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Release date : 23/12/2015

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Mountains may depart – synopsis nl/fr

China, eind 1999.

Tao, een jong meisje uit Fenyang wordt het hof gemaakt door haar twee jeugdvrienden, Zang en Lianzi. Zang is eigenaar van een tankstation en heeft een mooie toekomst voor zich, terwijl Liang werkt in een kolenmijn. Hoewel ze van beide mannen houdt, zal Tao een keuze moeten maken die niet alleen de rest van haar leven zal bepalen, maar ook dat van haar toekomstige zoon Dollar.

Gedurende een kwart eeuw volgen we deze personages van een radicaal veranderend China tot in Australië als een belofte op een beter leven, en de hoop, liefde en teleurstelling die het lot hen voorschotelt.

131 min – China- Chinees/Engels

Chine, fin 1999.

Tao, une jeune fille de Fenyang est courtisée par ses deux amis d'enfance, Zhang et Lianzi. Zhang, propriétaire d'une station-service, se destine à un avenir prometteur tandis que Liang travaille dans une mine de charbon. Le cœur entre les deux hommes, Tao va devoir faire un choix qui scellera le reste de sa vie et de celle de son futur fils, Dollar.

Sur un quart de siècle, entre une Chine en profonde mutation et l'Australie comme promesse d'une vie meilleure, les espoirs, les amours et les désillusions de ces personnages face à leur destin.

131 min – Chine – chinois/anglais



Mountains May Depart – cast

ZHAO TAO.....Tao
ZHANG YI Zhang Jinsheng
LIANG JIN DONGLiangzi
DONG ZIJIAN..... Dollar
SYLVIA CHANG..... Mia

Mountains May Depart – crew

een film van / un film deJia ZHANGKE
scenario / scénarioJia ZHANGKE
productie / production..... Ren ZHONGLUN, Shanghai Film Group Corporation
..... Jia ZHANGKE, XStream Pictures, Beijing
..... Nathanaël KARMITZ, MK Productions
..... Liu SHIYU, Runjin Investment
.....Shozo ICHIYAMA, Office Kitano Inc.
muziek / musiqueYoshihiro HANNO
production director Zhang DONG
eerste assistant / premier assistant Jun WANG JIAN
cinematographyYu LIK-WAI
camer / caméra Tian LI
assistant / assistant DOPWang JIAN JUN
montageMatthieu LACLAU
geluid / son..... Zhang YANG
geluidsmontage / montage du sonOlivier GOINARD (TVC)
geluidsassistent / assistant sonSi ZHONG LIN
set decoratorLiu QIANG
assistant set decorator WangYONG
kostuums / costumesLi HUA
make up..... Shinji HASHIMOTO

Mountains May Depart - director's note

It's because I've experienced my share of ups and downs in life that I wanted to make Mountains May Depart.

This film spans the past, the present and the future, going from 1999 to 2014 and then to 2025.

China's economic development began to skyrocket in the 1990s. Living in this surreal economic environment has inevitably changed the ways that people deal with their emotions. The impulse behind this film is to examine the effect of putting financial considerations ahead of emotional relationships. If we imagine a point ten years into our future, how will we look back on what's happening today? And how will we understand "freedom"?

Buddhist thought sees four stages in the flow of life: birth, old age, sickness and death. I think the ultimate point of this film is to say: Whatever times we live through, none of us can avoid experiencing those stages, those difficult moments.

Mountains may depart, relationships may endure.

Jia Zhangke (April 2015)



Mountains May Depart - At the mid-point: interview with Jia Zhangke

You've often focused on China's rapid social and economic changes, and in Platform you followed your characters across a decade. How has your thinking about these issues evolved? And how did you come to the three-part "Past-Present-Future" structure of this film?

I am 45 years old now, which means I've accumulated plenty of memories but still have plenty to look forward to. I'm standing at this mid-point in life, observing the present, remembering the past and imagining the future. After A Touch of Sin I felt an urgent need to make a film about emotions. Chinese society today is very focused on wealth creation, in sync with the rapid economic developments. And the new technologies which economic development has brought us, such as the internet and high-speed trains, are also changing the ways we feel and express our emotions.

I often find myself wondering if I'll feel regretful about this moment when I'm ten years older. Life is a one-time thing for all of us. Each generation has to face the age-old problems as brand-new issues. In recent years, emigration has become a hot issue in China. Many young couples choose to take their children abroad for a better life and education. Two years ago, as I travelled with A Touch of Sin to countries like the USA, Canada and Australia, I made contact with many émigré Chinese families, especially the ones from Shanxi. I was startled to see how younger Chinese émigrés live their lives. Many of them don't speak the Shanxi dialect, some don't speak Chinese at all. A language barrier has appeared, disrupting communication between parents and children. Is this the kind of family relationship we want?

