The Global Return of the Wu Xia Pian (Chinese Sword-Fighting Movie): Ang Lee's "Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon"

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PREVIEW
Abstract

In examining the way Ang Lee's "Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon" grapples with cultural identity and Chineseness, this essay considers Lee's construction of an image of "China" in the film, as well as its feminist possibilities. These readings reveal Lee's conflicted critique of traditional Chinese cultural centrism and patriarchal hegemony.
The Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon sequel Sword of Destiny isn't as thoughtful as its predecessor, but its fight sequences will hold your attention. The solid script doesn't try to be a mere copy of Ang Lee's masterpiece (despite a few similar moments here and there), while the visuals are dazzling and the fighting scenes spectacular, although the excess of CGI kills some of the fun and the film ends in a lame last scene. This movie did not feel Chinese at all. From the very obviously non-Asian forest scenes, to the fact that the actors were all speaking English, to an American-sitcom-feeling fight scene where precious Ming vases teeter precariously around the two young leads, to Donnie Yen looking like a friggin' COWBOY in his leather hat and bandanna getup Wu xia pian everybody was kung fu fighting martial arts in global context further reading. In common parlance, "martial arts" refers to Asian martial arts — judo, karate, kung fu, taekwondo. Chinese martial arts film came to be known as "wu xia pian," meaning "films of chivalrous combat." This genre may be said to begin in the popular Shanghai cinema with Romance of the West Chamber in 1927. Set against the background of the Japanese occupation of China, the film expresses Lee's rebellious spirit and the best demonstration yet of Lee's flexible martial arts style—including the spectacular use of a little-used weapon in previous martial arts films, the nunchaku, or nunchuks, which came to be as much associated with Lee as his bright yellow track suit.