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China and Cinematic Science Fiction: A Lost Genre

A brief history of Chinese science fiction film and its' narrative themes.



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Abstract

This paper has its goal in presenting an overall history of the Chinese science fiction movie genre but also to give an in-depth analysis of the thematic elements that is being presented in eight selected movies. Chinese films during the 21st century, which are being distributed outside of its domestic borders, have a tendency to be historical films, *wuxia* films or a mixture of these two genres. How come then, foreign science fiction film is so popular in the domestic market? My aim with this paper is to gain some perspective on why foreign, mostly American, science fiction film is so immensely popular in China. Furthermore, to get a better understanding of science fiction films I will take a closer look on the development of the genre in relation to how it has been written about in the Chinese media.

Introduction

What began as a hunch I didn't pay much attention to later on started to become a self-experiencing fact that raised an interesting question; have I ever watched a Chinese science fiction film? In fact, the number of science fiction films I had come across while discussing and watching Chinese film were closer to zero than to one. This is how my idea for this paper started to take shape. When I looked around for other papers, academic articles and books that had already covered this subject I could only find one (An article from *Science Fiction Studies* no.119 by Wei Yang) that had been published within the academic sphere in Europe and U.S.A.¹ The science fiction cinema of China seemed to be non-existing and even if there do exist some titles the more interesting question for me was: “*How come there aren't any more science fiction films in China?*”

It makes one wonder why China, which has gone through all the vicissitudes of hardships and change since the brothers Lumière invented the cinematographer at the end of the 19th century, hasn't made more science fiction films. One would think that the redefining of Chinese cultural identity and the optimism towards science and modernization during the May Fourth Movement in 1919, and the founding of the Peoples Republic of China in 1949 would be events that might have triggered the creativity and lust to depict the many possibilities of a versatile future. Though it might, at first glance, look like the Chinese film industry has neglected the idea of establishing a strong base for producing science fiction film the case is completely different when we turn to the literary arts. Shortly after the economic reforms were set at the 11th plenary session in 1978 the Chinese science fiction literature bloomed and hundreds of books were being written within this cultural field. Nowadays we see this phenomenon establishing new grounds and a new fan base once again. At the same time as China is planning to send its first man/woman to the moon the Chinese sci-fi literature is now considered to be a new literary movement.² How come then the Chinese science-fiction film genre, to use the words of film scholars Zhang Yingjin and Xiao Zhiwei, “... *is an underdeveloped genre in China*”?³

The purpose of this paper is not only to find out the answer of the questions stated above but also to give an overall presentation of the science fiction film that has already been produced in Mainland China.

¹ There are other articles covering science fiction in China but they have a tendency to be about films from Hong Kong rather than from Mainland China. For example Gregory Lee's *Wicked Cities: The Other in Hong Kong Science Fiction Film*.

² Han Song, “Chinese SF: A Response to Modernization”, *Science Fictions Studies*, 2013, volume 40 p.16

³ Zhang Yingjin and Xiao Zhiwei, *Encyclopedia of Chinese Film*, Routledge, 1998, p.297

Chinese film titles like *Hero* (*Yingxiong*, Zhang Yimou, 2002), *Fearless* (*Huo Yuanjia*, Yu Rentai, 2006) and *Kung Fu Hustle* (*Gongfu*, Zhou Xingchi, 2004) are the three most income bringing Chinese movies that has ever been shown in the US.⁴ The list continues with other Chinese films that also are constituted by their overall depiction of stories that include elements of *kung fu* and *wuxia* in the mise-en-scène. If we look at the foreign movies that have received a distribution permit (*gongying xukezheng*) in China one can by a quick glance see that the majority of the films imported to China are films from the U.S. By looking at the latest eight years (2007 – 2014) of box office figures one can also conclude that the majority of the highest grossing films are films from the U.S. and that they belong to the science fiction genre.⁵

Readers' impression might be that the basis of my paper presupposes that the economic incentives of producing science fiction films should have not only triggered a wave of enthusiasm and investment frenzy, which now would make China one of the leading countries producing science fiction film, but also that there exist a fully working how-to-do algorithm which allows film workers in China to mime and copy the concepts, storytelling and mise-en-scène of other countries science fiction movies freely. This is not completely true but it does come close to my understanding of Chinese film- economy and –production, and the complex nature of anticipating and serving the needs of an audience.

Wouldn't the culture of *shanzhai* (chinese copycat-ing) and a concrete usage of Zhang Zhidongs saying “*Chinese learning for fundamental principles and Western learning for practical application*” (*zhongxue wei ti, xixue wei yong*) be a perfect tool for welcoming science fiction in to the Chinese silver screen? Han Byung-Chul, professor in philosophy and media theory at Karlsruhe College, suggest that this form of copycat-ing (*shanzhai* = *mountain camp*) is not only a playful and creative process but it also transforms the content of the intended object. For instance, the popular Harry Potter book series didn't stop at seven books in China. The author – or authors – of the book “*Harry Potter and the Porcelain Mannequin*” (*Hali pote yu ciwawa*) developed the series further and put Harry Potter in a Chinese setting.⁶ But, it seems, that the culture of *shanzhai* hasn't reached the film industry, yet, but it has most certainly been influenced by other film cultures. This, of course, is probably more related to the costly nature of producing film than reluctance towards *shanzhai* culture.

⁴ <http://boxofficemojo.com/genres/chart/?id=foreign.htm>

⁵ <http://boxofficemojo.com/intl/china/yearly/?yr=2009&p=.htm> and also <http://www.sarft.gov.cn/catalogs/gldt/20070831155418550472.html>.

⁶ Han Byung-Chul, *Shanzhai*, Korpen Koloni Förlag, 2012, p.84-86

Maybe it is within literature we can find the answer to why Chinese film makers has overlooked the sci-fi genre or maybe one can trace the lack of science fiction to the Chinese Communist party and its policy making within the cinematic field. How come the Soviet Union and the former state of Czechoslovakia - both with a similar political structure in terms of ideology – has made so many more influential science fiction films and China hasn't? Behind the curtains of film policies does one find an economic reason to the lack of Chinese science fiction film or is it purely ideological, or maybe even cultural?

Research question(s)

The first question that needs to be asked is, to me, the most obvious one:

1: What characterizes Chinese science fiction film?

This is the overarching research question but in order to make it easier to grasp and answer we shall also have three subordinate research questions:

1a: How is mise-en-scène being represented in Chinese science fiction film?

1b: What kinds of stories are being told in Chinese science fiction films?

1c: What are the dominant themes in Chinese science fiction cinema?

When one, to some extent, can define the generic characteristics of Chinese science fiction film when it comes to narratives, iconography and themes one can go ahead and try to solve the more complex questions:

2a: How come the Chinese science fiction film is an underdeveloped genre?

2b: What consequences does this have for the genre in the future of Chinese film making?

Issues concerning analysis of (foreign) film

It might seem problematic for a Swedish student to take on the role of analysing and categorizing Chinese science fiction film. Chinese philosopher and historian Liu Dong have already pointed this out when he talks about the problem of reusing western terms, such as “realism” and “melodrama”, and then applying it to Chinese culture. He means that in order to fully comprehend the Chinese society one must be present in China. He calls this *shigan* (实感) – it can be translated in to *true feelings* or *sense of being present* – and his notion seems to be that only those who acquire this are able to understand Chinese culture.⁷ These thoughts are not only those of Liu Dong. When I was attending a workshop about Ingmar Bergman and his films Swedish film scholar Maaret Koskinen also emphasized the importance of having Swedish scholars when doing research about Bergman and his cultural legacy. Professor of film studies, Dmitris Eleftheriotis, at Glasgow University has another approach:

“The suggestion here is that what the Western (or any other) scholar needs in order to undertake cross cultural criticism is a detailed historical knowledge of the context of the films. While clearly such context includes representation and culture specific articulations of desire, it does not necessarily require a complete knowledge of the Other's psyche”⁸

Though I’m fully aware of the advantages in already being assimilated into a certain society and accustomed to its notions and views on its own culture I am also of the opinion that those advantages is not restricted by a nation states borders. By using my own different cultural background as an integrated part of my analytical tools when scrutinizing the cinematic realm of Mainland China I believe that my understanding of it differs mostly because I, compared to a Chinese film scholar, works in the premise of a different paradigm. This can also work to my disadvantage.

Take for example Chinese concepts such as *yong sang yu liu* (express one’s hidden sentiments by means of gentle allusions and ambiguous phrases) and *jie gu feng jin* (use the past to disparage the present) which most probably played a crucial role, with or without the consent of the director, when the movie *The Last Supper* (*Wang de shengyan*, Lu

⁷ Torbjörn Lodén, *Från Mao till Mammon*, p.138

⁸ Dmitris Eleftheriotis, ”Cross-cultural and Chinese cinema”, *Asian Cinemas: A Reader and Guide*, Edinburgh University Press, 2006, p.153

Chuan, 2012) didn't receive its distribution permit.⁹ The movie alludes to these two concepts by taking the story of Liu Bang and Xiang Yu - two leaders which fought over the control over China after the Qin dynasty had collapsed in 206 BC – and, supposedly, referring it to the power struggle among top party members of the Communist Party, in this case the struggle between Bo Xilai and the present president Xi Jinping. Due to the lack of transparency within the State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio Film and Television (SAPPRFT) we can't know for sure that this was the cause for not showing the film but nonetheless the fact still remains that somebody has already done the interpretation. A factor that is usually taken in to consideration when a film loses its distribution rights while it's still on the repertoire. Sheila Cornelius also mentions this post-distribution-censor phenomenon: *"It was not uncommon for films to be withdrawn from circulation only after the film critics detected an interpretation that escaped the censors."*¹⁰

Being restricted to history might make the input for interpretation less rich in a multifaceted analysis and also result in a more homogenous understanding of the implicit information one obtains from watching and analysing a film. Zhang Yimou himself mentions that it is easier to get approved for making a historical film than a film that takes place in the present since the latter one is more likely to be more direct in its critic on contemporary society.¹¹ On the other hand science fiction movies tend to give a more rich and heterogeneous interpretation from its viewers. When *Avatar* (James Cameron, 2009) went up on Chinese cinemas it didn't take long until people noticed a resemblance between the blue Na'vi population of Pandora and Chinese dissidents fighting for their property rights.¹² Meanwhile some viewers back in U.S.A. saw an allegory towards 9/11 and also, not surprisingly, towards American military aggression infused with expansive corporatism.¹³ With this said one might find it a truly complex task trying to categorize and find similar thematic elements within the Chinese science fiction film. But more importantly, what consequences does it have for Chinese film in the future when they overlook film production in the science fiction genre?

