

Queer Sinophone Cultures

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Queer historicism and Sinophone postcolonial critique

Howard Chiang

Introducing queer Sinophonicity

Pioneered by Shu-mei Shih, the “Sinophone” is an amended analytic category and a long-overdue alternative to the discourses of “Chinese” and “Chinese diaspora” that have traditionally defined Chinese studies. In her path-breaking book, *Visuality and Identity: Sinophone Articulations across the Pacific* (2007), Shih defines the Sinophone world as “a network of places of cultural production outside of China and on the margins of China and Chineseness, where a historical process of heterogenizing and localizing of continental Chinese culture has been taking place for several centuries.”¹ In a later essay, “Against Diaspora,” Shih offers a programmatic view of the parameters of Sinophone studies, which by 2010 she conceives as “the study of Sinitic-language cultures and communities on the margins of China and Chineseness.”² Finally, in her recent iteration entitled “The Concept of the Sinophone,” Shih broadens her conception of Sinophone studies as “the study of Sinitic-language cultures on the margins of geopolitical nation-states and their hegemonic productions.”³ She qualifies that

Sinophone studies disrupts the chain of equivalence established, since the rise of nation-states, among language, culture, ethnicity, and nationality and explores the protean, kaleidoscopic, creative, and overlapping margins of China and Chineseness, America and Americanness, Malaysia and Malaysianess, Taiwan and Taiwanness, and so on, by a consideration of specific, local Sinophone texts, cultures, and practices produced in and from these margins.⁴

In short, Sinophone communities and cultures bear a historically contested and politically embedded relationship to China, similar to the relationships between the Anglophone world and Britain, the Francophone world and France, the Hispanophone world and Spain, the Lusophone world and Portugal, and so forth.

The Sinophone framework has taken the field by storm, because it provides a rich theoretical rubric for examining the diverse origins and audiences for cultural production related to Chinese-speaking peoples and communities worldwide. Yet to date, none of the many ensuing critical discussions of “Sinophonicity” have addressed its interplay with queer subcultural formations. This chapter aims to

address that theoretical void by exposing where the liminal spheres of queer studies and Chinese studies overlap. By highlighting the intersections of the Sinophone and the queer, the interdisciplinary perspective presented here goes beyond the traditional frameworks of national and ethnic communities that continue to define the disciplinary contours of East Asian Studies and, to some degree, queer studies. Whereas the existing literature in Sinophone studies rarely considers queer themes and issues, this chapter calls for carefully situated analyses of non-normative genders, desires, and sexualities in the historical context of such Sinitic-language communities as in Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, and beyond, demonstrating a type of queer reading best comprehended from an angle on the periphery of, as opposed to from within, China. I argue for a unique transregional register of queer historicity and meaning at once produced by and generating the very cultural parameters of China and Chineseness.

This approach makes the perhaps overly ambitious claim that there is such a thing as queer Sinophonicity. Situated at the double margins of East Asian and queer scholarly inquiries, the notion of queer Sinophonicity suggests that both Chineseness and queerness find their most meaningful articulations *in and through* one another. When brought together, the Sinophone and the queer promise to denaturalize each other continuously. Similar to earlier studies of the various permutations of what is properly recognized as Chinese or queer, my delineation of queer Sinophonicity retains both adjectives as transient signifiers; in contrast to most studies, however, I do not uncover intrinsic variations on a theme, but only illustrate how the two signifiers intersect less so in a cumulative sense, than as mutual epistemological referents.

That *contemporary* literary and cinematic examples tend to dominate the analytic spotlight of practitioners in the still evolving fields of Sinophone and queer studies makes it evident that the historical and cultural terrains of Sinophone studies remain to be fully explored.⁵ This chapter therefore makes an initial attempt at navigating the boundaries of that horizon through the lens of queer cultural practices. I have not specified a geographical component in the parameters that I try to delineate for queer Sinophonicity, because central to the definition of the Sinophone is not so much a fixed geopolitical materiality of the location of culture, than a set of ever-shifting processes of (re/con)figuring “China” as viewed from the “outside-in.”⁶ Meanwhile, the definition of queer, which is arguably older than the Sinophone, has derived its theoretical force mainly from the North American debates on gender subversion, identity deconstruction, the problem of normativity, counter publics, among others.⁷ In principle, neither the Sinophone nor the queer is bound to a specific place, but they bring out one another most compellingly in place-based analyses.

The field of queer Asian studies has matured over the past decade or so, with a steadily increasing number of new monographs and essays that attend to the cultural particulars and specificities. What I have in mind here is the overwhelming theoretical emphasis on “the local”—be it framed in terms of global resistance or zones of alterity—in scholarship on Asian lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) cultures.⁸ Because the emphasis on cultural

specificity also loomed large in the earlier debate on Foucauldian historicism in queer theorization, I will begin by going over a schematic version of that debate as an *entrée* to broader issues regarding the overlapping politics of knowledge about queerness and Chineseness. Based on the epistemological evidence available and the kind of genealogical methodology substantiated by Foucault's work, I then suggest that the tensions between themes illuminated by Dennis Altman, on the one hand, and Lisa Rofel, on the other, on the subject of global gay identity has been heuristically useful for probing these issues in the context of modern Chinese culture, but also point to a potential lacuna in queer studies' perpetual regionalization of non-Western cultures. Of course, this idiosyncratic linkage can only be considered as one of the multiple layers of the plausible disciplinary groundings of queer Sinophone studies. Nevertheless, my purpose is to show not only why queer theory needs the Sinophone and vice versa, but, more importantly, how certain theoretical slippages can serve as points of their convergence—as pivotal anchors for grasping queer Sinophonicity across seemingly disparate disciplines.⁹ I will end with a rereading of Stanley Kwan's *Lan Yu* (2001) to bring to sharper focus the interdisciplinary implications and analytical configurations of queer Sinophone studies.

Foucauldian historicism in queer theorization

The general preference in queer studies for cultural particularism, as opposed to universalism, can be traced to an early debate between pioneer American queer theorists David Halperin and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick. In *Epistemology of the Closet*, Sedgwick criticizes Halperin for over-emphasizing historical paradigm shifts, an approach that comfortably follows Michel Foucault's genealogical periodization of sexuality.¹⁰ Sedgwick's assertion that overlapping and contradictory, universalizing, and minoritizing, forms of gender and sexual expression coexist at any given moment in time gives queer theoretical critique a powerful argument against interpretations that privilege linear progression. What alarms Sedgwick the most are readings of the past that posit the absolute supersessions of epistemological structures. Sedgwick's intervention has substantially informed many subsequent works in queer history, allowing them to question the underlying assumptions of paradigm shifts or epistemological breaks in the history of sexuality.¹¹ According to Thomas Foster's work on male sexuality in eighteenth-century Massachusetts, for example, early Americans "viewed sexual desires and interests as potentially part of an individual's makeup," suggesting that the distinction between "acts" and "identities" that has long dominated the analytic frame of historians of sexuality is less tenable than has been typically assumed.¹²

Similarly, based on his study of twentieth-century Southern American men who sought sexual encounters with other men, John Howard in his book *Men Like That* echoes Sedgwick's problematization of historical paradigm shifts:

If, as has been convincingly demonstrated, urbanization and industrialization enabled gay identity and culture formation in the cities during the

nineteenth century or perhaps earlier, then the Western world witnessed what has been called the Great Paradigm Shift, the articulation of a cultural binary undergirding much dualistic thinking: the heterosexual-homosexual split. Homosexuality—and, by inference, heterosexuality—was no longer understood as a set of acts, but as an identity; not as behavior, but a state of being.

Men Like That complicates this schism by documenting the experiences both of men like *that*—which is to say, men of that particular type, self-identified gay males—as well as men *who like that*, men who also like queer sex, who also engage in homosexual activity or gender nonconformity, but do not necessarily identify as gay. Though I naturally have greater access as a researcher to the former, my project nonetheless unearths evidence to support my tentative assertion that throughout the twentieth century, queer sexuality continued to be understood as both acts *and* identities, behaviors *and* beings. It was variously comprehended—depending in part on race and place—along multiple axes and continuums as yet unexamined by historians.¹³

Besides using queer loosely as a blanket term to document non-heterosexual desires among men living in the American South, Howard's analysis intentionally juxtaposes "identities" against "acts," "behaviors" against "beings," as the definitive feature of what the "Great Paradigm Shift" supposedly shifted. In this way, the "Great Paradigm Shift" becomes a relatively weak analytic frame as long as historians uncover the evidence for the centrality of "identities" to one's erotic definition before the supposed "Shift" (and for the centrality of "acts" after it). This interpretation has animated an impressive body of historical scholarship—including, most notably, Terry Castle's *The Apparitional Lesbian*, Bernadette Brooten's *Love Between Women*, the volume *Premodern Sexualities* edited by Louise Fradenberg and Carla Freccero, and, most recently, Regina Kunzel's *Criminal Intimacy*—in which Foucauldian histories of sexuality that tend to underscore periodizing ruptures rather than historical continuities often become a signaling target of critique. Interestingly, the resistance to Foucauldian historicism has been most forcefully articulated in lesbian historiography.¹⁴

In *How to Do the History of Homosexuality* (2002), Halperin directly responds to these anti-Foucauldian accusations—on both theoretical and empirical grounds—and is quick to acknowledge some of the problems with his earlier formulation of the social constructionist approach.¹⁵ While still defending his conviction that there was no homosexuality, properly speaking, in most pre-modern societies, Halperin goes on to identify some of the major shortcomings of this conviction, including

