

Asian 204, Summer 2010

Questions 01 and Homework 01: Comrades, Almost a Love Story

Part 1. Questions on the Film

Read through these questions in preparation for our viewing of the movie beginning Tuesday 6/22, and keep them in mind as you watch. We will begin discussing them in class on Wednesday 6/23.

For the first week's written homework assignment, write out responses to question #3 and turn them in at the beginning of class on Thursday 6/24. Your responses should total 300-500 words, printed out (word-processed), double-spaced in an easily legible 10 or 12 point font, carefully checked for correct spelling and grammar. You may respond to each sub-section of the question separately, or combine your responses; make sure though that you address each of the points.

1. What is the role or significance of languages in *Comrades: Almost a Love Story*? Specifically:

- 1a. What languages, including various Chinese dialects, are spoken?
- 1b. What are various characters' attitudes towards these different languages?
- 1c. What status do the various languages and dialects have?

Cite specific examples.

2. What role is played by the music of Teresa Teng (Teresa Tang/Deng Lijun)? Where does it show up in the story? How does it affect the events of the plot? What associations and emotional impact does it have for the characters?

3. The film's Chinese title, *Tian mimi*, is the name of one of Teresa Teng's songs; the English title, of course, is *Comrades: Almost a Love Story*?

- 3a. In what ways is it a "love story"? What conventions of a love story—familiar or standard plot lines, character types, scenes, images, etc.—can you identify? Cite specific examples.
- 3b. Why "almost" a love story?
- 3c. Why "Comrades"? What are some of the meanings and associations of this word, and how are they relevant to the particular love story being told here?

Part 2. Questions for Lu, "Diaspora, Citizenship, Nationality"

Prepare this reading for discussion on Thursday 6/24. The reading is available as an electronic reserve for the course: go to the main library website and follow the links for course reserves. Print out the reading and bring it to class. Be prepared to discuss the following questions:

1. According to Lu, what is the "standard" view of the nation? Where does Lu see this standard view expressed?

2. According to Lu, how does the view of nationality presented in *Comrades* challenge or differ from the standard view? What about the other films he discusses: is their vision identical with that of *Comrades*, or different in some ways?

3. Find and mark the sentence or paragraph in the essay that you believe best sums up the argument of the chapter as a whole.

4. Find and mark where the following words are used in Lu's essay:

diaspora/diasporic

teleology/ teleological

diegesis/diegetic

sovereignty/sovereign

What does each of these words mean? Look them up in a dictionary; note the various meanings, and write down the meaning most appropriate to Lu's use of the word in the article.

Dictionary Note: If you don't own a standard English dictionary (or even if you do), the UW Library website gives access to several online dictionaries. Go to the Libraries Information Gateway:

<http://www.lib.washington.edu/>

and follow the links from "Reference Tools." I recommend American Heritage, Merriam-Webster, or Oxford.