⁹ No author, "History is never just history", *The Economist*, July 7th 2012

<http://www.economist.com/node/21558316>

¹⁰ Sheila Cornelius, *New Chinese Cinema: Challenging Representations*, Wallflower, 2004, p.66

¹¹ David Roth-Lindberg, "Den kinesiska filmindustrin under början av det nya milleniet", *Kinarapport*, 2011, Vol.2, Scenkonst och film, p.26

¹² Caroline Davies, "Avatar – even in 2D – reportedly too hot a property for China Censors", *The Guardian*, January 18th 2010. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/jan/18/china-censorship-avatar-confucius>

¹³ Ben Hoyle, "War on Terror backdrop to James Cameron's Avatar", *The Australian*, December 11th 2009. <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/arts/film/war-on-terror-backdrop-to-james-cameras-avatar/story-e6frg8pf-1225809286903>

Method

“... Like feelings, meanings are born from the dynamics of form. They play a part along with other elements to make up the total system.”¹⁴

In this sentence David Bordwell and Kirstin Thompson express the essence for something I myself believe to be inherently true for film as a medium. Of course the analysis of actions and utterance in film can evoke different interpretations from different spectators but I am of the opinion that if I restrict myself by mainly focusing on *referential meaning* (“... *the meaning depends on the spectator’s ability to identify specific items...*”)¹⁵ and *explicit meaning* (*The explicit meanings of a film arise from the whole film and are set in dynamic formal relation to another.*)¹⁶ I might avoid being too supercilious and farfetched in my analysis. Furthermore, since I’m only doing research on science fiction film I also have to take into account what the *mise-en-scène* actually does with its audience when they try to identify and put it in a relation to the story.

Consider the movie *Nanjing! Nanjing! (City of Life and Death)*, Lu Chuan, 2009) where most of the scenes depict a war thorn Nanjing and they can all be related to, both spatially and temporally, by simply referring to the Nanjing massacre in 1937. The movie *Death Ray on a Coral Island (Shan hu dao shang de si guang)*, Huang Jianxin, 1980) takes place in an unspecified future and is set in environments depicting science labs and a secretive desolate island. In the aforementioned science fiction film *mise-en-scène* fills a different function than simply giving the atmosphere a realistic touch, it also implies something about this future society.

A simple answer can be found for the question “Why are there so many rifles in *Nanjing! Nanjing!*” but the same doesn’t go for the question “Why are there so many scientists in *Death Ray on a Coral Island?*” The first one can be explained through its historical reference to The Nanjing massacre but the second question might be harder to answer. Yes, science fiction movies tend to be about “...*science, along with the technology it*

¹⁴ David Bordwell & Kirstin Thompson, *Film Art: An Introduction*, McGraw-Hill, New York, 2008, p.61

¹⁵ *Ibid*, p.60

¹⁶ *Ibid*, p.61

produces and the reason that drives both...”¹⁷ but is a simple prop device like actors in lab coats enough to explain for the audience that this is a way to contextualize with the “science” in science fiction? These simple and not so eye catching elements of *mise-en-scène* require further explanation. Imagine the effect a dystopian or post-apocalyptic setting would have for a film that was produced in the beginning of the 1980’s in China, shortly after the Chinese economic reform was launched in 1978. Would the dystopian setting imply that opening up and reform would be bad for China’s future? Therefore I also find it necessary at sometimes also dig deeper in to the *implied meanings* of a film.

Delimitation and selection

The lack of Chinese science fiction film does make it easier for me to choose which ones I should use and which ones I don’t have to pay as much attention to. For my paper I have picked eight science fiction films that I will analyse more closely while I have the ambition to watch all Chinese science fiction films that I have found so far. Knowing the exact number isn’t always easy since there isn’t any official homepage from a Chinese institution that have categorized all existing Chinese films.¹⁸ There are some homepages though that has, to some extent, tried to assign a genre to many of the Chinese films (in *Appendix 2* further down in the paper you can see more detailed information of all the films that I plan to watch). As one can see in the information about the movies in the appendix, some of the films are being categorized as science fiction while others aren’t. Therefore my ambition to watch all films is not only necessary in order to get a correct overview of the genre but also important because it might give me an insight to a dichotomy between my own genre labelling and that of the labelling that has been made at the mentioned sites in the appendix.

For example, the movie *Deadly Kiss* (*Du wen*, Chen Xinzong, 1992) and *Zombies Reborn* (*Wu zui jian: jiang shi chong sheng*, Xia Yong, 2012) are defined differently on both Mtime and Douban. The first one is defined as a *fantasy* on Mtime and the second film is defined as a *horror* on Douban. When it concerns genre labelling for *Zombies Reborn* it might just be that the film has few science fiction elements in its *mise-en-scène* and that the

¹⁷ J.P Telotte, *The Routledge Companion to Science Fiction: Film, 1895 – 1950*, Routledge, New York, 2009, p.42

¹⁸ <http://www.dmcc.gov.cn/application/dmcc/ypkc.jsp> This page is part of SAPPRFT under the name *Administration Center of Digital Film Content* and it has categorized movies in to different genres but here both fantasy and science fiction is put in the same category that is called *huanxiang* (it can be translated in to “dream” or “fantasy”).

horror part is more obvious. *Deadly Kiss* being defined as a *fantasy* points out something that I find crucial for this paper: when do science fiction become fantasy and the other way around? The two terms also have a complicated history in China because the term science fiction was renamed to “science fantasy fiction” after 1949.¹⁹

As one can see at the original sheet for my list of Chinese science fiction films I had chosen 46 films that were considered to be science fiction according to the movies sites Mtime.com and Douban.²⁰ After I’ve seen all 46 films I can conclude that 34 movies falls under the category *full length feature science fiction film*. Unfortunately I’ve only found watchable copies of 27 of these films.²¹ The film titles that are marked in red in Appendix 1 are the eight films I’ve decided to look more closely at and the ones marked with blue in Appendix 2 are films that I didn’t consider to be science fiction and the ones in purple copies which I couldn’t find.

To make it more clear for the reader when I talk about China I talk about Mainland China (Zhongguo dalu). Autonomous regions with more or less self-governing executive authority like Hong Kong and Macau are not included in here. Taiwan, having their own film culture, is also not included in my definition of China in this thesis.

The eight movies that I have chosen are as follows:

1. The Ming Tombs Reservoir, Shisan ling shui ku chang xiang qu (Jin Shan, 1958)

Plot

The movie takes place in 1958, the first year of The Great Leap Forward campaign. The story centres on a group of visiting political leaders who participate in the work of finishing the reservoirs just outside of Beijing close to the town Shisan. During their visit they meet friends from former times and join them in the arduous labor and proudly watch the huge labour force that works with the project. The first hour of the movie focuses on the reservoir in present time while the last thirty minutes is set 20 years in the future. In the future The Shisan reservoir is an abundant place where getting food is the smallest of problems. The technical development has also skyrocketed and the inhabitants of Shisan can now enjoy a longevities

¹⁹ Wu Yan, *Science Fiction Studies*, “Great Wall Planet: Introducing Chinese Science Fiction”, 2013, volume 40 p.12

²⁰ See *Appendix 2*

²¹ See *Appendix 1*

life, personal air transport and communication commodities which resembles those of the 21th century.

Reason

The Ming Tombs Reservoir has been chosen because it is the only movie with science fiction elements that has been produced during the Mao-era 1949-1976. Although science fiction had numerous famous titles in the U.S before 1958 it was not until after 1972 that the science fiction genre got its momentum.²² With this in mind the film is interesting because it stands more alone from outer influence than other Chinese science fiction films made later during the 20th century.

2. Death Ray on Coral Island, Shanhu daoshang de siguang (Zhang Hongmei, 1980)

Plot

The ethnic Chinese scientist Zhao Qian has developed a high efficiency nuclear battery that he plans to bring back to China. Zhao is murdered before he can realize his plan but his future son-in-law Chen Tianhong takes upon himself the task to get the battery to China. On his way there his plane gets shot down in the middle of the ocean and while facing imminent death Chen suddenly gets rescued by the scientist Ma Tai and his mute servant. What saved Chen from hungry sharks was Ma's laser weapon that he controls from his isolated island. Luckily for Ma, Chen's nuclear battery is a reliable power source that let's Ma continue utilizing the laser weapon. Weinasi, the company that shot down Chen's airplane, is also after the nuclear battery and the laser weapon. They're planning to use the laser weapon for the sake of making a profit and as a tool for intimidation.

Reason

Death Ray on Coral Island is considered by numerous writers to be the first ever science fiction movie made in China.²³ Based on this information this movie is interesting simply because it's the genesis of Chinese science fiction film and therefore could be a source of inspiration for future films.

²² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tW0iOzedNxc> A seminar by Richard Slotkin at Wesleyan University in 2008.

²³ Xiao Mei, "Fantasy – The Soul of Science Fiction Film" (幻想—科幻电影灵魂), *Film Art* (电影艺术), no.11 1980, p.34-36. This is one of many writers who mention this.

3. Dislocation, Cuowei (Huang Jianxin, 1986)

Plot

Zhao Shuxin is buried in paperwork and fed up with the endless meetings he has to attend. In order to get more time focusing on his own experiments he creates an exact robotic copy of himself. After some time Zhao the robot starts developing his own personal characteristics and actually start enjoying attending meetings. The line is crossed when it's revealed that Zhao the robot is taking out Zhao Shuxin's girlfriend, Yang Lisun, for a date. After a dramatic ending between Zhao the robot and Zhao Shuxin the latter finally succeeds in shutting down his robotic copy. When he wakes up next day he discovers that he's been dreaming all along.

Reason

Dislocation is the second science fiction movie made in China during the 80's – worth to mention is that one writer mentions *Shadow of a Ghost* (Guo Baochang and Huang Ling, 1981) being a science fiction film²⁴ – and more importantly the movie was made after the Anti-Spiritual Pollution Campaign where “borrowism” and western bourgeois culture was being under attack from the top leaders of the Communist Party.²⁵ Seeing that science fiction is considered to be a cultural element that doesn't have any roots in China and instead being a “borrowed” element it is of interest to have a look at this film.

4. The Synthetic Man, Hecheng ren (Wang Yabiao and Yin Aiqun, 1988)

Plot

Professor Pang is transplanting the brain of the rural worker Wang Jiawei to the body of the former company director Wu Hao. In order to keep the Hua Fu Trading Company running poor Wang Jiawei is used as a puppet by people within the company so they can go back to business as usual. Like a fish out of the water, Wang is having problem convincing people that he is the former company director and in the end his ignorance in being a director bankrupts the company and Wang is later put on trial because of his deeds.

²⁴ Liao Xiaolan, “The Tragedy of Science Fiction Film” (科幻片的悲哀), *Film Review* (电影评介), 1981 no.9, p.13.

²⁵ Meng Guangdiao, “The Anti-Spiritual Pollution Campaign: How to Work with Research on Foreign Film” (清除精神污染, 开展外国电影的研究工作), *World Cinema* (世界电影), 1984, no.01, p.5

Reason

The Synthetic Man is one of those science fiction movies that are hardly mentioned in Chinese movie magazines. But the movie is not only visually interesting it also touches upon the subject of identity and the disparities between rural and urban people.