- (1) it does not acknowledge the complex relations between identity and identification in our attitudes to the past; (2) it has been overtaken by a queer political and intellectual movement to all forms of heteronormativity, and which therefore finds important connections between non-heterosexual formations in both the present and the past; (3) it does not reckon with what,

from a non-constructionist perspective, appear as continuities within the history of homosexuality; (4) it misleadingly implies a Eurocentric progress narrative, which aligns modernity, Western culture, metropolitan life, bourgeois social forms, and liberal democracies with “sexuality” (both homo- and hetero-), over against pre-modern, non-Western, non-urban, non-white, non-bourgeois, non-industrialized, non-developed societies.¹⁶

Having stipulated this set of problematics, Halperin still finds value in the Foucauldian interpretive framework for queer studies. The ultimate purpose of adhering to a strong historicism, Halperin contends, is:

to accede through a calculated encounter with the otherness of the past, to an altered understanding of the present—a sense of our own non-identity to ourselves—and thus to a new experience of ourselves as sites of potential transformation.¹⁷

Perhaps more so than anyone else, Halperin stands as a central figure in the field to promote an empirically grounded genealogical-historicist approach to queer studies—an approach that “begins with an analysis of blind spots in our current understanding, or with a problematization of what passes for ‘given’ in contemporary thought.”¹⁸ Foucauldian historicism is indispensable for queer theoretical thinking, according to this logic, because the potential alterity of the past and the strangeness of its regulatory norms invite us to reconsider our present day assumptions about what is conceivable, possible, and, by extension, transformable. As we will see momentarily in the context of China, the emergence of homosexuality as a form of experience was conditioned by a clear epistemological break from the past in the Republican period (1912–1949), so the Foucauldian approach becomes imperative for attending to the historical specificity and the potential problem of anachronism in our historiographical reappraisal of concepts of queer experience.

Above all, Halperin shows that the neat distinction between “identities” and “acts” obscures more than it illuminates. In the chapter “Forgetting Foucault,” after giving two examples, one from ancient Greece (the *kinaidos* figure) and another from an erotic tale told by Apuleius (retold by Giovanni Boccaccio in the fourteenth century), Halperin concludes:

the current doctrine that holds that sexual acts were unconnected to sexual identities in European discourses before the nineteenth century is mistaken in at least two different respects. First, sexual acts could be interpreted as representative components of an individual’s sexual morphology. Second, sexual acts could be interpreted as representative expressions of an individual’s sexual subjectivity. A sexual morphology is not the same thing as a sexual subjectivity: the figure of the *kinaidos*, for example, represents an instance of deviant morphology without subjectivity, whereas Boccaccio’s Pietro represents an instance of deviant subjectivity without morphology.

Thus morphology and subjectivity, as I have been using those terms, describe two different *logics* according to which sexual acts can be connected to some more generalized feature of an individual's identity.¹⁹

As such, what Halperin clarifies here is that, contrary to conventional wisdom, sexual identity—or modes of sexual identification to be more precise—unquestionably existed well before the emergence of the homosexual–heterosexual duality, after which sexual act continued to remain a decisive conceptual anchor. What Sedgwick and others have called the “Great Paradigm Shift” is anything but a neat historical evolution from a world exclusive of sexual “acts” to one of sexual “identities.” Despite the critique put forth by Sedgwick and her supporters, Halperin concedes that his earlier work simply “*wasn't Foucauldian enough*.”²⁰ By being less invested in conventional social history and making greater use of Foucauldian (or Nietzschean) genealogy, the more engaging task for historians of sexuality should be to “foreground the historicity of desire itself and of human beings as subjects of desire.”²¹

Therefore, what the late nineteenth-century emergence of the conceptual space of homosexuality shifted was a broader rearrangement of earlier patterns of erotic organization. For men in particular, features such as gender roles, sexual positions, and the asymmetrical hierarchies of social identities articulated in terms of status, age, etc. faded to the background in the making of the erotic subject, as homosexuality—at the unstable conjuncture of orientation, object choice, and behavior—came to the fore in denoting a mutually exclusive form of human subjectivity in opposition to heterosexuality.²² In other words, the historicism of the “Great Paradigm Shift” implies something more significant than a transition that could be reduced down to a simple succession of sexual “acts” by sexual “identities.”²³ Regarding the history of lesbianism, Valerie Traub suggests by contrast that a distinct cultural code marked the Tribade as a definitive thing of the past by the early twentieth century, when the Sapphist dominated the lesbian public: namely, Tribades did not smoke (or wear suits).²⁴

If there is one lesson historians of sexuality can take away from Foucault's work via Halperin, it is to investigate more carefully the subtle relations between sexual acts and identities before the concluding decades of the nineteenth century, to “pay more (not less) attention to the changing social and discursive conditions in which the desires of historical subjects are constructed.”²⁵ The widely accepted chronological distinction between “acts” and “identities”—the assumed linear progression from the former to the latter—that has been understood in terms of a “Great Paradigm Shift” is the first thing scholars need to put behind in order for queer theory to make greater use of the insight of historicism. In fact, the problem with this distinction has less to do with its assumed linear characterization of change over time per se, and more to do with its inadequate recognition of how *epistemology* factors into that change in favor of a more superficial reading of what that change entailed.

Sharon Marcus brings together the commensurability between Sedgwick's insistence on coexisting patterns of gender and erotic historical arrangement and

Halperin's defense of historicist thinking in her book, *Between Women: Friendship, Desire, and Marriage in Victorian England* (2007).²⁶ For a long time, scholars have debated the most adequate interpretation of nineteenth-century female same-sex relations in the English-speaking world. Carroll Smith-Rosenberg's seminal work on the female world of love and rituals in Victorian America, Adrienne Rich's subsequent manifesto on "compulsory heterosexuality," and Lillian Faderman's *Surpassing the Love of Men* (among her numerous other studies) are three of the most well-known works that argue for a fundamentally different cultural world in which female same-sex intimacy took on meaning before the advent of a pathological notion of lesbian deviancy.²⁷ Subsequent studies by Esther Newton, Lisa Duggan, Terry Castle, and Martha Vicinus provide powerful criticisms of the ways in which Smith-Rosenberg, Rich, and Faderman tend to desexualize lesbianism and universalize women who desired other women.²⁸ What is suggested in this lineage is that the issue of historical continuity versus epistemic rupture often plays a pivotal role in the entire debate. Marcus situates her book in relation to this debate by bringing historicism back to bear on queer theory. As Marcus explains it,

Between Women makes a historical point about the particular indifference of Victorians to a homo/hetero divide for women; this is also a theoretical claim that can reorient gender and sexuality studies in general. Queer theory often accentuates the subversive dimensions of lesbian, gay, and transgender acts and identities . . . *Between Women* shows, by contrast, that in Victorian England, female marriage, gender mobility, and women's erotic fantasies about women were at the heart of normative institutions and discourses, even for those who made a religion of the family, marriage, and sexual difference.²⁹

In the spirit of Sedgwick's queer theoretical intervention, Marcus shows that there is room for thinking about alternative and coexisting patterns of gender and erotic desire in the past, but it is not necessary for such a mode of thinking to proceed in ways that would compromise the kind of Foucauldian historicism promoted by Halperin and others. In light of this body of pioneering scholarship, our historiographical reappraisal of queer sexuality in China must start from historicizing the concept of homosexuality itself.

Epistemology, Chinese (homo)sexual identity, and global queer studies

I began with a group of queer theorists who prefer an analytical lens rooted in cultural specificity, which oftentimes involved a substantial dismissal of Foucauldian historicism, to make one simple point: similar patterns can be identified in recent developments in the China field. As the field of queer studies "goes global," its interlocutors remain less and less willing to make claims about broad contours of change over time. A recent generation of queer theorists has

offered an impressive spectrum of sophisticated insights into such topics as the subaltern question, migration, diaspora and postcolonial subjectivities, and queer temporalities by drawing on pressing concerns of recent global geopolitics.³⁰ However, as Anjali Arondekar has astutely observed, even as the turn to globalization represents the most recent force reshaping queer studies, the field still “navigates through, and sinks uncomfortably in, the very colonial landscape it hopes to exceed and supplant.”³¹ This is because

a substantial proportion of the scholarship produced under the rubric of sexuality and/or queer studies still narrates sexuality through the prism of a short-lived history, often relegating the materialities of colonialism and empire to the nominal status of recurring referents, rather than terrains of thick description.³²

That anthropology is the current house of the most innovative scholarship in global queer studies is a case in point.³³

Echoing Arondekar’s insight, Megan Sinnott has recently made the following comment in her article, “Borders, Diasporas, and Regional Connections: Trends in Asian ‘Queer’ Studies”:

Over approximately the past fifteen years, English-language scholarship on same-sex sexuality and transgenderism in Asia has expanded dramatically. One of the most significant themes in this literature is the exploration of sexuality and gender as a form of identity (or “subjectivity”), practice, and cultural discourse (or “cultural logic”) that has emerged in the context of the transnational movement of concepts, bodies, and imagery. The turn to issues of transnationalism, diaspora, and border crossings works toward interrogating and deconstructing assumptions of streamrolling Westernization or stable identity categories that fall along binaries such as traditional/modern or local/global. [...]

The critical analysis of how the nation-state works to define sexuality and gender as part of nationalist projects is a popular and well-developed direction of Asian sexuality and gender studies [think of Bret Hinsch, Gregory Pflugfelder, or Tze-lan Sang]. But exactly how sexuality and gender categories work across and through boundaries is an important new direction.³⁴

In offering a state-of-the-field analysis of queer Asian studies, Sinnott chose texts that she deemed most representative of the field’s general trends. It is no surprise that these texts are “weighted toward the discipline of anthropology and studies on Southeast Asia,” because they “make up a particularly dynamic, although not the only, area of Asian studies of sexuality and gender.”³⁵ Queer Sinophone studies, as a field for which this chapter aims to sketch some preliminary theoretical contours, similarly seeks to investigate “exactly how sexuality and gender categories work across and through boundaries” by bringing in examples from (postcolonial) East Asia and other trans-Pacific localities.

