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professionals’ frequent backtracking. Sharing the same screening schedule with two other topical films in summer 2015, Monkey King: Hero Is Back did not attract much attention at first. However, it amazed its initially small audience so much that it propagated explosively within several days. Its director Tian Xiaopeng is a professional with a fervent call in animation. Feeling urged to break the slump in the Chinese animation film industry, he launched this film project to expand the story of the Monkey King, one of the main characters in the traditional Chinese novel Journey to the West. Although some imperfections do exist in the flow of the story and 3D-screened transitions, its plot and excellent visual effects reflect the production team’s painstaking efforts. As Monkey King became the highest-grossing Chinese animated film, many social media platforms started to share links of interviews with its production team, whose story is as evocative of sympathy as its counterpart in B&T.

Given the high risk of investing in animated films in China, Tian had great difficulty collecting sufficient money to continue with his project. Different from B&T, Tian never called for crowdfunding and kept Monkey King unknown to the public. The creation process was an eighteen-year battle against external discourses with his teammates and an underdeveloped 3D technology in China. Despite the positive public attention, Tian humbly admitted that Monkey King was incomparable. “It is the slump of the industry that makes our work receive more compliments than it actually deserves,” Director Tian’s success proves that the Chinese animation industry opens doors exclusively to people who truly understand it. The script of Big Fish is yet to be finalized. When making suggestions, they used ambiguous phrases such as “This is not what we want,” instead of concrete feedback. When negotiating with Japanese professionals on a collaboration project, B&T failed to convince the Japanese team of Big Fish’s potential. As B&T keeps struggling with logistical issues, they have already disappointed many people who once had high hopes on them.

In view of Tian’s achievements in Monkey King: Hero Is Back, the only solution to boost the Chinese animated film industry is to deliver sufficient resources to the right professionals. At this moment, the role of amateurs in this industry remains trivial, until the audiences evaluate the quality of Big Fish and Chinese Flowering Crabapple after their releases—hopefully next year.

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**OPINION**

**BIG FISH VS. MONKEY KINGDOM**

**ZISHI LI asks the question, “Who will revitalise the Chinese animated film industry?”**

I first noticed a post about Big Fish and Chinese Flowering Crabapple on the Internet back in high school. It is an upcoming Chinese animated fantasy film directed and produced by Sebastian Bachner, an animation company established by two young alumni from Tsinghua University. Released in 2006, its demo immediately received most of the Chinese national animation prizes and even invited to the Macau Duma Festival in Cannes. The post claimed that the B&T animation company encountered a financial problem during the manufacturing process. In light of the great success of its demo, the producers called for an online crowdfunding.

The Chinese animation industry has been fighting against the conventional notion that animations are exclusively for children. Although such notions were rejected among Tsinghua’s King Fu Panda and Chillie’s Children, the first two efforts in the 1990s, it was alloacted inclusively to all animation teams. Therefore, many recently established studios that hope to produce high-quality films are in need of further financial and technical support. Due to the overwhelming quantity of mass-produced childish animations, the Chinese animated film industry has been in continual decline since the 1980s. In recent years, the Chinese animated film industry has almost lost hope for these so-called animation professionals. For instance, despite its intriguing plot. Moreover, the two producers’ evocative of sympathy as its counterpart in B&T. Different from Monkey King, one of the main characters in the traditional Chinese novel Journey to the West. Despite the positive public attention, Tian humbly admitted that Monkey King was incomparable. “It is the slump of the industry that makes our work receive more compliments than it actually deserves.”

**THE FUTURE OF THE CHINESE SCRIPT**

**RACHEL LENG reviews Beyond Sinology: Chinese Writing and the Scripts of Culture by Andrea Bachner.**

Andra Bachner’s new book, Beyond Sinology: Chinese Writing and the Scripts of Culture, examines the shifting significance of the Chinese language in the global world. Beyond Sinology is an attempt to move on script politics. The book’s main objective is to argue against the “universal” trends in language studies, and evoked expressions to cultural and national identity” and illustrate how the “conflict of digital media and reshaping of global power structures impacts our understanding of the Chinese script.”

Challenging the commonly held perception that the Chinese script is an example of “incurable language reform” failing to achieve “a script of modernity,” Bachner posits that the sinograph (characters used in Chinese writing) is not a monolithic or national language politics. Thus, the book proposes working “beyond sinology” to read the Chinese script and culture with a transcultural and transmedial approach. Beyond Sinology is divided into five key chapters—Sinographs, Iconographies, Sonographs, Allelographs, and Technographs—that discuss various multimodal forms, theoretical angles of the Chinese script, and its implications for the Chinese literary tradition. Bachner posits that such texts render the Sinophone an utterance to itself, obscuring the connection between the sinograph and a monstrous image of “Chinese.” Although I applaud Bachner’s inclusion of Sinophone contributions, the writers discussed are still connected to essential Chinese Culturalism within her framework of Chinese diaspora studies. Moreover, the chapter on only studies written by Michael Chiu or Alan Fan writes on Taiwan, or Malaysian-Chinese writers who now reside in Taiwan, is an anachronism, as the reinterpreted Sinophone communities around the world. Representing these other communities would have likely allowed Bachner to articulate a Sinophone that can produce different script politics beyond Sinology. The book considers Xu Bing’s 1987 A Book from the Sky and Taiwanese experimental writer Cao Zhihui’s and Hua Yi’s various approaches to scriptography. Bachner chooses A Book from the Sky and Sinophone experimental writer Cao Zhihui’s and Hua Yi’s various approaches to scriptography as examples of writing that challenge the cultural value of the Chinese script.

Beyond Sinology ends optimistically, asserting the malleability of the Chinese script in the wake of the digital revolution. Although an interesting proposition, whether the sinograph constitutes an “unusually stable linguistic and script system precisely because it translates well” is questionable. The problem here is that Bachner appears to define translation in limited terms of Chinese characters being digitally transformed into pictographic and iconic forms. Engaging with what scholars have written about the translatability of languages in general and of the Chinese script in particular may support Bachner in clarifying her position. Beyond Sinology achieves a lot by offering a wide range of intermedial, comparative, and cross-cultural analyses in light of the Chinese script, but this expansive undertaking is muddled with vague, sometimes contradictory, remarks about the definition of sinology itself. In concluding, Bachner suggests that scholars should move “beyond sinology” by deploying “a new method of reading, a new sinology” that transcends “evidence” of any kind and its traditional understandings of what counts as “Chinese.” Yet, how is it possible to transcend sinology by adopting a newly intermedial model or simultaneously redeﬁning? At these faults, I identify Bachner’s book’s Sinophone, whose bilingual and multimodal foray is highly recommended for anyone interested in Sinophone studies, sinographic language, comparative literature, and Chinese identity politics.

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**Writing and the Scripts of Chinese Culture**

**ANDREA BACHNER considers Xu Bing’s 1987 A Book from the Sky and Taiwanese experimental writer Cao Zhihui’s and Hua Yi’s various approaches to scriptography as examples of writing that challenge the cultural value of the Chinese script.**

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**Beyond Sinology: Chinese Writing and the Scripts of Culture by Andrea Bachner.**

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