

## Between Locality and Internationality: Fifth- and Sixth-generation Chinese Directors' Films and their Translations

Xichen Sun\*

The University of Auckland, Auckland, New Zealand

Corresponding Author: Xichen Sun, E-mail: sun.xichen@auckland.ac.nz

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### ABSTRACT

Focusing on 48 Chinese films made by the representatives of the fifth- and sixth-generation directors (i.e. Zhang Yimou, Chen Kaige, Jia Zhangke and Feng Xiaogang), this paper reveals: (1) These directors' preferences for the themes with locality are related to the popularity of Chinese local literature except for their nostalgia for hometowns; (2) The overseas distribution of these films cannot be separated from the support of the state policies, while 1985, 1995, 1999, 2002 and 2018 are found to be five milestone years in the development of the Chinese film industry to promote international co-production and distribution; (3) Subtitling is the most popular mode translation used to distribute Chinese films in English speaking countries, and the subtitling of these films always involves English native speakers' contribution to various degrees.

**Key words:** Chinese Films, Fifth-generation Directors, Sixth-generation Directors

### INTRODUCTION

The films by the fifth- and sixth-generation Chinese directors open a window for the Western audience to experience China and its diverse local culture. Some of these directors' films, which won prestigious international awards, tend to depict a strong regional flavour through dialects or other culture-specific references (hereafter CSRs). The investigation into the tension between going international and highlighting specific local characteristics of these films calls into questions: (1) why do these directors tend to choose themes infused with locality; (2) what promotes these films to be circulated overseas, and (3) who contributes to translating their works. The following findings cover the relationship between the films made by the selected directors and Chinese local literature, five crucial moments in the contemporary Chinese film industry development, and a summary of translators or subtitlers contributing to the selected films. This research tries to include as many films by Zhang Yimou, Chen Kaige, Jia Zhangke or Feng Xiaogang as possible, who are the leading figures of the fifth- and sixth-generation directors introducing contemporary Chinese films to the international audience. Finally, 48 eligible English-subtitled Chinese films, available in VCDs, DVDs, online videos or cinema releases, have been investigated, as shown in Table 1, Table 2, Table 3 and Table 4. The data about their production company, distribution company, and translators or subtitlers were collected. Arising out of the tension between locality and internationality, the fifth- and sixth-generation directors find their own ways to translate

their artistic works into the global discourse through glamour and exotica of Chinese culture and society with the aid of English subtitles in a favourable policy environment. Under the ongoing globalisation and the national initiative of Going Global, the locality is believed to be essential for the successful presence of Chinese films on the international stage.

### The Relationship between Chinese Dialect Films and Chinese Local Literature

More than half (26 films) of the 48 high-profile Chinese films in the present study are adapted from Chinese literary works, as shown in Table 5, Table 6, Table 7 and Table 8. The rich dialectal elements in these films can be explained through the popularity of Chinese local literature (乡土文学, xiāng tǔ wén xué, literally meaning native-soil literature) ever since the 1920s, which was originated by Lu Xun's *Hometown*. With diverse dialects coexisting with Puntonghu in China, the popularity of dialectal films has also been noticed by academia in Mainland China. A Chinese database, CNKI (China National Knowledge Infrastructure), retrieved 120 results (as of October 2022) covering the period between 2004 and 2022 with the key string “方言电影” (dialectal film) in Chinese. As shown in Figure 1, the number of those publications indicates a rising trend from two to five between 2005 and 2009, witnessing the success of *Crazy Stone* (2006), which is a low-budget film with a hotchpotch of Cantonese, Chongqing, Qingdao

**Table 1.** Film resources collected: Zhang Yimou's films

Production Year	Film Title	Production Company	Distribution Company	Available Format
1987	<i>Red Sorghum</i>	Xi'an Film Studio	China Sanhuan Audiovisual Products Distribution Department, Guangzhou Xinsheng Cultural Distribution Co., Ltd.	DVD by Xinsheng
1990	<i>Ju Dou</i>	China Film, Tokuma Shoten Publishing Co., Ltd., Tokuma Communications Co., Ltd., Xi An Film Studio	Miramax Films	DVD by Pioneer
1991	<i>Raise the Red Lantern</i>	Century Communications Ltd.	ERA International (HK) Ltd., Shanghai Film Studios	DVD by Warrior Co. Ltd.
1992	<i>The Story of Qiuju</i>	Sil-Metropole Organisation Ltd., Youth Film Studio of Beijing Film Academy, China Film Cooperation Production Company	Sil-Metropole Organisation Limited	DVD by Mei Ah Entertainment
1994	<i>To Live</i>	ERA International (HK) Ltd., Shanghai Film Studios	Century Communications LTD.	DVD by MGM
1995	<i>Shanghai Triad</i>	Shanghai Film Studios, UGC-IMAGES	Shanghai Film Studios, UGC-IMAGES	DVD by Sony Pictures Classics
1999	<i>Not One Less</i>	Guangxi Film Studio, Beijing New Pictures Distribution Company	Columbia Pictures Film Production Asia Limited	DVD by Sony Pictures Classics
1999	<i>The Road Home</i>	Guangxi Film Studio, Beijing New Pictures Distribution Company	Columbia Pictures Film Production Asia Limited	DVD by Sony Pictures Classics
2000	<i>Happy Times</i>	Guangxi Film Studio, Zhuhai Zhenrong Company, New Picture Films Company	Not Mentioned	DVD by Sony Pictures Classics
2002	<i>Hero</i>	An Edko Film, Zhang Yimou Studio, China Film Co-Production Corporation, Sil-Metropole Organisation Limited, Beijing New Picture Film Co., Ltd.	Miramax Films, Elite Group Enterprises Inc.	DVD by Miramax
2004	<i>House of Flying Daggers</i>	An Edko Film, Zhang Yimou Studio, Beijing New Picture Film Co., Ltd.	Elite Group Enterprises, Inc	Video on Youtube
2005	<i>Riding Alone for Thousands of Miles</i>	Beijing New Picture Film Co., Ltd., Elite Group Enterprises, Inc.		DVD by Zoke Culture
2006	<i>Curse of the Golden Flower</i>	Film Partner International Inc., Edko Film Limited, Beijing New Picture Film Co., Ltd.	Film Partner International Inc., Edko Films Limited, Beijing New Picture Film Co., Ltd.	DVD by Sony Pictures Classics
2009	<i>A Woman, a Gun and a Noodle Shop</i>	Beijing New Picture Film Co., Ltd., Film Partner (2009) International, Inc.	Huaxia Film Distribution Co., Ltd., Beijing New Picture Film Co.	DVD by Sony Pictures Classics
2010	<i>Under the Hawthorn Tree</i>	Beijing New Picture Film Co., Ltd., IDG China Creative Media Limited, New Classical Entertainment Co., Ltd., Film Partner (2010) International, Inc.	China Film Group Corporation, Huaxia Film Distribution Co., Ltd., Mainland China Distribution	Video on YouTube
2011	<i>The Flowers of War</i>	Beijing New Pictures Film Co. Ltd.	Wrekin Hill Entertainment, Row 1 Productions	DVD by Lionstage
2014	<i>Coming Home</i>	LE Vision Pictures Co., Ltd.	LE Vision Pictures Co., Ltd., Wild Bunch, Wanda Media Co., Ltd.	Video on Youku