5. The Ozone Layer Vanishes, Daqiceng xiaoshi (Feng Xiaoning, 1990)

Plot

Two thieves are planning on stealing what they believe to be gasoline from a train wagon. Little did they know that the wagon contained haloalkane, a substance that, in the movie, quickly disseminates the ozone layer. In a city close by a child is suddenly endowed with the ability to talk with animals. His cat then tells him of the imminent danger that the haloalkane is causing to the ozone layer. The child and the cat sets out on a journey where they meet other animals who give them clues about the source of pollution (污染源) and also tells them about the strong hate animals have towards mankind for polluting their home. The child and the cat finally find the source of pollution and with the aid of a bank robber they finally stop the pollution.

Reason

This movie is produced by the *Children's Film Studio (Zhongguo ertong dianying zhipian chang)* and is one of the many science fiction films that are made for children. The film also addresses environmental dilemmas such as global warming and the extermination of animals in exchange for profit.

6. Dangerous Knowledge, Weixian zhineng (Yu Xiaobing, 2003)

Plot

Sang Wei's boyfriend Lu Mao has been gone for a year and when he comes back he has no memory of her. Sang gets suspicious and starts looking in to the reason for Lu Mao's sudden amnesia. Her classmate Guo Zhou is also suspicious of Lu Mao's behavior and especially his sudden change from a high school jock to a super smart a-grade student. Sang and Guo's

research on Lu leads them to a company that conducts similar intelligence enhancing experiments on other students.

Reason

This movie is one of the many movies that were written by famous child-story writer Zhang Zhilu. A total of five movies in my list are written by Zhang Zhilu and this is the only one that has a focus on adolescents instead of children. This is also the first science fiction movie to be made during the 21th century.

7. Animen: Triton Forces, Chaowa zhanshi zhi chulu fengmang (Xu Ke, 2010)

Plot

The frogmen are a race that evolved from their originators, the human race. Many millennia's in the future these frogmen are living in a constant fear of another race that also developed from the humans, the Cockroaches. Among these frogmen are four friends who are one of the best fighters of the frogmen army. In their highly advanced mecha-suits they respond to the threats of the cockroaches by fighting them head-on in outer space.

Reason

Animen: Triton Forces is the only Chinese science fiction film that can be counted as a space opera. It is also one of the few Chinese movies, which doesn't belong to the *wuxia* or historical epic genre, which has gotten distributed in the U.S.

8. Shenzhou 11, Feitian (Wang Jia and Shen Dong, 2011)

Plot

Zhang Tiancong was the first taikonaut to ever enter space. He is now in his fifties and he's still trying to enter upcoming space programs even though other applicants are far younger than him. As Zhang is faced with adversity at work he is also trying to be a family man. His wife is unwillingly getting accustomed to a life in solitude; his daughter is pursuing a career in becoming a helicopter pilot and he's too busy to visit his dying mother. Zhang finally get chosen to the reserve taikonaut crew and after the original crew is in an accident Zhang is assigned as captain for the coming space mission.

Reason

Shenzhou 11 is the only science fiction film that has ever received the *Golden Rooster* award.²⁶ The award is considered to be the equivalent of the American award *Academy Awards* but limited only to the Chinese market. If it weren't for the bad ratings the movie received (4.4 of 10 on Mtime and 2.8 on Douban) the award wouldn't be surprising but now it seems too good to be true. For me this looks like an orchestrated move from officials that want to show appreciation towards the 90th anniversary of the founding of the Communist Party of China and how this is channelled through their national Space Program.

Defining Science Fiction

“Chinese science fiction film? You mean like Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon?”

Defining a genre can sometimes be difficult, especially nowadays when films become hard to define depending on in which context films are being watched. For a spectator who has never watched a Chinese film before the gravity defying actions sequences in *Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon* might very well be close to what one defines as science fiction. The fact that streaming sites like Netflix and HBO also puts “science fiction” and “fantasy” in the same category also makes the distinction harder to see. Not even SAPPRT's Administration Centre for Digital Film distinguishes between the both. Their category for science fiction film is simply put under “fantasy” (*huanxiang*).²⁷ Dr. Christine Cornea from University of East Anglia also acknowledges the ambiguous nature of some films relation to a genre but concludes that “... *Commercial concerns affect the way in which a film is classified and how it might be approached by audiences.*”²⁸

Even though there exist different ways of visually identifying something as science fiction at least there's a separation of fantasy and science fiction in a more literal sense in the English language. In China that line of differentiation is sometimes harder to spot.

²⁶ <http://www.imdb.com/event/ev0000295/2011>

²⁷ <http://www.dmcc.gov.cn/application/dmcc/ypkc.jsp>

²⁸ Christine Cornea, *Science Fiction Cinema: Between Fantasy and Reality*, Edinburgh University Press, 2007, p.7

As I mentioned earlier science fiction was once referred to as “science fantasy” (*kexue huanxiang*) and is now more generally referred to as “science fiction” (*kehuan*). The former word is not fully abandoned yet and to this day we still see writers and journalist is referring to the genre as “science fantasy”. Scholars Li Shoulong and Song Guangwen go so far as to call the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy a “... *A science fiction film set within a historical costume drama...*”²⁹ Even if these kinds of classifications are in the minority one shouldn’t overlook the possibility that works of science fiction might actually take place in the past.

Videogame *The Order* takes place in a late 19th century society where highly advanced firearms is used for warfare while Philip K. Dicks novel *The Man in the High Castle* does not show any particular interest towards the scientific development. But it does show the effects of how the American society would look like if Nazi Germany would win the Second World War. The fundamental change of the latter lays more in how a society has transformed than in the scientific community. This type of science fiction – where there is an emphasis on ideas concerning society and human relationships rather than technological development – is sometimes referred to as *soft science fiction*.

Since film is visual and relies a lot upon how former works have branded itself one can not only look at the narrative in order to define its genre, one must also look to its style, as The Guardian journalist Michael Newton puts it: “*In Blade Runner, as in all science fiction, the “future” is a style*”.³⁰ It doesn’t matter if the future in a film is perceived as taken part a hundred years from now or it’s an alternative description of the outcome of some war or social movement, in the end it is the style of the film that will trigger or fantasy the most. With this in mind when one look at all the Chinese science fiction films I’ve found for this paper this “style” reasoning doesn’t fit some of the films. For example, how come the movie *Shadow of a Ghost* from 1981 has been labelled science fiction when the only science related imagery in the film is the *deus ex machina* machine in the ending that reveals that the ghost in the film is actually a human being? In my eyes the adding of a genre specific prop in the ending of a movie cannot be counted as constituting the whole film as a specific genre – furthermore, when released on DVD the film was defined as a “detective” story.³¹ But, as concluded before, there always seems to be a very subjective understanding of film genre. And when it concerns China during the early 80’s the lack of reference to other science fiction

²⁹ Li Shoulong and Song Guangwen, “The Lack of Chinese Science Fiction Film as Seen From the Difference Between Western and Eastern Thought” (从东西方思维的差异看中国科幻片的匮乏), *Journal of Guizhou University*, 2006, Vol.20 no.2, p.54

³⁰ http://www.theguardian.com/film/2015/mar/14/why-blade-runner-is-timeless?CMP=share_btn_t

³¹ See Pictures Fig.2. On the DVD one can read that the film is a detective story, literally “cracking-the-case film (侦破故事片)”

film is very apparent due to the fact that they only had limited knowledge of the genre both when it comes to domestic films and imported films. Even if there's arbitrariness in defining science fiction I will discuss the problem throughout the thesis.

There's one last thing I should mention before I continue. In China they have a genre called *qihuan* that can be translated to "fantasy", "fantastic" and "illusory". According to Wikipedia the word is categorized as "fantasy" but if one looks at the movie site mtime.com we can find films such as we would normally call "fantasy", like *Lord of the Rings* (Peter Jackson, 2001, 2002 and 2003) trilogy, but also more ambiguous films like *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button* (David Fincher, 2008). One can even find science fiction films under this genre. The genre, it seems, is a classifier for anything that contains elements of unnatural actions or events and/or elements of fantasy.

A brief history of Chinese science fiction film: A state of inertia

Looking at all these science fiction films and analysing them, thinking that I would find a hidden message telling me why domestically produced science fiction film wasn't a popular genre in China might have been a bit naïve but at least it wasn't in vain. Without having information about box-office figures from the time before the 21st century my professional guess is that many of the films I've watched wasn't among the top grossing films. I base this on the fact that many of those films were only briefly mentioned in Chinese film magazines - my personal opinion is that many of the films lacks good storytelling and confuses the viewer both spatially and temporally. This isn't to say that there might have been a thriving debate about these films outside of the published sphere.

Early 20th century up to the era of Deng Xiaoping

The two earliest films in my list *Exchanged* and *Visiting Shanghai after 60 years*, both directed by Yang Xiaozhong, has in later times been acknowledged as being part of the science fiction genre – Chinese film scholar Shi Chuan calls *Exchanged* a horror-scifi³² - but none of the articles I've read that was published before the 21th century writes about Yang Xiaozhong as a director who made the first Chinese science fiction film but instead speak of him as the creator of Chinas first full length feature film. Moreover *Exchanged* and *Visiting Shanghai after 60 years* might have been overlooked due to fact that Yang was also known as a very productive director with over 100 titles in his curriculum. Another explanation could be that *Exchanged* was simply regarded as a comedy and not spoken about as a science fiction film. Howard Hawks film *Monkey Business*, which has a similar plot, is regarded as a comedy by film site IMDB.³³ Concerning *Visiting Shanghai after 60 years* it shouldn't be hard for the audience to make the conclusion that this film is a science fiction film. Seeing that H.G Wells works was widely spread in China during the 30's and that "... one of the goals for the intellectuals of the Fourth May movement was to translate foreign science fiction works as a means of spreading ideas of knowledge for the public",³⁴ there should be little doubt that the plot of Yang's film would be anything else than science fiction.

³² Shi Chuan and Yu Wenming, "Yang Xiaozhong: A Chinese film directors way of surviving in pre-1949 revolution China" (杨小仲: 一种中国早期职业电影导演的范式生存), *Film Art*, 2009 no.2, p.87.

³³ http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0044916/?ref_=nv_sr_1

³⁴ Chen Juan, "Translation of Wells works in modern China" (威尔斯在现代中国的译介), *Theory and Criticism of Literature and Art* (文艺理论与批评), 2011, no.2, p.96.

Then again, applying my twenty first-century preconceptions of the science fiction genre on an early twentieth-century audience is problematic. The whole concept of time travel might have been overlooked and focus would instead be on social issues or the audience would simply enjoy the comedic experience acted out by Han Langen and Yin Xiucen, the Chinese equivalent of Laurel and Hardy in pre-revolution China. Cinematic science fiction, it seems, was not as popular as the written genre back in the 1930's and 40's. According to Christine Cornea this is true for the US and also for China.³⁵ Seeing that there was hardly any science fiction film in China in those days the environment for producing science fiction film was hardly encouraging. Therefore it's more likely that Yang Xiaozhong's films has been re-gentrified in late 20th- and early 21st - century.