The fateful decision that sparks the film's story is Tao's choice of Zhang Jinsheng rather than Liangzi as her husband. Practically, her choice makes good sense. But it proves very damaging at the emotional level, for all concerned. How do you see her choice?

Tao faces two tough decisions in the story. One is her choice of husband and the other is giving up custody of her son to her ex-husband. I think her choice of partner is primarily emotional. Zhang Jinsheng obviously expresses his feelings better than his rival; he's a man of action and more romantic than the miner Liangzi. In a young woman's eyes, such qualities may be attractive enough. And Zhang Jinsheng's financial prospects definitely play a part in her choice. For example he owns a car, which immediately brings her closer to modern freedoms. They can drive to the Yellow River to see fireworks. So I do not rule out the material temptation in love.

But I think the harder decision lies in the '2014' chapter when she has divorced Zhang Jinsheng and agreed that her son can live with him. In a sense she's being pragmatic about this. As a mother, she must have wished to keep her child. At the same time she knows that she'll go on living in an area where there are few resources and opportunities, while Zhang Jinsheng has already moved to Shanghai, the country's financial capital. The material considerations seem paramount. For instance, Zhang's wealth pays for Dollar to go to an international school, where he can learn English before going abroad. But this very choice guarantees Tao's loneliness in 2025. It's in the '2025' chapter that materialist thinking is challenged. I believe that when Tao reaches her fifties in 2025, she must have second thoughts about her choice, not only because she hasn't seen her son for more than a decade but also because the boy grows up in Australia and lacks a mother's love. Mountains May Depart does not end with a mother-and-son reunion, but the audience may imagine what Tao and Dollar would have to say to each other if they did meet again.

There's no real science-fiction aspect to the chapter set in 2025, but it does contain some interesting predictions, such as transparent tablet devices and the triumph of vinyl records over CDs. How much did you think about future trends and technology? And why did you choose Australia?

Is 2025 that far from us? Not really. It's only a decade away. I told myself at the outset that this would not be sci-fi, but a film depicting people's emotional lives in the near future. As now, people in 2025 will probably pretty much rely on the internet for information and communication. Our art director is a big fan of devices like tablets and smartphones, and he collects futuristic conceptual designs. We came up with the idea of transparent digital devices together, on the basis of those concepts. I know about the back-to-vinyl trend, but vinyl records are basically a reminder of the past for me. They have disappeared from most people's lives. Young people mostly download music to their mobiles and computers from the internet. It seems that sales of records as physical objects won't last much longer, but I believe that vinyl record albums will still be around in 2025, just like paper books. There's a line in *Mountains May Depart*: "some things cannot be destroyed by time."

I actually thought about setting the '2025' chapter in North America, in a city like Vancouver, Toronto or New York with a large Chinese-immigrant community. I opted for Australia because it's in the southern hemisphere. Even though it only takes eight hours to fly from Shanghai to Perth, on Australia's west coast, it is still the other side of the planet. The hot summer down-under coincides with China's deep winter. The huge contrast in seasons gives me a feeling of great distance. The film's characters exile themselves to a place towards the end of the sky, and it feels almost impossible that they can ever return.

Like the beginning and ending of *A Touch of Sin*, this story takes you back to Shanxi – specifically to Fenyang, the town where you were born. Aside from your personal feelings for the place, do you see Fenyang as a kind of microcosm of China in the 21st century?

From my first films *Xiao Wu* and *Platform* to *A Touch of Sin*, my hometown Fenyang has always had special resonances in my films. But there's a different specific reason each time I shoot there. When I set *Xiao Wu* there, I saw Fenyang as a small inland city going through transformation. You could take it as a microcosm of all cities in China longing for development and opening-up. Most Chinese people were living in cities like that. And although it's located in the basin of the Yellow River, the cradle of Chinese civilization, few filmmakers had ever shot there.

When it came to *A Touch of Sin*, there were other reasons as well. Shanxi has a large number of ancient buildings which are still now part of everyday life. The stories in *A Touch of Sin* remind me of the stories in the classical novel *The Water Margin*, also known as *Outlaws of the Marsh*. When we see modern people surrounded by ancient buildings, it helps me bring out a precise theme: violence is an age-old problem that's been with us since the start. For me, Fenyang's visual appearance almost subliminally maps the classical novel onto the film's stories.

