

## Critical Interventions

Sheldon H. Lu, general editor

*Cinema, Space, and Polylocality in a Globalizing China*  
Yingjin Zhang

*Children of Marx and Coca-Cola: Chinese Avant-garde Art  
and Independent Cinema*  
Xiaoping Lin

*Uneven Modernity: Literature, Film, and Intellectual Discourse  
in Postsocialist China*  
Haomin Gong

*Remaking Chinese Cinema: Through the Prism of Shanghai,  
Hong Kong, and Hollywood*  
Yiman Wang

*From Fu Manchu to Kung Fu Panda: Images of China in American Film*  
Naomi Greene

*Fragrant Orchid: The Story of My Early Life*  
Yamaguchi Yoshiko and Fujiwara Sakuya  
Translated, with an Introduction, by Chia-ning Chang

CRITICAL INTERVENTIONS

## DV-Made China

### Digital Subjects and Social Transformations after Independent Film

Edited by Zhang Zhen  
and Angela Zito



University of Hawai'i Press  
Honolulu

2015

## Critical Interventions

Sheldon H. Lu, general editor

Critical Interventions consists of innovative, cutting-edge works with a focus on Asia or the presence of Asia in other continents and regions. Series titles explore a wide range of issues and topics in the modern and contemporary periods, especially those dealing with literature, cinema, art, theater, media, cultural theory, and intellectual history as well as subjects that cross disciplinary boundaries. The series encourages scholarship that combines solid research with an imaginative approach, theoretical sophistication, and stylistic lucidity.

© 2015 University of Hawai'i Press

All rights reserved

Printed in the United States of America

20 19 18 17 16 15      6 5 4 3 2 1

### Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

DV-made China : digital subjects and social transformations after independent film /  
edited by Zhang Zhen and Angela Zito.

pages cm—(Critical interventions)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-8248-4681-7 (cloth : alk. paper)—ISBN 978-0-8248-4682-4 (pbk. : alk. paper)

1. Independent films—China. 2. Digital cinematography—China.

I. Zhang, Zhen, editor. II. Zito, Angela, editor. III. Series: Critical  
interventions (Honolulu, Hawaii)

PN1993.5.C4D89 2015

791.430951—dc23

2014042674

University of Hawai'i Press books are printed on acid-free  
paper and meet the guidelines for permanence and  
durability of the Council on Library Resources.

Printed by Maple Press

## Contents

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS | vii

Introduction | 1

ZHANG ZHEN AND ANGELA ZITO

### PART ONE Ethical and Political Stakes | 27

1. Marking the Body: The Axiographics  
of the Visible Hidden Camera | 29  
ABÉ MARK NORNES
2. The Cruelty of the Social: *Xianchang*, Intersubjectivity,  
and Interobjectivity | 57  
J. P. SNIADOCKI
3. Filming Power and the Powerless: Zhao Liang's *Crime  
and Punishment* (2007) and *Petition* (2009) | 76  
JIE LI
4. The Spectacular Crowd: Representing the Masses  
in DV Documentary | 97  
SHUANG SHEN
5. DV-made Tibet: Domestic Videos, Elite Films,  
and the Work of Pema Tseden | 119  
ROBERT BARNETT
6. Chinese Independent Cinema in the Age  
of "Digital Distribution" | 163  
DAN GAO

- Jia, Zhangke 贾樟柯. 2009a. *Jia Xiang, 1996–2008: Jia Zhangke Dianying Shouji* 贾樟柯 1996–2008: 贾樟柯电影收集 (Jia's Thoughts, 1996–2008: Jia Zhangke's Notes on Film). Beijing: Peking University Press.
- . 2009b. *Zhongguo gongren fangtan lu: ershisi cheng ji* 中国工人访谈录: 二十四成绩 (A Collective Memory of Chinese Working Class: 24 City), Jinan: Shangdong Pictorial Press.
- . 2010. "Building a Public Consciousness: A Conversation with Jia Zhangke." *China Perspectives* 1: 58–64.
- "Jia Zhangke: Pickpocket Director." 1999. *Beijing Scene Online* 5 (23). <http://www.beijingscene.com/V05I023/feature/feature.htm>.
- Landesman, Ohad. 2008. "In and Out of This World: Digital Video and the Aesthetics of Realism in the New Hybrid Documentary." *Studies in Documentary Film* 2 (1): 33–45.
- Leary, Charles. 2003. "Performing Documentary, or Making It to the Other Bank." *Senses of Cinema* (July). [http://sensesofcinema.com/2003/feature-articles/performing\\_documentary/](http://sensesofcinema.com/2003/feature-articles/performing_documentary/).
- Phillips, Sandra S. 1994. "Meditations on the Document." In *Public Information: Desire, Disaster, Document*. San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, 27–37. New York: Art Publishers.
- Reynaud, Bérénice. 2003. "Dancing with Myself, Drifting with My Camera: The Emotional Vagabonds of China's New Documentary." *Senses of Cinema* (Oct.). [http://sensesofcinema.com/2003/feature-articles/chinas\\_new\\_documentary/](http://sensesofcinema.com/2003/feature-articles/chinas_new_documentary/).
- Sobchack, Vivian. 2004. *Carnal Thoughts: Embodiment and Moving Image Culture*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2004.
- Wang, Qi. 2012. "Performing Documentation: Wu Wenguang and the Performative Turn of New Chinese Documentary." In *A Companion to Chinese Cinema*, edited by Yingjin Zhang, 299–317. New York: Wiley-Blackwell.
- . 2013. "Embodied Visions: Chinese Queer Experimental Documentaries by Shi Tou and Cui Zi'en," *positions: east asia cultures critique* 21 (3): 659–681.
- . 2014. *Memory, Subjectivity, and Independent Chinese Cinema*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- White, Hayden. 1973. *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

## CHAPTER 9

## Crossing Cameras in China

Christian Aesthetics  
and Realized Fictions

ANGELA ZITO

There haven't been any films that deal with this cultural phenomenon, this religious feeling, while these things happen under everybody's nose.

—Gan Xiao'er

The films of director Gan Xiao'er are the first narrative features to take up Chinese Christians in their everyday concerns. This chapter discusses a pair of his films, one a fiction feature, the other a documentary made about taking that feature on the road and showing it in churches. It is about filmmaking practice—and especially documentary—as social occasion, as the concatenation between people of self-reflective moments of cultural creativity and critique. By social occasion, I mean that Gan has documented in the second film the moments of self-conscious "participation" in the fiction feature and in the documentary itself. Thinking of his work as creative of social occasions makes it particularly susceptible to forms of analysis honed in anthropology through ethnography.

As is typical in ethnographical analysis, the specific, the local, the small is taken up in order to illuminate larger issues. As is also usual in writing based on ethnographic encounter (and in this case, *about* encounters that are quite ethnographic themselves, Gan's relationship with his films' subjects), I will use personal interview material, mimicking in this text the empirical bias fundamental to documentary-as-social-occasion. However, besides the emphasis on encounter and performance in the acts of making, this chapter also discusses the video product itself, the films, as the objectified precipitate of this ongoing process, taking us into the realm of its aesthetic particulars.

