THE WEDDING BANQUET [1993]

Born in Taiwan, director Ang Lee attended college in Illinois and studied film at NYU, and now lives mostly in the US. This film, set in New York City and co-written I believe with a native-born American, was the first of his films to attract wide notice. He followed it with “Eat Drink Man Woman,” set in Taiwan; ”Sense and Sensibility,” from Jane Austen’s novel, set in England; “The Ice Storm,” set in suburban New York; “Ride with the Devil,” set in the American Civil War; “Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon,” set in a mythical China—a film which won the Oscar for Best Foreign Film; “The Hulk;” and “Brokeback Mountain,” which received a number of Oscar nominations.

A good question to ask [and discuss] is whether the film is particular [to Taiwanese Americans and/or gay couples in NYC?] or universal [universally American or just plain universal?]. Or, one might ask, is this an “American” or a “Taiwanese” film, or is it something else again? The two young men are Wai Tung and Simon, the young woman is Wei-Wei, and the parents are Mr. and Mrs. Gao. [See the IMDB web site for more details.] What do their interactions say about the following: Cultural and sexual identities; traditional and new kinds of families; family members living far away from one another; obligations to self and family; honesty with one’s parents; traditions in the “New World;” immigration and the immigrant scene in NYC; changing roles for women; family norms and expectations for their children; honesty and deceit with family and friends.

Other questions: Does the film have anything to say about Asian-American and/or gay lifestyles? Is the film realistic or more of a fantasy? How do the non-Asian and/or gay friends of the couple react to the wedding festivities? Does the film have a “message” on abortion or anything else? A minor point: Note the relationship between the father and his former subordinate who now owns the restaurant. Is it less formal because they are in the US?