and Tangshan dialects. Then, it fluctuated between three and eight and peaked at 11 in 2016, which can be related to Mo Yan winning the Nobel Prize of Literature award in 2012. The topic of dialectal films has received more scholarly attention in recent years, especially from 2019 to 2021. The popularity of dialectal cinema has been recognised in almost half of those publications.

#### ACCORDING TO CNKI

Meanwhile, Jia Zhangke's works often originate from his nostalgia for his hometown, Fenyang, Shanxi. He portrays the characters of ordinary small-town youngsters living on the margins of society and uses a variety of dialects, as shown in Table 7. These linguistic variations are "supposedly spoken

**Table 2.** Film resources collected: Chen Kaige's films

Production Year	Film Title	Production Company	Distribution Company	Available Format
1984	<i>The Yellow Earth</i>	Guangxi Film Studios	Not Mentioned	VCD by Mei Ah Laser Disc Co., Ltd.
1987	<i>King of the Children</i>	Xi'an Film Studios	Beauty Culture Communication	DVD by Beauty Culture Communication
1991	<i>Life on a String</i>	A Serene Production, Pandora Film, Beijing Film Studio, China Film Co-Production Corporation	Kino International	DVD by Kino Video
1993	<i>Farewell My Concubine</i>	Tomson Films; Beijing Film Studios	Tomson Films	DVD by Miramax Classics
1996	<i>Temptress Moon</i>	Tomson Films; Shanghai Film Studios	Tomson Films	DVD by Mei Ah Laser Disc Co., Ltd.
1999	<i>The Emperor and the Assassin</i>	New Wave Co. (Japan), Beijing Film Studios, China's Film Cooperation Production Company	Shin Corporation & Le Studio Canal +	DVD by Sony Pictures Classics
2002	<i>Together</i>	The Fourth Studio of China Film Group Co., Film Channel Programme Center, Century Hero Film Investment Co., Ltd., 21 <sup>st</sup> Century Shengkai Film and Television Cultural Exchange Co., Ltd.	Guangdong Huanya Audiovisual Production and Distribution Co., Ltd.	DVD by Guangdong Huanya Audiovisual Production and Distribution Co., Ltd.
2005	<i>The Promise</i>	Beijing Film Studio – China Film Group Corporation, 21 <sup>st</sup> Century Shengkai Film	Beijing Film Studio – China Film Group Corporation, Zoke Culture, 21 <sup>st</sup> Century Shengkai Film, Shanghai Rongjian Investment and Development Co., Ltd., Moonstone Entertainment Inc.	DVD by Zoke Culture
2008	<i>Forever Enthralled</i>	Beijing Film Studio – China Film Group Corporation, Fat Penguin Pictures Corporation, Emperor Motion Picture (International) Limited	China Film Group Corporation	DVD by Mangpong
2010	<i>Sacrifice</i>	Shanghai Film Studio – Shanghai Film Group Corporation, TIK Films, Stellar Group	Huaxia Film Distribution Co., Ltd., Shanghai Film Group Corporation, Stellar Group	DVD by My Way Film Co. Ltd.
2014	<i>Monk Comes Down the Mountain</i>	Beijing Bereal Picture Co., Ltd., Beijing 21 <sup>st</sup> Century Shengkai Film, New Classics Media Corporation, Columbia Pictures	New Classics Media Corporation, China Film Co., Ltd., Wuzhou Film Distribution Co., Ltd., Columbia Pictures	Video on Qiyi

by non-professional actors to evoke an authentic, spatially and temporally defined environment” (Li 2018, 274). Films like Jia's exhibit a more remarkable tendency towards localism (Li 2018, 274). In the undereducated protagonists' lines designed by Jia, the prevalent usage of slang is another conspicuous feature in addition to their dialects or accents. Fengyang for Jia is like Beijing for Feng Xiaogang. Feng is inspired by the street humour of Beijinger's comic spirit (Kong 2003, 179-180). Lu (2006) compares the different functions served by dialects in Jia's films and Feng's films. Unlike the Shanxi dialect in Jia's *The World* (2004), which symbolises the backward poverty hidden within the illusory prosperity

of modernity, the Sichuan dialect in *Cell Phone* (2003) and the Hebei dialect in *A World Without Thieves* (2004), both directed by Feng Xiaogang, are designed for comedic effects to entertain the audience (Lu 2006).

Except for the dialects used in these films, as listed in the tables below, other local CSRs are also detected in the depiction of local customs and the illustration of local arts in the films by Zhang Yimou or Chen Kaige. The local customs can be found in the wedding ceremony with the unique Shandong local style in *Red Sorghum* (1987) by Zhang, the funeral procession typical of China's rural area conventions in *Ju Dou* (1990) by Zhang, the traditional timing system in *Curse*