In a discussion at Chinese social media platform Weibo an employee from Chinese Film Archive Program Planning (*Zhongguo dianying ziliaoguan jiemu cehua*) tells science fiction author Fei Dao that: “*A lot of older Chinese films contained elements of science fiction like Jia Baoyu driving a submarine and Buddhist monk Xuanzang driving a motorcycle*”.³⁶ This can't be verified because of the loss of many copies from that time but this form of filmmaking where one places a classical fictional character in a modern setting might be more closely linked to the genre of *qihuan* than to science fiction. This form of hybrid between science fiction and classical literature could at least be found in literature. One example is Wu Jianrens *New Story of the Stone* (*Xin shitou ji*). Within the literary field some Chinese scholars, who focus their studies on science fiction in China, have suggested that before the revolution of 1949 there was little science fiction. Mostly because: “*industrialism was not sufficiently advanced*”.³⁷ Jiang Qian, lecturer in literature at Fudan University, explains the decline of science fiction as a result of the popularity of other genres such as butterfly and mandarin ducks (*yuanyang hudie*) fiction and also a “... *politically –oriented literature of the May Fourth Movement*”.³⁸

The standstill of production in the science fiction genre, within all cultural spheres, can also be explained by the tradition of showing reverence towards your ancestors and the emphasis on emulating real heroes rather than fictional heroes and most probably also because of the new policies towards culture that was implemented after the revolution in 1949.

³⁵ Christine Cornea, *Science Fiction Cinema: Between Fantasy and Reality*, p.21

³⁶ See Pictures Fig.3

³⁷ Mikael Huss, *Science Fiction Studies*, “Hesitant Journey to the West: SF's Changing Fortunes in Mainland China”, Volume 27, Part 1, p.

³⁸ Jiang Qian, *Science Fiction Studies*, “Translation and the Development of SF in China”, Volume 40, p.120

The basic outline for the latter one was formed even before the revolution back in 1942 when the Chinese communist party held the Yan'an forum. In literature a clear and optimistic political message of Marxist-Leninist Mao Zedong-thought was a must. Any form of ambiguous nature concerning the hero was unwanted and he was also supposed to be a man of the people, preferably being a peasant or a soldier, and the language of the book had to be vernacular.³⁹ Film production during the Yan'an period was limited to production of a small number of documentaries since the only film equipment they had were the camera they received from famous documentary filmmaker Joris Ivens.⁴⁰ Before 1949 the overall concept of Chinese film is dominated by two periods: 1932-1937 which is considered to be China's first golden era for leftist film and 1946-1949 which is considered as the second golden era. The first era was: "...*Exuberantly disjunctive and hybrid mixes of entertainment and exhortation...*" while the second was "... *Smoother melodramas with more seamless plots and unity of tone...*"⁴¹

Richard Curt Kraus thoughts about policies towards culture in the early days of the Peoples Republic of China: "*As the Party extended political control over the arts, once obvious distinctions among elite, popular, and folk culture became blurred as officials treated all art forms as administratively equivalent.*"⁴² Basically anything was tolerated as long as it didn't: "*weaken socialism, the dictatorship of the proletariat, the leadership of the Communist Party, or Marxist-Leninist ideology*".⁴³ Seeing that science fiction has long been seen as a "pulp" culture this homogenization approach towards culture might have deemed science fiction "not serious" while historical dramas with a strong social pathos were considered to be the norm. In a document from PRChistory.org one can read about several science fiction comics being banned because of being "absurd" (*huangdan*).⁴⁴ Seeing that the cultural sphere in China during that time was under the control of the party one can guess that these kinds of bans or restrictions on certain genres was being implemented on a horizontal level, meaning all forms of art were affected. The fact that social realism was the guideline for all filmmaking after 1949 might have also kept film workers from refraining to make science fiction film. Even though the "... *formal and stylistic implications of this term (social realism) remained*

³⁹ Torbjörn Lodén, *Från Mao till Mammon*, p.152

⁴⁰ Chris Berry, *The Oxford History of World Cinema*, "China before 1949", Oxford University Press, 1997, p.412

⁴¹ Ibid

⁴² Richard Curt Kraus, *The Party and The Arts in China: The New Politics of Culture*, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2004, p.37

⁴³ Ibid, p.31

⁴⁴ <http://prchistory.org/july-2014/>

open for interpretation...” almost a decade would pass before anyone explored the science fiction genre.⁴⁵

When Jin Shans movie *Ballad of the Ming Tombs Reservoir* was released in 1958 it's hardly referred to in Chinese media during that time but they do speak of the story in a cross-industry fashion. Not only was there a film made about the Ming Tombs Reservoir, writer Tian Han wrote a story that was made for other different cultural fields as well.⁴⁶ The political campaign the Great Leap Forward had just started and all China was in fervour over the ambition in taking the modernization of China one step further. The propaganda posters of the Great Leap Forward show signs of fantastic elements that could be seen as a way of approaching the aesthetics of science fiction. In the poster *Brave the Wind and the Waves, Everything has Remarkable Abilities* the artists depict a man that, in a Baron von Münchhausen manner, rides a rocket while reading a book.⁴⁷ Li Lang and Zhang Yuqing depiction of the future in 1958 is a bit less imaginary but does tempt ones imagination concerning scientific innovation. Li's poster depicts a scientist imagining space travel with a new form of spacecraft. A spacecraft which Chinese posters.net creator Marien van der Heijden calls a: “*typical 1950s technological fantasy*”.⁴⁸ Zhang's poster portrays a future rural community where abundance, mechanized agriculture and comfortableness are in the centre.⁴⁹ Zhang's theme is also something that we can see in Jin Shan's movie but the beginning years of the Great Leap Forward might have something to do with the lack of medial interest for Jin Shans movie *Ballad of the Ming Tombs Reservoir*.

According to associate professor Esther Yau, at Hong Kong University, the following two years after the Anti-Rightist movement saw some changes for the Chinese film industry. In 1958 after: “... Premier Zhou Enlai call for more record-oriented films with an artistic character (*yishuxing jilupian*), docu-dramas were made which combined documentary footage with reenacted scenes...”⁵⁰ If one looks at the style of Jin Shan's film *The Ballads of the Ming Tombs Reservoir* one can make a guess that the film would've been called a record-oriented film with an artistic character. In this film these elements are being represented by the filming of scenes where actors are in the foreground and the “real” construction of the

⁴⁵ Esther Yau, *The Oxford History of World Cinema*, “China After the Revolution”, Oxford University Press, 1997, p.693

⁴⁶ Ouyang Yuqian, “Cheer loudly for the Ballad of the Ming Tombs Reservoir” (为“十三陵水库畅想曲“大声喝彩), *People's Daily*, 1958-07-16.

⁴⁷ See Fig.4

⁴⁸ <http://chinese posters.net/posters/e15-427.php>, See Fig.5

⁴⁹ See Fig.6

⁵⁰ Esther Yau, *The Oxford History of World Cinema*, “China After the Revolution”, p.695

reservoir in the background. But the emergence of one science fiction feature film during the whole of the Mao-era cannot be credited to one certain film policy or utterance by a state leader. Science fiction author Wu Yan links Jin Shans film with the publication of author Zheng Wenguang's books *Fantasia of Communism (gongchanzhuyi changxiangqu)* labelling it as “China’s first Communist-influenced utopian science fiction.”⁵¹

Even though sci-fi literature enjoyed some good years of publication it would take another 22 years before the next full-length feature science fiction film would be released. But, depiction of science fiction in film was not completely abolished. In China, since the founding of the Peoples Republic, a lot of films that were being shown in theatres had a short film that was shown before the main one. These short films were something similar to an infomercial and informed the audience of science in everyday life like the introduction of a combustion engine, pesticide or our solar system.⁵² They’re called Science and Education Film (*Kexue jiaoyu dianying*). And at least one of those films, named *Small Sun (Xiao taiyang)*, dir. Guo Minsheng, 1963), has scenes where imagination, instead of scientific knowledge, drives the narrative. The little we can obtain from watching a still photo from the film at least suggests that the design of the spacecraft is imaginary.⁵³ The film is, according to Master Student Zhao Huikang, the: “first film to ever appear on the screen in China which has science fiction content”.⁵⁴ He might be wrong in that it’s the first film ever with elements of science fiction but he at least confirms the fictional content within *Small Sun*.

The 1980’s

From the beginning of the Cultural Revolution in 1966 to the end of it in 1976 not a single cultural product of science fiction was made except for one, Ye Yonglie’s novel *Petrolia Protein (Shiyou danbai)*.⁵⁵ The newspaper *People’s Daily* states that during the Cultural Revolution: “... sci-fi was regarded as something that could lead people astray.”⁵⁶ Ye Yonglie also decided to call his book a science fiction novel (*kehuan xiaoshuo*) instead of science fantasy fiction (*kexue huanxiang xiaoshuo*) in an attempt to get rid of the negative connotative meaning of the latter one. In 1978 Tong Enzheng’s science fiction novel *Death*

⁵¹ Wu Yan, *Science Fiction Studies*, “Introducing Chinese Science Fiction”, p.12

⁵² http://culture.ifeng.com/gundong/detail_2013_06/27/26863224_0.shtml

⁵³ See Fig. 7

⁵⁴ Zhao Huikang, A Summary over the Historical Development of Chinese Science and Education Films Between 1918 – 1995 (*Zhongguo kejiào diányǐng lìshǐ fāzhǎn gǎishù*), Chinese National Academy of Arts (*Zhongguo yìshù yánjiúyuán*), 2002, p.26

⁵⁵ Wu Yan, *Science Fiction Studies*, “Introducing Chinese Science Fiction”, p.12 - 13

⁵⁶ http://en.people.cn/200306/17/eng20030617_118407.shtml

Ray on a Coral Island came out and the year after it received the National Story Award, the first sci-fi book ever to win a mainstream literature award. On the latter half of 1980 the film-adapted version of the book went up on screens in China.

How well received was the film when it came out?⁵⁷ According to Wu Yan the film didn't go well at the box-office but the film critic Zhang Jie is in overall positive when it comes to what the film has to offer its audience. He mentions, just like I've done, that the main drive of the story is the dichotomy between the greedy businessmen and the "lofty ideals" of the scientists.⁵⁸ There's not a trace of negative criticism but rather it praises the film for its dense and exciting story. How come then science fiction film didn't get its momentum in the beginning of the 1980's like the science fiction literature had? Most probably because the genre itself hadn't been fully established on the market and also the fact that a lot of films that came during the dawning of the new decade wanted to make up with the past and focused more on what China had gone through and less what China would go through in the coming years. One writer is of a different opinion and means that *Death Ray on a Coral Island* is lacking the most vital part of science fiction, fantasy (huanxiang). He also mentions that he heard that: "except for the control on political and cultural content it (the film) also needs to undergo a control of its scientific content".⁵⁹

As pointed out above one of the many reasons for a paralysis of the science fiction genre in film was because of the political situation. In October 1983 the Campaign Against Spiritual Pollution (Qingchu wuran jingshen yundong) was launched. The campaign was considered by some to be a power struggle between two different factions in the echelons of the Communist Party but it was also a: "campaign against foreign cultural influence and humanist tendencies... (and) the main targets were once again intellectuals and writers."⁶⁰ Though some films had been criticized before this campaign much of the industry made it out intact. But scifi-literature was widely criticized. The author Ye Yonglie makes his case in an article, even before the outbreak of the campaign, in March 1983 defending the genre from people criticizing it for spreading false science and among other things pornography (xuanran seqing).⁶¹ The film *Shadow of a Ghost* is in December 1983 blamed for spreading superstition

⁵⁷ Yi Bing, *Film News (Dianying tongxun)*, "21 films that has been completed during the first half year of 1980" (shangbannian ge chang gong wancheng gushipian ershiyi bu), 1980, no.11, p.29.