Yet precisely because the growing attention to how queer categories operate “across and through boundaries” typifies the evolving field of queer Asian studies, it is all the more urgent to situate these categories within deeply embedded historical contexts rather than short-lived terrains. The tensions underlying arguments about “global” vs. “local” understandings of the emergence of the category of homosexuality itself have been one of the most hotly debated examples in Chinese studies. In terms of a more “local” approach, for example, the anthropologist Lisa Rofel in her book, *Desiring China: Experiments in Neoliberalism, Sexuality, and Public Culture* (2007), works against the notion of a “global gay identity” as first proposed by the scholar Dennis Altman.³⁶ In *Global Sex* (2001), Altman sets out to examine the significance of “globalization” for sexuality studies. One of the central premises of his argument is that Western models of sexuality, under the force of globalization in political economy, has been packaged, distributed, and exported to other parts of the world in the last three decades or so. By contrast, Rofel challenges what Altman has called “the emergence of a western-style politicized homosexuality in Asia,”³⁷ arguing instead that “the emergence of gay identities in China occurs in a complex cultural field representing neither a wholly global culture nor simply a radical difference from the West.”³⁸ “Global gayness,” Rofel contends,

with its assumptions about the similitude of identity, the homogeneity of values, and a sliding scale of identity development, fails to capture the intricate complexity . . . of gay life in Beijing. The insistence on identities that do not break down and on categories that are self-contained ignores the discursive processes of exclusion and differentiation. While the visions of many Chinese gay men in China about what it means to be gay are certainly connected to the knowledge that gay people exist all over the world, these men do not simply imagine a global community of horizontal comradeship. If the models of what it means to be gay emanate from outside China, they nonetheless construct a transcultural space by opening up a process of working them out in China.³⁹

Much like the earlier critics of Halperin and Foucault, Rofel favors culturally specific insights into the “intricate complexity . . . of gay life in Beijing” over generalizing statements about “a global community of horizontal comradeship.”⁴⁰ Their prioritization of certain types of queer theoretical intervention—oriented toward notions of complexity, specificity, locality, and non-linearity—converges on a decisive preference for cultural particularism.

Rofel’s analysis makes possible a more nuanced reading of “the emergence of gay identities in China” in comparison to Altman’s seemingly simpler model of “global sex.” Yet one could also argue that Rofel risks, in advocating for the power of the “local” in resisting globalization, underestimating the epistemic homogenizing power of globalization itself. On the one hand, the articulation of gay identities in China could indeed be read as situated at the intersections “between Chinese gay men’s desires for cultural belonging in China and transcultural gay identifications.”⁴¹

Still, in my view, some kind of pre-given ontological status of sexual identity still operates as an unquestioned assumption when Rofel speaks of “Chinese gay men” in relation to “desires for cultural belonging in China.” Rofel does not reconcile the under-specificity of the conceptual origins of that subject position she calls “Chinese gay men”; in her formulation, it is as if there had always been a group of individuals waiting to negotiate that identity. To be sure, it would be unconvincing to suggest that Chinese men who self-identify as gay have absolutely no agency whatsoever in reworking the global model of sexual identity. But this does not exhaust what the globalization thesis has to offer. Part of what is so compelling about the globalization thesis has to do with its explicit contextualization of the *epistemological* trajectories of (in Rofel’s words) “what it means to be gay” on a level that transcends the boundaries of the nation-state.

If one is willing to entertain the plausibility of the globalization thesis, even if only strategically, one can begin to appreciate the deeper historical roots of the kind of claims about epistemology that it enables. In the case of China, I have explored elsewhere the process whereby “homosexuality” emerged as a concept of human identity and difference in the Republican period.⁴² By bringing to light the writings of iconoclastic public intellectuals such as Zhang Jingsheng and Pan Guangdan on the subject, I demonstrate that the translation of the foreign concept of homosexuality into Chinese produced a key epistemological rearrangement in the social significance and cultural meaning of Chinese same-sex desire and relations. What got translated in the aftermath of the New Culture Movement was not just the sexological category of “homosexuality” itself, but an entirely foreign *style of reasoning* descending from Western psychiatric thought about sexual perversion and psychopathology. From this process of trans-cultural appropriation, the Republican-era Chinese sexologists had essentially established for China what Michel Foucault calls *scientia sexualis* that first distinguished itself in nineteenth-century Europe: a new regime of truth that relocated the discursive technology of the sexual self from the religious sphere of pastoral confession to the secular discourse of modern science and medicine.⁴³ Therefore, the conceptual space for articulating a Western-derived homosexual identity grounded in some notion of personhood *did* emerge in early twentieth-century China, primarily as a consequence of the establishment of a new regime of truth conditioned by the arrival of European sexological discourse.

Perhaps the best way to appreciate the historical significance of the rise of an East Asian *scientia sexualis* is to identify the changing styles of argumentation about same-sex desire it facilitated in China. The prevalence and meaning of homoeroticism in late imperial China has been a topic of intense scholarly discussion and debate.⁴⁴ But when we turn to the actual historical record, we are confronted with two opposing epistemological characterizations of same-sex desire in China’s transition from empire to nation: from what I call the *culturalistic* style of argumentation to a *nationalistic* style of argumentation.⁴⁵ In the essayist Zhang Dai’s reflections on the relationship between his friend Qi Zhixiang and a boy named Abao, written in the seventeenth century, we see that same-sex desire was described as a symbol of cultural refinement:

If someone does not have an obsession, they cannot make a good companion for they have no deep passions; if a person does not show some flaw, they also cannot make a good companion since they have no genuine spirit. My friend Qi Zhixiang has obsessions with calligraphy and painting, football, drums and cymbals, ghost plays, and opera. In 1642, when I arrived in the southern capital, Zhixiang brought Abao out to show me . . . Zhixiang was a master of music and prosody, fastidious in his composition of melodies and lyrics, and personally instructing [his boy-actors] phrase by phrase. Those of Abao's ilk were able to realize what he had in mind. . . . In the year of 1646, he followed the imperial guards to camp at Taizhou. A lawless rabble plundered the camp, and Zhixiang lost all his valuables. Abao charmed his master by singing on the road. After they returned, within half a month, Qi again took a journey with Abao. Leaving his wife and children was for Zhixiang as easy as removing a shoe, but a young brat was as dear to him as his own life. This sums up his obsession.⁴⁶

This passage also sums up what a man's interest in young males meant in the late imperial context remarkably well: it was perceived as just one of the many different types of "obsessions" that a male literatus could have—a sign of his cultural elitism. For Zhang, a man's taste in male lovers was as important as his "obsessions" in other arenas of life, without which this person "cannot make a good companion."

Replacing this culturalistic style of argumentation is the nationalistic style of argumentation that gained epistemological grounding in the early twentieth century. As Matthew Sommer's work on Chinese legal history has shown, sodomy appeared as a formal legislation in China only by the Qing dynasty. This innovation during the Yongzheng reign (1722–1735), according to Sommer, fundamentally reoriented the organizing principle for the regulation of sexuality in China: a universal order of "appropriate" gender roles and attributes was granted some foundational value over the previous status-oriented paradigm, in which different status groups were expected to hold unique standards of familial and sexual morality.⁴⁷ But whether someone who engaged in same-sex behavior was criminalized due to his disruption of a social order organized around status or gender performance, the world of imperial China never viewed the experience of homosexuality as a separate problem.⁴⁸ The question was never homosexuality per se, but whether one's sexual behavior would potentially reverse the dominant script of social order. If we want to *isolate* the problem of homosexuality in China, we must jump to the first half of the twentieth century to find it.⁴⁹

Here is where we can broaden our appreciation of the effort among certain Chinese modernizing intellectuals to build a science of sexuality starting in the early Republican period. When they explained same-sex desire by making the writings of European sexologists such as Havelock Ellis and Sigmund Freud familiar to a popular readership, what they brought to comprehensibility was not merely the category of "homosexuality" itself, but a whole new style of reasoning descending from Western psychiatric thought about sexual identity.⁵⁰ This

psychiatric style of reasoning “originated” from the West was, in turn, transformed into a nationalistic style of argumentation in the politically volatile context of Chinese national modernity: such as when the *dan* actors of Peking opera and other cultural expressions of homoeroticism (e.g., male prostitution) came to be regarded as signs of national backwardness even among the Chinese themselves especially by the late Qing and early Republic.⁵¹ Put differently, a distinct problem in modern Chinese historiography has been the question of why, starting in the early Republican era, Chinese modernizers began to view previous cultural expressions of same-sex eroticism as domestic indicators of mental deficiency. And what I am suggesting here is that, much like how the gradual acceptance of an intrinsically pathological view of China helped the reception of Western-style anatomy in nineteenth-century medicine,⁵² the epistemic alignment of pre-nationalistic homoeroticism with the foreign notion of homosexuality precisely undergirded the appropriation of a science of Western sexology in twentieth-century China.

To assess the transformation in the epistemology of same-sex desire in China from an internal historical perspective, then, we can begin to reconstruct some of the polarized concepts that constitute two opposed styles of argumentation. We are presented, for instance, with the polarities between literati taste and sick perversion, refined obsession and pathological behavior, cultural superiority and psychological abnormality, markers of elite status and signs of national backwardness. The first of each of these pairs of concepts partially makes up what I call the culturalistic style of argumentation about same-sex desire, while the second of each of these pairs help to constitute the nationalistic style of argumentation. These polarities therefore characterize two distinct conceptual modes of representation, two contrasting conceptual spaces, two different kinds of deep epistemological structure.

