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Between the Two Chinas: The Politics of Identity in Hong Kong Gambling Films

The gambling film in Hong Kong cinema is usually perceived as a highly commercialized genre and receives scant attention in film studies. This paper analyzes two of the most popular gambling films in the Hong Kong box office, namely *God of Gamblers III – Back to Shanghai* (1991) and *God of Gambler's Return* (1994). In *God of Gambler's Return*, the protagonist traverses across the spaces of mainland China and Taiwan, while the male lead in *God of Gamblers III* travels back in time from Hong Kong in 1991 to Republican China in 1937. Drawing on Butler's theory of performativity of subjectivity, and Bhabha's notion of disjuncture in the temporality of the nation, I will discuss how these gambling films produce discourses of national identity that disrupt and destabilize political boundaries between People's Republic of China (PRC) and Republic of China (ROC).