Choosing Fenyang again for Mountains May Depart springs first and foremost from a deep nostalgia. I have lived in Beijing ever since I left Shanxi many years ago, and I've made only short return visits since then. When I began thinking about a story that would start in 1999, I found myself recalling friends from Fenyang, people I'd known before I moved to Beijing, wondering what they'd made of their lives. From the very start I conceived Mountains May Depart as a film about 'love and relationships'. In China, we generally put those two words together in the word qingyi: the component qing means emotional affection, and the component yi means bonds of loyalty and obligation. In Shanxi, though, we've tended to distinguish between qing and yi; for us, yi has more to do with commitment and responsibility. Even when people grow apart over time, yi of some kind can still exist. In Mountains May Depart Liangzi gets sick, returns to Fenyang and asks for help from Tao to pay for his medical treatment. Tao visits his old home and comes through with financial help. The two of them no longer love each other, but respect for their past friendship and the time they spent together still endures. That's yi.

In Shanxi we have a historical exemplar of the spirit of yi in the marquis Guan Yu, who appears as a key figure in the classical novel Romance of The Three Kingdoms. In recent times, the traditional concept of yi has morphed into guanxi, another word that's usually translated as "connections" but one which means something more pragmatic and less emotionally close. I find myself really missing the days when I lived in Shanxi – the days when qing and yi had richer meanings.

As usual in your films, there are several recurring motifs – notably the ones which provoke Dollar's feelings of déjà-vu. Why do you like to embed such motifs in your storylines?

After Dollar's argument with his father, he sees a middle-aged man carrying a halberd (also known as a Guangong broadsword) by the seaside. That halberd is the symbol of Guan Yu. It may be a strange thing for Dollar to see. What he doesn't know is that his mother saw the same thing in 1999, when a ten-year-old kid crossed the street carrying one. And Liangzi saw one too, in 2014 in Handan, Hebei Province, when a young man walked through the mining camp carrying one. Each of us has different memories, but our lives are actually defined by broad similarities.

For me, this kind of repetition also connotes a mysterious kind of guanxi. Sally Yeh's Cantonese song Take Care appears several times in the film. When Dollar hears it in Mia's Chinese class (in the '2025' chapter), we can't be sure if he remembers that his mother played the same song to him on the train back to Shanghai when he was a seven-year-old boy. Maybe he does remember at some unconscious level. His déjà-vu moment in the car with the sunglasses is a similar case.

Each chapter of the film is shot in a different screen ratio. What do the screen ratios connote to you?

There are three different screen ratios in Mountains May Depart: 1.33:1 for the 1999 chapter, 1.85:1 for the 2014 chapter and 2.39:1 for the 2025 chapter. I didn't plan this in advance. In the 90s, I owned a DV camera which shot images in the 1.33:1 ratio, what they used to call Academy ratio. Yu Lik-Wai and I often went out with it and shot things that caught our eye, aimlessly. We accumulated a huge amount of video footage. More recently we've still sometimes done that, but with an Alexa camera, and we shoot in the 1.85:1 ratio.

When I look back at that mass of random footage, I tend to be intrigued by the people in it; I wonder how they're getting on now, what they're doing. I wanted to use a little of that footage in *Mountains May Depart*, mostly because the images document the moment they were shot in a way that cannot be reproduced. The images capture something of the times, the emotions, the values and the cultural tastes, even our physical characteristics. So, in the '1999' chapter, I used shots of the Fenyang Spring Festival Gala, shots of people dancing in the disco and the shot of the truck which almost overturns, all of them filmed in the 1990s in 1.33:1 ratio. Similarly, I used images I shot myself of people lighting a fire in the wild and of the mining camp at sunset in the '2014' chapter, filmed in the 1.85:1 ratio. Since this vintage footage was already in two different screen ratios, I thought the film should be in a different ratio for each time period.

Is there any special thinking behind the choice of Village People's "Go West" (performed by the Pet Shop Boys) as the film's disco anthem? And who is the guy seen carrying the halberd?

In some notes that I gave to Zhao Tao before the shoot, I explained that she would have to play a character from her youth to fifty years old. To me, that span represents the distance between an explosion of energy and an ocean of tranquillity. As it happens, the late 1990s was when disco achieved peak popularity in China. Many went out to dance in clubs at the weekend because it gave them a chance to break out of their personal limits; Chinese people tend to be repressed, shy and introverted! Back then I also enjoyed hanging out in discos, and "Go West" was one of the most exciting golden records for us. My memory is heavily dependent on music. More importantly, music endows me with imagination.

The person carrying the Guangong Broadsword is seen at three different ages. We could think of him first as a teenager learning martial arts, then as an adult martial artist and finally as an émigré in Australia. But we might also see him as a god roaming the crowded earth. He might even be Guan Yu.

The Chinese studio Shanghai Film Group Corporation coproduces the film, despite the troubles your previous film *A Touch of Sin* faced in China, where it has never been released. Wasn't that too difficult to work again under these circumstances?