Such a critical engagement on the level of historical epistemology allows us to reassess the broader significance of the new regime of truth conditioned by the rise of a *scientia sexualis* in China. Contrary to the claim propounded by Altman, Rofel, and others that “gay identity” and *scientia sexualis* first appeared on the China scene only by the post-socialist era, my historicization suggests that the emergence of both can be traced to an earlier epistemic turning point—in the Republican period.⁵³ Neither Altman’s nor Rofel’s work can be fully evaluated on the grounds of their empirical data, which focus on social changes in China that occurred only in the post-socialist era. While Altman’s work does not address the historical-epistemological contextualization of his globalization thesis, Rofel’s analysis does not fully acknowledge the deeper historical roots of what she calls “the emergence of gay identity in China” as well as the global dynamics of its relevant processes of historical (re)configuration.

The ethical convergence of theoretical critique

My objective so far has been to trace the history of certain queer theoretical debates and to show that the nature of these debates inevitably has a stake in the

way scholars study Chinese queer sexuality. An earlier generation of Western queer scholars, whether working on male or female homoerotic experience, tended to adopt Sedgwick's critique of the Foucauldian genealogical method, and they tended to favor non-linear interpretations of cultural identity over neat historical periodization. In the case of the debate between Altman and Rofel, Rofel's approach has been more respected by queer theorists of the North American region precisely due to their shared investment in uncovering cultural particularities and shared preference for anti-theoretical universalism (such as the "global gay identity" trope).⁵⁴ However, their similar propensity for theoretical particularism has celebrated Rofel's work at the expense of perpetuating a crucial blind spot in Chinese historiography: the globalizing consequence of a modern regime of truth that relocated the discursive technology of the sexual self to the discourse of science and medicine (the mirror image of this lacuna in queer studies being the continual regionalization of non-Western cultures). The disciplinary regime of Chinese sexology furnishes the category of homosexuality with a deeper historical and epistemological grounding, something that can be traced to the early twentieth century, especially the 1920s, a crucial turning point in the history of sexuality in China.⁵⁵

I am not suggesting that the various delineations of "specificities" and "particularism" in queer Asia are necessarily insignificant or ill-conceived. Indeed, if we consider the range of topics explored by scholars whose works have helped shape queer Asian studies, the field is replete with examples of a theoretical inclination that undermines generalization by emphasizing cultural uniqueness.⁵⁶ Many of the pioneer scholars in the field have begun to move in a direction that enriches the scholarly discussion of Chinese LGBTQ issues and peoples in the English-speaking world, but they often take for granted the geographical location of "China" as a static construct of analysis. In other words, although there are numerous textured accounts of what it means to be queer *in* "Greater China" (including Taiwan and Hong Kong), the question of how "queer" and "Chinese" could operate simultaneously as mutually reinforcing, reciprocal counterhegemonic indexes is rarely interrogated with respect to their compound marginality.⁵⁷ Taking a cue from the intellectual endeavor of denaturalizing categories of gender and sexuality, a non-hegemonic, subversive definition of "Chineseness" is essential to the concept of queer Sinophonicity. It encompasses the perspectives of queer people living outside China and in locales not traditionally associated with Chinese studies (Singapore, Malaysia, etc.) and pays closer attention to the cultural differences between Sinitic-language communities on the margins of China (Taiwan, Hong Kong, etc.) and those within the People's Republic of China (PRC), rather than flattening out these unique cultural identifications with the bias of China-centrism.

A common thread that connects the growing body of scholarship on queer Asia is the idea that "local" (even "Oriental") configurations of gender and sexuality cannot be overridden by modern Western taxonomies of sexual identity. This is now a standard interpretation of both the historical record and the cultural archive of non-Western same-sex desires. But a variant of this interpretation has

already generated controversial repercussions in the field of Middle Eastern sexuality studies. Consider Joseph Massad's infamous claim that all social significations of homosexuality, including internal gay rights activism, reflect the growing penetration of Western cultural imperialism:

The categories of gay and lesbian are not universal at all and can only be universalized by the epistemic, ethical, and political violence unleashed on the rest of the world by the very international human rights advocates whose aim is to defend the very people their intervention is creating.⁵⁸

It bears striking similarity, however ironically and uncomfortably, to Rofel's adamant critique of a "globalized gay identity."⁵⁹ A conspicuous disciplinary-methodological problem that Rofel has sidestepped is what I call self- or re-Orientalization. By that I mean an intentional project that continually defers an "alternative modernity" and quarantines non-Westerness (including Chineseness) by assuming that the genealogical status of that derivative copy of an "original" Western modernity is somehow always already hermeneutically sealed from the historical apparatus of Westernization.⁶⁰ In other words, while it is always important to point up the key imperatives of deimperialization, at the same time we should be more (not less) cautious of any effort to view the broader historical processes of epistemic homogenization as having any lesser bearings than forms of local (or "Oriental") resistance.⁶¹

In Chinese cultural studies, it is important to note that, before the theorization of the Sinophone, there had been a long tradition of treating "Chineseness" as more problematic and fluid than homogeneous and Sinocentric. Aihwa Ong's investigation of Chinese diasporic subjectivities is an important example. In *Flexible Citizenship: The Cultural Logics of Transnationality* (1999), Ong writes:

the contemporary practices and values of diasporan Chinese are characteristic of larger questions of displacement, travel, capital accumulation, and other transnational processes that affect large numbers of late-twentieth-century subjects (who are geographically "in place" and *displaced*). Over the past few decades, the multiple and shifting status of "Chineseness" has been formed and embedded within the processes of global capitalism—production, trade, consumption, mobility, and dislocation/relocation—and subjected to various modes of governmentality that fix them in place or disperse them in space.⁶²

By arguing that overseas Chinese adopt a flexible notion of citizenship across different regions of the Pacific world, Ong is really echoing some of the arguments that she made in the introduction to an earlier volume that she co-edited with Donald Nonini, *Ungrounded Empires: The Cultural Politics of Modern Chinese Transnationalism* (1997). In their introduction to the volume, Nonini and Ong classify modern Chinese transnationalism as a "third culture," a concept

they borrowed from Mike Featherstone.⁶³ By “third cultures” they mean those porous products of globalization associated with late capitalism that cut across geopolitical boundaries of nation-states. In their formulation, modern Chinese transnationalism can be considered one such third culture because it resembles “an emergent global form that moreover provides alternative visions in late capitalism to Western modernity and generates new and distinctive social arrangements, cultural discourses, practices, and subjectivities.”⁶⁴

Beyond theoretical framing, Ong and Nonini define the historical parameters of modern Chinese transnationalism by describing it as “a recent global phenomenon with historical roots in the premodern trade systems, European colonialism, and more recent American geopolitical domination of the Pacific.”⁶⁵ (In this their argument works well with Rey Chow’s decentering of the “Middle Kingdom” as the ultimate meaningful referent for any understanding of Chinese diaspora.⁶⁶) By grounding Chinese transnationalism “in the geopolitical context of late-twentieth century Asian modernity,” their volume adds greater refinement to Arif Dirlik’s deconstruction of the Pacific Rim as a transregional cultural space of Asian capitalism.⁶⁷ Again, in stressing that they “do not thereby accord China a privileged ontological or epistemological position,” Ong and Nonini have provided a model for studying Chinese transnationalism that anticipates the “Sinophone” concept to be developed later by Shih and others, although with an underexplored perspective of Sinophone’s historical parameters that date to no earlier than the 1980s.

I propose that the historical parameters of queer Sinophonicity are best defined through simulating the chronotypology of *the entire postwar period*. The history of the Sinophone is essentially a history of constructions of Chineseness that exceeds the traditional historiographies of modern China and Chinese diaspora.⁶⁸ If one insists on bringing the construction of Chineseness to bear on the history of Chinese diaspora, Sinophonicity would find its articulation most meaningful only when continental China is not assigned an ontologically and epistemologically privileged position. Philip Kuhn’s historical study, *Chinese Among Others: Emigration in Modern Times* (2008), is an interesting example of this problem. By insisting on the presence of over four centuries of social and economic “corridors” between overseas Chinese and China the homeland, Kuhn’s analysis inevitably succumbs to a kind of “Sinocentrism” that is unwilling to let go of the Chinese roots of those people living abroad who, although emigrated from China, nonetheless have established overseas communities that are no longer identical to Mainland Chinese culture and have had to deal with various measures of state and social pressure (such as the pronounced anti-Sinitism in subregions of Southeast Asia following the Pacific War).⁶⁹ However, diaspora, as Shih has reminded us, “has an expiration date; one cannot say one is diasporic after three hundred years, and everyone should be given a chance to become a local.”⁷⁰ Kuhn is certainly correct in highlighting the worldwide contribution of overseas Chinese to the establishment of a new Chinese Republic in the early twentieth century. This supports his argument that “the modern history of Chinese emigration and the modern history of China are

really aspects of the same socio-historical process.”⁷¹ But I would insist that this is not a historically continuous process, and the cleavage is most evident in the postwar decades. By the 1950s, the relationship between the PRC and its peripheries came to reflect the broader geopolitical cultural contours of the Cold War.⁷² This suggests that Kuhn’s taken-for-granted nominal categorization of places like Taiwan and Hong Kong as “frontier enclaves” of China obscures more than it illumines regarding these regions’ intricate relationship to global integration.

