

Acknowledgments

I began this project in the last years of my PhD study at the University of California, Davis (UCD). My intellectual development during the years of research in the United States paralleled the dramatic sociocultural changes in China in the first decade of the new millennium. I wish to thank the Department of Comparative Literature at UCD for the nonresident tuition fellowships in 2001–2008, a block grant in 2005, and several travel awards; St. Mary's College of Maryland (SMCM) for faculty development awards between 2008 and 2011 and several travel awards between 2008 and 2011; and the College of William and Mary for a Freeman Fellowship in the spring semester of 2006.

I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to my PhD supervisor, Sheldon H. Lu, to whom I am indebted for all his time, energy, guidance, and insights. His unfailing support and encouragement pulled me through many tough periods. Without him, this book would not have been possible. I also owe a great many thanks to Michelle Yeh and Xiaomei Chen, who offered crucial support in various stages in my graduate studies in the United States, and whom I hold in the greatest esteem. Their literary, theoretical, and analytical expertise inspired me all along.

Additional readers of various chapters include Ban Wang, Yvonne Sung-Sheng Chang, Esther Cheung, Sabina Knight, and Richard Stack. Many thanks also to my other readers for their wonderful generosity of spirit: Jia-yan Mi, Gang Zhou, Ao Wang, Xin Yang, Jing Nie, Yang Xiao, Wendy Yamamoto, and Sophia Jin. I also thank my colleagues in the Department of International Languages and Cultures and Asian Studies Program at SMCM. I am especially grateful to Jingqi Fu, who guided me through the first stage of being a faculty member at an American college.

Some parts of this book were presented, in their earlier versions, in China and the United States between 2006 and 2009. I enjoyed the hospitality of my hosts and was thankful to my audiences for their critical inquiries. Two anonymous readers have given me invaluable suggestions for revision; at the University of Hawai'i Press, Patricia Crosby and Ann Ludeman were most meticulous editors. To them I owe my sincere gratitude.

Finally, I dedicate this book to my parents. With their endless love and support from the other side of the Pacific they always have been a spiritual haven that I can depend on. My wife Lina Dai has shared with me both the excitement and the frustration of my research. She not only listened patiently to my ideas but also rewarded me with great Chinese dishes. With the publication of this book, we also celebrate the birth of our daughter Stephanie.

Parts and portions of several chapters have been previously published in different forms elsewhere: an earlier version of Chapter 1 appeared as “Unevenness in Contemporary China: A Critical Inquiry,” in *Telos* no. 151 (Summer 2010): 57–85; an earlier version of the first and the last parts of Chapter 2 was published in *Journal of Contemporary China* 20, no. 69 (March 2011): 343–358; an earlier and shorter version of Chapter 3 appeared in *Modern Chinese Literature and Culture* 22, no. 1 (Spring 2010): 59–95; an earlier version of Chapter 4 appeared as “Commerce and the Critical Edge: Negotiating the Politics of Postsocialist Film, the Case of Feng Xiaogang,” in *Journal of Chinese Cinemas* 3, no. 3 (2009): 193–214; and an earlier version of the first part of Chapter 5 was published as “Social Critiques and Sentimentalism: On Wang Xiaoshuai’s *So Close to Paradise*,” in *Asian Cinema* 20, no. 2 (Fall/Winter 2009): 182–192 (John A. Lent, editor). I am thankful to the publishers for their generous permission to use this material here.