No, the Shanghai Media Group loved the script and they were willing to go on board from the start. With this film, I hope we can earn enough money to cover the loss they suffered because of the interdiction to release *A Touch of Sin* in China: this interdiction came very late when they were just about to release the film so investments were already engaged. Amongst the coproducers, apart from my own production company Xstream and Office Kitano – an unfailing ally for 15 years –, we received support from Nathanaël Karmitz and benefited from the recent agreements on Franco-Chinese coproduction.

Has this film received the authorization to be released in China?

Yes, in principle there should not be any problem this time.

Interview by Tony Rayns (April 2015)

except the last 2 questions coming from an interview conducted by Jean-Michel Frodon (May 2015)

Y a-t-il une généalogie pour ce film ?

Il y a eu un temps de maturation très long, Mountains May Depart vient en partie de séquences accumulées durant le tournage des films précédents. Depuis 2001, lorsque j'ai eu ma première caméra numérique, mon chef opérateur Yu Lik-wai et moi avons beaucoup circulé, en filmant un peu au hasard. Nous avons tourné des images qui n'étaient pas exactement des tests, plutôt des notes, sans savoir ce qu'on en ferait. Il y a 4 ans, nous avons fait plus ou moins la même chose avec une nouvelle caméra, beaucoup plus perfectionnée, l'Arriflex Alexa. La mise en relation de ces deux ensembles d'images, à 10 ans d'intervalle, m'a donné l'idée du film. J'ai été frappé à quel point les images de 2001 me semblaient lointaines, comme venues d'un monde disparu. Je me suis demandé comment j'étais moi-même à cette époque, et si j'étais capable de renouer avec celui que j'ai été il y a si longtemps... dix ans qui semblent un gouffre.

Vous aussi, vous avez changé durant cette période.

Bien sûr, je suis un homme différent moi aussi, j'ai 45 ans et une expérience de la vie qui faisait défaut alors. J'ai trouvé intéressant, à partir de cette distance parcourue, de poursuivre la trajectoire au-delà du présent, dans le futur. Quand on est jeune on ne pense pas à la vieillesse, quand on se marie on ne pense pas au divorce, quand on a ses parents on n'envisage pas qu'ils vont disparaître, quand on est en bonne santé on ne pense pas à la maladie. Mais à partir d'un certain âge, on entre dans ce processus, qui est celui du présent mais aussi de projections dans l'avenir. Le sujet du film est la relation des sentiments avec le temps : on ne peut comprendre vraiment les sentiments qu'en prenant en compte le passage du temps.

Pour cela vous aviez aussi besoin d'aller dans le futur ?

Si on raconte seulement le présent on manque de recul. Se placer du point de vue d'un futur possible est une manière d'observer différemment le présent, de mieux le comprendre. Ayant vécu toute mon existence en Chine, je suis très conscient des mutations foudroyantes qu'a connu le pays, dans le domaine économique bien sûr, mais aussi pour ce qui concerne les individus. Tous nos modes de vie ont été bouleversés, avec l'irruption de l'argent au centre de tout.

Vous avez essayé de représenter le temps lui-même ?

Un des moyens auxquels recourt le film repose sur la comparaison entre les étapes d'une vie et des paysages successifs qui défileraient, d'où l'importance de l'idée de voyage dans le film : la voiture, le train, l'hélicoptère, etc. Il y a ce déplacement permanent, et en même temps il y a ce qui se répète, ce qui est stable dans le quotidien – ne serait-ce, de manière très triviale, que le fait de manger : on a fait des raviolis, on fait des raviolis, on fera des raviolis...

Le film parcourt en effet de multiples paysages, mais il y a aussi un point fixe, qui est la petite ville de Fenyang, où vit le personnage de Tao.

Fenyang est une petite ville de la province centrale du Shanxi, c'est là que je suis né et que j'ai grandi. J'y ai tourné mes deux premiers films, Xiao-wu et Platform, et une partie de A Touch of Sin. C'est un point d'ancrage affectif, j'y ai mes amis et une partie de ma famille, mais aussi un point d'ancrage esthétique et social : pour moi, Fenyang représente ce que vit le commun des mortels en Chine. Cette région est aussi très attachée à une notion qui est le sujet du film, et qu'on exprime en chinois par les caractères Qing Yi. Cela désigne une notion très forte de la loyauté envers ses proches, qu'il s'agisse de sa famille, de la personne qu'on aime ou de ses amis. Cette idée, qu'on peut comparer à ce qu'on a appelé en Europe au Moyen Age la « foi jurée », est centrale dans les romans de chevalerie. Elle est incarnée dans la mythologie chinoise par Guan Gong, le dieu de la guerre. Son attribut traditionnel est cette longue hallebarde avec un plumet rouge, cet objet qu'on voit réapparaître dans chaque partie du film. Il est porté par quelqu'un qui semble errer sans but, comme s'il ne savait plus que faire de cette vertu.