Again, one of the major theoretical innovations of Sinophonicity lies in the self-reflexive project of problematizing China-centrism, especially with respect to our appreciation of how the Sinosphere relates to the postcolonial world. On the issue of how scholarly writing in area studies can reinforce and re-essentialize the very object of their analysis, such as “China” or “the Orient,” I am reminded of Rey Chow’s penetrating insights in *Writing Diaspora: Tactics of Intervention in Contemporary Cultural Studies* (1993). On the question of whether Chinese culture and history can be studied through the theoretical lens of postcolonialism, Chow writes:

the notion of “coloniality” (together with the culture criticisms that follow from it), when construed strictly in terms of the foreignness of race, land, and language, can *blind* us to political exploitation as easily as it can alert us to it. In the history of modern Western imperialism, the Chinese were never completely dominated by a foreign colonial power, but the apparent absence of the “enemy” as such does not make the Chinese case any *less* “third world” in terms of the exploitation suffered by the people, whose most important colonizer remains their own government. China, perhaps because it is an exception to the rule of imperialist domination by race, land, and language involving a foreign power, in fact highlights the effects of the imperialistic transformation of value and value-production more sharply than in other “third world” cultures.⁷³

Here, one can easily make a connection to what Tani Barlow terms “colonial modernity” and to James Hevia’s study of British imperialism in nineteenth-century China. In their separate but closely related projects, Barlow and Hevia question the dominant “semi-colonial” interpretive framework that scholars have cast over modern Chinese history, particularly for the pre-civil war period.⁷⁴ If I were to rephrase the most immediate concern that underpinned their overlapping analytics, it would be as follows: Is it possible to consider the various inter-related attempts of colonial, imperial, and nationalist geopolitical struggles around the world in an unifying framework that we might call “colonial modernity?” This would not lead us, in using quantitatively indexed terms such as “semi-colonialism” or “informal empires,” to privilege a certain type of colonial administration and turn a blind eye on other co-existing modalities of colonizer–colonized relations. Adopting “colonial modernity” as a historical and historiographical category would thus force us to rethink about China and India, for instance, as two sites of colonial power/resistance—two intertwined nexuses of

contested imperial formations—in terms of a *global configuration*, a worldwide web of the social epistemological forces that coalesced around colonial enterprises and apparatuses of imperial domination (and subversion).

If we apply a postcolonial approach to the study of modern Chinese culture and history, we can begin to see the shortcomings of any argument that insists on a permanently different “culture” of Chinese queerness that Western words, ideas, and even theories will always fail to register. To quote Chow again, the aim of a self-reflexive postcolonial critique

is to point out the ever-changing but ever-present complicity between our critical articulation and the political environment at which that articulation is directed. Because of this, whenever the oppressed, the native, the subaltern [and we can add here, the queer], and so forth are used to represent the point of “authenticity” for our critical discourse, they become at the same time the place of myth-making and an escape from the impure nature of political realities. In the same way that “native imprints” suggest “primitivism” in modernist art, we turn, increasingly with fascination, to the oppressed to locate a “genuine” critical origin.⁷⁵

In other words, *the voices and identities of Chinese queers should not be understood as and expected to be the “authentic” raw material that anthropologists and queer scholars seek to re-present as purely as possible. They are not the origin of critical discourse but “the place of myth-making.”* The very assumption of their enduring cultural authenticity, or what I called cultural particularism earlier, might reinforce a pre-established boundary of “difference” whose imprint of postcoloniality stems from the various norms and currents of the imperial project.⁷⁶

Again, an underlying problem that queer Sinophonicity aims to rectify concerns projects that label some form of queerness distinctively Chinese or identify some aspects of Chinese culture distinctively queer yet not in any Western sense of the word, because such efforts only unveil the very constructive nature of queerness and Chineseness by fixing them on to analytical presumptions. As Chow observes,

it is ironic that in much of the work we do in cultural studies today, we resort to cultural/ethnic/local “difference” not as an open-ended process but as a preordained fact. The irony is that such a valorization of cultural difference occurs at a time when difference-as-aura-of-the-original has long been problematized by the very availability—and increasing indispensability—of our reproductive apparatuses.⁷⁷

Like the way Sinologists can (and often do) romanticize a preordained fact of Chineseness, queer scholars can (and often do) easily re-essentialize the very object of their analysis, queerness. Queer Sinophone studies, as an interdisciplinary field for which this chapter has aimed to chart some preliminary contours, squarely confronts this ethical convergence of theoretical critique.

Having worked through the similarities between the frequently assumed ontological status of queerness and Chineseness in cultural studies, especially via Rey Chow's postcolonial insights that eschew the disturbing comfort of Sinology's disciplinary situation, we come full circle to the meaning and rationale of queer Sinophonicity. One of the theoretical strengths of queer Sinophonicity as a guiding framework is that it directs our attention to the parallel blind spots in East Asian studies and queer studies that simultaneously disguise the subjective element of scholarly discourses and falsely present what they claim to represent as unproblematically "authentic" or genuinely "different." This is why I have not insisted on the investigation of cultural identities and practices from the cumulative perspective of adding Chineseness to queerness, an effort that stresses the *nominal differences* of the two categories; rather, the whole point of thinking in terms of queer Sinophonicity is to approach anti-normative transnational practices and identities from an angle that crystallizes Chineseness and queerness as cultural constructions that are more mutually generative than different, as open processes that are more historically co-produced than additive.

Modern Chinese literature and cultural production now has to face, as do British and French literatures, "an impressive roster of newly empowered voices asking for their narratives to be heard."⁷⁸ In her recent clarification of the historical dimensions of the Sinophone concept, Shu-mei Shih broadens its meaning beyond concrete objects of analysis: "the Sinophone can be considered *a way of looking at the world*, a theory, and perhaps even an epistemology."⁷⁹ As a way of looking at the world, the Sinophone eschews the binary of "China and the West" and problematizes the dichotomy of "Western theory and Asian reality." Such potential fracturing prompts us "to ask whose interests these binaries serve, what kind of work is hampered or held up in the service of these interests, and what, therefore, remains to be done."⁸⁰ It is in being that kind of interruptive worldview that the Sinophone and the queer ultimately converge.

Rerouting the geopolitics of desire

In light of the unconventional nature of the theoretical terrains that this chapter has tried to map, I will end with a rereading of one of the most celebrated films in which homosexual experience in the PRC is depicted, *Lan Yu* (2001), and zoom out from this example of affective representationalism to illustrate the broader significance of queer Sinophone studies in lieu of a conventional conclusion.

In an article that appeared as part of the 2010 special issue of *positions* on transnationalism and queer Chinese politics, Asian America specialist David Eng argues that what the film *Lan Yu* conveys is a "queer space of China." This is a space occupied by two contrasting figurations of political economy that have helped shape China's discrepant modernity—as best personified and embodied by the two protagonists: Handong ("the sugar daddy") and Lan Yu ("the boy favorite")—one capitalist, the other socialist.⁸¹ However, if we reread the film through the lens of queer Sinophonicity, the transnational logic of the film's

biography according to which its production, marketing, and consumption have operated raises poignant yet previously often overlooked questions: What does it mean for Mainland Chinese homosexuality/queerness to be represented through the *oeuvre* of a Hong Kong-based director, Stanley Kwan? How and why does the circulation of “desire” find official legitimation and international success in a Sinophone Hong Kong-based milieu of visibility (in other words, on the margin of “Chinese” filmic culture) but not within an enclosed Mainland China-based film industrial nexus? (*Lan Yu* was banned from public screening in the PRC.) In other words, in what ways has the public and global appreciation of Mainland Chinese queer affect been cultivated through a “refracted” lens (Chinese queer affect as refracted through Hong Kong’s transnational staging)? As these questions make evident, even a compelling reading like Eng’s still considers *Lan Yu* very much from a “post-socialist China” perspective, as opposed to, say, a “minor transnational China” angle.

Rather than viewing Handong and Lan Yu as representative of an ongoing ideological struggle *within* the PRC’s aspiration for a socialist modernity and its contemporary investments in a neoliberal capitalist world order, a queer Sinophone reading might strategically bracket Handong, a figurative embodiment of Sinophone communities, from Lan Yu, a symbolic character of socialist China. Indeed, the relationship between the PRC and Sinophone communities is vividly captured early on in the film by the very first verbal communication between the two characters. After watching a program that introduces the city of Los Angeles on TV, Lan Yu asked: “Have you been to America?” to which Handong later replied, “You come over; I have something for you.” This scene implies that Lan Yu’s impression of the Western world is entirely mediated by what is available in Chinese mass media, and his aspirations for them are able to be realized here and now, through his affair with Handong. If Handong’s invitation is reflective of Sinophone communities’ self-awareness of possessing something that the PRC lacks, their very concrete alliances—economic, political, and not just ideological—with countries such as the United States, not necessarily in a hegemonic sense but in terms of minoritizing cultures, come across much clearer through this Sinophone rereading. The relationship between Lan Yu and Handong, in other words, no longer simply denotes a filmic representation of a “queer space of China,” but registers an unruly tension of cultural and visual (dis)identification that transcends the ideological and even geopolitical contours of (post-) socialist China.

This strategy of rereading *Lan Yu* must be identified with the broader horizon of Sinophone production, because its epistemological-historical pillars come from outside the geopolitical China proper, including the legacies of British postcolonialism, American neo-imperialism, the recontextualization of the Republican state’s scientific globalism (recall my earlier argument that homosexuality emerged not in the post-Mao era but the Republican period), and Hong Kong’s cultural (which was in turn driven by economic) affiliations with other sub-regions of Cold War East Asia, such as Taiwan and Japan. As it is well known, between the end of the Korean War in the mid 1950s and the

reopening of the Chinese Mainland in the late 1970s, Japan, Okinawa, South Korea, and Taiwan became U.S. protectorates. "One of the lasting legacies of this period," according to the cultural critic Kuan-Hsing Chen, "is the installation of the anticommunism-pro-Americanism structure in the capitalist zone of East Asia, whose overwhelming consequences are still with us today."⁸² Inherent in the concept of the Sinophone lies a more calculated awareness of the implicit role played by communist China in the Cold War structuration of transnational East Asia.

