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978-0-521-80677-0 - Confronting Modernity in the Cinemas of Taiwan and Mainland China

Tonglin Lu

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CONFRONTING MODERNITY IN THE CINEMAS OF TAIWAN AND MAINLAND CHINA

This book is a cultural study of New Wave cinema that considers the experience of modernity and modernization in Taiwan and mainland China. Following separate paths, Taiwan and China have both rapidly modernized, economically and culturally, since 1949. Despite differences in the political, social, and economic systems of the two regions, the process of modernization has challenged traditional cultural norms in both. At the same time, the significant differences in this process respectively shape perceptions of tradition in the two regions to the extent that the notion of Chinese tradition also differs in Taiwan and on the mainland. In fact, tradition itself is often reconstructed retrospectively for the sake of modernization.

Tonglin Lu examines how differences in cultural formation between Taiwan and China have influenced reactions to modernity and how cultural identity has taken different forms on both sides of the Taiwan Strait. She illustrates the expression of these differences in the experience of modernity through her analysis of paradigmatic films produced in both countries, with a particular emphasis on their formal experiments.

Tonglin Lu is Associate Professor of Asian Languages and Literatures at the University of Iowa. She is the author of *Rose and Lotus: Narrative of Desire in France and China* and *Misogyny, Cultural Nihilism, and Oppositional Politics: Contemporary Chinese Experimental Fiction*.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My fascination with Fifth Generation films began in the mid-1980s. In 1991, the Chinese Cinema Festival at Montreal made me also aware of some wonderful Taiwan New Cinema works. Although each of these two contemporary cinemas in the Chinese language contained a wide range of heterogenous works, some directors on both sides of the Taiwan Strait, at least at the early stages of their careers, have had one desire in common: to subvert their respective cinematic traditions through formal experiments. Since the early 1990s, while working on my book on contemporary mainland fiction, I started thinking about a cultural-studies project focusing on contemporary Taiwan and mainland cinemas, partly because I was also interested in sorting out some commonalities and differences between the cultures on the two sides of the strait after decades of geopolitical segregation. From the very beginning, this project has received various institutional supports: a generous travel grant from Asian Art Council for a research trip to Taiwan in Summer 1993, a one-year senior research grant at the Center for Chinese Studies at UC Berkeley (1993–4), as well as a developmental leave in Fall 1996 and several international travel grants from the University of Iowa.

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