

XSTREAM PICTURES  
PRESENTS



**SWIMMING OUT TILL  
THE SEA TURNS BLUE**  
(Yi zhi you dao hai shui bian lan)

A FILM BY **JIA ZHANG-KE**

Screening Schedule

Thursday, 20.02.2020 09:30 CinemaxX 7 (Press Screening)  
Friday, 21.02.2020 15:00 Haus der Berliner Festspiele (World Premiere)  
Tuesday, 25.02.2020 12:30 Cubix 6

2020 – CHINA – DOCUMENTARY – MANDARIN – 112'

## SYNOPSIS

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In May 2019, a large number of prominent Chinese writers and scholars gathered in a village in China's Shanxi Province – which happens to be Jia Zhang-ke's native province. Images from this literary event open an 18-chapter 'symphony' which spans the history of Chinese society since 1949. The story is told through memories of the late writer-activist Ma Feng and the testimonies of three major writers who are active today: Jia Pingwa (born in the 1950s), Yu Hua (born in the 1960s) and Liang Hong (born in the 1970s). These writers recount their own lives and literary careers, which allows the film to weave a 70-year spiritual history of the Chinese people.

Ten years after his last documentary *I Wish I Knew* (screened in Un Certain Regard, Cannes 2011) Jia Zhang-ke returns to non-fiction with *Swimming Out Till the Sea Turns Blue*, the final panel in his trilogy about the arts in China. It follows Venice winners *Dong* (2006), and *Useless* (2007).

## WORDS FROM THE DIRECTOR

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After making *Dong* (2006, about the painter Liu Xiaodong) and *Useless* (2007, about the fashion designer Ma Ke), I wanted to make a documentary about Chinese writers. It is not that I have a thing about trilogies. It's more that as a reader, I've always had great respect for the writers who strive to keep abreast of the fast-changing world, sometimes under extremely difficult circumstances.

When I discovered that a village in my native province Shanxi was host to a major literary festival, I wanted to see it for myself. (The place is named Jia Family Village, but it has no direct connection with my own family.) Our starting point was to film at the festival, and we soon realized that we were experiencing not only a journey in contemporary Chinese literature but also a journey into the spiritual history of the Chinese people. Beyond the literary talk, an unexpected new protagonist for the film somehow appeared: the peasantry who inhabit China's vast hinterlands.

The writers in the film tell their own stories, the kind of stories that weigh on the minds of most Chinese people.

I wanted the images to look dignified, almost sculptural, and the 18 chapters to be structured as casually as flowing clouds. The people in this country are living lives like rivers leading to the sea, travelling with heavy loads, towards somewhere blue and clear in the distance.

Their journeys are very similar, but each footprint deserves to be remembered.

Jia Zhang-ke

## DIRECTOR'S INTERVIEW

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### CLOSE TO LIFE

Jia Zhang-ke answers questions from Tony Rayns

**TR: When you made *Dong* and *Useless* more than ten years ago, you spoke about making a trilogy of films about China's artists. Is *Swimming Out* the third part of a trilogy?**

**JZK:** *Dong* in 2006 was my first documentary about a Chinese artist. At that time Chinese society was embracing consumerism. Artists and serious-minded works of art were marginalized. The public had little interest in works of art which discussed real-life problems and explored historical truths. They took the view that art should be 'pure' and free from any political agenda. That kind of attitude, so rigid emotionally, made me feel the need to make documentaries on artists. I was hoping to inspire a greater interest in works of art that are close to life, and especially an interest in recognizing beauty through the experience. Many artists in China today are very sensitive individuals, almost as if they had some weird 'prophetic' abilities. Their creativity interacts with many developments in society. I felt the need to make a film that would make such work better-known. I went on to make *Useless* in 2007, about woman fashion designer Ma Ke. After that, I put the project on hold.

In recent years, China has witnessed rapid urbanization. Many young people are migrating from the villages and towns where they were born to the great metropolises. Rural areas are declining, reduced to populations of the very young and very old. For a country with thousands of years of agricultural history, rural decay produces changes in traditional ways of living, interpersonal relationships and ethical morality. And young people now have plenty of experience of city life, but very little sense of rural life.

While being very aware of this, I also noticed that some Chinese writers were moving in the opposite direction. They were shifting their focus from big cities back to the countryside or small towns, looking at the changes from the ground up. Nothing has a more profound influence on the spiritual world of the Chinese people than the ancestral village. The village gives our understanding of contemporary China a foundation and an historical perspective.