Gan's pair of films were both shot in digital video. The fiction feature, *Raised from Dust* (*Juzi chentu* 2007), uses mostly members of the religious community as actors. Gan's documentary, *Church Cinema* (*Jiaotang dianying* 2008), intercuts a chronicle of screenings of *Raised from Dust* with extensive postproduction discussion about the community's participation in making the feature.<sup>1</sup> In it we see the sense of ownership various church members developed about the original project. Gan mobilizes from within the interest of the community in seeing itself represented in various ways—thus inciting and securing the community's participation. We see in his work an example of the shift in general in documentary making from representation to recording impulses of self-reflexive participation (Nichols 1994; MacDougall 1998). In turn, once the bounds of "objectivity" are breached by filmmakers stepping into the lens and subjects talking back to it, considerations of aesthetics come into play across the board—at issue in Gan's fiction feature and discussed at length in his documentary. Gan successfully challenges the boundary between scripted fiction feature and what Bill Nichols would call "sober documentary," with its automatic claim on unvarnished, direct truth.<sup>2</sup>

Gan's films provide a rich case for investigation because of the differing aesthetic positions taken up in the materialization of this project: the community argued that more mobilization of feeling would enhance the fiction feature, whose purpose was, according to them, to spread the gospel. Although he was himself a member of the church, Gan differed, intent on pursuing his own agenda as writer and director with a modernist art-house sensibility. Their differing aesthetic regards point to differences of urban/rural sensibilities and of class distinctions of education, but also to a division within Protestant sensibilities about "sensibilities" themselves. Gan's restraint about what can be "shown" contrasts with his fellow congregants' affective enthusiasm about "liveness." I have been thinking about their differences as less contradictory and more as examples of how the dialectical mediation of social life requires, in fact, just such distinct moments of emphasis on objectifications in contrast with liveness /performance. In short, their differing investments in what Ilona Hongisto, borrowing from Gilles Deleuze, calls "fabulation," or self-conscious myth making, point us to interesting conclusions about documentary in general and in China today (Hongisto 2011b).

## Of Christians in China

Being Christian in China has become more complex and interesting beyond the ever-present matter of dealing with the state in your religious business. Catholics and Protestants in China have parallel histories. Both originated in outside missionary activity from Europe and North America, both were enfolded into the

Chinese state via governing bureaus after the success of the Communist-led revolution in 1949, and both suffered splits within their own ranks as many refused to join up with the Three-Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM)<sup>3</sup> and went underground. The Catholics went into secret parishes that maintained tenuous connection with Rome, refusing to recognize state-sanctioned bishops ordained in China; the Protestants into "House Churches" or *jiating jiaohui*. All such churches are considered illegal and must meet quietly, often secretly, in people's homes. There are five large House Church systems in China, mostly rural in location, four in Henan and one in Anhui (Qi 2009, 92). This simple formula of mostly rural and very different from the TSPM state churches has become more complex. House Church life in the cities has developed and gone more public<sup>4</sup> with the rising urban middle class providing a widening pool for conversion.<sup>5</sup>

Gan Xiao'er has attended urban house churches since he left his small country town. But the churches you will see in his films are not "underground"; they are registered with the state's Bureau of Religious Affairs and are open and legal TSPM churches. However, their liturgical and theological sensibilities are saturated with the underground house churches that began in Henan, where Gan's films are located. He estimates that about 15 percent of his hometown population is Christian (Kwok 2007). Religious groups in China play an elaborate hide and seek, "now you see me, now you don't" high-stakes game with the state. Falungong lost that game; Christians are only getting started.

## Of Chinese Independent Documentary

[There is a] move away from attempts to speak from mind to mind, in the discourse of scientific sobriety, and toward a politics and epistemology of experience spoken from body to body.

—Nichols (1994, 82)

The Chinese independent documentary makers who took their start after Tiananmen in 1989 have cultivated a style of watching closely, allowing things to unfold at a leisurely pace before the lens, a style that has been called "direct cinema" and that, in the land of performative films by people like Michael Moore, seems quaintly retro.<sup>6</sup>

However, this direct gaze does not naively serve up simple "objectivity" in the sense of letting events speak for themselves. Neither is it about an absence of subjective feeling. So what might look like direct cinema's wish to find a kind of objectivity in a realism that's treated as scientifically drained of subjective taint (what Nichols criticizes) remains more complicated for Chinese filmmakers.<sup>7</sup> If "reality" is being invited to speak up and have a voice, this invitation must be

understood in the context of the major competing voice this new “reality” might possibly encounter. For filmmakers, that unwelcome voice would be emanating from state-run, mainstream media in its many forms. Their quiet gaze acts as more of a ground-clearing gesture, a preemptive announcement of neutrality that nonetheless, in their context, carries more political heft than Wiseman’s.<sup>8</sup>

Yet, coming from a tradition deep within the demands of building socialism through media forms of TV, film, and radio, all in control of the Communist Party, many filmmakers gained their technical chops in those same venues, and some still work for them (Johnson 2006, 51–52; Lin Xu-dong 2004). Many more of them now graduate from state-run college and university media and film departments. These filmmakers nonetheless continue to plant themselves in the outside world, turning away from those familiar institutions as much as they can. The world they wish to see—and thus invite viewers to reimagine—is felt and constructed beyond the gaze of the state, as a kind of newly neutral territory.

Once their (aesthetic) ground is defended against the state’s tropes of voice-over, scripted action, and added-in music to cue emotion, this neutral territory is found to be waiting to be infused with a new feeling. What do they hope will arrive in this objectified space? I’d venture it is new subjects in all senses of that word.

In front of the lens, filmmakers find subjects to shoot in the territory beyond the state’s gaze by usually concentrating on the marginalized, the neglected, the overlooked, the willfully ignored, or the uncategorizable.<sup>9</sup> This choice has often brought down on them criticism for showing only misery and corruption—for airing dirty national laundry and pandering to foreign voyeuristic curiosity. Yet it has also enlarged the map of social life in China, making visible and available for historical archiving people’s lives heretofore neglected or prettified by mainstream media (whether censored by politics or the market).

And what of the subjects behind the lens? What are filmmakers becoming themselves? Making a movie often changes them, reworks their own subjectivities, as much as it changes the subjects they shoot. Thus, instead of subject versus object, what we have is a matter of “intersubjectivity” (Wang 2010; Zito 2014). Scholar Paola Voci says of documentary in China today: “Authenticity is better described as the subjective *striving to achieve* truthful representations of reality than the objective claim of capturing and explaining the only true meaning of reality” (italics mine, Voci 2004, 103). These realities are presented as implicitly shared and intersubjectively produced, rather like the “social subjectivity” that Bill Nichols discusses in *Blurred Boundaries*.<sup>10</sup> I would amplify Voci’s point by venturing that Chinese filmmakers have begun spending more effort documenting their own “striving” at the social process of production, making those scenes an ever more important and integral part of filming the social world around them.

