

Cambridge University Press  
0521414652 - Melodrama and Asian Cinema  
Edited by Wimal Dissanayake  
Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

---

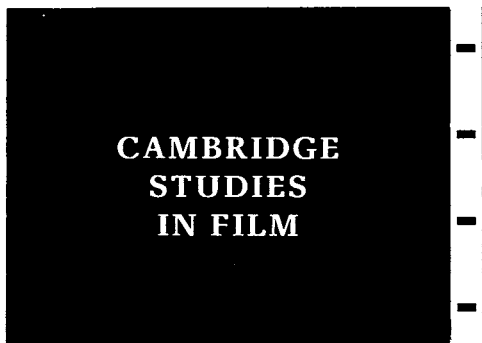
Cinema is a dominant force in the lives of many people living in Asia, a continent that has a number of distinguished national film industries. A concept central to much of Asian film production is melodrama. This path-breaking study examines the importance of melodrama in the film traditions of Japan, India, China, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Australia. Exploring with theoretical sophistication the various ways that melodrama operates, the essays contained in this volume shed light on the different traditions of Asian cinema, as well as on the wider cultural discourse in which they participate.

Cambridge University Press  
0521414652 - Melodrama and Asian Cinema  
Edited by Wimal Dissanayake  
Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

---

MELODRAMA AND ASIAN CINEMA

Cambridge University Press  
0521414652 - Melodrama and Asian Cinema  
Edited by Wimal Dissanayake  
Frontmatter  
[More information](#)



#### GENERAL EDITORS

Henry Breitrose, *Stanford University*  
William Rothman, *University of Miami*

#### ADVISORY BOARD

Dudley Andrew, *University of Iowa*  
Anthony Smith, *Magdalen College, Oxford*  
Colin Young, *National Film School*

#### OTHER BOOKS IN THE SERIES

*Film and Phenomenology*, by Allan Casebier  
*Chinese Cinema: Culture and Politics since 1949*, by Paul Clark  
*The Gorgon's Gaze: German Cinema, Expressionism and the Image of Horror*,  
by Paul Coates  
*Nonindifferent Nature: Film and the Structure of Things*, by Sergei Eisenstein  
(trans. Herbert Marshall)  
*Constructivism in Film: The Man with the Movie Camera*, by Vlada Petric  
*Renoir on Renoir: Interviews, Essays, and Remarks*, by Jean Renoir (trans.  
Carol Volk)  
*The Taste for Beauty*, by Eric Rohmer (trans. Carol Volk)  
*The "I" of the Camera: Essays in Film Criticism, History, and Aesthetics*, by  
William Rothman  
*The British Documentary Film Movement, 1926–1946*, by Paul Swann  
*Metaphor and Film*, by Trevor Whittock

Cambridge University Press  
0521414652 - Melodrama and Asian Cinema  
Edited by Wimal Dissanayake  
Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

---

# MELODRAMA AND ASIAN CINEMA

*Edited by*  
**WIMAL DISSANAYAKE**  
*East–West Center*  
*Institute of Culture and Communication*



**CAMBRIDGE**  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press  
0521414652 - Melodrama and Asian Cinema  
Edited by Wimal Dissanayake  
Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

---

Published by the Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge  
The Pitt Building, Trumpington Street, Cambridge CB2 1RP  
40 West 20th Street, New York, NY 10011-4211, USA  
10 Stamford Road, Oakleigh, Victoria 3166, Australia

© Cambridge University Press 1993

First published 1993

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data  
Melodrama and Asian cinema / Wimal Dissanayake, editor.  
p. cm.  
ISBN 0-521-41465-2  
1. Motion pictures – Asian. 2. Melodrama in motion pictures.  
I. Dissanayake, Wimal.  
PN1993.5.A75M45 1993  
791.43'095 – dc20 92-23862

A catalog record for this book is available from the British Library.

ISBN 0-521-41465-2 hardback

Transferred to digital printing 2003



## Contents

<i>List of contributors</i>	page vii
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	ix
<b>I Introduction</b> <i>Wimal Dissanayake</i>	1
<b>II Melodrama / subjectivity / ideology: Western melodrama theories and their relevance to recent Chinese cinema</b> <i>E. Ann Kaplan</i>	9
<b>III Symbolic representation and symbolic violence: Chinese family melodrama of the early 1980s</b> <i>Ma Ning</i>	29
<b>IV <i>The Goddess</i>: Reflections on melodrama East and West</b> <i>William Rothman</i>	59
<b>V Melodrama as historical understanding: The making and unmaking of communist history</b> <i>Yuejin Wang</i>	73
<b>VI Melodrama, postmodernism, and Japanese cinema</b> <i>Mitsuhiro Yoshimoto</i>	101
<b>VII Inscribing the subject: The melodramatization of gender in <i>An Actor's Revenge</i></b> <i>Scott Nygren</i>	127
<b>VIII Insides and outsides: Cross-cultural criticism and Japanese film melodrama</b> <i>Catherine Russell</i>	143
<b>IX Psyches, ideologies, and melodrama: The United States and Japan</b> <i>Maureen Turim</i>	155