**Table 3.** Film resources collected: Jia Zhangke's films

Production Year	Film Title	Production Company	Distribution Company	Available Format
2002	<i>Unknown Pleasure</i>	T-Mark Inc., Hu Tong Communication, Bitters End	New Yorker Films	DVD by New Yorker
2004	<i>World</i>	The Shanghai Film Studio, Steam Pictures (Hong Kong)	Not Mentioned	DVD by Beauty Culture Communication
2006	<i>Still Life</i>	The Shanghai Film Studio, Xsteam Pictures	British Film Institute/ New Yorker Films Artwork	DVD by BFI & DVD by New Yorker
2013	<i>A Touch of Sin</i>	Xstream Pictures (Beijing), Office Kitano, Shanghai Film Group Corporation, Shanxi Film Group, Bandai Visual, Bitters End	Not Mentioned	DVD by Kino Lorber
2015	<i>Mountains May Depart</i>	Shanghai Film Group Corporation, Xstream Pictures (Beijing)	Shanghai Film Group Corporation, Xstream Pictures (Beijing), MK Productions, Beijing Runjin Investment, Office Kitano,	Video at 1905.com

of the Golden Flower (2006) by Zhang, Daoism in *Monk Comes Down the Mountain* (2014) by Chen, whereas local arts are manifested through the Xintianyou, a type of folk music from Shaanxi province, in *The Yellow Earth* (1984) by Chen, the sanxian (a three-stringed traditional Chinese lute) performance in *Life on a String* (1991) by Chen, the Beijing opera in *Farewell my Concubine* (1993) and *Forever Enthralled* (2008) by Chen, Chinese shadow puppetry in *To Live* (1994) by Zhang, and Nuo opera in *Riding Alone for Thousands of Miles* (2005) by Zhang. Furthermore, the CSRs of the wedding ceremony recur in Feng's *If You Are the One I* (2008) in the form of a divorce ceremony, a post-modernist representation filled with black humour. The CSRs of funerals, as a stinging satire of Feng's style, are reproduced in the funeral farce in *Big Shot's Funeral* (2001) and the character Xiangshan's farewell ceremony when he is still alive in *If You Are the One II* (2010).

Most of those 26 films are adapted from Chinese novels, whereas one is adapted from Chinese prose, i.e. *The Yellow Earth* (1984). It is also discovered that the earlier the films are made, the more likely they are adapted from a literary work. For example, the films directed between 1984 and 1995 are all adapted from Chinese literature. It is evident that the director Jia Zhangke is the screenwriter himself for all his films and the other three directors prefer Chinese literature for their filmmaking creation. Among those 22 films not adapted from any Chinese literary work, *A Woman, a Gun and a Noodle Shop* (2009) directed by Zhang Yimou is adapted from an English-language American film *Blood Simple* (1984), and *Only Cloud Knows* (2019) is created based on the true story of director Feng Xiaogang's old friend. Feng Xiaogang's film works are always related to his happy foe, Wang Shuo's writings, bringing new elements to Beijing literature and culture (Han 2011). Most of Feng's early works are adapted from Wang Shuo's novels, who is a renowned writer focusing on the everyday language spoken by ordinary people in the street. Wang uses a large amount of Beijing dialect in his writings. Wang's style can be easily detected in Feng's films, especially in Feng's comedies

made in the Beijing dialect. For example, *The Dream Factory* (1997) is derived from Wang's *You are not a Worldling* (*nǐ búshì yīgè sùrén*, 《你不是一个俗人》), even though Wang is not credited in that film. Sometimes, Wang is credited as the scriptwriter, for example, in *Sigh* (2000) and *Personal Tailor* (2013).

Director Chen Kaige's most acknowledged film *Farewell My Concubine* (1993), full of Beijing local flavour, is adapted from the novel created by Li Bihua, a famous writer and screenwriter. *Farewell My Concubine* (1993) is the only Chinese film that has won the Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival to date. In turn, the film adaption of the local literature can facilitate local Chinese stories to be widely accessed by international readers. Jiang (2020) investigates how Zhang Yimou's film *The Flowers of War* (2011) promotes the original novella 《金陵十三钗》(*Jinling Shisan Chai*) to be developed into a novel and translated and published with the film's title. In addition, Jiang (2020) maintains that the English translation of the film title *The Flowers of War* (2011) erases all the cultural allusions of the original Chinese title 《金陵十三钗》(*The Thirteen Hairpins of Jinling, jin ling shi san chai*). It alludes to the famous "The Twelve Hairpins of Jinling" (金陵十二钗, *jin ling shi er chai*) in one of the four great Chinese classical novels, *A Dream of Red Mansions* (《红楼梦》, *hong lou meng*).

In the meantime, literary writers can also be directly involved in the film production project. For example, Mo Yan participated in writing the script of Zhang Yimou's film *Red Sorghum* (1987) with two other screenwriters, Chen Jianyu and Zhu Wei. Another film made by Zhang, *Ju Dou* (1990), is based on Liu Heng's novel *Fuxi Fuxi*, who worked as a screenwriter for many well-known Chinese films. Liu wrote scripts for Zhang's films *The Story of Qiuju* (1992) and *The Flowers of War* (2011). As shown in Table 5, the former is adapted from Chen Yuanbin's novel *Lawsuits of Thousands of Families*, while the latter is based on Yan Geling's novel under the same title *The Flowers of War*. The script of Feng Xiaogang's war film *Assembly* (2007) is also written by Liu, which is adapted from Yang Jingyuan's novel *Lawsuit*.