With these thoughts in mind, I realized that I wanted to make a documentary about contemporary writers. Taken with the two earlier films, it completes what I call the "Artists Trilogy", extending my "spiritual portraits" project.

**TR: Why writers in particular? How did you choose the four writers (one dead, three living) who are presented in the film?**

**JZK:** As it happens, the lives and writings of the four featured authors parallel the 70-year history of contemporary China since 1949. The first covered in the film is the late Ma Feng, whose most creative period was the 17 years prior to the Cultural Revolution – the time known as "the period of socialist construction" in China. His writing was tied in with dramatic social reforms. "Revolutionary literature and art" is an unavoidable subject when it comes to

building a spiritual portrait of modern China. Collectivism in the 1950s solved some problems and caused some new ones. That's the historical starting point for understanding our current social structure and our contemporary literature.

The other three writers seen in the film span the years since then. Jia Pingwa, born in the 1950s, focuses on the "Cultural Revolution" and its aftermath (that is, the 1960s and 70s), a time that was full of trauma and helplessness. Yu Hua, born in 1960, is the third writer in the film. His experiences date from the 1980s, China's "reform and opening up" period, when there was a social thaw and individualism revived. The fourth writer, Liang Hong, is a woman born in the late 1970s. Her account of her work coincides with the present.

I want to highlight the last person presented in the film, Liang Hong's 14-year-old son. His interest in and confusion about his family history gives me an opportunity to peek into the spiritual world of the coming generation.

**TR: Yu Hua is in some ways the film's odd-man-out, less rooted in a rural environment than the others and less inclined to bring his own family background into his writing. Does that make him less 'representative' of China's modern writers?**

**JZK:** Yu Hua emerged in the 1980s as a pioneering writer. Unlike preceding generations, he was never forced to sacrifice his literary practice on the altar of "revolutionary literature and art". When he began, other Chinese writers were already striving for more openness and diversity in Chinese literature. He was an individualist from the very start, using his personal feelings to describe Chinese society. He looks like an odd-man-out in the film because he brings a different ideology to his literary world; he's even something of a post-modernist. So his work brings an ironic attitude into play, something that earlier writers wouldn't have attempted; he sets out to dispel hypocrisy and challenge authority, facing the darkness deep down by cutting through the sugarcoating. He represents a generation that respects individual experience and rejects the image of an idealized society. He often sets his work in townships precisely because those are the places where urban and rural traits intersect. Townships themselves are structured by their relationship with the countryside, country people and old traditions, much more so than cities are. It's not that one is more important than the other, but rather that urban and rural characteristics co-exist in the same space.

**TR: Your chapter titles stress the importance of family relationships and personal experiences in a way which echoes the stories you wrote for the acted characters in *24 City*. How do you see the relationships between lived experiences and larger socio-political developments in China?**

**JZK:** The film is divided into 18 chapters, a quasi-musical structure of a kind that classic Chinese novels also often used. I can classify them like this. First, each of the four featured writers is given his or her own chapter. Liang Hong's chapter, towards the end, is extended in three more chapters of – "Mother", "Father" and "Son" – which cover the basic family relationship in human society. The other chapter titles refer to common life issues which confront every one of us: "Eating", "Love", "Disease" and so on. My main interest in the film is not simply to reveal larger socio-political developments, but to understand how these changes have affected individuals. Individual experiences, especially detailed descriptions of individual

memories, are crucial for understanding history. Only by exploring them can I feel that I have truly made inroads into history.

**TR: In many countries, literary culture has declined in the age of the internet and social media, and China is clearly no different. For you, does literature remain as relevant as ever?**

**JZK:** We have a population of 1.4 billion, but any serious novel which sells 30,000 copies is considered a best seller. That statistic, though, hasn't dented writers' passion for writing. There are exciting new works and emerging new writers every year. The general public likes sharing information on social media and is happy being surrounded by fragments of information. And that makes literature all the more important, because great literature reflects more analytic thought and presents its vision with both social and historical dimensions. Literature allows readers to experience life through vivid depictions. Storytelling and understanding are intimately related: the process of reading is also the process of understanding.