Vous avez la nostalgie d'un rapport plus profond et plus durable entre les personnes.

Oui, mais pas seulement entre les personnes, cela peut être avec des lieux, et surtout avec des souvenirs. Dans la vie quotidienne des Chinois d'aujourd'hui, je constate une perte profonde de cette relation d'engagement réciproque, et elle affecte aussi les souvenirs. Même si une relation entre des personnes se défait, il ne devrait y avoir aucune raison pour ne pas continuer de respecter ce qui a été partagé. Si on abandonne cela, tout peut se défaire, même « les montagnes peuvent s'en aller ».

Est-ce aussi le titre en chinois ?

Littéralement, le titre chinois veut dire « les vieux amis sont comme la montagne et le fleuve », ils sont immuables. La formulation est l'inverse du titre en anglais, mais c'est la même idée, la même interrogation.

Le changement de cadre, de plus en plus grand, le passage du 1,33 au 1,85 puis au format scope traduit autant une perte de repères qu'une ouverture.

J'ai suivi les contraintes des techniques successives utilisées quand nous avons filmé, techniques qui correspondent elles-mêmes aux différentes périodes. Les scènes dans la boîte de nuit, ou celles avec le camion de charbon enlisé, ont été tournées en 1,33 à l'époque, j'ai tenu à les conserver dans ce format. Avec l'Alexa et le format plus large, c'est tout le rapport à l'espace qui change, pas seulement la taille du cadre. Et puis à nouveau avec les images en scope, pour lesquels on a utilisé des objectifs anamorphiques, donc qui déforment l'espace même si on ne s'en rend pas compte.

Pourquoi avoir choisi l'Australie pour la partie future ?

La plupart des Chinois qui émigrent vont aux Etats-Unis et au Canada, surtout sur la Côte Ouest, mais l'Australie me semblait bien plus lointaine. Le choix de l'Australie tient au fait que c'est dans l'autre hémisphère, quand c'est l'hiver en Chine, là-bas c'est l'été. Quand il fait très chaud en Australie, il neige dans le Shanxi. Le succès international de A Touch of Sin m'a amené à circuler dans de nombreux pays, je m'y suis intéressé à la présence d'immigrés chinois, et notamment du Shanxi. J'étais particulièrement attentif au sort des jeunes, et à leurs rapports avec leurs parents. J'ai découvert dans de nombreux endroits, à Los Angeles, à Vancouver, à Toronto ou à New York, des ruptures dans le langage, avec des conséquences profondes. Dans beaucoup de familles chinoises émigrées, seul un des deux parents parle anglais, l'enfant, lui, ne parle que l'anglais. Il y a donc un des deux parents avec lequel il ne peut pas dialoguer. C'est une rupture majeure.

Pour la 3e partie, vous avez dirigé des séquences entières en anglais, une langue que vous ne maîtrisez pas entièrement.

Ce n'est pas un problème pour moi, je connais le texte que disent les acteurs puisque je l'ai écrit, et ensuite c'est affaire de rythme. Dans ces conditions, je peux diriger des scènes en anglais sans problème.

Deux chansons jouent un rôle important dans le film, Go West des Pet Shop Boys et une chanson de variétés en cantonais.

La chanson de Pet Shop Boys a été extrêmement populaire en Chine dans les années 90, quand j'étais à l'université, à une époque où des discothèques ouvraient un peu partout. Dans les boites de nuit et dans les soirées, Go West était la chanson qui passait systématiquement à la fin, et qui réunissait tout le monde dans une danse collective. On ne se demandait pas trop ce que désignait l'Ouest, ça pouvait être la Californie (qui pour nous est à l'Est) ou l'Australie comme les personnages du film. Quant à la chanson en cantonais, Take Care, c'est un morceau de la chanteuse Sally Yeh. Elle est une star de la cantopop, mais la chanson elle-même est peu connue. Je l'aime beaucoup, je l'écoute souvent. La musique populaire m'a toujours beaucoup intéressé, ces chansons m'ont aidé à comprendre la vie et elles sont un très bon témoignage de la mentalité collective, elles racontent la société. A nouveau, je suis frappé par la disparition, dans les chansons récentes, des sentiments forts, de l'engagement fidèle envers quelqu'un ou quelque chose qui était si présent auparavant. J'ai d'ailleurs publié un article sur le sujet : on a toujours des chansons d'amour, mais qui s'attachent plus au physique, et à l'instant. Au contraire, Take Care porte sur l'idée qu'une séparation est sans doute en cours mais que ce qui été vécu de fort ne sera pas effacé.

