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**Medical Humanities**

Medical Humanities was initially concerned with the training of medical practitioners in hospitals and medical schools. Its origins can be traced to the use of history of medicine as a way of encouraging medical students to reflect on their practice in innovative ways. Major themes are understanding the patient experience, establishing empathy, medical ethics, history of concepts of disease and therapies, and medicine and the arts. It is inherently interdisciplinary, and commonly uses literature, theatre and the visual arts in participatory ways. In recent years the term Health Humanities has been used to embrace all the ways in which healthcare involves those other than professional medical communities.

**Health Humanities**

Health Humanities, as an emerging field, engages the creative arts in discourses about the body and its care. It emphasises the multi-vocal and negotiated status of health for individuals and diverse communities, and de-emphasises the hegemony of authoritative professional medicine. As, globally, we are confronted with an epidemic of non-communicable diseases, Health Humanities represents all the broader challenges of behaviour change as it relates to diet, exercise and lifestyle that are contingent on keeping well. By replacing ‘Medical’ with ‘Health’ it both questions the aims and the power relationships between professional and individual/community agency in understanding and transforming health globally.

**Medical Humanities in China**

Medical Humanities in China, as elsewhere, is taught mainly in medical schools. It has mainly been modelled after teaching practice in European and American schools and their concern that doctors and health workers have new pedagogical experiences that encourage empathy with sufferers. While Chinese medical history has flourished in these contexts, and there has been a strong focus on key differences in Chinese medical ethics, new models for a culturally specific Chinese medical humanities are only recently emerging. YiMovi is one response to this exciting development.

**Film and the Public Sphere**

The public health miracle that the socialist government has apparently delivered since 1949, extraordinarily rapid increases in life expectancy, reduced infant and maternal mortality and reductions in poverty that the WHO can only dream of has divided commentators. While any consequentialist has to take heed, others legitimately ask, at what cost? Improvements in public health were a key objective of the Communist revolution in China, and film is an important way of understanding the aims and outcomes of the universal, comprehensive, and institutionalised health care that it promised.

**Ageing**

With less children born to each couple since the 1980s, and a rapid increase in how long people live, China faces an unparalleled problem of how to cope with its aging population. By 2000, the population aged 65 and older was almost 90 million, and the could reach 300 million by 2050 (United Nations, *World Population Ageing 2007,* New York: UN Dept. of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, 2007): 202-203. With young people increasingly moving away from the countryside to make a living family units are breaking down, and traditional reverence for the elderly is under strain. The so-called 1-2-4 problem (One child: two parents: four grandparents) means that there is an urgent need for new solutions in state and community care. While China has the biggest problem in the world, it also has unique potential for mobilising a population with a strong sense of tradition.

**Disability**

The wellbeing of disabled people in under-resourced settings is closely linked to broader issues in development. Since the promulgation of China’s 1990 ‘Law on the Protection of Disabled Persons’ social attitudes towards people with disabilities are gradually changing. Government attention is also mobilised thanks to the advocacy of key people and community groups and filmmakers have been critical in reflecting and constituting their work.

**Childhoods**

Histories of childhood, particularly Asian childhood, are not well served. Since the cultural turn in the humanities and social sciences, which challenged the assumption that biologically determined categories such as birth and puberty are somehow ‘natural’ or universal, we are invited to look at differences between people. What practices or beliefs in Chinese cultures were specifically about ‘girlhood’ for example, or even ‘boyhood’ for that matter. So focussed, the history of childhood and youth ‘is actually [a history of] the ways in which adults tried to shape and characterise the young’ – a history full of cultural symbols of relative age, especially in relation to law, war, education, marriage, reproduction and sexual relationships.

Genre Themes

**First Generation**

While the technology of film arrived in China in the late nineteenth century, the first Chinese film was, *Ding jun shan* 定军山 (Dingjun Mountain, 1905) a silent film featuring Tan Xinpei, 谭鑫培the famous Peking opera actor. It was shot with a manual camera in three days without transcript or background. By the 1920s the so-called "First Generation" film still drew on the aesthetics of opera, with fixed-camera shooting, and familiar narratives from traditional stories. By the late 1920s there were about one hundred directors were making films, notably Zhang Shichuan [1890–1954] and Zheng Zhengqiu [1889–1935) first feature film *Nan fu nan qi* (Husband and Wife in Misfortune , 1913), and the beginnings of the martial arts genres. Family and romantic dramas initially dominated. But these were difficult times in China and the 1930s began to see the rise of films that dealt with the more pressing political issues.