**Table 4.** Film resources collected: Feng Xiaogang's films

<b>Production Year</b>	<b>Film Title</b>	<b>Production Company</b>	<b>Distribution Company</b>	<b>Available Format</b>
1999	<i>Sorry Baby</i>	Huayi Brothers Advertising, Asian Film Union, Forbidden City Film	Not Mentioned	DVD by Dejin Culture
2000	<i>Sigh</i>	Huayi Brothers Advertisement Co., Ltd., Feng Xiaogang Film Studio, Beijing Film Studio	Guangdong Huanya Audiovisual Production and Distribution Co., Ltd.	DVD by Zoke Culture
2001	<i>Big Shot's Funeral</i>	Columbia Pictures Film Production Asia Limited, Huayi Brothers & Taihe Film Investment Corporation, China Film Group	Columbia Pictures Film Production Asia Limited	DVD by Sony Pictures Classics
2003	<i>Cell Phone</i>	Beijing Film Studio of the China Film Corp, Huayi Brothers & Taihe Film Investment Co., Ltd, Columbia Pictures Film Production Asia Ltd.	Bureau for External Cultural Relations, Ministry of Culture, P.R. China	DVD by Bureau for External Cultural Relations, Ministry of Culture, P.R. China
2004	<i>A World Without Thieves</i>	Huayi Brothers & Taihe Film Investment Co., Ltd., Taihe Film Investment Co., Ltd, Focus Films Limited	Xiying & Huayi Film Distribution Co., Ltd. (Mainland China); China Film Group Corporation (Mainland China); Media Asia Distribution Ltd. (Other Areas)	DVD by Palisades Tartan
2006	<i>The Banquet</i>	Huayi Brothers Pictures, Media Asia Films Ltd.	Media Asia Distribution Ltd.	DVD by Metrodome
2007	<i>Assembly</i>	Huayi Brothers Pictures, MK Pictures (Korea), New Film Association	Not Mentioned	DVD by Rialto Distribution
2008	<i>If You Are the One I</i>	Huayi Brothers Media Corporation, Media Asia Films Ltd.	Media Asia Distribution Ltd.	DVD by Showtime (Taiwan)
2010	<i>If You Are the One II</i>	Feng Xiaogang Film Studio, Emperor Classic Films Company Limited, Zhejiang Media Group & Co., LTD, Huayi Brothers International Limited	Huayi Brothers Media Corporation, Huayi Brothers International Ltd.	DVD by TS (Taiwan)
2010	<i>Aftershock</i>	Tangshan Broadcast and Television Media Co., Ltd., China Film Group Film Production Corporation, Huayi Brothers Media Corporation, Shanghai Film Group Corporation, Zhejiang Media Group & Co., Ltd., Media Asia Films Ltd., Emperor Classic Films Company Limited	Huayi Brothers Media Corporation, Huayi Brothers International Ltd.	DVD by Vendetta Films
2012	<i>Back to 1942</i>	Huayi Brother Media Corporation, Huayi Brothers International Limited, Bon Voyage Film Studio	Huayi Brothers Media Corporation, Huayi Brothers International Ltd.	Video at V.QQ.COM
2013	<i>Personal Tailor</i>	Huayi Brothers Media Corporation, Bon Voyage Film Studio, Huayi Brothers International Limited, Beijing Live Planet Film Co., Ltd.	Huayi Brothers Media Corporation, China Film Co. Ltd., China Film Digital, Ltd. A China Film Group Company, Huayi Brothers International Ltd.	Video at V.QQ.COM
2016	<i>I Am Not Madame Bovary</i>	Beijing Sparkle Roll Media Corporation, Beijing Skywheel Entertainment Co. Ltd., Huayi Brothers Media Corporation, Huayi Brothers Pictures Ltd., Zhejiang Dongyang Mayla Media Co. Ltd.	Sparkle Roll Media	Video on QIYI
2017	<i>Youth</i>	Zhejiang Dongyang Mayla Media Co., Ltd., Huayi Brothers Films Co., Ltd.	Huayi Brothers International Ltd.	DVD on YouTube
2019	<i>Only Cloud Knows</i>	Alibaba Films Co., Ltd., Zhejiang Dongyang Mayla Media Co., Ltd., Emperor Classic Films Company Limited, Huayi Brothers Films Co., Ltd.	China Lion	Released in Auckland Event Cinemas

**Table 5.** Zhang Yimou's films and their relation to Chinese literature and dialects

Year	Film	Literature Adapted from	Dialects Used
1987	<i>Red Sorghum</i>	Novel: <i>Red Sorghum Clan</i> (Hong Gao Liang Jia Zu) by Mo Yan	Shangdong dialect
1990	<i>Ju Dou</i>	Novel: <i>Fuxi Fuxi</i> by Liu Heng	NA
1991	<i>Raise the Red Lantern</i>	Novel: <i>Wives and Concubines</i> ( <i>Qi Qie Cheng Qun</i> ) by Su Tong	NA
1992	<i>The Story of Qiuju</i>	Novel: <i>Lawsuits of Thousands of Families</i> ( <i>Wan Jia Su Song</i> ) by Chen Yuanbin	Shaanxi dialect
1994	<i>To Live</i>	Novel: <i>To Live</i> ( <i>Huo Zhe</i> ) by Yu Hua	NA
1995	<i>Shanghai Triad</i>	Novel: <i>Gang Law</i> ( <i>Men Gui</i> ) by Li Xiao	NA
1999	<i>Not One Less</i>	Novel: <i>There is a Sun in the Sky</i> ( <i>Tian Shang You Ge Tai Yang</i> ) by Shi Xiangsheng	Zhangjiakou dialect
1999	<i>The Road Home</i>	Novel: <i>Remembrance</i> ( <i>Ji Nian</i> ) by Bao Shi	Hebei dialect
2000	<i>Happy Times</i>	Novel: <i>Shifu, You'll do Anything for a Laugh</i> ( <i>Shi Fu Yue Lai Yue You Mo</i> ) by Mo Yan	Northeastern dialect
2002	<i>Hero</i>	NA	NA
2004	<i>House of Flying Daggers</i>	NA	NA
2005	<i>Riding Alone for Thousands of Miles</i>	NA	Yunnan dialect
2006	<i>Curse of the Golden Flower</i>	NA	NA
2009	<i>A Woman, a Gun and a Noodle Shop</i>	NA	Northeastern dialect
2010	<i>Under the Hawthorn Tree</i>	Novel: <i>Hawthorn Tree Forever</i> ( <i>Shan Zha Shu Zhi Lian</i> ) by Aimi	NA
2011	<i>The Flowers of War</i>	Novel: <i>The Flowers of War</i> ( <i>Jin Ling Shi San Chai</i> ) by Yan Geling	Nanjing dialect
2014	<i>Coming Home</i>	Novel: <i>The Convict Lu Yanshi</i> ( <i>Lu Fan Yan Shi</i> ) by Yan Geling	NA

Qin (2010) studies Zhang's adaptation of novels in his early films, *Red Sorghum* (1987), *Ju Dou* (1990), *Raise the Red Lantern* (1991), and *To Live* (1994), and discovers that three of the four novel writers are listed among the screenwriters in the credits. Besides, Qin (2010, 163) maintained: "In fact, Zhang's input was crucial in shaping each of these scripts. In each film, Zhang himself was one of the screenwriters, although he was not listed in the credits". Zhang is a great master of adapting Chinese rural literature for movies. In shooting the film *Red Sorghum* (1987), "Zhang made several key changes to the script that Mo Yan and two other writers had prepared for him", and his aim "was to create an idealised world of liveliness that felt most Chinese artists and

writers had talked a lot about but had not managed to create" (Clark 2005, 166).