**TR: People often speak of literature and cinema as opposites, although some of the writers here have had their work adapted for films. You don't go into the differences between the written work and film, although you do use brief clips from your earlier films to show how places have changed in the last 20 years. How do you see the connections between literature and cinema?**

**JZK:** My film Platform opens with a group of peasants chatting and smoking in front of a wall painting outside a village theater in 1979. We shot that scene in Jia Family Village; the painting on the theater wall was called "Plan for the New Village". We returned to Jia Family Village for Swimming Out, hoping to find the old painting. But it was gone. Later, we found a new painting in the Village History Museum. It was another plan, but it showed high-rise buildings and electronic communication technologies, none of which appeared on the old one. When I saw tourists taking photos of it on their iPhones, I reflected how different the people in Platform were. I cut together shots of both wall paintings in Swimming Out, the one from Platform in 1979 and the new one, and the changes of the last 40 years are immediately apparent and clear. Some feelings can be triggered only by moving images, while others are triggered by the written word.

# JIA ZHANG-KE

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## DIRECTOR'S BIOGRAPHY

Jia Zhang-Ke 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, *A Touch Of Sin* won the Best Screenplay prize in Cannes in 2013 and *Mountains May Depart* and *Ash Is Purest White* were in competition in Cannes 2015 and 2018. Several of his films have blurred the lines between fiction and documentary.

## FILMOGRAPHY

SWIMMING OUT TILL THE SEA TURNS BLUE	Berlin 2020, Berlin Special
ASH IS PUREST WHITE	Cannes 2018, Competition
MOUNTAINS MAY DEPART	Cannes 2015, Competition
A TOUCH OF SIN	Cannes 2013, Best Screenplay
I WISH I KNEW (documentary)	Cannes 2010, Un Certain Regard
24 CITY	Cannes 2008, Competition
USELESS (documentary)	Venice 2007, Hirizonti Documentary Award
STILL LIFE	Venice 2006, Golden Lion Award
DONG (documentary)	Venice 2006, Horizon
THE WORLD	Venice 2004, Competition
UNKNOWN PLEASURES	Cannes 2002, Competition
IN PUBLIC (documentary)	Marseilles 2001, Grand Prix
PLATFORM	Venice 2000, Competition
XIAO WU	Berlin 1998, Wolfgang Staudte Award & Netpac Award

## THE WRITERS

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### Ma Feng

Ma Feng was born in Xiaoyi City, Shanxi Province, in 1922 and began writing in the 1940s. He lived and worked in the countryside for a long time and was acclaimed for novels and scripts about rural life, written in a simple but vivid and earthy style. In the context of China's plan for socialist construction in the 1950s, his books were highly relevant: they depicted the actual complexities of village life and reflected the actual spiritual transformation of peasants and rural cadres at that time. He was recognized as one of the key writers of the "Shan-Yao-Tan (Potato) School".

### Jia Pingwa

Jia Pingwa was born in Danfeng County, Shangluo City, Shaanxi Province in 1952. He studied Chinese language and literature at Northwest University and began publishing his writing in 1974. During the 1980s, he made the deliberate decision to write about his hometown, and devoted himself to exploring psychological attitudes to tradition and national culture. His novels and essays on Shangzhou made him one of the key writers for the Xungen ("Roots Literature") Movement. His 1990s novel *Ruined City* caused heated controversy and was once banned for its depiction of sexuality. His other novels, such as *Shaanxi Opera*, *Old Kiln* and *The Lantern Bearer*, have consistently focused on rural China, bringing to life the fierce impact and dramatic changes brought by social transformation in the countryside.

His books have been translated into more than twenty languages, including English, French, German, Russian, Japanese, Korean and Vietnamese. He has received many literary awards including the Pegasus Prize for Literature, the Prix Femina, the Mao Dun Literature Prize and the Lu Xun Literary Prize.

### Yu Hua

Yu Hua was born in Hangzhou, Zhejiang Province, in 1960. After he finished high school in 1977, he worked as a dentist for five years. He began writing in 1983 and became one of the leading figures of 'Chinese Pioneer Literature', overturning traditional concepts and using innovative literary forms. Since the 1990s he has shifted his focus to realism, using plain language to sketch realities and uncover hidden aspects of human nature. His most famous novels include *Cries in the Drizzle*, *To Live*, *Chronicle of A Blood Merchant*, *Brothers* and *Seventh Day*. One of China's best-known novelists internationally, Yu Hua has received many international awards and honors, including the Italian Premio Grinzane Cavour, the Barnes & Noble Discovery New Writers Award, the French Prix Courier International and the Italian Giuseppe Acerbi prize. His works have been translated into more than 40 languages and published in the United States, Great Britain, Australia, France, Germany, Spain, Egypt, Korea, Japan and other countries.