Thus, one fresh thing in Chinese documentary is how it brilliantly works through, and contributes by its uses of social subjectivity to, a current shift in documentary in general from “representation” as the major trope to an impulse of “participation.” This self-reflexive effort is still harnessed to an old documentary rhetorical imperative: its ability to persuade people that what they are seeing/hearing is so important that audiences might change their minds or take action. Or, as Sarah Elder puts it, respond to the empathy created by the documentary (Elder 1995).<sup>11</sup> However, nowadays, films marshal not only the rhetoric of evidential representations; they also tend to display the filmmakers’ own sincerity and tactics on-screen. The rise of first-person video, directly related to portable camcorder availability, filled the U.S. documentary scene from the mid-1980s until now (Aufderheide 1995, 1997; Sherman 2007). Such films thus reveal that the first level of persuasion of authenticity occurs for the people making the film, and that we might participate in their transformation as we watch it happening, as they strive to achieve their truthful representation. It is, as it were, the thoughtful effort that has begun to count with audiences as much, or more than, the evidence. Or, to put it another way, the evidence of their effort, and of the filmmaker’s sincere emotion, is as important as any other evidence.

New Chinese documentary,<sup>12</sup> since its inception in the early 1990s, has often been highly collaborative in its social production, which interferes with an automatic sense of auteur representational authority. Instead of filmmakers automatically claiming, or being given, full control over what is going to be represented on the screen, subjects often seek filmmakers to shoot them. For example, we have the family documented by Zhang Yuan in *Sons* (1996); Zhang Zhanbo’s classmate-turned-local-official in his film *The Interceptor from My Hometown* (2011); or sometimes the subjects themselves picking up a camera during the production and contributing their own footage, as in Ou Ning’s *Meishi jie* (2006).

Gan Xiao’er’s films fully exploit this turn to participatory, performative style at the level of production and consumption in their combination of fiction and documentary feature films: the narrative film *Raised from Dust* is the second in a projected series of seven narrative films around Christian themes, through which Gan hopes to illuminate a Chinese life of the spirit (Gan, interview, June 2007). After its completion, Gan took *Raised from Dust* on the road in Henan and showed it “at about 10 sites, only one of which was in a house, the others all churches. Roughly about 4000 people saw the film, and we got forms filled out by over 1000, and filmed their opinions and feelings. The crew altogether shot about 80 hours of footage, and collected 1000 photos” (personal communication, Sept. 7, 2007). The resulting documentary, taken together with the feature film, provides a pioneering glimpse of a post-Reform community of Christians in Henan using film to mediate itself to itself and to the world. That effort, thanks to Christian



aesthetics that emphasize media to spread the gospel, actually takes us even further, where representation becomes a form of participation itself in a wider world.

### A Story “Uncovering Itself”: Raised from Dust and Representation

I think this fiction film can function as a documentary film that records the lives of Chinese peasants nowadays, and their Christian lives. The story uncovers itself as it develops.

—Gan Xiao'er, director's statement

Gan graduated from the Beijing Film Academy's Literary/Critical Department, where he majored in film theory and turned to actual production after graduation. In this unorthodox route he was preceded by the director Jia Zhangke. Gan was born in 1970, in Henan Province, Xinxiang township, in Qiyiling—the village made famous by Mao's pronouncement in 1958 that “Communes are good!” He returned there to shoot *Raised from Dust*. His great-uncle had studied with missionaries and passed on the gospel to Gan's father, but Gan himself did not convert until his father's death in 1997.

My father's liver illness lasted for 18 years. My mother nursed him continually until there was no hope. By the end he could not move, but they were singing praise hymns together, him trying to raise himself up because he felt it not proper to sing lying down. It was wrenching. Suddenly I saw my parents in a completely different light—as though they were strangers. My mother offered up my father's life to God, right in front of me. I had to rethink my own relationship to them—and it was then that I realized this was a wonderful religion.

(Gan, interview, June 2007)

An illness lovingly nursed forms the plot for *Raised from Dust*. A young woman's husband lies dying of silicosis in a hospital, in a freezing corridor because the family is so poor.

We follow Xiaoli as she rides her three-wheeler around the village, scavenging for bricks and coal, to-and-fro carrying meals to her desperately ill husband, helped by her sunny, young daughter whose school fees are hanging hostage alongside the hospital bills. Xiaoli is Christian, and her life in the church band and choir forms the counterpoint to her desperate poverty. Her husband is finally released into her care in a wrenching scene where the medical team helps load him into the back of the tricycle on his quilt, putting his shoes on at the last, as his feet dangle over the edge. He gasps without his oxygen tank. The sound of his painful,



Figure 9.1. *Raised from Dust*. Xiao Li visiting her husband, who is dying from lung disease in the hospital.

labored breathing cuts out as the camera's point of view shifts to the barren ground. Suddenly, the frame silently fills with Xiaoli's smiling face; it is spring, she carries a pink paper flower. Her husband is driving the tricycle—she is being carried. They are joyful in a silence finally broken by the wheel rumbling along the hard, cold ground, seen from above. The very next scene shows that ground being dug up by several of the village men—it is a grave, her husband's grave.

Let us backtrack.

The film opens mysteriously with a fixed, wide shot of two men whom we slowly realize are surveying the flat land. We learn a railroad will be coming through, and people begin rushing to build structures so that the government will be forced to pay them off to demolish them. The final scene takes us out to the same fields, where people are still building the rickety fake structure. Xiaoli is still delivering the bricks that will ultimately return to rubble. We hear faintly a far-away train. This is the only hint of the presence of the state as outside presence, a framed disavowal that makes way for the institution that Gan is most interested in capturing in this film—the Christian community and its large church.<sup>13</sup>

When the state does appear, it is borne in the conversations and prayers of the members. At several junctures, they are led in public prayer for the nation and



**Figure 9.2.** *Raised from Dust*. Xiao Li's memory of riding home with her young husband after the wedding.

its leaders. Xiaoli is a member of the choir (*changshiban*), which is accompanied by a muscular, Salvation Army–style brass drum and bugle corps complete with uniforms. An old drummer explains that, though they call it a choir, outsiders will not understand this term. So he recommends calling it a “propaganda team.” “Right,” pipes in the choir leader. “A propaganda team for Jesus.” Laughter all round, as the drummer breaks into song. In this moment, two things become evident: first, that Gan is shooting his fiction feature deliberately in an improvised documentary style, sweeping up commentary on details of Christian life, and second, that everyday life accommodates multiple tropes for action on the part of its subjects, both Christian and communist/socialist.

Gan used only two professional actors in the film: Hu Shuli performed the role of Xiaoli and Zhang Xianmin the role of her husband. Everyone else played roles close to their own lives, as the later documentary shows at length. In this choice, Gan follows a long line of independent filmmakers, including Jia Zhangke who used amateurs in his first, pathbreaking narrative feature, *Xiao Wu* (Wu 2000, 194–198). Gan said of his own films’ *jishi fengge* style,<sup>14</sup> “Documentaries and narrative films both share ‘documenting.’ What we call fiction is also a form of ‘documenting’ [*jiu shuo fiction ye shi zai jilu*]” (Gan, interview, June 2007, English in original).