⁵⁸ Zhang Jie, *Film Review (dianying pingjie)*, "Breaking ground with new explorations"(biekaishengmian de xin tansuo), no.7, p.4

⁵⁹ Xiao Mei, *Film Art (Dianying yishu)*, "Fantasy – The Soul of Science Fiction Film (Huanxiang – kehuan dianying de linghun), no.11, p.34

⁶⁰ Gregory Lee, *China's Lost Decade*, Tigre de Papier, Lyon, 2009, p.170

⁶¹ Ye Yonglie, "A debate on the creation of contemporary science fiction novels" (Dangqian kehuan xiaoshuo chuanguo de taolun), *The Publishing Labourer* (Chuban gongzuo), 1983, no.03, p.47 - 48

and *Death Ray on a Coral Island* seems to pass along unnoticed even though it portrays Chinese indulging in western traditions and practices. There doesn't seem to be any commotion surrounding the latter film except for an article in *People's Daily* from February 1982 where the film is accused of advocating troublesome lone-wolf behaviour among scientists when in fact "... *conducting research is a group task which can't be solved alone.*"⁶²

Whatever the reason it would take another five years until a science fiction film would be produced. In 1986 the now well-established producer Huang Jianxin directed *Dislocation*. Just like the film *The Synthetic Man*, being released two years later, both films use a very stylized production design that also seems to be the reason for the films to be titled as absurd/incredible (huangdan) films.⁶³ This is a term that returns in film magazines now and then to explain the content of some of the sci-fi films. The term is probably more used in a leisure manner being closely related to something like being "spectacular" or "very fantasy like" and being less closely related to the absurd in "Theatre of the Absurd" (huangdanpai). Paul Pickowicz, professor of Chinese studies at the University of California, mentions the debate over the "absurd" work of Huang Jianxin's film *Dislocation* as being a matter of great importance. The discussion of the "absurd" content in Huang Jianxin's film *The Black Cannon Incident* (Heipao shijian, dir. Huang Jianxin, 1986) had started a year before the debate concerning *Dislocation* and at that time the word "absurd" didn't seem to bother film critics. Then, at a symposium in January 1987 – during one of the many Campaign against Bourgeois Liberalization - the word suddenly contained connotative meaning. The "absurd" was now a modernist concept (an ideology of despair) and it "... *suggested alienation and solitude*".⁶⁴ Solitude being one of the characteristics which one can use to describe the many scientist characters in the films I've watched (as described above). The word "absurd" also suggested that life itself was being trivial and meaningless which was a direct effect of adhering to western thoughts and values.

⁶² Bai Sheng & Tong Jun, "Science culture must be scientific" (Kexue wenyi yao you kexuexing), *People's Daily*, 1982-02-23

⁶³ *Dislocation* is being mentioned in this article: Xu Shankun, "To understand the mysterious: discussing the merits and faults of the art in *Dislocation*" (Bawuhao shenmi de du), *Film Review* (Dianying pingjie), 1987, no.8, p.11. *The Synthetic Man* in this one: Chen Peiliang, "On Screens in August" (Bayue yinmu), *Film Review*, 1988, no.8, page. unknown

⁶⁴ Paul G. Pickowicz, *China on Film: A Century of Exploration, Confrontation and Controversy*, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2013, p. 286-287

Post-Tiananmen - From 1989 up to now

After the Tiananmen crackdown in the beginning of June 1989 and the arrest, or expulsion from the party, of several prominent party leaders whose political standpoint was considered dubious, the film industry moved towards a more commercial operation procedure. Films that were considered too "... *formal and stylistic*..." were coerced to do more entertaining films and if they didn't comply their films wouldn't be released.⁶⁵ The science fiction film of the late 80's and the early 90's were mostly children's movies but two of them also commented on the growing environmental issues in China.

The Ozone Layer Vanishes is one of those films that film scholars in China to this day mention as being one of the few science fiction films made in China but also a film which is now and then mentioned in internet forums when discussing this.⁶⁶ One article mentions the film as being a great example of how a children's film should be and what it should convey. The author speaks of the films as inhabiting three fundamental story techniques for telling a good children story: It's a good-looking film (*haokan*), it appeals to the aesthetics of children and it makes the audience reflect on themes mentioned in the film. What makes this article interesting is in the end it's lack of talking of the film as being part of the science fiction genre. The article mentions the films tendency to reflect upon scientific issues but in the end the author is more inclined to call it a "detective story".⁶⁷

Seen from an environmental perspective it seems that *Deadly Kiss* (Du wen, dir. Chen Xingzhong, 1992) is the only film that have gotten acknowledged as being directly associated with the environmental movement. There's a lack of coverage concerning *Deadly Kiss* and this is most probably because of the bad reception the film got – it was considered one of the worst movies made in 1992.⁶⁸ Though the intentions of the film is very apparent with its blunt display of violence and death that comes with the boy who is born with the ailment of killing everything he touches (in the film this ailment comes due to the pollution of the environment). Films dealing with environmental issues today are considered a sensitive subject. Even the CCTV sponsored documentary *Under the Dome* (Qiongdong zhi xia, dir. Chai Jing, 2015) – Chai Jing makes a direct reference to the American sci-fi series with the

⁶⁵ Esther Yau, *The Oxford History of World Cinema*, "China after the Revolution", p703

⁶⁶ See Chen Mo, "The Reason for the Lack of Science Fiction Film (in China)", *Dazhong Dianying*, 2012, no.08, p.1

⁶⁷ Song Jie, "A Science Fairy Tale about Social Issues" (Kexue tonghua jiangshu shehui de wenti), *Film Review* (Dianying pingjie), 1990, no.10, p.10

⁶⁸ Geng Haiwen, "Deadly Kiss – Discussing the Errors of Environmental Litterature" (Duwen yu Baiyanggu – Jiantan huanjing wenxue de wuqu), *China Environmental Management* (Zhongguo huanjing guanli), 1993, no.5, p. 44

same name - was taken of internet streaming sites in China and state sponsored media was refrained from reporting about it after the film created a vivid discussion about environmental issues (and corruption).⁶⁹ Also, last year one foreign film was denied co-production status in China because it dealt with issues concerning the environment.⁷⁰ *Deadly Kiss* is not the last science fiction film to tell stories about the environmental issues on our planet but it is the only one in China that does it in such a direct way. The problem here, once again, is not in the genre but in the content of the story.

The 90's also gave rise to China's first action film within the sci-fi genre. *Reborn Hero* (Zaisheng yongshi, dir. Zhang Jianya and Li Guomin, 1995) is most easily explained as a Chinese version of Marco Brambilla's *Demolition Man* (1993). Nothing special is written about this film except for the fact that this film is also considered to be something else than science fiction.⁷¹ The year 1995 is maybe more known as the year that Chinese science fiction film disappeared from the cinema's repertoire for more than 10 years. Film scholar Wang Yiming and film critic Guan Jun misses to mention the film *The Crazy Rabbit* (Fengkuang de tuzi, dir. Cui Xiaoqin and Meng Weibing, 1997) and *Dangerous Knowledge* two sci-fi films that were written by prolific science fiction writer Zhang Zhilu.⁷² It might just be that they perceived the films as being something else than science fiction but the fact that Zhang Zhilu wrote them must have triggered a connection between the author and his inclination in writing about stories set in a science fiction setting.

If the 80's were a period of experiment with the new genre and the 90's were a time where the genre once again lost its momentum then the new millennium suddenly gave rise to films that seemed to be confident in mixing science fiction with other genres. Two of the later films, *I Love Fantasy* (Tiansheng huanxiang kuang, dir. Bao Li, 2009) and *Lee's Adventure* (Li Xianji lixian ji, dir. Guo Fan and Li Yang, 2011), tend to be more closely related to what Zhang Yiwei calls *shanzhai films*. These films rely heavily on the commercial success of other films because the style of the *shanzhai films* is more or less a copy of the

⁶⁹ <http://chinadigitaltimes.net/2015/03/minitrue-clamping-dome/>

⁷⁰ <http://vflnyheter.se/kultursondag-9-november/>

⁷¹ Su Qinchun, "An Interview with Director Li Guomin, Advisor for Films Special Effects" (Wei le zhongguo dianying de zhege "weiyi" – fangshang yingtejidui guwen, daoyan Li Guomin), *Jianghai Qiaosheng*, 1996, no.4

⁷² Guan Jun, "A Brief History of the Development of Chinese Science Fiction" (qiantan zhongguo kehuan dianying de fazhan), *Cultural Perspectives* (Wenhua shijie), 2013, no.6, p.116 and see also Wang Yiming, Huang Wen and Zeng Guoping, "A Comparative Study of the Production of Chinese and American Science Fiction Films and some Thoughts on the Development of Chinese Science Fiction Film" (Zhongmei kehuan dianying shuliang bijiao ji dui woguo kehuan dianying fazhan de ji dian sikao), *Science Popularization* (Kepu yanjiu), 2011, February, p.28

former.⁷³ As I have explained earlier there was a lot of confident from some certain groups when *Shenzhou 11* premiered but the box-office figures tells us that it was far from incepting a new wave of science fiction fever (referred to as *yinhe re* in the late 70's).⁷⁴

One of the few things that are consistent within the science fiction genre is the tendency to call it an “absurd” (*huangdan*) genre. As mentioned earlier Pickowicz found texts discussing this words meaning and in the end the word signified that the genre could affect its audience negatively by diminishing their sense of appreciation of life and meaning, leaving them with a sense of despair.⁷⁵ But is not merely the thought of thinking about our place in the universe absurd and fantastic? To grasp the size of the universe seems in itself to be embedded with either a feeling of awe or an acute feeling of insignificance, as one professor of psychology from the University of Pennsylvania put it.⁷⁶ Yes, the science fiction genre can be a force of good, as some would like it to be, when it comes to encouraging the kids and teenagers today of becoming the next generation of scientists. But, it might just be the other way around.

Last year on the 27th of November a press conference was held for over hundred journalists where some of Chinas finest, who worked within the science fiction genre, told the public about the upcoming new era (*yuannian*) for science fiction film. The new wave of sci-fi had a lot to do with the popularity of the genre in literature but some meant that the high-grossing and much talked about film *Interstellar*⁷⁷ (Christopher Nolan, 2014) also was the reason for this newly found love for cinematic science fiction.⁷⁸ Maybe 2015 – or most probably 2016 when Liu Cixins first book in his trilogy *Three Body* premiers on the silver screen – will be the year that Chinese science fiction becomes a international hit.

⁷³ Zhang Yiwei, “An Analysis and Exploration of Pop-Aesthetics in Shanzhai Films”, *Film Art*, 2009, no.03, p.28.