**Liang Hong**

Liang Hong was born in Dengzhou, Henan Province, in 1973. She is a writer, scholar and Professor of Chinese Literature in Renmin University. She is dedicated to studying the connections between native-soil literature and rural China. Her non-fiction books *China in Liang Village* and *Leaving Liang Village* offer acute observations of contemporary village life and wider Chinese society based on her in-depth researches into both the current residents of Liang Village and those who have left to seek work elsewhere. Her documentation of the pain and trauma caused in the village by China's transformations has made Liang Village a significant point of reference for understanding the present and future of rural China. She has also published the short-story collection *The Sacred Clan* and a novel, *The Light of Liang Guangzheng*. She has won the Chinese Literature Media Award for Outstanding Essayist, the People's Literature Award and many other literary prizes.

## **GLOSSARY OF HISTORICAL TERMS**

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### **Mutual aid group**

Short for “agricultural production mutual aid group”. Mutual aid groups were formed in the early 1950s on a voluntary basis. The aim was mutual benefit: the groups worked to overcome such problems as shortages of labor, animals and farm implements, and to combat the constant threat of drought. The groups were generally formed from up to one dozen households, each of which kept its own property while working together. Mutual aid groups did succeed to a certain extent in improving production efficiency, and they helped to expand the collective economy, considered as an emerging stage of semi-socialism.

### **Collectivization**

Collectivization is the term for the process of consolidating individual peasant farmers into mutual aid groups (and later agricultural production cooperatives) by the Communist Party of China. This policy was pursued in the 1950s, to increase agricultural production and income. Collectivization gradually transformed rural China from a smallholding-peasant economy to a socialist collective economy, thereby establishing the public ownership system of socialism.

### **People’s commune**

People’s communes operated in China from 1958 to the 1980s, functioning as production units and as a local political authority. They held, accounted for and collectively assigned all means of production and all public property. Communal dining was also promoted. Communes had centralized leadership with a hierarchical management structure; they followed military models for social activities and agricultural production. The rise of the commune movement was very rapid in China. It was not until the establishment of a new market economy in the 1980s that the commune system gradually disintegrated. It was replaced by township government.

### **Mandatory communal kitchen**

Mandatory communal kitchens were widely established within the commune movement in rural China. Daily meals were prepared and served without charge to commune members in the communal kitchen. At the same time China promoted public kindergartens, tailor shops, shower rooms, nursing homes, agricultural schools, political schools and other institutions as part of the trial of “society-wide public ownership” and the transition to communism. But the mandatory communal kitchens had a life of only two or three years before the experiment came to an end.

### **Learn from Peasants and Workers Movement**

#### **(Down to the Countryside Movement)**

The ‘Learn from Peasants and Workers Movement’ was a political initiative from the 1950s to the late 1970s. A large number of urban students were mobilized and assigned to the countryside to join in agricultural production and reform through labor. The policy was enacted under the guidance of Mao Zedong’s sayings: “the countryside is a vast expanse of heaven and earth where we can flourish” and “educated young people must go to the countryside and learn from living in rural poverty”.

## **The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution**

The Cultural Revolution was a socio-political movement that swept across China for a decade from 1966 till 1976. It started with criticism and political censure of literature and the arts, and quickly impacted the leadership of the Communist Party of China and society as a whole. It caused severe social upheaval and unprecedented national chaos. Schools and universities were closed. Students were sent to the countryside, to be re-educated by the peasants. Red Guard groups formed by young people grew rapidly. Teachers, academics, democracy activists and cadres were persecuted or publicly denounced. Some party and political agencies were attacked. Most blue- and white-collar enterprises either stagnated or found themselves completely paralyzed.

## **Resettlement (Rustication)**

'Resettlement' refers to the long-term placement of urban students and cadres in rural production units during the Cultural Revolution. They were instructed to live and work in the agricultural economy. From the winter of 1968 onwards, resettlement became the major strategy of the 'Learning from Peasants and Workers Movement'. There was no precedent for the number of people and families involved, the efforts put into enforcing the policy or for the impact at home and abroad.