Considering *Lan Yu* as a vivid articulation of queer Sinophonicity rather than a monotonous representation of Chinese homosexuality is also instructive in four other regards. First, the Sinophone approach pushes postcolonial studies beyond its overwhelming preoccupation with "the West." Drawing on empirical examples mainly from the South Asian context, postcolonial scholars have problematized the West either by deconstructing any variant of its essentialist invocation or by provincializing (or de-universalizing) the centripetal forces of its greatest imperial regimes, such as Europe and America. Naoki Sakai's essay "Modernity and Its Critique: The Problem of Universalism and Particularism" (1988) and Dipesh Chakrabarty's "Provincializing Europe: Postcoloniality and the Critique of History" (1992) are perhaps the most representative studies of each of these approaches respectively.⁸³ At other times, critics have attempted to recuperate nativist examples from the histories of third world nations. Certain modern concepts often understood as imposed from the outside and sustained by the colonial system, they argue, were actually already internal to the indigenous civilization. The work of Ashis Nandy is exemplary in this regard.⁸⁴ But, as I have pointed out earlier with the example of the history of homoeroticism in China, these otherwise brilliant efforts often risk performing "reverse," "self-," or "re-"Orientalism. Simply put, the delineation of an intrinsically Asian (or non-Westernized) order of things actually reinforces the Orientalist framework it claims to exceed. More to the point, the West is analytically deployed as an universalized imaginary Other in all of these three strategies. By perpetually being *treated as method* in historical narration and cultural criticism, the West continues to function as "an opposing entity, a system of reference, an object from which to learn, a point of measurement, a goal to catch up with, an intimate enemy, and sometimes an alibi for serious discussion and action."⁸⁵

On the contrary, viewing the transnational significance of *Lan Yu* as an historical event of Sinophone production repositions our compass—and redraws our map—by recentring the non-West, Asia, and China more specifically. In his provocative book, *Asia as Method*, Kuan-Hsing Chen invites postcolonial scholars to "deimperialize" their own mode of investigation by moving beyond the fixation of "the West" as a sole historical-theoretical caliber of civilizational, national, imperial, colonial, and Cold War predicaments.⁸⁶ In his words,

In Asia, the deimperialization question cannot be limited to a reexamination of the impacts of Western imperialism invasion, Japanese colonial violence, and U.S. neoimperialist expansion, but must also include the oppressive

practices of the Chinese empire. Since the status of China has shifted from an empire to a big country, how should China position itself now? In what new ways can it interact with neighboring countries? Questions like these can be productively answered only through deimperialized self-questioning, and that type of reflexive work has yet to be undertaken.⁸⁷

My grounding of *Lan Yu* in the frameworks of queer historicism and Sinophone postcolonial theory is precisely an attempt of executing this type of reflexive work. The genealogical trajectory that I propose from Republican-era sexology (as a modality of discourse in global circulations) to the geopolitics of filmic representations of queer desire in Sinophone Hong Kong shows that the Cold War “mediates the continuity between the colonial and postcolonial history of East Asia.”⁸⁸ *Lan Yu* is taken here to be both a medium of cultural representation and an unique form of transregional cinematic meaning-dissemination. The dispersed circuits of knowledge that saturate the meaning-making of the film refocus our attention from the “influence” of Western concepts and ideas to the inter- and intra-Asian regional dynamics of subjectivity condition—from denaturalizing the West to provincializing China, Asia, and the Rest.

Second, by provincializing China, the Sinophone framework enables us to see and think beyond the conventions of China studies.⁸⁹ In terms of the substantive objects of study, a growing number of Sinophone scholars have already ventured into multiple place-based analyses of literary and cinematic examples across the Pacific, from Southeast Asia to Hong Kong to Taiwan to America.⁹⁰ These localized examples in literature and film—in light of their authorial background or artistic form and content even—are rarely invoked in Chinese studies, Asian American studies, or other traditional (area studies) disciplines.⁹¹ Sinophone studies, as “the ‘study of China’ that transcends China,” to borrow the phrase from Mizoguchi Yuzo, therefore acknowledges unforeseen possibilities in Sinological practice in the aftermath of its Cold War structuration.⁹²

In the spirit of marking out “a space in which unspoken stories and histories may be told, and to recognize and map the historically constituted cultural and political effects of the cold war,”⁹³ my rereading is intended to raise a series of interrelated questions situated at the interstices of various categorical assumptions that continue to haunt a “China-centered perspective.”⁹⁴ Is the kind of homosexual experience represented in *Lan Yu* “Chinese” or “Western” in nature? Homosexuality in whose sense of the term? Is it a foreign import, an expression (and thus internalization) of foreign imperialism, or a long-standing indigenous practice in a new light? How can we take seriously the administrative reordering of Hong Kong (where the director is from) in the late twentieth century, which took place not long before the film was made? Is it possible to speak of an alternative “Chinese modernity” that challenges the familiar socialist narrative of twentieth-century Chinese history? Which China is alluded to by the various notions of Chineseness that are depicted in the film? Is the handover of Hong Kong to the PRC in 1997 another form of colonial (and imperial) domination? Evidently, the complexity of the history far exceeds the common terms used to

describe the historical characteristics of “postcolonial” Hong Kong (or Taiwan for that matter). To conceive of the PRC in relation to Hong Kong *circa* 1997 as a regime from the outside or a colonial government only partially accounts for its proto-Chineseness or extra-Chineseness, and precisely because of the lack of a precedent and analogous situations, it is all the more difficult to historicize, with neat categorical imperatives or ways of periodization, the social backdrop against which and the epistemic conditions under which non-normative sexualities are conceptualized through a refracted modality of interregional cultural production.

In terms of chronology, then, dominant historical narratives of twentieth-century China tend to be anchored on three pivotal years: 1919, 1949, and 1989. The narrative outlined in this chapter straightforwardly crosses these turning points. It begins by situating the emergence of “(homo)sexuality” as a conceptual and technical problem in a historical context characterized by the contours of its epistemological dissemination across modern sexology, and it closes with the rise of queer filmic representations of “Chinese” sexuality as a culminating episode in postcolonial Hong Kong. Even if the connections (or the leap, as the case may be) across the years 1949 and 1989 await to be crystallized further and evened out better with more substantial empirical examples, their potential presence nonetheless reminds us of the underlying problems of invoking “Cultural China as a strategy to counter Western hegemony,” which oftentimes “ends up being a reproduction of imperialist desire, locked in the binary opposition of China versus the West.”⁹⁵

Third, understood as “a way of looking at the world,” the epistemological rendition of the Sinophone as “an interruptive worldview” not only breaks down the China-versus-the West binary, but it also specifies the most powerful type, nature, and feature of transnationalism whose interest-articulation must lie beyond the hegemonic constructions of the nation-state. According to Françoise Lionnet and Shu-mei Shih, the transnational “can be less scripted and more scattered” and “is not bound by the binary of the local and the global and can occur in national, local, or global spaces across different and multiple spatialities and temporalities.”⁹⁶ If “China” and “Chineseness” had indeed evolved over the course of the history of (homo)sexuality from sexological discourse to the growing influence of late capitalist archetypes of biopolitics, the changes over time we witness in this history have less to do with the “coming out” of sexual minorities per se, than with the shifting transnationalism of queer Chinese cultures: from the growing global hegemony of Western conceptions of lifelihood and sexuality in *major* transnational China to the rhizomic interactions of geopolitical forces, historical conditions, and cross-cultural contours in *minor* transnational China.

Although I have used postcolonial Hong Kong as the exemplary frame of queer Sinophone (re)production, its implications obviously extend beyond this particular historical context. By invoking the notion of minor transnational China, I hope to garner more in-depth dialogues on the potential *horizontal* connections in queer cultural, social, and political production across postcolonial

locations such as Taiwan, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Singapore, and possibly even South Korea. What I have been suggesting is that in order to capture the history of queer sexuality in modern China in all of its complexity, one needs to account for the epistemological origins of our common sexual categories as much as the transnational context of cultural representation that does not reify the normativity of China-centrism, to chronicle events and processes of change as much as to theorize the genealogy of sexuality and the historicity of queerness. If our perspective is flexible enough to vacillate between the vertical and the horizontal, transnationalism appears to be neither always nor necessarily a top-down homogenizing force, but can very much operate as a bottom-up heterogenizing vector. One of the ensuing shortcomings of queer theory lies in its frequent inability to offer meaningful vocabularies that cut across both the global and the local in order to adequately register the queer otherness of non-Western cultures. But perhaps the problem also lies in the predominant mode of analysis in queer studies that oftentimes lacks in-depth genealogical insights. On such topics as the evolving meaning and transregional politics of Chineseness and gender modernity, queer studies can benefit from a more historically sensitive approach to situating the roots of global queer formations in the intercultural articulations of desire and the rhizomic interactions of minor transnational cultures “from below.”

This brings us to the last, yet perhaps the most important, contribution of the Sinophone methodology: the ability to appreciate the formation of a Sinophone modernity that began to distinguish itself from and gradually replaced an older apparatus of colonial modernity in the course of twentieth-century Chinese history. The year 1989 is a pivotal turning point for reflecting on the historical development of late twentieth-century Chinese and Sinophone cultures.⁹⁷ The PRC government's military action to suppress the Tiananmen Square protests of 1989 has been widely condemned by the international community. Taking place two years after the lifting of the martial law in Taiwan, the incident has been taken to be a direct reflection of the sharp divergence in democratic characteristics of various Chinese-speaking communities (e.g., across the Taiwan strait). If the Cold War structure of East Asian capitalist zones had indeed remained intact by as late as the 1990s, it would still be heuristically useful to periodize contemporary Chinese history along this temporal axis.⁹⁸ In this legacy of the Cold War, and despite its termination, American culture, in both its elite and popular forms, continued to operate as one of the defining forces shaping Taiwanese culture even after Nixon's normalization of American diplomatic relations with communist China (completed in 1979) at the expense of ties with Taiwan.⁹⁹ Handong's embrace of Lan Yu immediately after the Tiananmen Incident in the film (see Figure 2.1), therefore, cannot simply be read as a syncretic moment when the seemingly diachronic socialist and postsocialist tendencies that constitute China's discrepant modernity intersect.¹⁰⁰ This reputable (if not *the* most famous) scene from *Lan Yu* should be more adequately understood as a subtle yet contentious reflection (in part on behalf of the Hong Kong-based director) on the future anterior merging of the PRC and Sinophone communities, both

indicative of the triangulation of the geopolitics of desire through the unique punctuation of historical narration and reflecting the degree of difference between China and Sinitic-language communities and cultures on its margins—between China and the global sphere in which it is situated.