Scholars and critics have noted this bleed between fiction and documentary in Chinese independent film (Zhang Zhen 2010; 2007, 3, 7, 17). Gan has compared *Raised from Dust* to Jia Zhangke’s fiction feature *Still Life* (*Sanxia haoren* 2006). Before Zhang made *Still Life*, there was a documentary by Li Yifan about the Three Gorges Dam project that highlighted its destructive dislocation of people: *Before the Flood* (Yanmo 2005). But according to Gan, Jia Zhangke’s feature film was much better known; only a fraction of Jia’s audience numbers would ever see, or even hear of, *Before the Flood*. So if we are talking about the documentary mission of empathetically moving people to grasp a social critical point, or even to feel that they have participated in an authentic effort to provide an experience of some particular reality, then according to Gan, Jia’s fiction feature will go further in fulfilling that function. In this way, Gan feels that the gap and difference between fiction feature and documentary is easily bridged.

Gan thinks he and Jia used similar methods: “[There is a] using of fiction feature as documentary. Both stories are boring. The films are definitely not about telling you a story. They are about documenting the bigger things . . . in my case I wanted to document the larger background. Storyline is like a melody, but the background provides the structure. These films are about structure” (Gan, interview, June 2007).

Gan’s slow camera and spare dialogue present us with a sideways, almost diffident narrative. The camera is used with indirection, like an eye that restlessly cannot take in all it sees yet remains coolly engaged. Gan himself performs a role as the returning bridegroom that locates him inside the film as a participating element, a piece of the whole that he is trying to glimpse. Gan also starred in his first film, *The Only Sons* (2002), as the fictional protagonist, but the biographical nature of his role in *Raised from Dust* brings it closer to a docudrama sensibility. The film treads between improvisation and tight directorial control—and certain aspects of how affect was used and portrayed became a source of debate between Gan and his local “actors.”

### Perception and Feeling: Church Cinema as Participation

Every time I face this subject, I know perception is secondary. I just trust my feelings.

—Gan, director’s statement, *Raised from Dust*

In 2007, Gan committed himself and a small crew to building a grassroots audience and exposing more people to his feature film by taking it on the road. I have already noted the shift from representation to participation as key to understanding

current documentary. This participation takes place in several ways: between the filmmaker and the subjects of the film; among the subjects of the film; between the audience and the film; among the audience members. In other words, the heretofore hierarchized interaction between auteur/maker and subject, along with spectacular, representational film and audience, is intercut with horizontal forms of participation. His documentary of the screening road trip, *Church Cinema*, is replete with examples of this mixture of participatory agendas as it displays at its heart the feature film process that brought the community together. Gan appears on-screen in both the feature and the documentary alongside the community that provides context, actors, and eventually the audience for both projects.

Gan's documentary accomplished several things. First, he used the occasion of *Raised from Dust* to introduce some of its cast in person, in their lives as Christians—we are introduced to them in their film roles through quick clips first, and then we follow them into their daily lives where they talk theology, religious commitment, and church politics while going about their business feeding pigs, playing mahjong, or eating dinner. Second, we see the film being shown in the very church where it was shot; the church that served as the set for the film now becomes a cinema, but an unusual one, where watching the film is a religious act. After we see the screen raised and the projector being set up by Gan and his star

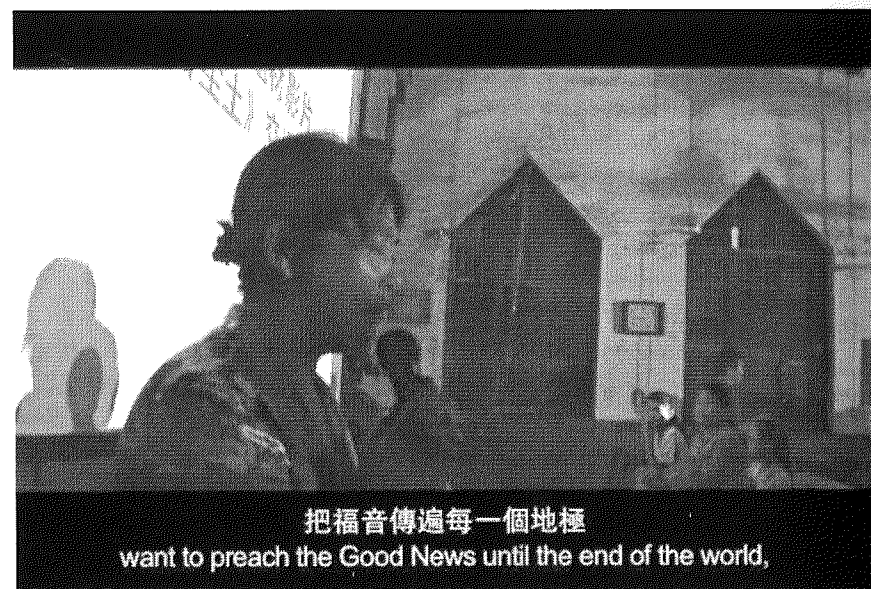


Figure 9.3. Church Cinema. A thankful exhortation to go forth and preach in the wake of Gan's feature film release.

Zhang Xianmin, we cut to a panning shot of the congregation, each person praying aloud with eyes closed. Then a member leads a public prayer in which God is thanked for having answered their entreaties. She declares that "in their hearts each brother and sister is willing to preach the Gospel," providing a list of media that includes everything but the Internet: newspapers, magazines, TV, and movies. We begin to suspect that their notion of what the fiction feature was designed to do might differ from Gan's.

This suspicion proves true in a long scene where the members discuss and criticize *Raised from Dust*. Their passionate engagement of the process and the final product reveals how deeply invested they are. The discussion raises sharp aesthetic differences between the director and the church members—who often refer to the film as *zamende dianying*, "our film." Gan sits at the table with them.

One woman worries that non-Christians will not understand, feeling that the film is very particular, which contrasts with Gan's universalizing ambition of showing Christians as Chinese people. Then the woman beside her bluntly says that he did not succeed in his mission of documentation. She says that "real life was not embodied forth." Frankly, I thought he succeeded richly at this goal, but began to realize that her definition of "real life" is not a material one. When she says, "He didn't show how Christians live . . .," the problem seems to be a failure at depicting a Christian *ethical* life. She accused him of ambiguity in staging the husband's death, and she was also confused by the silent, joyful scene on the way back: Only slowly did she realize it was memory. Then someone else interjected that music was needed and a veritable clamor for music is heard around the table—"music and spoken parts." The first woman actually reminds Gan that "this is not a documentary [using the old state TV term *zhuanqi pian*] and as a feature film it needs a musical atmosphere. Even if you are preaching the good news [which seems to suggest that she thinks that is the movie's point] you can add hymns."

Following the yearning for music comes the yearning for more indications of feeling—Xiaoli's heart is breaking with her husband's dying, and what she needs, as a Christian, is words of God or an inspirational poem or someone singing to her. This drive to melodrama is certainly anathema to Gan, who is in the scene taking notes, lips literally sealed. It casts his opening remarks (as quoted above) in an ironic light: To what feelings in himself is he turning? I'd venture they are artistic sensibilities, not Christian urges to evangelize.

In a series of interviews we conducted in New York City in February 2008, Gan talked about the relationship between religion and art for himself as a filmmaker. He noted that, although he found art before Jesus, it was his religious commitment that eventually formed his own artistic direction. In China, Christian filmmakers are very rare. Even as he hungers to find a way to represent the





**Figure 9.4.** Church Cinema. Meeting of his church community with Gan (on right), discussing how his film *Raised from Dust* might have been improved.

nature of spirituality in his films, he finds himself on unfamiliar ground. Loving Bergman's films, he at first thought that he would have the heroine of *Raised from Dust* say nothing beyond the occasional "Praise the Lord!"

