

News at this Newspaper.” It would have shown the reader the remarkable continuity in the thought of China’s greatest investigative journalist.

JEAN-PHILIPPE BÉJA

*Celluloid Comrades: Representations of Male Homosexuality in Contemporary Chinese Cinemas*

SONG HWEE LIM

Honolulu: Hawai'i University Press, 2006

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Song Hwee Lim’s *Celluloid Comrades* is the first monograph on the topic of male homosexuality in Chinese cinemas. Focused on films from China, Taiwan and Hong Kong since the 1990s, its extensive coverage and erudite exegesis guarantee that it will be a fundamental work for all scholars interested in Chinese cinema and sexuality for many years to come. The title refers to the appropriation of the Chinese Communist Party and KMT Nationalist Party’s preferred term of address amongst members by LGBT Chinese speakers, who now also call each other ‘*tongzhi*’ (comrade). This humour and lightness of touch runs through the whole volume, ensuring accessibility to a wide readership, including undergraduate and post-graduate students. It also manifests a certain tension between the main title and the subtitle: the former gestures towards a wider range of non-conformist sexual behaviours than the latter. This tension is productive, because Lim uses the specificities of the films he engages with to question many norms of both gay activism and queer academic criticism, as well as to question both “queer” and “gay” in his conclusion.

Lim locates his project in the movement from a national to a transnational approach to Chinese cinema. He understands Chinese cinema in general, and the representation of homosexuality within it in particular, as a cross-border cultural formation. Other scholars and critics have attacked Chinese filmmakers for submitting to the Orientalist gaze of the West. However, Lim argues this is a reductionist analysis that forecloses upon the agency of Chinese filmmakers and ethnic Chinese audiences. With Lim’s insight, we can see that the production of a discourse around Chinese homosexuality by Chinese filmmakers and audiences has been enabled by the global flows of film festival culture. This discourse encompasses not only the films, with their international sources of funding, cross-border casts, and use of locations, studios and post-production facilities in many different countries. It also includes the critical discourses produced by newspapers, websites and festival catalogues.

*Celluloid Comrades* is not a history, and it makes no claims to comprehensive coverage. Nevertheless, an impressive range of major works is discussed in detail. They include *The Wedding Banquet*, *Farewell My Concubine*, *Happy Together*, *Rebels of the Neon God*, *The River*, *Hold You Tight* and *East Palace, West Palace*. In each case, Lim engages thoroughly with the existing literature and advances his own distinctive arguments. In the case of *The Wedding Banquet*, for example, he notes the burden of expectations it accrued by virtue of its status as the first substantial gay Chinese film, and resists the tendency of critics to impose their agendas on the film. Is it really right to complain that the main character does not come out to everyone, when coming out does not always work as well as a more flexible deployment of sexuality and identity in the film itself? Is the idea that the film pits homosexuality

against the Confucian-patriarchal family useful, when the film shows that family to be surprisingly accommodating and when so many non-Chinese films betray similar anxieties about family and sexuality?

This pattern of questioning the adequacy of dominant values within LGBT academic criticism is also found in his work on other films by non-queer directors. He argues against criticisms of their portrayal of masochistic and feminized gay masculinity as negative in the mainland films *Farewell My Concubine* and *East Palace, West Palace*. Instead, Lim places these films in a long tradition of uses of this stance in an authoritarian context, where it enables resistance in the guise of obedience. For Wong Kar-wai's *Happy Together*, his investigation of the connections between home, travelling, and sexuality lead Lim to not only acknowledge criticisms of the films preference for domesticity over promiscuity, but also question queer critics preference for promiscuity to the exclusion of queer domesticity. This leads him to the relatively neglected third character of the Taiwanese man in the film, who seems to offer a possible future happy together that disrupts the idea that Hong Kong's togetherness is necessarily oriented towards the mainland.

The final two chapters focus on Chinese cinema's two most internationally prominent gay directors, Tsai Ming-liang and Stanley Kwan. However, of the two, Tsai has always been more reticent. Here, Lim productively deploys the tension between the confessional mode and the Japanese "I-novel," (which he rightly points out would be better translated as the "private" novel), to investigate Tsai's complex poetics of desire. Although Kwan may be publicly known as gay, Lim shows in his final chapter that being out is undercut by profound ambivalence in his cinema. What Kwan embraces is less the out-and-proud model preferred by activists than the condition summed up by the Cantonese opera line "I deny! I deny! . . . Yet in the end there's simply no denial" that he quotes in his 1997 documentary *Still Love You after All These*.

Running through these chapters are questions about how to engage with Chinese culture to represent homosexuality in Chinese cinema, and the metaphorical uses of homosexuality to speak about "sensitive" political themes and questions. The result is thoughtful, rigorous and challenging. Some readers will regret the exclusion of internationally less lauded directors such as Cui Zi'en, Mickey Chen, and Yon Fan, whereas others will want to see work on lesbian representations or the kind of broader vision enabled by a queer theory framework. However, we should welcome *Celluloid Comrades* as an effort to lay the foundations for work that moves out in these directions as well as for its own many achievements.

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*Foreign Policy Making in Taiwan: From Principle to Pragmatism*

DENNIS VAN VRANKEN HICKEY

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Taiwan's ambiguous international status, with all the hallmarks of a state but lacking international recognition, along with its critical position in China–US relations, makes the island an important subject for scholars of international relations. Dennis Hickey's new volume, *Foreign Policy Making in Taiwan: From Principle to Pragmatism*, is an accessible and well-researched study into the complex process of decision making in Taiwanese foreign policy. Despite the importance of Taiwan's