**Sixth Generation**

The so-called sixth generation of filmmakers in China had grown up during the 1960s and 70s at a time of radical transition. As China emerged from the ideological fever of the Cultural Revolution and entered a period of rapid commercialisation they many experienced a social and cultural displacement. No longer conveying simple political messages, the new directors associated with this period cannot be easily classified. But they share themes of marginalised people living on the edge of society, and the settings and visual aesthetics are unmistakably urban and gloomy. Many of these films never passed the government censors but were shown at international film festivals.

**Documentary**

“Any attempt to understand China’s visual culture today must start from an understanding of the New Documentary Movement.” Chris Berry.

The development of the now 25-year-old wave of new Chinese documentary film-making (and documentary-influenced fiction) has paralleled the nation's emergence as an economic powerhouse. There's been a lot of interest in this movement because the documentaries are made largely outside the state system, so they reflect a more independent and realistic point of view than that of the government.

**Docudrama**

Many of the so-called sixth generation of film directors who began making documentaries went on to produce dramatised stories which focus on similar themes to their earlier work and deploy the same aesthetic sensibilities. Their desire to portray the harsh realities of marginalised groups means that many of these films are a critical resource for the Medical Humanities.

**Directors**

**Ning Ying**

Ning Ying **宁瀛**is an independent female filmmaker and screenwriter who has become the main representative of Chinese ‘neorealist’ (*xin xianshi zhuyi*新现实主义) film, which combines technique with realistic storytelling. Ning Ying entered the Beijing Film Academy in 1978 and is a graduate of the Fifth Generation class of 1982 (see Fifth Generation film directors). From 1982 to 1986 she studied film in Italy, and she was Bernardo Bertolucci’s assistant director for *The Last Emperor*. After initially assisting other directors, she made her directorial debut in1990 with a comedy feature called *You ren pianpian aishang wo* 有人偏偏爱上我 (Somebody Loves Just Me).

Ning Ying is best known for her Beijing trilogy: *Zhao le*找乐 (For Fun, 1992), *Minjing gushi*民警故事 (On the Beat, 1995) and *Xiari nuan yangyang*夏日暖洋洋 (I Love Beijing, 2000). *For Fun* is a piece about retirees trying to set up a Peking opera group; *On the Beat* is a police movie in which policeman Yang 杨is ordered to exterminate all the neighbourhood dogs, and discovers that the social system is the enemy; *I Love Beijing* follows the life and loves of a young taxi driver. Her semi-documentary storytelling, use of mostly amateur actors, and appropriate technique paint a realistic picture of the contemporary Beijing of ordinary people. Her combination of social criticism and wit has become a hallmark of Ning Ying’s art as a filmmaker, screenwriter and editor, and makes her a rather unique ‘Fifth Generation’ director.

**Zhang Yang**

Zhang Yang 张扬 (1967-) is a Sixth Generation director whose movies frequently touch on old age and loneliness. Here, once again he tackles the themes of friendship and death, combining elements from two of his best films, ***Shower*** (*Xizao*, 1999), with its mix of community and old age, and ***Getting Home*** (*Luoye guigeng*, 2006), a tragicomic road trip, the story of a middle aged man who transports the body of a friend from Shenzhen to Chongqing, mostly on foot, trying against all odds to return his friend’s body to his long-estranged family. He has also tackled drug addiction in ***Quitting*** (*Zuotian*, 2001), the aftermath of the Cultural Revolution in ***Sunflower*** (*Xiangrikui*, 2005), and more recently the problems of the new middle class in ***Driverless*** (*Wuren Jiashi*, 2010), a ‘yuppie’ drama.

**Zhang Yuan**

Zhang Yuan 张 元 (1963) is considered by many to be the helmsman of the Chinese documentary movement. Having been one of the first graduates from the Beijing Film Academy after it re-opened after the Cultural Revolution, he went on to shoot some of the most influential docudramas in our programme for the Chinese Medical Humanities. Besides *Mama,* his first documentary, we have used, *Beijing Bastards* (Beijing zazhong, 1993), *The Square* (Guangchang, 1994) on Tian’anmen square, *Sons* (Erzi, 1996) on dysfunctional families and alcoholism, *East Palace West Palace* (1997), his first feature film based on a novel by Wang Xiaobo, *Seventeen years* (Guonian huijia, 1999), and *Little Red Flowers* (Kanshangqu hen mei, 2006), based on Wang Shuo’s very famous novel of the same title.