But when we actually started shooting, we realized that was wrong! In China, when someone comes to your home, you must speak to them. Otherwise, it would be impolite. I see Europeans films where people can refuse to speak and no one thinks it strange. But in China, if you don't talk, people think it really weird. This is quite serious. As I said, Chinese films have not yet found a way to express the nature of spirituality, not a good way. Silence is not a method; at first I thought, not letting them speak was good. I wanted to make a quiet, very interior thing, and I could not figure out a better way.

(interview, Feb. 25, part two, 2008)

This sense of interiority seems to be a key component for Gan in understanding people's relationship to God—he pointed out that, lacking as it does a theological tradition, Chinese films are replete with stories about relationships among people, but none about humanity's relationship with deity. In that craving for silence and quiet we find Gan's aesthetic most at odds with the collective

enthusiasm of his fellow congregants. He laid it out in terms of historical contingency:

I have to say that the reason I am not "crazier" about religion is mostly because all the historical experience of New China has been of a sort of special "crazy fanaticism." [The term here is *kuangre*, which means mad, crazy, wild, unrestrained, with overtones of arrogance, hence a favorite translation of "fanaticism."] And that situation made us very resistant toward such craziness, very resistant. Which seems quite reasonable.

(interview, Feb. 25, part two, 2008)

He used the Chinese term *kezhi* ("restrained") to describe not only his own directorial style, but even his personal demeanor:

And showing feeling was like that: If you liked someone, you would not be especially fanatical. Everything was done in a whisper. The entirety of historical experience of that period influenced people of my cohort this way. When we watched films as kids, and a person died, there was always someone wailing, "Oh, Mama . . . Mama . . ." That sort of expression is unbearable; not bad per se because sometimes they are necessary. But we cannot produce them!

Instead, Gan hopes to "express the nature of religion, spirituality and emotion through the trembling body and the peaceful heart"—an aesthetic of restraint, not melodrama. He noted ruefully that his film suffered criticism for not being more intense (*jilie*) and passionate (*jijing*).

In this context, Gan brought up Yuan Zhiming, the eventual producer and director of a highly melodramatic testimonial documentary *The Cross: Jesus in China*. Yuan's initial reactions to enthusiastic Christianity in Princeton after he fled to America following the Tiananmen incident of 1989 were, according to Gan, emblematic of intellectuals' attitudes: "He went to a service and everyone was holding a little book—wasn't this just like Mao's sayings? And they were singing from it, and using its own words to understand it? Hadn't we been struggling mightily to get past this kind of thing? What were the Americans doing?" Even more importantly, Gan felt that many people in his cohort (he was born in 1970), artists and directors, living as they have with the results of political excess even if they were not participants, now tend to shy from "fanaticism" or "obsessiveness," being very restrained in their emotional expression.

But melodrama is precisely what Gan's critics featured in the documentary *Church Cinema* seem to want. And we can turn to Yuan Zhiming's tour-de-force of the genre for a glimpse of that aesthetic. *The Cross: Jesus in China* is a famous



**Figure 9.5.** *The Cross: Jesus in China: Part 3, The Bitter Cup.* Choral music swelling in the background provides the soundtrack for close-ups.

Christian four-video set that has been circulating underground in China on DVD since it was made in 2003 by Chinese in exile.<sup>15</sup> It provides a history of Protestant missionary churches in China, along with the current state of the underground House Church movement. It is full of witnessing for the Lord through stories of conversion and trials in prison. Every so often the interviewing and voice-over narration is interrupted by hymns and extreme displays of emotion.

In a report in the *China Soul* newsletter, Pastor Yuan writes of how extraordinary people find the video: "We have received countless letters and emails, and the most common phrase we see is: 'It is just too moving! We cried straight through to the end!' In Europe and North America at tens of screening venues, thousands of people have come forward to witness for Christ, hundreds giving their bodies to the Way." On the mainland, people are warned to bring hankies: "Countless numbers of copies of *The Cross* are spreading across China. Christians that are spread across China in all four directions crowd themselves into homes for a first viewing. In some villages they stop the film while people sop their tears, and then resume the screening" (Yuan 2004).

I suspect that is more what Gan's critics had in mind—the tears, the emotional excess, the music, all call forth a response in the viewer that is involving in its intensity. These DVDs circulate as encouraged piracy in China. "People have made thousands of copies of [the first of the four DVDs] 'Spirits of Life' and passed them out on the street, at curbsides, in markets . . . No wonder *The Cross* has sparked a preaching movement on the mainland, a renaissance in the Churches" (Yuan 2004).

The DVDs also act as fund-raisers and prods to piety among evangelical groups abroad, such as the Voice of the Martyrs. "*The Cross* incites our Brothers and Sisters in America and elsewhere, and as more [DVDs] of the English versions of the film are produced, more translation versions are being made including the eight languages of Europe, Arabic, Korean, and Japanese—all done by volunteers and most nearly finished" (Yuan 2004).

We are left to contrast Gan's wish to make a film that would function more as a restrained, representational, and objectified artistic text with the congregation's wish to create something more like pretext for melodramatic feeling and action. I am reminded of a useful distinction David Morgan draws in his book *Visual Piety: A History and Theory of Popular Religious Images*. Morgan muses that Warner Sallman's immensely popular, and very sweet, head of Christ can never be taken as "high art" because it fails the test of what he calls an "aesthetic of disinterestedness" or "beauty characterized by a non-instrumental enjoyment . . . that incites no desire for a thing, but enjoys only its representation in the mind." Instead, he notes that "a popular response to images often merges form and physical existence, representation and object, in order to experience the presence of Jesus himself" (Morgan 1998, 26). In the case of *Raised from Dust*, I would amend that formula to say that the congregation longed "to experience the presence of another Christian experience."

### In Conclusion: Tarkovsky Says

How does time make itself felt in a shot? It becomes tangible when you sense something significant, truthful, going on beyond the events on the screen; when you realize, quite consciously, that what you see in the frame is not limited to the visual depiction, but is a pointer to something stretching out beyond the frame to infinity; a pointer to life.

—Andrei Tarkovsky, *Sculpting in Time* (1989, 117–118)

As we noted, other filmmakers in China (and elsewhere to be sure) experiment with the boundary between documentary and fiction narratives. Such blurring

has been a signature move of Jia Zhangke who, while making *Still Life*, his brilliant feature about several dislocated by the Yangtze River dam project, also shot a documentary in the same location (Kraicer 2007; McGrath 2008). The documentary was about the artist Liu Xiaodong (entitled *Dong* [2006], it was packaged together with *Still Life* for DVD sale). Jia and Gan share the ongoing formation of a self-reflexive, participatory, and performative cinema aesthetic, but use it for quite different ends. Both projects, literally, represent collaborations, but they have different consequences in how they point to the world outside the screen. Rather than sharing the project as an artist within his own community (the case with Gan), Jia and Liu share a project as two artists. In Jia's documentary we notice that one of his favorite actors, who played the worker protagonist in *Still Life*, casually joins the actual workers posing in their underwear for the painter Liu. But in Gan's project, people step into the fiction film from their lived world, embodying a kind of imaginative extension of everyday life in a specific intention of Christian mission projected into this artistic form. In Jia's documentary, an actor joins the people; in Gan's feature, real people act.