⁷⁴ <http://www.cbooo.cn/m/589821>

⁷⁵ Paul G. Pickowicz, *China on Film: A Century of Exploration, Confrontation and Controversy*, p. 286-287

⁷⁶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wp6cnp1kZBY>, 1 hour and 48 minutes in.

⁷⁷ <http://cn.nystyle.com/books/20141126/tc26scifi/>

⁷⁸ http://whb.news365.com.cn/whshx/201411/t20141129_1477856.html

Chinese science fiction film: Narrative themes

To make things easier I'm going to divide the 33 films in to different subcategories and subgenres in order to get a better overview of all the films. The films categorization was decided by the overall scientific theme that's being represented in the films. The numbers in the middle represent the amount of films that can be categorized as the subcategories mentioned down below and the numbers to the far right are the numeric representation of all the science fiction films (See Appendix 1). Films in the list below can be in more than one category.

Transhumanism / Human alteration	7	3, 9, 12, 15, 17, 19, 32
UFO	7	10, 11, 18, 22, 24, 26, 33
Superpowers	7	10, 15, 16, 20, 21, 24, 26
Ethics of Science (Commerce vs. common good)	4	5, 8, 12, 17
Space travel / Space opera	4	25, 29, 31, 34
Time Travel	3	2, 23, 28
Environmental Catastrophe	3	13, 16, 22
Transdimensional / Dimension travel	3	14, 20, 27
Undefineable	2	6, 14
Robot	2	7, 30
Fish-out-of-the-water	2	9, 17
Dystopia	1	8
Utopia	1	4

From Utopia to Dystopia

Communism is a tool of emancipation but one must not forget that it is also a tool of repression. Following different stages of social engineering and fundamental changes to the society a socialist society would in the end become a communist utopia. The Chinese film industry was more focused at depicting a contemporary and historical society rather than a future one. The only film with utopian ideals in my list was *The Ballad of the Ming Tomb Reservoir* and it portrays this by showing three different stages of the Chinese society. The first one being the feudal and immensely cruel society (as depicted in the film) before the revolution in 1949. The second one is during the outset of the Great Leap Forward in 1958 where labourers, with smiles on their faces, are working diligently and the third one is set in an unspecified future. In this film the utopia of the future is being defined by its abundance of food and technological innovations that can make everyday life more leisure. In an article

from 1961 journalist Lan Wei elaborates on the idea that: "... *Science fantasy films can teach us not to fear hardships and how to embrace the optimism of revolution.*" a notion much like the one in *The Ballads of the Ming Tombs Reservoir*.⁷⁹

On the opposite of the utopian ideal we have the dystopia. Portraying a near future that resembles present day China seems to be a political minefield especially if one wants to portray something negative. The movie *It's a Man's World* (Nanren de shijie, dir. Wang Weiyi, 1987) is the only movie that portrays a future society in an unfavourable way. Other films portray characters in the story in a way that might be seen as a carrier of implicit meaning towards the whole of society but *It's a Man's World* is the only film that is very explicit about it. In a near future woman is a rarity. Hardly any females are born due to an wish from the male protagonist/antagonist and some measures of a scientific kind. The remaining adult females are either too old or already married so the young adults are left to roam the streets looking for a fitting partner. The females that have not yet been betrothed live a secluded life in a castle far away from civilization and without the males being aware of it. The movie ends with the upheaval of the family the film has been about.

The stories about human transformation and/or alteration are not something that characterizes the Chinese science fiction more than other countries. It seems to me that the major scientific breakthrough in medical science during the 19th century has triggered the imagination of many storytellers, not the least Mary Shelley. I don't see a strong connection between the films I've seen, which tells this kind of stories, rather they all seem to tell their own story. The body exchange in *Dislocation* is a powerful way of depicting the dichotomy between the rural and urban society in China. Not only does it make for a good comedy but it also shows the injustice created within a country where the speed of development differs greatly between the countryside and the city. *Invisible Doctor* (Yinshen boshi, dir. Zhang Zien, 1991) uses the invisible transformation as a way of not only telling a classical Wellsian tale but also to convey the ethics concerning an experiment that could be used to do criminal acts. In this film the formula for becoming invisible is something the leader of a criminal gang wants to obtain while the scientist who holds the key to invisibility refuses to sell it. To alter the minds of people and making them your personal slaves is the story of *Reborn Hero*. Here Dawei (most probably a phonetic transcription of David) wakes up from a coma seven years after an accident only to find out that the world he knew has changed drastically. His problem with the future is not so much human alteration as the social changes. Dawei is sceptic not

⁷⁹ Lan Wei, "Discussing Science Fantasy Films" (tantan kexue huanxiang de yingpian), *Film Art*, 1961, no.04, p. 42-43

only to the new system of digitalised criminal investigation but also towards his female superiors leaving him little room for displaying his masculinity through physical actions.

Themes concerning that which is foreign

That the world grew smaller with the development of better communications apparatus was becoming more and more imminent for Mainland China the further we went into the 20th century. Even though China continued keeping contact with states outside its interest sphere it's not an understatement to say that China became more of a solitary country than it was before the founding of the peoples republic. But the foundation of scientific progress is based on the exchange of knowledge, a concept richly visualised in many of the films. Even in *Ballad of the Ming Tombs Reservoir* do foreigners play a part, even though they're merely spectators to the massive undertaking of reconstructing the reservoir. Their presence seems to symbolize a desire from the Chinese to boast their will to modernize. In *Death Ray on the Coral Island* the foreigners is more integrated in to the story representing the antagonist who wants to make profit from the hard work done by the Chinese scientists. This film not only displays the transition of China changing from a mainly agro-industrial planned economy in to a commodity based market economy where science and innovation is the main force of economic growth but also the urge to return to ones roots in a globalized society.

The story centres on the scientist Zhao Qian, his daughter Meng Nuo and research assistance Chen Tianhong. Their life are being lived in a very western fashion. They dance waltz, celebrate Christmas, and the interior design of their home is, simply put, that of a western home.⁸⁰ But even if the protagonist in appearance might seem like they have adapted to a western life style their moral attitudes are that of Chinese characteristics, or in other words socialist characteristics.

When the founder of Weinasi Company, Bulai Xiesi, approaches Zhao Qian he is being offered a big sum of money for his recently developed nuclear battery. But Zhao Qian politely refuses to accept the offer and instead starts talking about the importance of conducting science for the sake of ones people – echoing the well known party phrase *Serve the people* (Wei renmin fuwu) – and also the need for them to get it back to the motherland.⁸¹ But, the film not only shows the great moral character that the protagonist inhabits it also reminds the audience of the malicious nature of foreign corporatism and at the same time

⁸⁰ See Figure.10

⁸¹ *Death Ray on Coral Island*, 17-18 minutes in.

places this in a historical context in connection to China. Drawing parallels to Chinas Century of humiliation (bainian guochi) where foreign powers time after time challenged the sovereignty of China. Zhao Qians brother Hu Mingli, believed to be dead for over 10 years, meets Chen Tianhong in what can only be seen as a bizarre symbolic twist of fate.

Travelling with the nuclear battery in order to escape Weinasi Company, Chen Tianhong is shot down in the middle of the ocean by a corporate submarine. Saved by a laser shot from a nearby island Chen later finds out that Zhao Qians missing brother Hu Mingli has lived in the island for the last 10 years, conducting scientific experiments for the Weinasi Company under the name Dr. Ma Tai. Here Hu tells Chen the story of how he was put into an insane asylum by Weinasi for not helping them making a profit of his scientific discoveries. This chain of events is, according to me, an elegant allegory for displaying the misconceptions and wrongfully labelling of East Asian people being inherently weaker than “us” in the west. This “Sick man of East Asia” (Dongya bingfu) concept is toppled by the display of Zhao Qians and Hu Minglis superior power in intellect (Minglis name literally means “reason”) but their death by Weinasi Company also signals the vicious force of commerce. In the end, though, both Zhao and Hu get their posthumous revenge by the new generation of Chinese, Chen Tianhong and Meng Nuo with Mengs name meaning “dream”, suggesting that there lies hope in the future.

In other films the “foreign” is vaguely represented. Take for example *Dislocation* where foreign businessmen are more of a prop for describing the importance and magnitude of Zhao Shuxins work while in *Virtual Recall* (Yikong weiqing, dir. Zhang Haijing, 2010) the foreign brands and drinks are more a signal of wealth and modernity. In *The Synthetic Man* foreign influence is subtler and is shown through the use of art deco like interior design in Wu Haos office.⁸² The peasant Wang Jiapei, whose brain is inside the body of Wu Hao, later on represents the chineseness in the film, redecorating the office with a traditional Chinese poster showing a boy with a carp.⁸³

Concerning the majority of all the children’s movies the foreign elements are of a more extra terrestrial nature. The powers endowed to the kid in *Wonder Boy*, the watch in the *The Magic Wristwatch*, the kid in *Mars Baby*, the videogame in *The Crazy Rabbit* and the environmental threat in *Ace Mission* are all of foreign nature. In all of films they are a potential threat if not in a direct way, in the sense that the enemy is extra terrestrial, then in an indirect way, disturbing for example the bringing-up of children. This suspicion towards

⁸² See Figure 11

⁸³ See Figure 12

foreign influence is continuously used as a political tool for staging campaigns when unhealthy trend within the society becomes imminent (more about this further down). Author and Beijing based journalist James Palmer sees the same tendency within the literature:

“*Faintly menacing foreigners are a mainstay of the stories, especially those specifically aimed at kids...*”⁸⁴

The Scientist

When talking about science fiction one cannot forget to mention the agents of scientific development, the scientists. As I’ve already mentioned in this passage there are a lot of scientist characters who possess good moral qualities and who wants to use science for a collective cause rather than personal gains. But there are also those who confine themselves to anti-social behaviour and whose only goal is to reach success. These scientists can be seen in *Bodiless Beauty in an Haunted House* (Xiongzhai meiren tou, dir. Liu Yichuan, 1989), *Ace Mission* and *Armour Hero Emperor* (Kanjia yongshi zhi dihuang xia, dir. Zheng Guowei, 2010). Within these films the strongest incitement for the scientists are usually not of a materialistic concern but more about wanting to receive acknowledgement from people. Highly esteemed notions such as working for the people or being an unknown hero are quickly abandoned for the sake of prestige. These notions are not easy to live after especially since you both have to be modest and at the same time not bragging to much over the success of your experiment.