## **Military training**

'Military training' meant the activities through which schools led students to learn about military affairs. During the Cultural Revolution, China vigorously encouraged students to "learn from workers, peasants and the army" and to "criticize the bourgeoisie". And so training for militias and military studies were organized on a large scale.

## **Hukou (Household Registration)**

The 'Hukou' is a legal document issued by the National Administrative Agency to register and retain basic information on the nation's households. It is also the identity certificate and a basic legal document for every Chinese citizen. China's household registration system was established many centuries ago, during the Xia, Shang and Zhou dynasties. For a long time after 1949, China maintained strict control over the registration system and gave the people either 'urban' or 'rural' residency status. Rural residents could not move to cities because monthly food coupons were only available to urban residents. Anyone without urban residency status was unable to access the coupons, which meant that peasants could not survive if they left their lands.

## **Letter of introduction**

A letter of introduction was a document issued by an employer to its employee to facilitate contacting other agencies for work, inquiries for information, or permission to attend social activities. It served the dual function of introduction and certification. Before and after the Cultural Revolution many aspects of basic social life, including travel and transportation, required a formal letter of introduction. Without it, ticket purchases and hotel bookings would not be possible.

## **Food coupons (Food vouchers)**

Food coupons were tickets authorizing purchases of rationed grains, issued by China from the 1950s to the 1980s. In the early years of New China the country suffered from severe food shortages. The government implemented a unified grain purchase- provision-management

system, providing rationed grains based on household registration. Urban residents could receive their food coupons at designated grain stores with their Hukou and grain passbook.

During the planned economy period, China issued coupons not only for grain but also for cigarettes, alcohol, matches and other items. In 1961, there were 156 commodities which could not be purchased without coupons. The so-called 'coupon economy' affected the lives of countless Chinese people.

### **Counter-revolutionary**

'Counter-revolutionary' was the designation for anyone who opposed the Chinese Communist Revolution after 1949 or who had previously opposed the revolutionary cause. Such people included secret agents who organized, led or were involved in spy agencies, key figures in rival political parties, leaders of illegal 'reactionary' religious organizations, local tyrants, bandits and so on.

### **Reformable children**

The term 'reformable children' was applied to children with 'bad family origins'. In practice, this meant the offspring of parents in the 'Five Black Categories': landlords, rich peasants, counter-revolutionaries, bad-influencers and rightists. During the Cultural Revolution, unprecedented importance was attached to family origin. Reformable children, treated unfairly because of their family origins, were beset with problems in most aspects of their lives, including education, employment, promotion, changing jobs, army enrollment and marriage.

### **Worker-Peasant-Soldier students**

In 1970, four years after the Cultural Revolution closed down China's universities and colleges, these institutions began accepting applications from recommended students with a background in worker-peasant-soldier families. Such applicants were known as 'Worker-peasant-soldier students'.

### **Arrest of the Gang of Four**

The term 'Gang of Four' refers to the four politicians who attempted to lead China in the later years of the Cultural Revolution and after Mao Zedong's death: they were Jiang Qing, Zhang Chunqiao, Yao Wenyuan and Wang Hongwen. They were arrested in October 1976 by the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and accused of conspiracy and attempting to usurp the party's leadership and seize state power. Their downfall marked the end of the Cultural Revolution, the ten years of turmoil.

### **Rehabilitation**

'Rehabilitation' denotes the process of acknowledging, reevaluating and amending the misjudged convictions of individuals during the Cultural Revolution. It was essentially a process of restoring justice to public life, for the historical record and for wronged individuals. When the Cultural Revolution ended, the Communist Party of China embarked on years of rehabilitation to correct injustices and wrong political conclusions. Rehabilitation paved the way for China's reform and opening up, and initiated a program of political reforms.

## LITERARY WORKS MENTIONED IN THE FILM

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### **Stockman Uncle Zhao**

Ma Feng wrote the short story *Stockman Uncle Zhao* in 1964, and it was first published in that year's April issue of *People's Literature*. It tells the story of how Uncle Zhao, a stockman of the Zhao Family Village Agricultural Production Cooperative, becomes a livestock expert through his unremitting efforts to improve animal farming practices.

### **Sister Han (Han Meimei)**

Ma Feng's novel, written in 1955, tells the story of Han Meimei, a young woman who does well in her county school but then fails a college entrance exam. She returns to her village home to work on the farm and volunteers to feed the pigs, despite the mess and smell. She is later hailed as a role model for agricultural production. The novel indicates the correct direction for 'educated youth' who return to the countryside by comparing positive and negative figures.