Jia Zhangke's projects still hew closely to older, non-digital forms of cinema: tightly controlled by his directorial vision, the performative aspects are relegated to a kind of art-circle in-joke. In Gan's double project, I see a form of filmmaking enabled by the turn to the small, intimate formats of video that resides between two of its most obvious genre innovations—between “first-person documentary” and “vernacular video,” and yet not quite fitting either.

Though Gan appears in his films, these are not exactly “first person” efforts reflecting the filmmaker's own life. Gan's project resembles neither Ross McElwee's *Sherman's March* nor Jonathan Caouette's *Tarnation*, where the filmmaker truly becomes the object of his own subject (Lebow 2012). The only part of his life that Gan allows is his role in making these films—as an actor and as a director.

However, neither is his project exactly the vernacular video that Pat Aufderheide predicted in 1995 would proliferate as “personal journalism by camcorder.” She presciently asked nearly twenty years ago—before the rise of the interwebs, YouTube, social media—“Will the genre largely circumvent the traditional middlemen of journalism, letting people tell their own stories their own way?” (Aufderheide 1995, 46). Gan's participants did not pick up cameras, nor did they contribute actual footage. Their contributions were, instead, opinions and performances.

Iлона Hongisto's idea of “documentary fabulation” borrowed from Deleuze is useful here: She quotes Deleuze saying that “fabulation is the becoming of the real character when he himself starts to ‘make fiction,’ when he enters into the ‘flagrant offense of making up legends’ and so contributes to the invention of his people” (Hongisto 2011a, 9; 2011b). Gan is a fabulator who collaborates across his

minoritized community—a community that overtly understands media as bearing the gospel good news out of any frame and into the world. For them, “representation” is a form of “participation.” And in fact, Gan offers his films to them as tokens of his own participation in their community, despite their aesthetic differences.

If we take seriously the notion that culture is not a *thing*, but a *process*—even though it may seem like a congeries of things, and even though we can analyze only through the materiality of things—we must get it in analytic motion.<sup>16</sup> Much in human life—including “the social”—remains empirically directly unavailable. Yet we know it is “there”—in fact, a good deal of human life is about making the invisible visible, that is, *mediating and materializing it*.

Marx's own dialectical vocabulary consistently “views things as moments in their own development in, with and through other things” (Ollman 1977, 52), leading to the Frankfurt School's view of culture as that which “mediates the interaction between the material and the mental, the economic and the socio-political” (Mendieta 2006, 5). By emphasizing the marvelous slippage between “media” and “mediation,” I want to focus our attention on the paradox of *materializing process* (Zito 2008). For analysis, this comes down to grasping the importance of the choices we make of which moments we focus on in the general dialectical construction of social reality. Like many things, a film is only sometimes an object—it strains to become a thing that can exist, be circulated, and not decay with undue speed. But it is also much more: a pause in an ongoing and ensemble process of making, of social production, that takes a certain materialized form, one that can be heard, seen, portably carried, or emailed.

In the case of Gan's films, we are presented with intersecting angles of performance and objectification, moving at possible cross-purposes. Gan wants to make artistically significant films that can be shown in European and American art houses and festivals. In his eyes, that is the finest gift he can make to his community. Yet he cuts his documentary *Church Cinema* to include their long critiques and discussions of their own hopes for *Raised from Dust* as an intentional vehicle for the Gospel—even though he disagrees and has no intention of changing the feature. He claims his role as objectifier even as his respect for their performances is, at every level, exemplary.

Community members trade their own performances wholeheartedly in this joint enterprise, but wish to prolong their own moments of participatory, emotional connection to create an extension that will draw in audiences mimetically to feel moved toward religious fervor and Christ. In this hope, they have an aesthetic that closely resembles that of West African Pentecostal video dramas. As Brian Larkin sums up: “These are genres designed to generate physical effects. Like the Holy Spirit, they come in to take over your body” (Larkin 2008, 190).<sup>17</sup>

They wish to close a gap that Gan perforce seeks to hold open for the spectatorial aesthetic pleasure that will gain audience for his object. For the congregants, the ideal audience would be made of people who would star in the next feature about Christian life—even, and especially, if it meant conversion. In a more politically sensitive reading of the clash of aesthetics, their objections to the semiotically complicated and yet stylistically unguided viewing of the husband's painful, wheezing death in the tricycle as not evoking Christian emotions might also be registering subliminal anxieties. One could, left unguided, see the ways in which that scene (indeed all the scenes of grinding poverty) indicate the failures of socialism after reform and the resultant inadequacy of community. Those vexing, politically provoking readings would be precluded, or at least forestalled, with more sensory direction through obviously Christian music or poetry.

Rather than naming one kind of object as “documentary,” the term might be better theorized as a disposition toward the world, a creation of something that points outside itself toward the next social engagement in its life as an object being circulated. In that sense—that is, in the sense of acting as a prompt to empathy, as the basis for future social occasions—Gan's religious community ironically may have a more avant-garde and highly developed sense of “documentary” than he does! But they do need him to make one.

## Notes

Epigraph. Kwok 2007.

1. Two other documentaries about Christians in China were made around the same time as Gan's: *Fangshan Church (Fangshan Jiaotang)* by Xu Xin and *Faith (Xinxin)* by Wei Xueqi. Simply considering the three documentaries, as outsiders, both Xu and Wei bring different agendas and perspectives from Gan's insider one. Gan himself thinks of his work as important to religious life inside China. I cannot say. I chose his work for its formal qualities that, as I will argue, actually do hinge to some extent on his engagement with certain Christian aesthetic forms. Embroiled in them himself, he provides an occasion for the unfolding of something intimate: his vision of Christian ways of thinking among themselves in the midst of life. I did not choose Gan's pair of films because of what they can “tell” us about Christian life in the context of state pressure—prominent features of the other two films. I found looking closely at his pairing of fiction and documentary in the same project to be also interesting and useful for considering documentary in general.

2. Bill Nichols analyzes this trend in his brilliant *Blurred Boundaries: Questions of Meaning in Contemporary Culture*. One of the more basic boundaries to be worked over and through, according to Nichols, is that between “confirmation” of an interpretive frame and “evidence” from the historical world (Nichols 1994, see especially chapter 2).

3. TSPM emphasizes self-governance, self-support, self-governance (Xu 2004, 107).

4. The state has eased up on them considerably in recent years to the point that one famous house church in Beijing reached a membership of 1,000 and collected \$4 million for its own building. However, around April 10, 2011, “Shouwang” or “Light-house” was evicted by state order from their rental hall. In a show of willingness to stand their ground, they neither disbanded nor dispersed back into private living rooms (Jacobs 2011). This congregation is middle class, well-educated, and rich enough.