Zhao Tao est présente dans tous vos films depuis Platform mais elle a une présence nouvelle dans Mountains May Depart, une autre manière d'être actrice. Lui avez-vous demandé de jouer différemment ?

Ce n'est pas moi qui lui ai demandé, cela vient d'elle, et elle m'a beaucoup étonné. On se connaît bien puisque nous sommes mariés, et qu'on travaille ensemble depuis longtemps, mais avec ce film j'ai découvert des aspects d'elle que j'ignorais, un monde intérieur qui m'était inconnu. Au début de la préparation, elle m'a demandé si je pouvais lui donner des indications sur le personnage, je lui ai donné seulement deux mots : « explosif » pour la première partie et « océan » pour la deuxième. A partir de là, elle a énormément travaillé de son côté, elle a rempli plusieurs cahiers de notes sur le personnage, sur tout ce que je n'avais pas écrit dans le scénario, qui comme d'habitude est surtout constitué de grands repères, en laissant beaucoup de place à l'initiative durant le tournage. Elle a fait une véritable création littéraire. Elle a par exemple cherché à expliquer, pour elle-même, comment cette femme avait accepté de laisser son fils partir avec son mari. Elle a aussi pris beaucoup d'initiatives, par exemple pour la scène finale, elle porte des habits qui appartiennent à ma mère, c'est son idée. Elle a également beaucoup travaillé le langage corporel, pour chaque époque. Son expérience de danseuse l'aide pour cela.

Qui sont les autres acteurs ?

Zhang Yi, qui joue le mari, a souvent joué à la télévision, il est connu en Chine. Je l'ai vu dans Dearest de Peter Chan, qui était à Venise en 2014, et j'ai beaucoup aimé son jeu. Liang Jing-dong, qui joue l'autre homme, était déjà dans Platform, il n'avait pas joué depuis longtemps. Dollar est interprété par Dong Zi-jang, qui vient de l'Académie d'art dramatique. Et Sylvia Chang, bien sûr, est la star de dizaines de films signés Li Han-xiang, Ann Hui, Tsui Hark, Edward Yang, Johnnie To, Mike Newell, Ang Lee, Tian Zhuang-zhuang... Elle est aussi cinéaste, mais surtout il me fallait une très bonne actrice chinoise qui parle parfaitement anglais.

On retrouve comme coproducteur le studio Shanghai Film Group, malgré les problèmes de A Touch of Sin, toujours pas sorti en Chine. Cela n'a pas été difficile de renouer avec eux ?

Non, le Shanghai Film Group a aimé le scénario et était partant pour m'accompagner. Avec ce film, j'espère leur permettre de récupérer l'argent qu'ils ont perdu à cause de l'interdiction de A Touch of Sin : celle-ci s'est fait à la dernière minute, quand ils avaient engagé des frais importants pour la sortie du film. Parmi les coproducteurs, aux côtés de ma société, Xstream, et d'Office Kitano, allié indéfectible depuis 15 ans, nous avons reçu le soutien de mk2, grâce aux récents accords de coproduction franco-chinois.

Ce film a l'autorisation de sortir en Chine ?

Oui, en principe il n'y aura pas de problème.

Souvent dans vos films, il y a des plans qui ne font pas partie de l'histoire, qui l'enrichissent de manière indirecte, par exemple ce plan du tigre en cage. D'où vient cette image ?

Oui, ce tigre me faisait pitié, j'éprouvais de la tristesse pour lui, comme pour les humains, les personnages du film. Quand je voyage en Chine, dans les petites villes, je vais fréquemment voir les animaux dans les zoos, les voir m'inspire une forme particulière d'émotion.

Propos recueilli par Jean Michel Frodon



Mountains May Depart – Spanning the years: interview with Zhao Tao

This is the first time you've had to play a character across a 26-year time span. What are the challenges and problems in doing that?

When Jia Zhangke decided to shoot *Mountains May Depart* last year, he told me that the story would cover 26 years, and that I'd have to play a woman who ages from her twenties to her fifties. I was excited by the challenge. I first worked with Jia Zhangke in 2000 on *Platform*, which tells the story of one generation's youth. Eleven years later I played an immigrant mother in *I am Li* for the Italian director Andréa Segre. The emotional and physical experience of playing those two roles was a good preparation for playing Tao at different ages. Also, as I get older myself, I feel more confident about playing such emotionally rich characters. 26 years is a long time, not only for us to experience emotions but also to rethink and understand our emotions. In the '1999' chapter, the most important thing for me was to find the right body language, the physical feelings of being young. Young women like Tao at the start can be impetuous and very physical in their responses. For the second chapter, I learned a lot from observing my mother and her physical tempo. And for the scene at the end of the '2025' chapter, I borrowed some clothes from Jia Zhangke's mother – my mother-in-law – and slipped into character the moment I put them on.