### Five Milestones in the Development of the Chinese Film Industry

In 1985, *The Yellow Earth* (1984), directed by Chen Kaige and cinematographed by Zhang Yimou, proved a great success at the Hong Kong International Festival. It is the debut of the fifth-generation directors on the international stage and the very beginning of the Chinese films' journey to the west. Afterwards, between 1985 and 1995, the government's firm control of film production and distribution

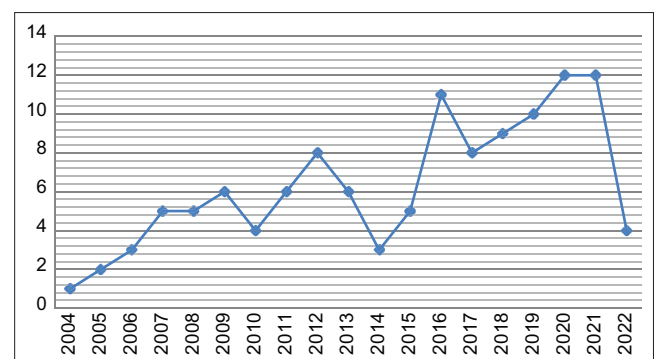
**Table 6.** Chen kaige's films and their relation to Chinese literature and dialects

Year	Film	Literature adapted from	Dialect used
1984	<i>The Yellow Earth</i>	Prose: <i>The Echo from the Gullies</i> ( <i>Shen Gu Hui Sheng</i> ) by Ke Lan	Shaanxi dialect
1987	<i>King of the Children</i>	Novel: <i>King of the Children</i> ( <i>Hai Zi Wang</i> ) by Ah Cheng	Yunnan dialect
1991	<i>Life on a String</i>	Novel: <i>Strings of Life</i> ( <i>Ming Ruo Qin Xian</i> ) by Shi Tiesheng	NA
1993	<i>Farewell My Concubine</i>	Novel: <i>Farewell My Concubine</i> ( <i>Ba Wang Bie Ji</i> ) by Li Bihua	Beijing dialect
1996	<i>Temptress Moon</i>	NA	Shanghainese
1999	<i>The Emperor and the Assassin</i>	NA	Yan dialect (an invented dialect)
2002	<i>Together</i>	NA	Wu dialect and Beijing dialect
2005	<i>The Promise</i>	NA	NA
2008	<i>Forever Enthralled</i>	NA	Beijing dialect
2014	<i>Monk Comes Down the Mountain</i>	Novel: <i>Monk Comes Down the Mountain</i> ( <i>Dao Shi Xia Shan</i> ) by Xu Haofeng	NA

**Table 7.** Jia Zhangke's films and their relation to Chinese literature and dialects

Year	Film	Literature adapted from	dialect used
2002	<i>Unknown Pleasure</i>	NA	Shanxi dialect
2004	<i>The World</i>	NA	Shanxi dialect and Wenzhou dialect
2006	<i>Still Life</i>	NA	Shanxi dialect and Chongqing dialect
2008	<i>24 City</i>	NA	
2013	<i>A Touch of Sin</i>	NA	Shanxi dialect, Chongqing dialect, Hubei dialect, Hunan dialect and Cantonese
2015	<i>Mountains May Depart</i>	NA	Shanxi dialect and Shanghainese

had been gradually loosened through the release of a series of policies. Before 1985, film production, distribution and exhibition were all under state control in the form of the China Film Corporation (hereafter CFC) (May and Ma 2014; Zhu 2002). From 1982, some state-owned capital was invested in the Hong Kong-based Sil-Metropole Organisation, which was given special status in Chinese film distribution (May and Ma 2014). A second policy period from 1985 to 1995 witnessed the separation between the government and state enterprises. In 1985, the Film Bureau carried out a reform aiming to revive the industry through marketisation, responding to China's overall opening-up policy. State Administration of Radio, Film and Television (hereafter SARFT) substituted the Ministry of Culture to formulate

**Figure 1.** The Number of Publications on Chinese Dialectal Films from 2005 to 2021

and issue rules or guidelines regarding the management of media enterprises. In 1993, the CFC would no longer purchase all the films produced by state studios, and the studios could distribute their films in their own way (May and Ma 2014). This meant that the investment in film production started to open for the capital of non-state-owned companies. Though the government still financially supported film production, especially for leitmotif films, many other private, state-controlled, and even foreign interests had been increasingly involved in Chinese filmmaking in various forms of co-production (Kong 2008). The relatively friendly co-production environment for both domestic and foreign partners brought about creative and distinctive filmmaking works that dominated international festivals in the following years, including *Red Sorghum* (1987) by Zhang Yimou, *King of Children* (1987) by Chen Kaige, *Ju Dou* (1990) by Zhang Yimou, *Life on a String* (1991) by Chen Kaige, *Raise the Red Lantern* (1991) by Zhang Yimou, *The Story of Qiu Ju* (1992) by Zhang Yimou, *Farewell My Concubine* (1993)

**Table 8.** Feng Xiaogang's films and their relation to Chinese literature and dialects

Year	Film	Literature adapted from	dialect used
1999	<i>Sorry Baby</i>	NA	Beijing dialect, Taiwanese Mandarin and Sichuan dialect
2000	<i>Sigh</i>	NA	Beijing dialect, Henan dialect and Wuhan dialect
2001	<i>Big Shot's Funeral</i>	NA	Beijing dialect and Cantonese
2003	<i>Cell Phone</i>	Novel: <i>Cell Phone</i> ( <i>Shou Ji</i> ) by Liu Zhenyun	Henan dialect, Sichuan dialect
2004	<i>A World Without Thieves</i>	Novel: <i>A World Without Thieves</i> ( <i>Tian Xia Wu Zei</i> ) by Zhao Benfu	Hebei dialect, Shaanxi dialect, Beijing dialect and Sichuan dialect
2005	<i>The Banquet</i>	NA	NA
2007	<i>Assembly</i>	Novel: <i>Lawsuit</i> ( <i>Guan Si</i> ) by Yang Jingyuan	Henan dialect
2008	<i>If You Are the One I</i>	Novel: <i>If You Are the One</i> ( <i>Fei Cheng Wu Rao</i> ) by Feng Xiaogang	Beijing dialect, Northeastern dialect, Sichuan dialect, and Taiwanese Mandarin
2010	<i>If You Are the One II</i>	Novel: <i>If You Are the One</i> ( <i>Fei Cheng Wu Rao</i> ) by Feng Xiaogang	Beijing dialect and Taiwanese Mandarin
2010	<i>Aftershock</i>	Novel: <i>Aftershock</i> ( <i>Yu Zhen</i> ) by Zhang Ling	Tangshan dialect, Shandong dialect and Sichuan dialect
2012	<i>Back to 1942</i>	Novel: <i>Remembering 1942</i> ( <i>Wen Gu 1942</i> ) by Liu Zhenyun	Henan dialect, Shaanxi dialect and Chongqing dialect
2013	<i>Personal Tailor</i>	NA	Shaanxi dialect, Shandong dialect, Shanghainese, Shanxi dialect, Cantonese and Beijing dialect
2016	<i>I Am Not Madame Bovary</i>	Novel: <i>I Did Not Kill my Husband</i> ( <i>Wo Bu Shi Pan Jin Lian</i> ) by Liu Zhenyun	Wuyuan dialect and Shanxi dialect
2017	<i>Youth</i>	Novel: <i>You Touched me</i> ( <i>Fang Hua</i> ) by Yan Geling	NA
2019	<i>Only Cloud Knows</i>	NA	Wuhan dialect

by Chen Kaige, and *To Live* (1994) by Zhang Yimou etc. The fifth-generation directors, Chen and Zhang, established themselves at the forefront of world cinema.