5. The number of Chinese Christians (including Catholics and Protestants) is estimated to range from 54 million to over 100 million. See Weiland (2009, 850, n2) for a discussion of how various accountings are made. Figures on Christians in China are hard to come by. They range widely from the most recent government census available as 4 million Roman Catholics and 10 million Protestants to the figure of 130 million by the end of 2006, including 20 million Catholics, from State Administration for Religious Affairs Director Ye Xiaowen's in-house report to universities, subsequently denied by the Foreign Ministry (personal xerox copy). On the other hand, an American Christian organization called ChinaPartners.org sent thirty-one survey teams around China over a thirteen-month period; these teams interviewed a total of about 5,500 people and concluded there are 39 million Protestants in China (Ellis 2007).

6. Filmmakers were introduced to the work of Frederick Wiseman and Ogawa Shinsuke at workshops and have acknowledged this debt; see Wu Wenguang (2010).

7. They also tend not to be interested in “realism” per se because, again, that is a trope of old state socialist aesthetics (Zhang Yingjin 2006, 27). Of course, since an older generation grew up on those aesthetics, their influences, conscious or not, may remain profound.

8. “Politically neutral” translates in the Chinese case as “not state-owned or operated.” One might read this as a convenient, even necessary, appropriation of neo-liberal market impulses. But it should not at all be seen as some kind of capitulation to that idea. Caught between a critique of the state and a critique of capitalist excess, what is a filmmaker to do? Evading the state might be thought of as an impossible, utopic fantasy. Nonetheless, and even though post-Olympics, the state's new surveillance apparatus remains in place, looking *away* from the state's purview, to see things it refuses to see, still remains a very powerful motivation for documentary in China, I think.

9. Here are just a few examples of things that go unseen in mass media: *West of the Tracks* by Wang Bing (2001) about *displaced workers*; several films by Du Haibin, including *Umbrella* (2007), an omnibus that presents vignettes of *people struggling in a small-town rural setting* to overcome rurality and get somewhere else, including workers, army recruits, and students; and Du's *1428* (2009) on *survivors* of the Sichuan earthquake of 2008; the robust queer cinema on its community's difficulties and edges, such as *Meimei* by Gao Tian (2005) on a *down-and-out drag queen*, until quite recently with the attempt at historicizing a queer presence and giving it media visibility (e.g., *Queer China* by Cui Zi'en [2008]; see also chapter 11, by Luke Robinson, in this



volume). A veritable documentary genre has grown up around contested property rights and local corruption: *Petition* by Zhao Liang (2009) and *Taishi Village* by Ai Xiaoming (2005) are examples of activist filmmaking discussed by Zhang Zhen in chapter 12 this volume.

10. "Social subjectivity would link not only the doer and the done to, in self-constituting action, but the state of 'does/done to' experienced by one and that experienced by others. Social subjectivity, like the social imaginary that it transcends, is a category of collective consciousness (Nichols 1994, 105). See also Yingjin Zhang on subjectivity and performance in Chinese cinema (2009, 103–169).

11. Documentary film has long served a "social purpose," given a "call to action." But in the past this was accomplished more by providing a "greater sense of knowledge or even a more fully elaborated sense of social structure and historical process" (Nichols 1994, 47). Here I am talking about the mobilization of affect.

12. "New Documentary Movement" is how Lü Xinyu characterizes the films I am discussing (Lü 2003, 1–23; Lü 2010, 15–48). How to categorize the films produced, not uncoincidentally, in the wake of Tiananmen in 1989 remains somewhat fraught. Are they underground and on their way to independent? (Pickowicz and Zhang 2006, vii–xi) That is, are they constantly evading state censorship and made by people who rigorously eschew the state-media apparatus? Not exactly. Still underground? Not really. See the American distribution company website that confides to the world "dGenerate Films brings uncensored, unprecedented, and visionary content from deep within mainland China's independent, and underground, film scene to the U.S. market" (<http://dgeneratefilms.com/about/>, accessed 12/9/10). For more arguments, see Johnson 2006 and especially Berry and Rofel, who argue against "independent" and for "alternative" as a designation (2010, 135–137). Berry and Rofel are particularly persuasive in noting that these films form an "alternative archive." I feel they are indeed "new" in both their aesthetic reach and their social impetus, and that this performance of "newness" at this juncture will be deeply appreciated at a future time.

13. Rural Henan and Anhui provinces have seen the most rapid growth of the evangelical, Protestant Christianity that has recovered fairly rapidly since the close of the Cultural Revolution and the beginning of Reform in the late 1970s. More recent figures from Pew Research (2011) put the number of total Christians at 67 million while the latest report by the U.S. State Department's International Religious Freedom Report (2012) says, "The 2011 Blue Book of Religions, produced by the Institute of World Religions at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS), a research institution directly under the State Council, reports the number of Protestant Christians to be between 23 and 40 million." One can certainly note the striking fact that there were only about 700,000 Protestants in the country in 1949 when the Communist Party came to power after the civil war.

14. Chris Berry and Lisa Rofel translate this term, which refers to a spontaneous style devoted to sync sound and natural light, as "on-the-spot realism" (Berry and Rofel 2010, 5).

15. It is also available for download online, but not in the mainland (Wong 2004). Yuan Zhiming (b. 1955) fled China after Tiananmen and was one of the writers of the critically acclaimed and popular TV series, *River Elegy*. He converted to Evangelical Christianity in the United States and now has a ministry based in Petaluma, CA. It produces a lot of gospel media. Its website is <http://www.chinasoul.org/>.

16. Theodore Schatzki offers this useful formulation of "practices as embodied, materially mediated arrays of human activity centrally organized around shared practical understanding" (Schatzki et al. 2001, 2, italics mine). See also Zito 2008.

17. There is a rich literature on Pentecostal videos in Africa. See Katrien Pype (2012) on Kinshasa in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Birgit Meyer (2006) on Ghana.

## Bibliography

- Aufderheide, Pat. 1995. "Vernacular Video: For the Growing Genre of Camcorder Journalism, Nothing Is Too Personal." *Columbia Journalism Review* 33 (5): 46–48.
- . 1997. "Public Intimacy: The Development of First-Person Documentary." *Afterimage* 25 (1): 16–18.
- Berry, Chris and Lisa Rofel. 2010. "Introduction." In *The New Chinese Documentary Film Movement: For the Public Record*, edited by Chris Berry, Lü Xinyu, and Lisa Rofel, 3–14. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.
- Elder, Sarah. 1995. "Collaborative Filmmaking: An Open Space for Making Meaning, a Moral Ground for Ethnographic Film." *Visual Anthropology Review* 11 (2): 94–101.
- Ellis, Mark. 2007. "China Survey reveals fewer Christians than some Evangelicals want to believe." *Assist News Service*, Oct. 1. <http://www.assistnews.net/STORIES/2007/s07100011.htm>.
- Hongisto, Ilona. 2011a. "Documentary Fabulation and the Creation of Collectivity." Paper presented at Visible Evidence, New York University, New York, Aug. 11–14.
- . 2011b. "Soul of the Documentary: Expression and the Capture of the Real." PhD dissertation, University of Turku, Finland.
- Jacobs, Andrew. 2011. "Illicit Church, Evicted, Tries to Buck Beijing." *New York Times*, Apr. 17. [http://www.nytimes.com/2011/04/18/world/asia/18beijing.html?\\_r=1&emc=tnt&tntemail0=y](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/04/18/world/asia/18beijing.html?_r=1&emc=tnt&tntemail0=y).
- Johnson, Matthew David. 2006. "'A Scene beyond Our Line of Sight': Wu Wenguang and New Documentary Cinema's Politics of Independence." In *From Underground to Independent: Alternative Film Culture in Contemporary China*, edited by Paul G. Pickowicz and Yingjin Zhang, 47–76. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Kraicer, Shelly. 2007. "China's Wasteland: Jia Zhangke's *Still Life*." *Cinema Angle* 29. [http://www.cinema-scope.com/cs29/feat\\_kraicer\\_still.html](http://www.cinema-scope.com/cs29/feat_kraicer_still.html).
- Kwok, Yenni. 2007. "The Passion of Gan." *Asia Sentinel*, July 20. [http://www.asiasentinel.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=590&Itemid=34](http://www.asiasentinel.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=590&Itemid=34).
- Larkin, Brian. 2008. *Signal and Noise: Media, Infrastructure, and Urban Culture in Nigeria*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.