Another character, which usually plays a more lugubrious character, is the businessman. You’re already familiar with the bad qualities of the businessman in *Death Ray on Coral Island* but there’re more of them. These evil businessmen are usually portrayed more one-sided than the scientists. For the businessmen there’s only one thing that is important and that is money. In *Mars Baby* the businessman is portrayed as a gangster-like-figure who is clumsy and humoristic in his inability to do anything right. The same goes for the small thugs in *Ace Mission* who wants to strike big but most of the time they find themselves in physical pain after failing in carrying out a mission. Wu Ao, the businessman who dies in *The Synthetic Man* but whose body is reused, is portrayed in a more subtle matter. Since his characters dies in the beginning one can only figure out how he was like before by analysing people’s reaction of the “new” executive of the company, which now is the farmer Wang Jiapei. One can see that before Wang Jiapei “took over” as the new company executive

⁸⁴ http://europe.chinadaily.com.cn/epaper/2015-01/09/content_19277591.htm

employees feared Wu Ao and everyday routine for employees was very formal and strict – something Wang Jiawei gets to learn at the first day at the office when his secretary in a robot-like manner ignores him when he comes in. In *Dangerous Knowledge* the businessmen and scientist collaborate in trying to make profit on one of the most important things in the life of a Chinese, the *gaokao* test. These and the businessman from *Unidentified* (Laili bumeng, dir. Chen Chutong, 2013) are simply after one thing and that is profit at any cost. But both of these films also have a critic against how some businesses are run. Making money out of students who want to perform better on a test is not wrong but it is in the way that it's being done. Hard work and diligence are two musts for passing the *gaokao* and without them the whole system loses its meaning. In *Unidentified* the unlawful way in which a mine is being run is a direct critic against unlawful mines in China, which was a looming problem even before the production of this film.⁸⁵

Sadly many of these comments on societal problems in the films are just too plain straightforward and the idea of science fiction as a very potent genre for delivering subversive critique is completely lost in many of the films. The worst example must be *Zombies Reborn* (Wujian zui: Jiangshi chongsheng, dir. Xia Yong, 2012) where the actions of the rogue doctor, who experiments on dead bodies, have to be explained as illegal in a notice to the audience just before the end credits.

The Family

Many of the films I watched do not pay much attention to portraying families in their classical constellation (mother, father and child). A majority of the films are about individuals dealing with problems that have arisen since they obtained or were subject of some scientific inquiry. If one for example looks at all the science fiction films that can be classified as “children’s movies” (seven altogether) half of those films are about a child and its return to the family while the rest is more about friendship and the wish to fit in. *Ace Mission* (Chaoneng shaonian zhi lieweita renwu, dir. Feng Danian, 2009) is the only film where the family is in focus throughout the whole film while *Mars Baby* (Huoxing meishi, dir. Liu Yiwei, 2009) is about a child who descends from Mars and becomes the son to a father who just lost his wife in childbirth. The first one is simply about trusting your children and the latter is about kids needing guidance and education from adults and the problems caused if they don’t receive that.

⁸⁵ <http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB116718773722060212>

Wonder Boy (Pili beibei, dir. Weng Luming and Song Chong, 1988), *Magic Wristwatch* (Mobiao, dir. Xu Geng, 1990), *Crazy Rabbit* (Fengkuang de tuzi, dir. Cui Xiaoqin and Meng Weibing, 1997) and *Mars Baby* are all films where children are endowed with powers not fit for them. Rather than stating the fact from the beginning - that children is in need of guidance to become a benevolent person - the children learn it by experience when they are using their newly received powers. They create disorder and through this they learn to see the consequences of their actions.

Some films simply ignore to tell a story where the child is searching for either a place to fit in or getting his/her family back again. In *The Ozone Layer Vanishes* (Daqiceng xiaoshi, dir. Feng Xiaoning, 1990) “The Child” (haizi) starts on a journey after being granted the gift of talking to animals during one day. His journey is all about finding the “source of pollution” and on his journey he talks to different animals that have been a victim of human cruelty. The film is far from showing the absence of responsibility that naturally, it seems, inhabits children’s mind-set. *The Ozone Layer Vanishes* instead shows that the immoral actions and malevolent behaviour of adult human beings alter the environment in a negative way. So rather than learning by good example this film shows how one shouldn’t act.

Later films tend to be more about a young man searching for love or they show how an alternative family constellation can look like. *Animen Triton Forces* (Chaowa zhanshi zhi chuluo fengwang, dir. Xu Ke, 2010) portray a future society where homo-sapiens no longer exists and a kind of frog-people has evolved to a humanoid being which culture is the same as ancient Chinese culture. In *Animen* the bonds keeping the four protagonists together is similar to that of a family but instead it’s based on concepts of brotherhood. In this film the bond between the four soldiers are strengthened by a common value system but also by a common enemy.

In *Shenzhou 11* the family is in constant focus and the main character Zhang Tiancong is in a perpetual status of inner conflict trying to find time for his family while he at the same time has the responsibility over China’s future spacecraft Shenzhou 11. The movie embodies the modern dilemma where one has to take in to consideration not only filial piety (xiào) but also loyalty (zhōng) towards the Communist party, or as in this film case loyalty towards party has been replaced by devotion to one’s nation. Echoing a scene from the movie *Jiao Yulu* (dir. Wang Yixing, 1990) – based on the life of the now immortalized paragon with the same name – where Jiao Yulu is being withheld the information of his dying mother so that he can continue focusing on his important work as a party cadre. In *Shenzhou 11* Zhang Tiancong keeps on working completely unaware of that his mother has passed away. His duty

as a husband and as a son is considered to be less important than that of succeeding with his mission of honouring China through its technological innovation in its space program. Just like the film *Zhang Side* (dir. Yi Li, 2004) – about the revolutionary martyr with the same name - *Shenzhou 11* received numerous movie awards, there among the Golden Rooster award for “Best Film”, indicating that these films won more based on its party friendly ideological content than for being films which earned it through good storytelling and memorable aesthetics.⁸⁶

⁸⁶ Ying Zhu and Stanley Rosen, “Introduction”, *Art, Politics, and Commerce in Chinese Cinema*, Hong Kong University Press, 2010, p.7

Epilogue

So, in the end, why did I choose to write about Chinese science fiction? In our strive to find our identity and place in this world we first of all have to create some form of meaning for our existence. Simply being a scientist for the sake of science or wanting to help people without having any knowledge of the existence of pain and suffering is simply not something that can be endured. Our will to do something or to strive for something lies in the fact that we have an ambition to look for that which we are missing. That which is missing can be something fundamental as Buddha's juvenile life being utterly devoid of misery and pain, which in turn incepted his journey towards creating one of the world's largest religions. It can be something more complicated like having the ambition to create a supercomputer of the like you can see in Star Trek, which Googles senior vice president Amit Singhal has as his dream.⁸⁷ These two widely different people are an example of how meaning is construed by cognitive impressions. Since humans are social beings and don't live in a vacuum film can have a huge impact on how people construct meaning.

As for me the shaping of my identity as an individual in this world was mainly through the experience I got from watching a lot of film. This in turn also triggered my interest in Chinese science fiction and its place in the Chinese society. The introduction to this thesis hopefully also revealed my belief in that film, if not the origin of empathy or an idea, at least enhances already established ideas. This was certainly what happened to protesters in Hong Kong during Occupy Central when they started using the three-finger symbol (*Sanzhi jingli*) from *The Hunger Games: Mockingjay - Part I* (Martin Lawrence, 2014) for expressing, in my opinion, empathy towards a resistance against autocratic rule.⁸⁸ The Mockingjay symbol could also be seen almost ubiquitously around Hong Kong after the protests ended.⁸⁹ And even though the artists' intentions are good when they make a film in the end it is the spectator who will determine the ideological content of the film. Producer Lynda Obst film *The Siege* (Edward Zwick, 1998) is a good example of this phenomenon:

"... That of the Muslim FBI agent whose son is caught up in mass arrests and is defended by a civil-rights-championing Denzel Washington—was the whole point of the movie, but no

⁸⁷ Google and the World Brain, 21 min in.

⁸⁸ <http://hongkong.dwnnews.com/photo/2014-11-27/59620950.html>

⁸⁹ See Figure.9

matter how hard we jawboned, no understanding was created. We tried to create a conversation, but got a battle.”⁹⁰

With this in mind what can these elaborations on movies influence on its’ audience possibly have for the future of Chinese science fiction film. Well, if we do have a concoction of ideas that arises when watching film there’s also a problem in controlling the content to a full extent. This means that no matter how hard producers in Hollywood try to make “safe” content that doesn’t upset censors in China the content will in the end always be analysed by others than themselves which leaves room for all kinds of interpretation. This might lead to an unstable market where ambiguities can have negative effect on a films economy and where the control over rights for showing a film might be shortened even more than it is now. Foreign films usually gets an approval of being shown around 4-5 weeks in Chinese cinemas before it can’t be shown anymore whether the cinema likes it or not.⁹¹

A worst-case scenario would be something similar to that which happened shortly after the Occupy Central movement ended in Hong Kong last year. After the protests ended western thinking was considered to be one of the factors for influencing public attitudes in Hong Kong, which in turn sparked the Campaign against Western values.⁹² Though I don’t consider it to be probable, but if notions of anti-western rhetoric spread to other spheres in Chinese society science fiction would be an easy target seeing that it was “... *a new literary form with no equivalent in traditional East Asian literatures.*”⁹³ But the most probable scenario would instead be prohibition towards certain narrative gimmicks such as time traveling,⁹⁴ equivocal depiction of party sovereignty, the future of Hong Kong and its role as an autonomous state and other topics.⁹⁵ One thing is certain; as long as some genres are considered safer than others the shackles of self-censorship will always have a grip over the creators’ imagination.

⁹⁰ Lynda Obst, *Sleepless in Hollywood: Tales from the New Abnormal in the Movie Business*, Simon & Chuster, New York, 2013, p.116

⁹¹ <http://www.qdaily.com/webapp/articles/8986.html>

⁹² <http://www.apnewsarchive.com/2015/Under-Xi-Chinese-state-media-step-up-anti-West-rhetoric-with-attacks-on-Western-values/id-7b0298a9c7da40c8a43049cda7c484ea>

⁹³ <http://io9.com/the-heroic-translators-who-reinvented-classic-science-1696944844>

⁹⁴ <http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/china-bans-time-travel-films-177801>

⁹⁵ <http://thediplomat.com/2014/04/beijings-censors-ban-hong-kong-short-film/>

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Appendix

Appendix 1

	Mtime	Douban
Ballad of the Ming Tombs Reservoir (十三陵水库畅想曲)	1958 -	x
Death Ray on Coral Island (珊瑚岛上的死光)	1980 x	x
Shadow of a Ghost (潜影)	1981 -	x
Dislocation (错位)	1986 -	x
A Mans World (男人的世界)	1987 -	x
The Synthetic Man (合成人)	1988 x	x
Wonder Boy (霹雳贝贝)	1988 x	x
凶宅美人头	1989 -	x
Magic Armwatch (魔表)	1990 -	x
The Ozon Layer Vanishes (大气层消失)	1990 -	x
An Adventure in Time (荧屏奇遇)	1991 x	-
Invisible Doctor (隐身博士)	1991 x	-
Deadly Kiss (毒吻)	1992 -	x
Reborn Hero (再生勇士)	1995 -	x
Crazy Rabbit (疯狂的兔子)	1997 x	x
Dangerous Knowledge (危险智能)	2003 -	x
Ace Mission (超能少年之烈维塔任务)	2009 x	-
I Love Fantasy (天生幻想狂)	2009 x	x
Mars Baby (火星没事)	2009 x	-
Animen: Triton Forces (超蛙战士之初露锋芒)	2010 x	x
Armor Hero Emperor (铠甲勇士之帝皇侠)	2010 x	-
Virtual Recall (异空危情)	2010 x	-
Lee's Adventure (李献计历险记)	2011 -	x
Shen Zhou 11 (飞天)	2011 -	x
Seer II (赛尔号 2: 雷伊与迈尔斯)	2012 x	-
Zombies Reborn (无间罪: 僵尸重生)	2012 x	-
Unidentified (来历不明)	2013 x	x