The bigger challenge probably comes from Jia Zhangke's way of telling the story. He doesn't spell out specific reasons for a character's emotional changes, or even provide detailed back-story for the characters. The other actors and I need to fill in all those blanks from our own imaginations, and it has to look convincing in the film. My own way of dealing with is embarrassingly straightforward: I write down whatever occurs to me while reading the script. Thorough preparation makes me feel better equipped when I'm acting.

Tao's choice of Jinsheng over Liangzi is the fateful moment which sparks the film's storyline. What do you think about the character's choice?

If I'd been Tao in 1999, I would also have chosen Jinsheng. Not only because, as a rising nouveau riche, he can offer her material wealth but also because he cares for her spirit as well as her immediate prosperity. There's a Hong Kong song she likes; Jinsheng rushes out to get the CD for her. He's actions, not words. Tao is not some goddess high above but a living person. I fancied the same kind of people when I was her age in 1999. Back then there was no great wealth gap in China; none of us could have imagined that those born in similar circumstances would end up experiencing extremes of wealth and poverty. By 2014, Zhang Jinsheng has become a successful capitalist, a player of the stock market. Maybe that's why the marriage fell apart? When I was playing the young Tao in the '1999' chapter, I didn't think about Tao in the later chapters because she herself has no real sense of her future. Her focus was completely on the moment and how she felt in it.

The most painful thing for Tao must have surrendering custody of her son to her ex-husband. It was probably the right thing to do; as she says in the film, she's not a very 'capable' person, and Dollar would have had many fewer opportunities if he'd stayed with her in a small town. In a sense, she sacrifices her own happiness for the sake of her son's future. But she has no way of knowing that her decision will actually leave a huge gap in Dollar's life, will leave him emotionally empty and confused in 2025. It is heart-breaking. I quite like the ending of the film, the way Tao ends up living on her own. People are destined to be lonely. It probably echoes with what she says to Dollar, that nobody stays with you forever. We are all meant to separate in the end.

Tao chooses to stay in Fenyang after her divorce, and the film suggests that she will live out her days there, lost in her memories. Do you share Jia Zhangke's feelings for Shanxi and Fenyang?

I was born and raised in Taiyuan, Shanxi, not much more than 100 km from Fenyang. It's Shanxi's provincial capital, famous for its coal and steel. So Jia Zhangke and I share a similar cultural background. Jia Zhangke's script reveals what he thinks about traditional relationships in Shanxi, not to mention his deep love for the mountains, rivers and counties there. I completely understand and feel the same way spiritually. Even the sound we hear when the winter wind blows in those places and the faces we see at county fairs keep telling us that our feelings for the place are irreplaceable. I recall that Jia Zhangke once joked with a reporter that he likes filming in Shanxi because he likes Shanxi people and finds them all pretty. Of course he was joking, but the title he chose for the film is Shan He Gu Ren (literally it means "Mountains and Rivers, Old Acquaintance". The "Mountains and Rivers" part refers to the landscape, "Old Acquaintance" refers to people. We love both the people and the place. I don't think viewers will find it hard to see these embedded feelings.

Interview by Tony Rayns (April 2015)



Mountains May Depart - Director: Jia Zhangke

He was born in Fenyang, Shanxi, in 1970 and graduated from Beijing Film Academy. His debut feature *Xiao Wu* won prizes in Berlin, Vancouver and elsewhere. Since then, his films have routinely premiered in the major European festivals. *Still Life* won the Golden Lion in Venice in 2006, and *A Touch of Sin* won the Best Screenplay prize in Cannes in 2013. Several of his films have blurred the line between fiction and documentary. He has also produced films by many young directors, and has made cameo appearances in films for other directors.

In 2015, Jia Zhangke returns to Cannes to receive the Carrosse d'Or Prize (Golden Coach) and his feature *Mountains May Depart* is selected in Competition.

FILMOGRAPHY

2015 MOUNTAINS MAY DEPART - In Competition, 68th Cannes International Film Festival

2013 A TOUCH OF SIN - Best Screenplay, 66th Cannes International Film Festival

2010 I WISH I KNEW (documentary) - Un Certain Regard, 63rd Cannes International Film Festival

2008 24 CITY - In Competition, 61st Cannes International Film Festival

2007 USELESS (documentary) - Venice Horizons Documentary Award, 64th Venice International Film Festival

2006 STILL LIFE - Golden Lion Award, 63rd Venice International Film Festival

DONG (documentary) - Horizon, 63rd Venice International Film Festival

2004 THE WORLD - In Competition, 61st Venice Int'l Film Festival

2002 UNKNOWN PLEASURES - In Competition, 55th Cannes Int'l Film Festival

2001 IN PUBLIC (documentary) - Grand Prix, 13th International Documentary Film Festival of Marseilles

2000 PLATFORM - In Competition, 57th Venice International Film Festival

1998 XIAO WU - Wolfgang Staudte Award & Netpac Award, The International Forum of New Cinema, 48th Berlin International Film Festival



