This chapter examines the films of Wong Kar-wai. The echoes and refrains that arise across the sets of films—Chungking Express and Fallen Angels, on the one hand, and In the Mood for Love and 2046, on the other hand—elicit a reflexive awareness of their narrative intricacies and of their coexistence within an authorial corpus. Rather than a series of events stitched into a self-contained causal chain, these films consist of fractured diegetic strands that connect at a meta-narrative level to produce an intertextual web of meaning from film to film. The unhinging of time in Wong's films, many critics have noted, conveys the historic mood of Hong Kong at the turn of the century, with the 1997 handover signaling a moment of extreme uncertainty, a rupture between past and future, and a crisis in identity.

This chapter examines how the Wong Kar-wai's use of pre-existing songs has undergone drastic changes under the strictures of a new working environment. It does this through a close reading of the pop compilations of Fallen Angels and Wong's first English-language production, My Blueberry Nights. Both films, despite their somewhat marginal standing in the Wong Kar-wai canon, are paradigmatic in that they rely heavily on
pre-existing songs, and on popular idioms more generally. They provide perhaps the best demonstration yet that, despite endlessly looping mantras on Wong as a “visual artist”, predictably voiced again on the occasion of the recent release of My Blueberry Nights, songs are of the essence in Wong's cinema. In particular, in both films, songs impart to the sequences in which they appear the quality of “musical numbers”—that is, modular, detachable segments of representation that while propelling the action forward can be contemplated as self-contained entities.

Coda
Jean Ma

in Melancholy Drift: Marking Time in Chinese Cinema

The expansiveness of Wong Kar-wai's approach to intertextuality, citation, and borrowing, along with the dense cross-cultural, cross-medial matrix in which his films are situated suggest another angle on the director's position within the tradition of art cinema. Likewise, the work of Hou Hsiao-hsien and Tsai Ming-liang also illustrates the reverberations of postmodernism in the arena of art cinema, a development that complicates the view of these directors as realists based on their reliance upon the long take. The idea of a cinema of time finds a further resonance in contemporary Chinese cinema beyond the work of Hou Hsiao-hsien, Tsai Ming-liang, and Wong Kar-wai. One notable figure who engages a similar problematic of temporal form and historicity is Jia Zhangke, one of the leading directors of the PRC's Sixth Generation. Jia's films assume a critical view of the official discourse of progress and market reform shaping China's new era.

Liu Yichang and Wong Kar-wai
Hsiu-Chuang Deppman

in Adapted for the Screen: The Cultural Politics of Modern Chinese Fiction and Film
This chapter examines the everyday life of middle-class couples in the thriving capitalist environment of 1960s and 1970s Hong Kong. A melodrama, In the Mood for Love (2000) illustrates an aborted romance between two working middle-class people entangled in the hypocritical demands of bourgeois morality. The basis for this movie, Liu Yichang’s modernist novella entitled Intersection (1972), records the interior monologues of two different characters—an elderly male Shanghainese immigrant and a young local Hong Kong girl—as they saunter through the maze of Hong Kong’s cityscape and survey the mercantile environment with their restless gaze. Wong Kar-wai’s film bears little resemblance to the original story and his method of adaptation is the most abstract discussed here. He uses what some scholars call “intersecting adaptation,” a style that seeks to show that the film is the novel as seen by cinema.

Melancholy Drift
Jean Ma

This book offers an innovative study of three provocative Chinese directors: Wong Kar-wai, Hou Hsiao-hsien, and Tsai Ming-liang, whose highly stylized and non-linear configurations of time have brought new global respect for Chinese cinema. Amplifying motifs of loss, nostalgia, haunting, and ephemeral poetics, they each insist on the significance of being out of time, not merely out of place, as a condition of global modernity and transnational cultures of memory.

Introduction
Jean Ma

This book focuses on the work of Hou Hsiao-hsien, Tsai Ming-liang, and Wong Kar-wai, directors who have not only propelled Chinese cinema into the international spotlight in recent years, but also crafted a distinctive idiom, a cinema of time, across the realms of national and transnational film culture. The following chapters show the significance of this cinema of time as a response to the historical ruptures and political upheavals of
modern Chinese history; a representational politics implicating questions of historiography, national identity, gender, and sexuality; and an active engagement with and reinvention of the modernist legacy of art cinema in response to globalization and shifting conceptions of narrativity in a post-classical film culture.

The Sensuous Cinema of Wong Kar-wai
Gary Bettinson

The widely acclaimed films of Wong Kar-wai are characterized by their sumptuous yet complex visual and sonic style. This study of Wong’s filmmaking techniques uses a poetics approach to examine how form, music, narration, characterization, genre, and other artistic elements work together to produce certain effects on audiences. Bettinson argues that Wong’s films are permeated by an aesthetic of sensuousness and “disturbance” achieved through techniques such as narrative interruptions, facial masking, opaque cuts, and other complex strategies. The effect is to jolt the viewer out of complete aesthetic absorption. Each of the chapters focuses on a single aspect of Wong’s filmmaking. The book also discusses Wong’s influence on other filmmakers in Hong Kong and around the world. The Sensuous Cinema of Wong Kar-wai will appeal to all who are interested in authorship and aesthetics in film studies, to scholars in Asian studies, media and cultural studies, and to anyone with an interest in Hong Kong cinema in general, and Wong’s films in particular.

Hong Kong
Mette Hjort and Duncan Petrie

in The Cinema of Small Nations
and Andrew Lau are shown to reflect thoughtfully on Hong Kong's re-inscription into China following the Handover in 1997.