



Sentimental Fabulations, Contemporary Chinese Films: Attachment in the Age of Global Visibility (Film and Culture Series)

Rey Chow

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What is the sentimental? How can we understand it by way of the visual and narrative modes of signification specific to cinema *and* through the manners of social interaction and collective imagining specific to a particular culture in transition? What can the sentimental tell us about the precarious foundations of human coexistence in this age of globalization?

Rey Chow explores these questions through nine contemporary Chinese directors (Chen Kaige, Wong Kar-wai, Zhang Yimou, Ann Hui, Peter Chan, Wayne Wang, Ang Lee, Li Yang, and Tsai Ming-liang) whose accomplishments have become historic events in world cinema. Approaching their works from multiple perspectives, including the question of origins, nostalgia, the everyday, feminine "psychic interiority," commodification, biopolitics, migration, education, homosexuality, kinship, and incest, and concluding with an account of the Chinese films' epistemic affinity with the Hollywood blockbuster *Brokeback Mountain*, Chow proposes that the sentimental is a discursive constellation traversing affect, time, identity, and social mores, a constellation whose contours tends to morph under different historical circumstances and in different genres and media. In contemporary Chinese films, she argues, the sentimental consistently takes the form not of revolution but of compromise, not of radical departure but of moderation, endurance, and accommodation. By naming these films sentimental *fabulations*—screen artifacts of cultural becoming with irreducible aesthetic, conceptual, and speculative logics of their own—Chow presents Chinese cinema first and foremost as an invitation to the pleasures and challenges of critical thinking.

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