Appendix 2

	Mtimes	Douban
Visiting Shanghai After Sixty Years (六十年后上海滩)	1938 -	x
Exchanged (化身人猿)	1939 x	-
Ballad of the Ming Tombs Reservoir (十三陵水库畅想曲)	1958 -	x
The Female Diver (女跳水队员)	1964	
Death Ray on Coral Island (珊瑚岛上的死光)	1980 x	x
Shadow of Ghost (潜影)	1981 -	x
Dislocation (错位)	1986 -	x
Red and White (红与白)	1987 -	x
A Mans World (男人的世界)	1987 -	x
The Synthetic Man (合成人)	1988 x	x
Wonder Boy (霹雳贝贝)	1988 x	x
凶宅美人头	1989 -	x
Magic Armwatch (魔表)	1990 -	x
The Ozon Layer Vanishes (大气层消失)	1990 -	x
An Adventure in Time (荧屏奇遇)	1991 x	-
Invisible Doctor (隐身博士)	1991 x	-
Deadly Kiss (毒吻)	1992 -	x
Reborn Hero (再生勇士)	1995 -	x
Crazy Rabbit (疯狂的兔子)	1997 x	x
Dangerous Knowledge (危险智能)	2003 -	x
Peking Monster (北海怪兽)	2006 -	x
Parapax	2007 -	x
乌龟也上网	2008 x	-
Turbulence (湍流)	2008 -	x
七宗梦	2008 x	x
牛人墩三	2009 -	x
Ace Mission (超能少年之烈维塔任务)	2009 x	-
I Love Fantasy (天生幻想狂)	2009 x	x
Mars Baby (火星没事)	2009 x	-
Animen: Triton Forces (超蛙战士之初露锋芒)	2010 x	x
Armor Hero Emperor (铠甲勇士之帝皇侠)	2010 x	-
Astro Plan (太空历险记)	2010 -	x
Dreams of Jinsha (梦回金沙城)	2010 x	-
Virtual Recall (异空危情)	2010 x	-
Lee's Adventure (李献计历险记)	2011 -	x
Shen Zhou 11 (飞天)	2011 -	x
Zhongji Youxi (终极游戏)	2011 x	x
爆炸性新闻	2012 -	x
Seer II (赛尔号 2: 雷伊与迈尔斯)	2012 x	-
Animen II (超蛙战士之威武教官)	2012 x	x
Zombies Reborn (无间罪: 僵尸重生)	2012 x	-
Unidentified (来历不明)	2013 x	x
Combat Armor Steel Wings (战斗装甲钢羽)	2013 -	x
Ksitigarbha (地藏)	2013 -	x
Infested Brain (侵入脑神经)	2013 -	x

Pictures

Picture 1



The placard depicting Darth Vader says "It's barely 20 cents, fuck!" During a protest in Brazil June 2013 protesters are demonstrating against the public funding that will go into the FIFA World Cup in 2014.

Picture 2



Picture 3

这半晚科幻还拍成了电影！
2013-12-10 10:49 [查看对话](#) | [回复](#) | [👍](#)

 洞洞00 : 右边的真像陈汉典。。。
2013-12-10 10:49 [回复](#) | [👍](#)

 飞气 V : 回复@奇爱博士:多谢！辛苦了，没流传下来真可惜。
2013-12-10 10:48 [查看对话](#) | [回复](#) | [👍](#)

 奇爱博士 V 📢 : 回复@飞气:我回头给你找找 但是片子都无存
2013-12-10 10:47 [查看对话](#) | [回复](#) | [👍](#)

 飞气 V : 回复@奇爱博士:能提供一下具体的片名吗？多谢了。贾宝玉坐潜水艇，可能是根据吴研人的小说改编的。第一次知道还拍成了电影！
2013-12-10 10:46 [查看对话](#) | [回复](#) | [👍](#)

 奇爱博士 V 📢 : 回复@飞气:早期电影有很多科幻元素 贾宝玉驾驶潜水艇 唐僧骑摩托车这类穿越元素很多
2013-12-10 10:45 [查看对话](#) | [回复](#) | [👍](#)

 飞气 V : 回复@奇爱博士:更早的是啥？
2013-12-10 10:43 [查看对话](#) | [回复](#) | [👍](#)

 电子骑士 V : @奇爱博士 你们资料馆有这片子么？组织科幻作家去看一下行不？
2013-12-10 10:39 [回复](#) | [👍](#)

 奇爱博士 V 📢 : 回复@飞气:无存 这也肯定不是最早的一部
2013-12-10 10:38 [查看对话](#) | [回复](#) | [👍](#)

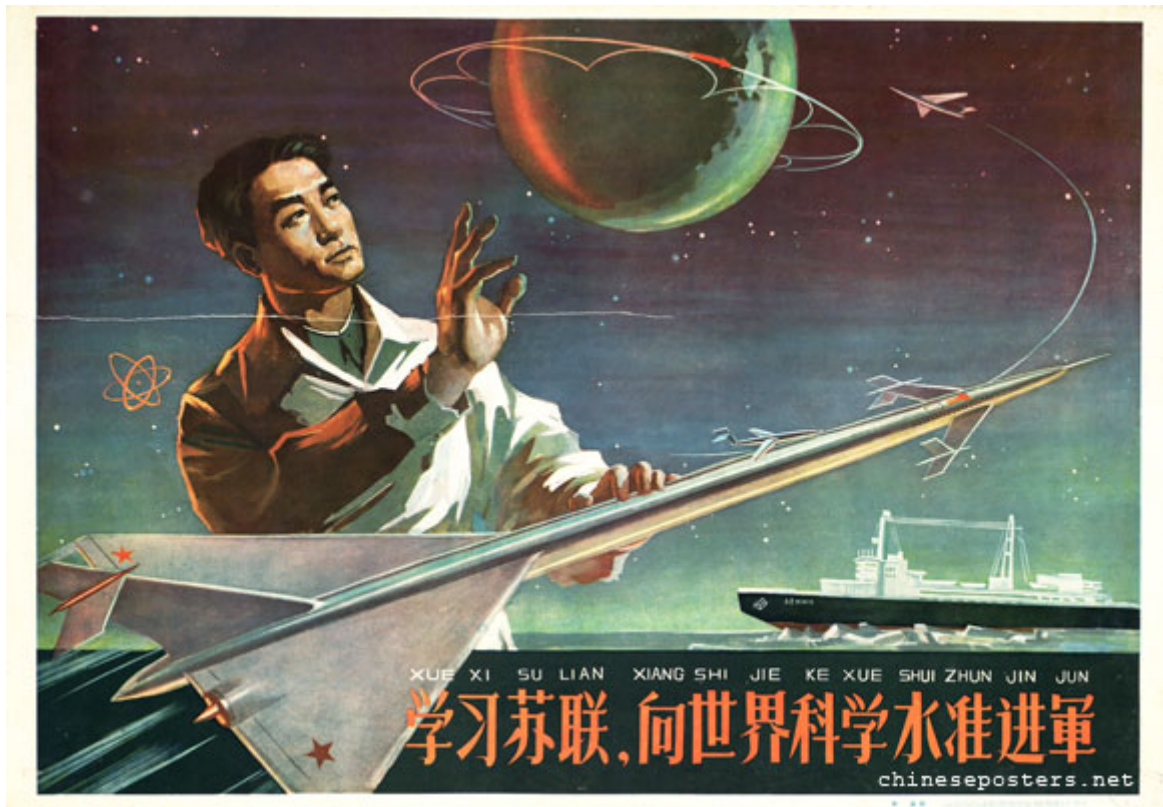
 飞气 V : @西夏2067
2013-12-10 10:36 [回复](#) | [👍](#)

1 2 下一页

Picture 4



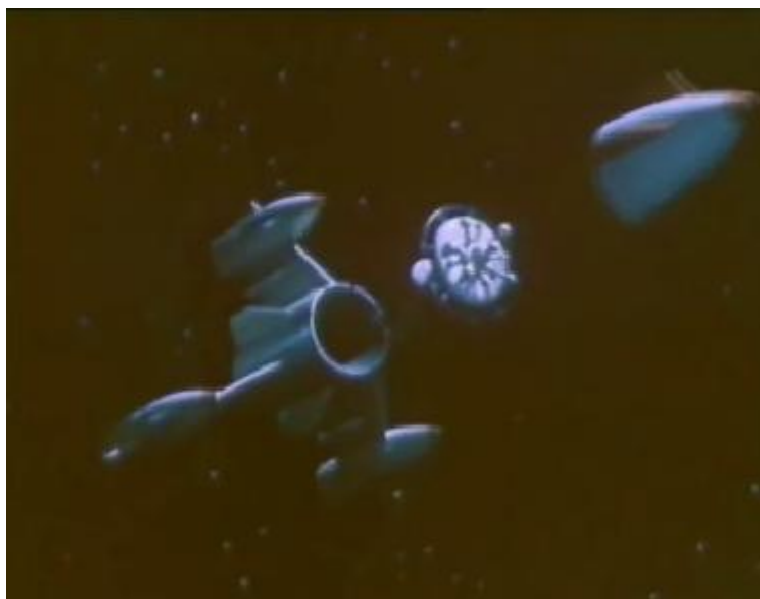
Picture 5



Picture 6



Picture 7



简 讯

上半年各厂共完成故事片二十一部

截止六月底，各厂拍摄完成，经部、局审查通过的故事片共有二十一部。其中：

上影厂八部，《405谋杀案》、《等到满山红叶时》、《半张订婚照·见面礼》、《雪花与栗子球·小花猫》、《珊瑚岛上的死光》、《琴童》、《海之恋》、《庐山恋》；

长影厂三部，《大渡河》、《北斗》下集、《刑场上的婚礼》；

北影厂一部，《他们在相爱》；

八一厂一部，《今夜星光灿烂》；

峨影厂两部，《不是为了爱情》、《玉色蝴蝶》；

珠影厂一部，《一个美国飞行员》；

西影厂一部，《爱情与遗产》；

广西厂两部，《十天》、《真是烦死人》

上影厂上半年完成该厂全年任务的百分之五十七，第一次实现“时间过半，任务过半”，做到了生产的计划性、均衡性。

各厂拍摄完成即将送审的影片中有长影厂的《红牡丹》、《为我自豪吧，母亲》、《最后八个人》；八一厂的《三个失踪的人》；西影厂的《第十个弹孔》；上影厂的《飞吧，足球》。

(艺 兵)

Picture 9



Photo taken by Dan Garret.

Picture 10



Picture 11



Picture 12