In 1999, the CFC was restructured into the China Film Group Corporation, China's foremost film production and distribution enterprise (Yeh and Davis 2008). The China Film Group Corporation was an essential organisation established by SARFT and the State Film Bureau for the development of the film industry (Zhang 2009, 48). The period from 1999 to 2000 witnessed the film industry in the grip of depression (Li 2010). After China joined the WTO (World Trade Organisation) in 2001 and ended the state-owned studios' monopoly in 2002, private companies were allowed to produce and distribute Chinese films.

Zhang Yimou's blockbuster, *Hero* (2002), produced by New Picture Films Company, broke the domestic box office record by 250 million yuan revenue and significantly boosted the industry. In 2003, the box office earnings of Chinese domestic films exceeded those of imported foreign

films at home for the first time. Subsequently, many successful Chinese films have achieved desired commercial revenues. From 2006 to 2015, China's box office revenue increased from 2.6 billion yuan to 44 billion yuan by an average annual growth rate of 30%, occupying 13% of the global box office gross (Ouyang 2018, 1). In 2015, the box office value was 44.069 billion yuan which grew by 50% compared to 2014 (Ouyang 2018, 1). In 2016, the value was 49.283 billion yuan by a year-on-year growth rate of 11.83%, maintaining its second-place market position internationally, following the biggest film market, i.e. the United States (China Film Association & Film Art Centre of the China Federation of Literary and Art Circles, 2017, 4, 20, 53). In 2017, 798 Chinese domestic feature films were produced, creating a total box office taking of 55.911 billion yuan (Chen and Fan 2018, 3), six of which generated over one billion yuan each in the box office. Among them, *Wolf Warriors 2* (2017) was the highest-earning at the box office with 5.683 billion yuan.



**Table 9.** Subtitlers and their credits in Zhang Yimou's films

Year	Film	Subtitler in Credits	Subtitler's Credit Title
1987	<i>Red Sorghum</i>	NA	NA
1990	<i>Ju Dou</i>	Helen Eisenman	Subtitles
1991	<i>Raise the Red Lantern</i>	NA	NA
1992	<i>The Story of Qiuju</i>	NA	NA
1994	<i>To Live</i>	NA	NA
1995	<i>Shanghai Triad</i>	NA	NA
1999	<i>Not One Less</i>	NA	NA
1999	<i>The Road Home</i>	NA	NA
2000	<i>Happy Times</i>	NA	NA
2002	<i>Hero</i>	Carolyn Choa, Linda Javin	English Subtitles by (英语字幕) Carolyn Choa English Subtitles by (英语字幕翻译) Linda Jaivin
2004	<i>House of Flying Daggers</i>	Linda Javin, Sherrie Liu, Chris Lu	English Translation: Linda Jaivin, Sherrie Liu English Translation and Subtitles: Chris Lu
2005	<i>Riding Alone for Thousands of Miles</i>	NA	NA
2006	<i>Curse of the Golden Flower</i>	S. Louisa Wei, Brad Metten, Carolyn Choa	English Translation (英语翻译): S. Louisa Wei, Brad Metten, Carolyn Choa
2009	<i>A Woman, a Gun and a Noodle Shop</i>	Zhang Mo	English Subtitles (英文字幕): Zhang Mo (张末)
2010	<i>Under the Hawthorn Tree</i>	Zhang Mo, Tim Youngs, Fang Yuan	English Subtitles (英文字幕翻译): Mo Zhang (张末), Tim Young (杨添旻) Subtitles (字幕制作): Fang Yuan (方媛)
2011	<i>The Flowers of War</i>	Carolyn Choa, Zhang Mo, Daniel Manwaring, Jeremy Huff, Fang Yuan	English Script Translated by (英文剧本翻译) Carolyn Choa (蔡敏仪 (美国)) English Subtitles by (英文字幕翻译) Mo Zhang English Subtitling Assistants (英文字幕协助): Daniel Manwaring (孟丹青 (美国)), Jeremy Huff (候杰明 (美国)) Subtitles Typesetting Artist (对白字幕制作): Fang Yuan (方媛)
2014	<i>Coming Home</i>	Zhang Mo, Daniel Manwaring, Jeremy Huff, Tian Jiaming, Chen Shikong	English Subtitles by (英文字幕翻译): Mo Zhang (张末) English Subtitles Consultants (英文字幕顾问): Daniel Manwaring (孟丹青 (美国)), Jeremy Huff (候杰明 (美国)) Subtitles Typesetting Artists (对白字幕制作): Tian Jiaming (田佳茗), Chen Shikong (陈时空)

By the first quarter of 2018, China had become the most prominent film market worldwide. Then, in April 2018, the China Film Administration was established by separating itself from the supervision of SARFT, directly reporting to the Ministry of Culture. In the trend of streamlining government organisations, the foundation of the China Film Administration indicates an acknowledgement of the significance of film industry development and highlights the critical role of Chinese films in the revitalisation of national culture (Sun 2019,102). In addition to its responsibility of censoring films and issuing approvals, the China Film Administration has launched several important projects to promote the international dissemination of Chinese cinema. For example, “Chinese Films Shown to the World” (中国电影普天同映, *zhong guo dian ying pu tian tong ying*) aims to build a global distribution platform for domestic films, while “China-Thailand Film Festivals”, “China-US Film Festivals”, and “Chinese Film Week” in Portugal facilitate cultural

exchange and further cooperation between China and other countries (Sun 2019).