- Lebow, Alisa. 2012. *The Cinema of Me: The Self and Subjectivity in First Person Documentary*. London: Wallflower Press.
- Lin Xu-dong. 2004. "Documentary in Mainland China." *Documentary Box* 26: 24–36.
- Lü, Xinyu 吕新雨. 2003. *Jilu Zhongguo: Dangdai Zhongguo xinjilu yundong* 纪录中国: 当代中国新纪录运动 (Documenting China: The New Documentary Movement in Contemporary China). Beijing: Sanlian shudian.
- . 2010. "Rethinking China's New Documentary Movement: Engagement with the Social." In *The New Chinese Documentary Film Movement: For the Public Record*, edited by Chris Berry, Lü Xinyu and Lisa Rofel, 15–48. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.
- MacDougall, David. 1998. *Transcultural Cinema*. Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press.
- McGrath, Jason. 2008. "The Cinema of Displacement: The Three Gorges Project in Feature Film and Video." In *Displacement: The Three Gorges Dam and Contemporary Chinese Art*, edited by Wu Hung, 33–46. Chicago: Smart Museum of Art, University of Chicago.
- Mendieta, Eduardo. 2006. "Introduction." *The Frankfurt School on Religion: Key Writings by the Major Thinkers*, 1–17. New York: Routledge.
- Meyer, Birgit. 2006. "Impossible Representations: Pentecostalism, Vision, and Video Technology in Ghana." In *Religion, Media, and the Public Sphere*, edited by Birgit Meyer and Annelies Moors, 290–312. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Morgan, David. 1998. *Visual Piety: A History and Theory of Popular Religious Images*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Nichols, Bill. 1994. *Blurred Boundaries: Questions of Meaning in Contemporary Culture*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Ollman, Bertell. 1977. *Alienation: Marx's Conception of Man in a Capitalist Society*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Pew Research, Religion, and Public Life Project. 2011. "Global Christianity: A Report on the Size and Distribution of the World's Christian Population—Spotlight on China." Accessed Apr. 8, 2014. <http://www.pewforum.org/2011/12/19/global-christianity-regions/#asia>.
- Pickowicz, Paul G. and Yingjin Zhang, eds. 2006. *From Underground to Independent: Alternative Film Culture in Contemporary China*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Pype, Katrien. 2012. *The Making of Pentecostal Melodrama*. New York: Berghahn Books.
- Qi, Liu. 2009. "Field Notes: A Close Look into an Immigrant Workers' Church in Beijing." *Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions* 12 (4): 91–98.
- Schatzki, Theodore, Karin Knorr Cetina, and Eike von Savigny, eds. 2001. *The Practice Turn in Contemporary Theory*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Sherman, Tom. 2007. "Vernacular Video." *Wired*, Jan. 28, 2007. Accessed May 12, 2013. [http://www.wired.com/beyond\\_the\\_beyond/2007/01/vernacular\\_video/](http://www.wired.com/beyond_the_beyond/2007/01/vernacular_video/).
- Tarkovsky, Andrei. 1989. *Sculpting in Time: The Great Russian Filmmaker Discusses His Art*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.
- U.S. Government International Religious Freedom Report for 2012, China. Accessed Apr. 8, 2014. <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm?dliid#wrapper>.

- Voci, Paola. 2004. "From the Center to the Periphery: Chinese Documentary's Visual Conjectures." *Modern Chinese Literature and Culture* 16 (1): 65–113.
- Wang, Yiman. 2010. "'I Am One of Them' and 'They Are My Actors': Performing, Witnessing, and DV Image-Making in Plebian China." In *The New Chinese Documentary Film Movement: For the Public Record*, edited by Chris Berry, Lü Xinyu, and Lisa Rofel, 217–236. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.
- Weilander, Gerda. 2009. "Bridging the Gap? An Investigation of Beijing Intellectual House Church Activities and Their Implications for China's Democratization." *Journal of Contemporary China* 18 (62): 849–864.
- Wong, Joanna S. 2004. "The Cross: Jesus in China." *Christianity Today*, Feb. 29. [http://www.christiantoday.com/article/the\\_cross\\_jesus\\_in\\_china/136.htm](http://www.christiantoday.com/article/the_cross_jesus_in_china/136.htm).
- Wu Wenguang 吴文光. 2000. "Fangwen Xiaowu daoyan Jia Zhangke" 访问小武导演贾樟柯 (Interviewing the director of *The Thief*, Jia Zhangke). *Document/Xianchang* 1 (1): 184–213.
- Xu, Yi-hua. 2004. "Patriotic Protestants: The Making of an Official Church." In *God and Caesar in China: Policy Implications of Church-State Tensions*, edited by Jason Kindopp and Carol Lee Hamrin, 107–121. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press.
- Yuan Zhiming 远志明. 2004. *Shizi jia: Yesu zai Zhongguo jianbao* 十字架: 耶稣在中国简报 (A Short Report on *The Cross: Jesus in China*). Shenzhou Chuanbo xiehui (China Soul for Christ Foundation Newsletter), July 20. <http://christiantimes.org.hk/Common/Reader/News/ShowNews.jsp?Nid=24787&Pid=2&Version=886&Cid=105&Charset=gb2312>.
- Zhang, Yingjin. 2006. "My Camera Doesn't Lie? Truth, Subjectivity, and Audience in Chinese Independent Film and Video." In *From Underground to Independent: Alternative Film Culture in Contemporary China*, edited by Paul G. Pickowicz and Yingjin Zhang, 23–46. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- . 2009. *Cinema, Space, and Polylocality in a Globalizing China*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.
- Zhang Zhen. 2007. "Introduction." In *The Urban Generation*, edited by Zhang Zhen. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- . 2010. "Transfiguring the Postsocialist City: Experimental Image-Making in Contemporary China." In *Cinema at the City's Edge: Film and Urban Networks in East Asia*, edited by Yomi Braester and James Tweedie, 95–118. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.
- Zito, Angela. 2008. "Culture." In *Key Words in Religion, Media and Culture*, edited by David Morgan, 69–82. New York: Routledge.
- . 2014. "Writing in Water, or, Evanescence, Enchantment and Ethnography in a Chinese Urban Park." *Visual Anthropology Review* 30 (1): 10–22.