In the post-1987 era, the Taiwanese social and cultural space soon became home to a vibrant group of queer authors, scholars, activists, and other public figures who passionately emulated North American gay and lesbian identity politics and queer theoretical discourse.¹⁰¹ Apart from social movement and academic theorization, gay men and lesbians in Taipei in particular have constructed an urban geography of their own with unique subcultural tempos and patterns. As Jens Damm has observed,

Taipei is the only city—probably not only in Taiwan but the whole of East Asia—where a huge open space, the Red House district, has been successfully developed into an area where gays and lesbians have openly created their own urban infrastructure, with bars, restaurants, shops and information exchange opportunities.¹⁰²

Hong Kong popular culture, too, especially in the cinematic realm, has developed a sophisticated procedural nexus of artistic creativity to capture, represent, and even transform the lives of the sexually diverse, forging myriad variations of a sexual “undercurrent” everywhere.¹⁰³ As Ackbar Abbas has remarked, “We get a better sense of Hong Kong through its new cinema (and architecture) than is currently available in any history book.”¹⁰⁴ Lan Yu’s death in the film, then, may suggest an implicit critique of the PRC’s colonialism and imperialism in Hong Kong, namely, that the PRC must leave Hong Kong alone.



Figure 2.1 Handong’s embrace of Lan Yu after the Tiananmen Incident.

But this is only among the many existing superficial readings from the Sinophone viewpoint. Although the narrative tempo of *Lan Yu* succumbs to such an ostensible ending, the expressive yearning and desire for a possible alternative gate of filmic departure precisely indexes the kind of ambivalent relationship between the PRC and Hong Kong that continues to strike resonances across the Sinophone world.

Since the 1990s, cultural flows between the PRC, Taiwan, and Hong Kong have steadily accelerated. Critics now tend to trace the roots of queer political activism in Mainland China in the early twenty-first century to the initial influx of Western queer theory (酷兒理論, *ku'er lilun*) and the rise of the gay and lesbian movement (同志運動, *tongzhi yundong*) in Taiwan and Hong Kong in the 1980s and 1990s.¹⁰⁵ The first gay pride parade in Chinese-speaking communities took place in Taiwan in 2003, followed by Hong Kong in 2008 and Shanghai in 2009. Echoing the kind of minor transnationalism discussed above, many gay and lesbian activists in Taiwan and Hong Kong today believe that they have nothing to learn from the Mainlanders and that the trajectory of activism-strategy learning would only flow in one direction: from Sinophone communities to the PRC.¹⁰⁶ Clearly, the queer Sinophone framework underscores the ways in which particular polities mediating the transmission of foreign/Western knowledge to China (such as Japan in the late Qing and early Republican periods), at least in the areas of gender and sexuality, have been gradually replaced by Sinophone communities by the end of the twentieth century.¹⁰⁷ What a Sinophone rereading of *Lan Yu* reveals is precisely this apparatus of historical displacement, in which the social and cultural articulations of non-normative sexualities are rerouted through—and thus re-rooted in—Sinitic-language communities and cultures on the periphery of Chineseness.¹⁰⁸ The historical trajectory from the Republican-era sexological formation of the concept of homosexuality to the transnational cultural staging of the reciprocal meanings of queer intimacy and Chineseness in Sinophone postcolonial contexts exemplifies a grid of knowledge and experience that exceeds, decenters, and, indeed, replaces the familiar analytical framework of colonial modernity, which already displaces an even older notion of semi-colonialism. The transition from colonial to Sinophone modernity around the midcentury, therefore, is something that we are only beginning to appreciate.

Notes

- 1 Shu-mei Shih, *Visuality and Identity: Sinophone Articulations across the Pacific* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 4.
- 2 Shu-mei Shih, "Against Diaspora: The Sinophone as Places of Cultural Production," in *Global Chinese Literature: Critical Essays*, ed. Jing Tsu and David Der-wei Wang (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 29–48, on p. 29.
- 3 Shu-mei Shih, "The Concept of the Sinophone," *PMLA* 126, no. 3 (2011): 709–18, on p. 710.
- 4 Shih, "The Concept of the Sinophone," 710–11.
- 5 Shih, *Visuality and Identity*; Tsu and Wang, eds., *Global Chinese Literature*; Peter T. W. Shen, "Sinophone Travels: Transnationalism and Diaspora" (PhD Dissertation, Harvard University, 2010); Brian C. Bernards, "Writing the South

- Seas: Postcolonialism and the Nanyang Literary Imagination" (PhD Dissertation, University of California, 2011); Jing Tsu, *Sound and Script in Chinese Diaspora* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011); Audrey Yue and Olivia Khoo, eds., "From Diasporic Cinemas to Sinophone Cinemas," special issue, *Journal of Chinese Cinemas* 6, no. 1 (2012); Lily Wong, "Deflowering Attachments: Prostitutes, Popular Culture, and Affective Histories of Chineseness" (PhD Dissertation, University of California, 2012); E.K. Tan, *Rethinking Chineseness: Translational Sinophone Identities in the Nanyang Literary World* (Amherst, NY: Cambria Press, 2013); Shu-mei Shih, Chien-hsin Tsai, and Brian Bernards, eds., *Sinophone Studies: A Critical Reader* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013); and Alison M. Gropp, *Sinophone Malaysian Literature: Not Made in China* (Amherst, NY: Cambria Press, 2013).
- 6 Prasenjit Duara, *The Global and the Regional in China's Nation-Formation* (New York: Routledge, 2009). See also the essays in Susan D. Blum and Lionel M. Jensen, eds., *China Off Center: Mapping the Margins of the Middle Kingdom* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2002); and Sherman Cochran and Paul G. Pickowicz, eds., *China on the Margins* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2010).
 - 7 See Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990); David Halperin, *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality and Other Essays on Greek Love* (New York: Routledge, 1990); Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990); Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (New York: Routledge, 1993); Michael Warner, ed., *Fear of a Queer Planet: Queer Politics and Social Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993); Michael Warner, *The Trouble with Normal* (New York: The Free Press, 1999); David Halperin, *How to Do the History of Homosexuality* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2002); Michael Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics* (Cambridge, MA: Zone Books, 2002); and Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender* (New York: Routledge, 2004).
 - 8 See, for example, Dennis Altman, "Global Gaze/Global Gays," *GLQ* 3 (1997): 417–36; Peter Drucker, "Introduction: Remapping Sexualities," in *Different Rainbows*, ed. Peter Drucker (London: Gay Men's, 2000), 9–42; Chris Berry, Fran Martin, and Audrey Yue, eds., *Mobile Cultures: New Media in Queer Asia* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003); Linda Garber, "Where in the World Are the Lesbians?" *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 14 (2005): 28–50; Afsaneh Najmabadi, "Beyond the Americas: Are Gender and Sexuality Useful Categories of Analysis?" *Journal of Women's History* 18 (2006): 11–21; Ara Wilson, "Queering Asia," *Intersections: Gender, History and Culture in the Asian Context* 14 (November 2006); Evelyn Blackwood, "Transnational Discourses and Circuits of Queer Knowledge in Indonesia," *GLQ* 14 (2008): 481–507; Fran Martin, Peter Jackson, Mark McLelland, and Audrey Yue, eds., *AsiaPacificQueer: Rethinking Genders and Sexualities* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2008); Josephine Ho, "Is Global Governance Bad for East Asian Queers?" *GLQ* 14, no. 4 (2008): 457–79; Howard Chiang, "Empire of Desires: History and Queer Theory in an Age of Global Affect," *InterAlia: A Journal of Queer Studies* 3 (2008/2009); Peter A. Jackson, "Capitalism and Global Queering: National Markets, Parallels among Sexual Cultures, and Multiple Queer Modernities," *GLQ* 15 (2009): 357–95; Megan Sinnott, "Borders, Diaspora, and Regional Connections: Trends in Asian 'Queer' Studies," *Journal of Asian Studies* 69, no. 1 (2010): 17–31; Petrus Liu and Lisa Rofel, eds., "Beyond the Strai(gh)ts: Transnationalism and Queer Chinese Politics," special issue, *positions* 18, no. 2; Yau Ching, ed., *As Normal as Possible: Negotiating Sexuality in Mainland China and Hong Kong* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2010); Howard Chiang, ed., "Queer Transnationalism in China," topical cluster, *English Language Notes* 49, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 2011): 109–44; Denise Tang, "Queer Asian Cultures," *Sociology Compass* 5, no. 8 (2011): 688–95.