Mountains May Depart - Cinematographer: Yu Lik-Wai

He was born in Fenyang, Shanxi, in 1970 and graduated from Beijing Film Academy. His debut feature *Xiao Wu* won prizes in Berlin, Vancouver and elsewhere. Since then, his films have routinely premiered in the major European festivals. *Still Life* won the Golden Lion in Venice in 2006, and *A Touch of Sin* won the Best Screenplay prize in Cannes in 2013. Several of his films have blurred the line between fiction and documentary. He has also produced films by many young directors, and has made cameo appearances in films for other directors.

FILMOGRAPHY

Selected films as cinematographer:

2015 MOUNTAINS MAY DEPART by Jia Zhangke

2013 A TOUCH OF SIN by Jia Zhangke

2011 A SIMPLE LIFE by Ann Hui

2011 LOVE AND BRUISES by Lou Ye

2011 SAUNA ON MOON by Zou Peng

2010 I WISH I KNEW by Jia Zhangke

2008 24 CITY by Jia Zhangke

2006 GOING HOME by Zhang Yang

2006 STILL LIFE by Jia Zhangke

2006 THE POST-MODERN LIFE OF MY AUNT by Ann Hui

2004 THE WORLD by Jia Zhangke

2002 UNKNOWN PLEASURES by Jia Zhangke

2000 PLATFORM by Jia Zhangke

1998 ORDINARY HEROES by Ann Hui

1997 XIAO WU (directed by Jia Zhangke)

Films as director:

2008 PLASTIC CITY

2003 ALL TOMORROW'S PARTIES

1999 LOVE WILL TEAR US APART

1996 NEON GODDESSES (documentary short)

Mountains May Depart - Zhao Tao (as Tao)

Graduated from the Department of Chinese Folk Dance of Beijing Dance Academy. She obtained several awards in domestic dancing competitions and began to work with director Jia Zhangke in 2000. The film *Still Life*, which she starred in, won the Golden Lion Award of the 63rd Venice International Film Festival. She is also one of the producers of Jia Zhangke's documentary *Useless* (2007), which won the Venice Horizons Documentary Award of the 64th Venice International Film Festival. In 2012, as the leading actress of an Italian film *Io Sono Li*, she won the Best Actress Award of David di Donatello Award, the first time an Asian actress has been awarded the prize.

FILMOGRAPHY

2015 MOUNTAINS MAY DEPART by Jia Zhangke

2013 A TOUCH OF SIN by Jia Zhangke

2011 IO SONO LI by Andrea Segre

- Best Actress Award, David di Donatello Award

- Best Actress Award, Asti International Film Festival

- Best Actress Award, Bimbi Belli 2012

2010 I WISH I KNEW by Jia Zhangke

2010 TEN THOUSAND WAVES by Isaac Julien

2008 24 CITY by Jia Zhangke

2006 STILL LIFE by Jia Zhangke

2004 THE WORLD by Jia Zhangke

2002 UNKNOWN PLEASURES by Jia Zhangke

2000 PLATFORM by Jia Zhangke



Mountains May Depart - Sylvia Chang (as Mia)

She was born in Chiayi, Taiwan, to a family with roots in Shanxi. She lived in Hong Kong and New York for periods in her childhood. After working for radio and television, she made her film debut in 1973 and has acted prolifically in Hong Kong and Taiwan movies ever since. She has also worked as a director, producer and scriptwriter since the early 1980s, and is noted for supporting the work of many young directors.

FILMOGRAPHY

Selected films as actress:

2015 MOUNTAINS MAY DEPART by Jia Zhangke

2006 THE GO MASTER by Tian Zhuangzhuang

1994 EAT DRINK MAN WOMAN by Ang Lee

1990 FULL MOON IN NEW YORK by Stanley Kwan

1988 SOURSWEET by Mike Newell

1984 SHANGHAI BLUES by Tsui Hark

1983 THAT DAY, ON THE BEACH by Edward Yang

1979 LEGEND OF THE MOUNTAIN by King Hu

1979 THE SECRET by Ann Hui

1977 DREAM OF THE RED CHAMBER by Li Han-Hsiang

Main films as director:

2015 MURMUR OF THE HEARTS

2008 RUN PAPA RUN

2004 20 30 40

2002 PRINCESS D

1999 TEMPTING HEART

1996 TONIGHT NOBODY GOES HOME

1992 MARY FROM BEIJING

1987 THE GAME THEY CALLED SEX (one episode)