### Subtitling for Fifth- and Sixth-generation Directors' Films

Subtitling is “used widely for exhibition both by Chinese film companies and overseas media institutions” (Jin 2018, 199). Even though subtitling is the most prevalent mode of translating Chinese films into English, dubbing is also applied to disseminating Chinese films to English-speaking audiences. In this present research, it is found that some selected Chinese films are not only subtitled but also dubbed into English, such as *Curse of the Golden Flower* (2006), *Hero* (2002) and *House of Flying Daggers* (2001) by Zhang Yimou. Besides, it is recognised that those subtitled versions are different from the dubbed versions. With the growing foreign audience, more high-profile Chinese films will likely

**Table 10.** Subtitlers and their credits in Chen Kaige's films

Year	Film	Subtitler in Credits	Subtitler's Credit Title
1984	<i>The Yellow Earth</i>	NA	NA
1987	<i>King of the Children</i>	NA	NA
1991	<i>Life on a String</i>	NA	NA
1993	<i>Farewell My Concubine</i>	Linda Jaivin	NA
1996	<i>Temptress Moon</i>	NA	NA
1999	<i>The Emperor and the Assassin</i>	Carma Hinton	English Translation by Carma Hinton
2002	<i>Together</i>	NA	NA
2005	<i>The Promise</i>	Carolyn Choa	English Translation by (英文字幕翻译) Carolyn Choa
2008	<i>Forever Enthralled</i>	Linda Jaivin	English Subtitle Translation (英文字幕翻译) Linda Jaivin (贾佩琳)
2014	<i>Monk Comes Down the Mountain</i>	Linda Jaivin, Darren Leung	English Subtitle Translation: Linda Jaivin Additional Translation: Darren Leung

be dubbed one day since the high cost of dubbing is currently the primary concern of Chinese filmmakers. Apart from the comparative study about English subtitling and dubbing, it is also found that the film *Farewell My Concubine* (1993) is produced with both English subtitles for hearing viewers and English subtitles for the hearing impaired (i.e. subtitles for the Deaf and hard-of-hearing).

Among the 48 selected Chinese films with English subtitles, 17 of them, mostly produced during the 1980s and 1990s, do not show subtitlers' names in the films' credits, as listed in Table 9, Table 10, Table 11 and Table 12. Johnston (2020, 915) also detects such a lack of acknowledgement of subtitlers by commenting that:

It would be relatively simple to track down the name of the editor or the production designer who contributed to a particular aspect of that scene; in terms of the subtitles, that labour seems even more invisible and disconnected from the main act of creation.

As shown below, the remaining 31 films credit subtitlers or translators' names with varying roles. These 28 titles mentioned above mainly fall into the groups of script translator, subtitle translator and subtitle adaptor. Among the 31 films, three films only have Chinese monolingual credits, eight have English credits, and most (22 films) end with bilingual credits for actors and crew, corresponding to the prevalence of bilingual subtitles in Chinese films. It is a tradition that Chinese films are subtitled in both Chinese and English. As early as during the 1920s and 1930s in the silent film era,

**Table 11.** Subtitlers and their credits in Jia Zhangke's films

Year	Film	Subtitler in Credits	Subtitler's Credit Title
2002	<i>Unknown Pleasure</i>	Tony Rayns, Wang Weiqing	Subtitler: Tony Rayns Translator: Wang Weiqing
2004	<i>World</i>	Tony Rayns, Wu Dan, He Jun	English Translators (英文翻译): Wu Dan (吴丹), He Jun (贺军), Tony Rayns (汤尼·雷恩)
2006	<i>Still Life</i>	Tony Rayns, Maggie Lee	English Translators (英文翻译): Maggie Lee (李诗才) English Subtitles Editor (英文字幕编辑): Tony Rayns (汤尼·雷恩)
2008	<i>24 City</i>	Tony Rayns	English Subtitler: Tony Rayns
2013	<i>A Touch of Sin</i>	Tony Rayns	English Subtitles (英文字幕): Tony Rayns
2015	<i>Mountains May Depart</i>	Tony Rayns, Guo Ying	English Subtitles (英文字幕): Tony Rayns English Translation (英文翻译): Guo Ying (郭莹)

bilingual intertitles were added to the whole film, "which shows the international ambitions of Chinese film makers from the very beginning of Chinese cinemas" (Jin 2018, 198). Nowadays, "Chinese-produced films that are shown on VOD platforms and in cinema are often bilingually subtitled with both English and Chinese in the hope to boost their international circulation" (Díaz-Cintas and Remael 2021, 19).

- Subtitler
- Subtitles
- Subtitle Translation
- English Subtitles
- Translator
- English Translation
- English Translation and Subtitles
- Script Translation
- English Script Translator
- Additional Translation
- English Editor
- 英文字幕 (English Subtitles)
- 英语字幕 (English Subtitles/English Subtitler)
- 英文对白字幕翻译 (English Subtitles)
- 英语字幕翻译 (English Subtitles)
- 英文字幕翻译 (English Subtitle Translation/English Subtitles)
- 英文翻译 (English Translators, translated by the author)
- 英文翻译 (English Translators/English Translation)
- 英语翻译 (English Translation)
- 字幕翻译 (Subtitle Translation/Dialogue Translation)
- 英文字幕编辑 (English Subtitle Editor)
- 字幕校对 (Subtitle Editing)
- 字幕制作 (Subtitles)

**Table 12.** Subtitlers and their credits in Feng Xiaogang's films

Year	Film	Subtitler in Credits	Subtitler's Credit Title
1999	<i>Sorry Baby</i>	Willie Brent	English Script Translator: Willie Brent
2000	<i>Sigh</i>	NA	NA
2001	<i>Big Shot's Funeral</i>	Willie Brent, Christopher Barden	English Script Translator: Willie Brent English Subtitles: Christopher Barden
2003	<i>Cell Phone</i>	Kuang Peihua, Joel Kirkhart, Christopher Barden	English Translation: Kuang Peihua English Editor: Joel Kirkhart Script/ Subtitle Translation: Christopher Barden
2004	<i>A World Without Thieves</i>	Christopher Barden	NA
2005	<i>The Banquet</i>	NA	NA
2007	<i>Assembly</i>	NA	NA
2008	<i>If you are the One</i>	Christopher Barden, Sherrie Liu (邓怡君)	English Subtitles (英文对白字幕翻译): Chris Barden, Sherrie Liu
2010	<i>If You Are the One II</i>	Zuo Yi (左懿)	Subtitle Translation (字幕翻译): Zuo Yi (左懿)
2010	<i>Aftershock</i>	Jonathan Noble	Subtitle Translation (字幕翻译): Jonathan Nobel
2012	<i>Back to 1942</i>	Jonathan Noble, Brendan O'Kane, Zuo Yi	Script Translation (剧本翻译): Jonathan Nobel (刘战) Subtitle Editing/ Dialogue Translation (字幕校对/字幕翻译): Brendan O'Kane (何崧), Zuo Yi (左懿)
2013	<i>Personal Tailor</i>	Cindy Carter	Dialogue Translation (字幕翻译): Cindy Carter
2016	<i>I Am Not Madame Bovary</i>	Joel Martinsen, Alice Xin Liu	Subtitle Translation (字幕翻译)
2017	<i>Youth</i>	Joel Martinsen, Alice Xin Liu	Subtitle Translation (字幕翻译)
2019	<i>Only Cloud Knows</i>	Joel Martinsen, Alice Xin Liu	Subtitle Translation (字幕翻译)