### **Marriage**

Ma Feng published the short story *Marriage* in the *People's Daily* in 1951. It was later chosen as a set text for China's middle schools. Ma himself wrote the script for a feature film version in 1954.

### **Young People of Our Village**

*Young People of Our Village*, a 1959 movie directed by Su Li from a script by Ma Feng, was the most noted film on rural issues made in the first decade of the People's Republic of China. It depicted energetic young people fully committing to socialist life and work in the countryside. One of the songs on the soundtrack, *Beautiful Shanxi*, written by Qiao Yu and performed by Guo Lanying, was so popular that it entered the repertoire of classic folk songs.

### **Three Records of Shangzhou**

*Three Records of Shangzhou* is an anthology of essays by Jia Pingwa, published in 1986. The collection includes *First Records*, *Further Records* and *More Records of Shangzhou*, all of them dealing with everyday life in his native district. Nobody had ever attempted such a full picture of local life and social history in essay-form before, and these volumes became cornerstones of the 'Shangzhou World' for which Jia Pingwa is famous. The Shangzhou-related novellas and essays collected in the *Three Records of Shangzhou* are considered the major achievements of the Xungen ("Roots Literature") Movement.

### **Chicken Coop Valley**

*Chicken Coop Valley* is a rural fiction Jia Pingwa wrote in 1983. Taking Chicken Coop Valley as an image of Shangzhou villages, the novel depicts the changes in people's thinking, emotions, ethics, values and lifestyle during the period of rural reform. The novel was adapted for the film *In the Wild Mountains* (1986, directed by Yan Xueshu), which was screened in the Berlinale Forum and went on to win the Golden Montgolfiere at the third Festival of 3 Continents in Nantes as well as the Best Feature Film at the 1986 China Golden Rooster Awards.

### **Turbulence**

*Turbulence*, published in 1987, was Jia Pingwa's debut novel. By following the romance between the peasant Golden Dog and Water Girl, it reveals the emerging problems behind the reform and opening-up policy, the hidden hollowness in a fickle society. This story won the Pegasus Prize for Literature in 1988 in America.

### **Cries in the Drizzle**

*Cries in the Drizzle* was Yu Hua's first novel, published in 1991. It established his new writing style. The novel describes the joy and pain of a family from a first-person perspective.

### **To Live**

The novel *To Live*, written by Yu Hua in 1993, follows the life of Fugui, a common man from the countryside, through vicissitudes and tribulations, reflecting China's social changes over half a century. The book has won many awards, including the Italian Grinzane Cavour Prize (1998), the China Times Open Book Award (1994), Hong Kong SCMP Book Award (1994) and World's Chinese Literature 'Bing Xin Literature Award' (2002). It was also listed by the magazine Asia Weekly as one of the Hundred Greatest Chinese Novels of the 20th century and nominated by a hundred Chinese literary critics and editors as one of the ten most influential works of the 1990s. It has been translated and published in over 30 countries and adapted for film, television and the stage. Zhang Yimou's film version in 1994 won the Grand Prix and the Best Actor prize at the 47th Cannes Film Festival.

### **China in Liang Village**

*China in Liang Village* is Liang Hong's non-fiction work, published in 2010. It chronicles the changes in Liang Village over the past 40 years by documenting the real life of the people on the land and the plight they face as residents leave for the cities. It records the pain and trauma inflicted on the village by the transformation of China's countryside.

### **Leaving Liang Village**

Liang Hong followed up *China in Liang Village* with this sequel, published in 2013. The book focuses on those people from her native village who have left to work elsewhere. In researching it, she visited some ten provinces and cities, interviewed more than 400 migrant workers and collected two million words of testimony and photographs. The result offers a richly detailed analysis of contemporary Chinese society.

### **The Light of Liang Guangzheng**

*The Light of Liang Guangzheng*, written in 2017, is Liang Hong's first novel. It is based on her father: it opens with Liang Guangzheng in his twilight years as he searches for lost relatives and has his children recalling his Sisyphean life, fighting and often losing but always guided by the light of hope. The novel complements Liang Hong's non-fiction work in continuing to illuminate China's social development and reform over the past 40 years.

## CREW

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Director of Photography: YU Lik-Wai  
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Script: JIA Zhang-Ke, WAN Jiahuan  
Editing: KONG Jing-Lei

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