<b>Contents</b>	<b>vi</b>
X <b>Negotiating the transition to capitalism: The case of <i>Andaz</i></b> <i>Paul Willemen</i>	179
XI <b>The concepts of evil and social order in Indian melodrama: An evolving dialectic</b> <i>Wimal Dissanayake</i>	189
XII <b>Politics of melodrama in Indonesian cinema</b> <i>Krishna Sen</i>	205
XIII <b>Power, pleasure, and desire: The female body in Filipino melodrama</b> <i>Teresita A. Herrera and Wimal Dissanayake</i>	218
XIV <b>The register of nightmare: Melodrama as it (dis)appears in Australian film</b> <i>Susan Dermody</i>	232
XV <b>Overview: What is American about film study in America?</b> <i>William Rothman</i>	254
<i>Index</i>	279

Cambridge University Press  
0521414652 - Melodrama and Asian Cinema  
Edited by Wimal Dissanayake  
Frontmatter  
[More information](#)



## Contributors

*Susan Dermody* is a member of the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Technology, Sydney, Australia. She and Elizabeth Jacka coauthored the two-volume study *The Screening of Australia*.

*Wimal Dissanayake* is the assistant director of the Institute of Culture and Communication, East–West Center, and the head of its film program. He is the author of several books including *Cinema and Cultural Identity* and *Sholay – A Cultural Reading*. He is the editor of the *East–West Film Journal*.

*Teresita A. Herrera* is in the Department of Political Science, University of Hawaii. One of her areas of scholarly interest is cinema in the Philippines and questions of culture and nationhood.

*E. Ann Kaplan* is professor of English and director of the Humanities Institute at the State University of New York at Stony Brook. She has written widely on women in film, cultural studies, and television. Among her books are *Women and Film*, *Psychoanalysis and Cinema*, and most recently *Motherhood and Representation: The Mother in Popular Culture and Melodrama*.

*Ma Ning* holds a doctorate in film studies from Monash University, Australia. He is a well-known scholar of Chinese cinema, and one of his main areas of interest is Chinese melodrama.

*Scott Nygren* is associate professor of film studies in the Department of English at the University of Florida. He has previously published in such journals as *Wide Angle*, *Journal of Film and Video*, *Jump Cut*, and *East–West Film Journal*. He is currently writing a book on Japanese cinema.

*William Rothman* is a well-known film scholar who now teaches at the University of Miami. He is the author of *Hitchcock: The Murderous Gaze* and *The "I" of the Camera: Essays in Film Criticism, History, and Aesthetics*.



---

**Contributors**

viii

*Catherine Russell* is assistant professor of film studies at Concordia University, Montreal, Canada. The relationship between cinema and cultural discourse is one of her domains of scholarly interest.

*Krishna Sen* teaches in the School of Humanities at Murdoch University, Perth, Australia. She is an editor of the quarterly magazine *Inside Indonesia*. Her book on Indonesian cinema is due to be published in early 1993.

*Maureen Turim* is professor of film studies in the English Department at the University of Florida. Her most recent book is *Flashback in Film: Memory and History*. Her articles have appeared in numerous journals and anthologies.

*Yuejin Wang* is a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Fine Arts, Harvard University. He has published articles in journals such as *Framework*, *Wide Angle*, *East–West Film Journal*, and *Public Culture*. He is a highly regarded scholar of Chinese cinema.

*Paul Willemen* is an influential film commentator based in London. He is a former editor of the British film journal *Framework* and has done pioneering work on film and melodrama. He is a coeditor of *Questions of Third Cinema*.

*Mitsuhiro Yoshimoto* teaches in the Department of Asian Languages and Literature and in the comparative literature program at the University of Iowa. He is currently working on two projects: the problematic of the body in the age of new capitalist empires and the origins of modern Japanese art.



## Acknowledgments

For over a decade I have been coordinating the East–West Center’s annual film symposium, which brings to the Center distinguished film scholars working on Asian cinema and comparative poetics of cinema. It has been a truly rewarding educational experience for me to interact with these fine minds. Many of the papers gathered in this volume were first presented at the symposium on melodrama held in 1989. First of all I wish to thank all the contributors to this volume. Bill Rothman took a great interest in this project from the very beginning. I would like to express my deep sense of gratitude to Bill Rothman and Kitty Morgan for their friendship and wise counsel over the years. My wife Doreen and my daughter Niru helped me in numerous ways in the preparation of this manuscript. It has been a pleasure to work with the staff and editors of the Cambridge University Press. Their efficiency and professionalism are exemplary.