- 英文字幕协助 (English Subtitling Assistants)
- 英文字幕顾问 (English Subtitles Consultants)
- 对白字幕制作 (Subtitle Typesetting Artist)
- 英文剧本翻译 (English Script Translated by the author)
- 剧本翻译 (Script Translation)

On one side, all of Jia Zhangke's six films are subtitled by Tony Raynes (see Table 11), and four of Chen Kaige's films (see Table 10), either made earlier or later, involve Linda Jaivin's contributions. On the other side, after cooperating with Helen Eisenman, Carolyn Choa, Linda Javin, Sherrie Liu, Chris Lu, S. Louisa Wei and Brad Metten, Zhang Yimou finally begins stable cooperation with his daughter Zhang Mo and son-in-law Daniel Manwaring (see Table 9). Zhang Mo studied architecture and film directing in the United States. After returning to China, she has worked alongside her father, Zhang Yimou, on many of his projects as listed in Table 9, i.e. *A Woman, a Gun and a Noodle Shop* (2009), *Under the Hawthorn Tree* (2010), *The Flowers of War* (2011) and *Coming Home* (2014). Her husband, Daniel Manwaring also involved in subtitling *The Flowers of War* (2011) and *Coming Home* (2014). Inspired by differing Chinese and Western expectations over marriage, she also made her directorial debut, *Suddenly Seventeen* (2016). Recently, she co-directed a leitmotif film, *Sniper* (2022), with her father, Zhang Yimou. Her husband, Daniel Manwaring, is the executive of Creative Artists Agency. That agency acted as an international distribution consultant for the film *I am not Madame Bovary* (2016) by Feng Xiaogang (Reynaud 2018). Similarly, Feng also finds Joel Martinsen, a native English

speaker, and Alice Xin Liu, a native Chinese speaker, to co-translate his films. Martinsen and Liu also collaborate as literary translators. They have subtitled Feng's most recent three films, *I am not Madame Bovary* (2016), *Youth* (2017) and *Only Cloud Knows* (2019). Before cooperating with Martinsen and Liu, Feng has worked with numerous translators or subtitlers, Willie Brent, Christopher Barden, Kuang Peihua, Joel Kirkhart, Sherrie Liu, Zuo Yi, Jonathan Noble, Brendan O'Kane and Cindy Carter, as listed in Table 12. Additionally, Zuo Yi, who has been involved in two of Feng's films, *If you are the One II* (2010) and *Back to 1942* (2012), turns out to be an executive producer having cooperated with Feng for a decade since Feng shot his film *Aftershock* (2010).

## CONCLUSION

The fifth- and sixth-generation directors are the first to bring Chinese films to an international audience. The international audience started to feel Chinese local flavour through their distinctive works. How their works were created and translated can shed light on the dissemination of newly made Chinese films, which are bound to be not limited to the plight of China's rural malaise or the splendid performance of Chinese martial arts. They can be Chinese-styled fantasy animation films, *Monkey King: Hero is Back* (2016), *Big Fish & Begonia* (2016), *Ne Zha* (2019), *Legend of Deification* (2020), China's first full-scale interstellar spectacular *The Wandering Earth* (2019) by Frant Gwo, Bi Gan's poetic art films *Kaili Blues* (2016) and *Long Day's Journey into Night*

(2018), Wen Muye's realistic comedy dramas *Dying to Survive* (2019) and *Nice View* (2022), patriotic war dramas, *The Sacrifice* (2020) and *The Eight Hundred* (2020) by Guan Hu, *The Battle at Lake Changjin* (2021) by Chen Kaige, Hark Tsui and Dante Lam, *Sniper* (2022) by Zhang Yimou and Zhang Mo, and *Home Coming* (2022) by Rao Xiaozhi, and modern leitmotifs, *My People My Country* (2019), *My People My Homeland* (2020), *My Country My Parents* (2021) and *Nineteen Twenty One* (2021). In the post-pandemic age, some Chinese semidocumentaries and documentaries about the profoundly touching and heartwarming stories happening during the COVID-19 lockdown have been produced successively, including *Chinese Doctors* (2021) by Andrew Lau, *Days and Nights in Wuhan* (2021) by Cao Jinling, *Heros in Harm' Way* (2020) by Hu Shuhua, *Winter Giving Place to Spring: China in the 2020 Pandemic* (2020) by Kang Chengye (2020), *China's Post-Pandemic Era: Winning Against All Odds* (2021) by Takeuchi Ryo and so on. Well received by the domestic audience, these films manifest more diversity and modernity but earn less popularity overseas. The spreadability of all these films cannot rival the sensation caused by Fang Fang's *Wuhan Diary* in the world. Being controversial at home (Qi, 2021), the English translation of Fang's online diary published as a book entitled *Wuhan Diary: Dispatches from a Quarantined City* has become a best seller in less than a month after its publication (Jandrić 2020). What China shows to the world and what the world wants to learn about China lead to a dilemma for the Chinese national initiatives Chinese Culture Going Global and Chinese Films Going Global. The retrospect of the local themes and international dissemination of the fifth- and sixth-generation directors' films reminds us of how contemporary Chinese films first travelled successfully abroad. Due to aesthetic fatigue, Chinese exotism naturally cannot always be attractive and thought-provoking for foreign audiences. It entails rethinking the locality in modern China and exploring alternative routes to express the locality in films. It might lie in the Chinese legends displayed through computer animation, film adaptations of Chinese innovative science fiction, Chinese poetic aesthetics and realistic aesthetics in exploring and expressing the topics of life and death, Chinese interpretation of individualistic heroism in war blockbusters, tender descriptions of small potatoes' stories in the significant background of national development, and Chinese ways to tell local stories. These newly released Chinese films are on their way to presenting fast-developing China as it is and as the audience likes it in a changeable globe.

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