- 9 Here, I depart from Petrus Liu's assertion that what queer theory needs is "China." See Petrus Liu, "Why Does Queer Theory Need China?" *positions* 18, no. 2 (2010): 291–320.
- 10 Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*, pp. 44–48; Halperin, *One Hundred Years*; Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1990 [1976]).
- 11 See Susan McCabe, "To Be and to Have: The Rise of Queer Historicism," *GLQ* 11, no. 1 (2005): 119–34.
- 12 Thomas A. Foster, *Sex and the Eighteenth-Century Man: Massachusetts and the History of Sexuality in America* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2006), xii.
- 13 John Howard, *Men Like That: A Southern Queer History* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1999), xvii–xviii.
- 14 Terry Castle, *The Apparitional Lesbian: Female Homosexuality and Modern Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993); Bernadette J. Brooten, *Love Between Women: Early Christian Response to Female Homoeroticism* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1996); Louise Fradenberg and Carla Freccero, eds., *Pre-modern Sexualities* (New York: Routledge, 1996); Regina Kunzel, *Criminal Intimacy: Prison and the Uneven History of Modern American Sexuality* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2008). Some scholars have expressed a similar frustration in the field of women's history. See Judith Bennett, *History Matters: Patriarchy and the Challenge of Feminism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006). In her review of the book, Leila J. Rupp supports Bennett's emphasis on continuity over rupture: see Leila J. Rupp, "Revising Patriarchy," *Journal of Women's History* 20, no. 2 (2008): 136–40.
- 15 Halperin, *How to Do*.
- 16 Halperin, *How to Do*, 14–15.
- 17 Halperin, *How to Do*, 15.
- 18 Halperin, *How to Do*, 13.
- 19 Halperin, *How to Do*, 41–2.
- 20 Halperin, *How to Do*, 13 (emphasis original).
- 21 Halperin, *How to Do*, 9.
- 22 Halperin, *How to Do*, 130–4. On the historical construction of heterosexuality, see Jonathan Ned Katz, *The Invention of Heterosexuality* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1995).
- 23 For recent reflections on the historical implications of the "Great Paradigm Shift," see the essays collected in Mathew Kuefler, ed., *The Boswell Thesis: Essays on Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2006); and Thomas A. Foster, ed., *Long Before Stonewall: Histories of Same-Sex Sexuality in Early America* (New York: New York University Press, 2007). For a recent endorsement, see Richard Godbeer, *Sexual Revolution in Early America* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002).
- 24 Valerie Traub, "The Present Future of Lesbian Historiography," in *A Companion to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Studies*, ed. George Haggerty and Molly McGarry (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), 124–45.
- 25 Halperin, *How to Do*, 9.
- 26 Sharon Marcus, *Between Women: Friendship, Desire, and Marriage in Victorian England* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007). As Marcus points out in the introduction, the title of her book alludes to Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985).
- 27 Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, "The Female World of Love and Ritual: Relations between Women in Nineteenth-Century America," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 1 (1975): 1–25, reprinted in *Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985), 53–76; Adrienne

- Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence," *Signs* 5, no. 4 (1980): 631–60; Lillian Faderman, *Surpassing the Love of Men: Romantic Friendship and Love between Women from the Renaissance to the Present* (New York: William Morrow, 1981).
- 28 Esther Newton, "The Mythic Mannish Lesbian: Radclyffe Hall and the New Woman," *Signs* 9, no. 4 (1984): 557–75; Lisa Duggan, "The Trials of Alice Mitchell: Sensationalism, Sexology, and the Lesbian Subject in Turn-of-the-Century America," *Signs* 18, no. 4 (1993): 791–814; Castle, *The Apparitional Lesbian*; Martha Vicinus, "Lesbian Perversity and Victorian Marriage: The 1864 Codrington Divorce Trial," *Journal of British Studies* 36 (1997): 70–98; Martha Vicinus, *Intimate Friends: Women Who Loved Women, 1778–1928* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2004).
- 29 Marcus, *Between Women*, 13.
- 30 See, for example, Yukiko Hanawa, ed., "Circuits of Desire," special issue, *positions* 2, no. 1 (1994); Elizabeth A. Povinelli and George Chauncey, eds., "Thinking Sexuality Transnationally," special issue, *GLQ* 5, no. 4 (1999); Cindy Patton and Benigno Sánchez-Eppler, eds., *Queer Diasporas* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000); Dennis Altman, *Global Sex* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2001); Arnoldo Cruz-Malavé and Martin F. Manalansan IV, eds., *Queer Globalizations: Citizenship and the Afterlife of Colonialism* (New York: New York University Press, 2002); Martin F. Manalansan IV, *Global Divas: Filipino Gay Men in the Diaspora* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003); Jon Binnie, *The Globalization of Sexuality* (London: Sage, 2004); and Eithne Luibhéid and Lionel Cantú Jr., eds., *Queer Migrations: Sexuality, U.S. Citizenship, and Border Crossings* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005). Some scholars have argued in favor of the terminology "transnational" over "global": see Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan, "Global Identities: Theorizing Transnational Studies of Sexuality," *GLQ* 7, no. 4 (2001): 663–79. For a critique of the shortcomings of thinking sexuality in a transnational-historical framework, see Tze-lan D. Sang, *The Emerging Lesbian: Female Same-Sex Desire in Modern China* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 1–34. On queer temporalities specifically, see Judith Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (New York: New York University Press, 2005); Elizabeth Freeman, ed., "Queer Temporalities," special issue, *GLQ* 13, nos. 2–3 (2007); Heather Love, *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009); and Elizabeth Freeman, *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010).
- 31 Anjali Arondekar, "The Voyage Out: Transacting Sex Under Globalization," *Feminist Studies* 33, no. 2 (Summer 2007): 299–311, on p. 300.
- 32 Arondekar, "The Voyage Out," 300.
- 33 Tom Boellstorff, *A Coincidence of Desires: Anthropology, Queer Studies, Indonesia* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007).
- 34 Sinnott, "Borders," 17–18.
- 35 Sinnott, "Border," 18.
- 36 Dennis Altman, "Rupture or Continuity? The Internationalization of Gay Identities," *Social Text* 48 (1996): 77–94; Dennis Altman, "Global Gaze/Global Gays," *GLQ* 3 (1997): 417–36.
- 37 Altman, *Global Sex*; Lisa Rofel, "Qualities of Desire: Imagining Gay Identities in China," *GLQ* 5 (1999): 451–74, reprinted in *Desiring China: Experiments in Neoliberalism, Sexuality, and Public Culture* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), 85–110. This statement coming from Altman has been the subject of intense debate among numerous scholars in queer studies. See also the essays in John C. Hawley, ed., *Postcolonial and Queer Theories: Intersections and Essays* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2001); and John C. Hawley, ed., *Postcolonial, Queer:*

- Theoretical Intersections* (Albany: State University of New York Press: 2001), esp. Jarrod Hayes, "Queer Resistance to (Neo-)Colonialism in Algeria," 79–122.
- 38 Rofel, *Desiring China*, 88–9.
 - 39 Rofel, *Desiring China*, 109–10.
 - 40 For a milder critique of Altman's "global gay identity" model based on anthropological data from Southeast Asian gender and sexual communities, see Megan Sinnott, *Toms and Dees: Female Same-Sex Sexuality and Transgender Identity in Thailand* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2004); and Evelyn Blackwood, *Falling into the Lesbi World: Desire and Difference in Indonesia* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2010).
 - 41 Rofel, *Desiring China*, 94.
 - 42 Howard Chiang, "Epistemic Modernity and the Emergence of Homosexuality in China," *Gender and History* 22, no. 3 (2010): 629–57. See also Tze-lan D. Sang, "Translating Homosexuality: The Discourse of *Tongxing'ai* in Republican China (1912–1949)," in *Tokens of Exchange: The Problem of Translation in Global Circulations*, ed. Lydia H. Liu (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999), 276–304.
 - 43 Foucault, *History of Sexuality*.
 - 44 Robert Hans van Gulik, *Sexual Life in Ancient China* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1974); Xiaomingxiong (小明雄) [Samshasha], *Zhongguo tongxing'ai shilu* (中國同性愛史錄) [The history of homosexual love in China] (Hong Kong: Fenhong sanjiao chubanshe, 1984); Bret Hinsch, *Passions of the Cut Sleeve: The Male Homosexual Tradition in China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990); Sophie Volpp, "Classifying Lust: The Seventeenth-Century Vogue for Male Love," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 61 (2001): 77–117; and Giovanni Vitiello, *The Libertine's Friend: Homosexuality and Masculinity in Late Imperial China* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2011). For a lucid analysis that situates Xiaomingxiong's study in historical context, see Helen Leung, "Archiving Queer Feelings in Hong Kong," *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 8 (2007): 559–71.
 - 45 Howard Chiang, "Rethinking 'Style' for Historians and Philosophers of Science: Converging Lessons from Sexuality, Translation, and East Asian Studies," *Studies in History and Philosophy of Biological and Biomedical Sciences* 40, no. 2 (June 2009): 109–18. For a classic discussion of the transition from "culturalism" to "nationalism" in the Chinese political sphere, see Joseph R. Levenson, *Confucian China and Its Modern Fate: A Trilogy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1965).
 - 46 Zhang Dai (張岱), *Tao'an mengyi* (陶庵夢憶) [Dream reminiscences of Tao'an] (Shanghai: Shanghai shudian, 1982), 35–6, as translated (with my own modifications) and cited in Cuncun Wu, *Homoerotic Sensibilities in Late Imperial China* (London and New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004), 42–3.
 - 47 Matthew Sommer, *Sex, Law, and Society in Late Imperial China* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000). For earlier works that look at the legal construction of sodomy in China, see Marinus J. Meijer, "Homosexual Offences in Ch'ing Law," *T'oung Pao* 71 (1985): 109–33, reprinted in *Asian Homosexuality*, ed. Wayne R. Dynes and Stephen Donaldson (New York and London: Garland, 1992); Vivian W. Ng, "Ideology and Sexuality: Rape Laws in Qing China," *Journal of Asian Studies* 46 (1987): 57–70; and Vivian Ng, "Homosexuality and State in Late Imperial China," in *Hidden from History: Reclaiming the Gay and Lesbian Past*, ed. Martin B. Duberman, Martha Vicinus, and George Chauncey (New York: New American Library, 1989), 76–89.
 - 48 For an explanation of why homosexuality was not criminalized in the Republican period, see Wenqing Kang, "Male Same-Sex Relations in Modern China: Language, Medical Representation, and Law, 1900–1949," *positions: east asia cultures critique* 18, no. 2 (Fall 2010): 489–510.
 - 49 Chiang, "Epistemic Modernity"; Sang, "Translating Homosexuality."

- 50 It is important to note that Freud later distanced himself from sexology. See Frank J. Sulloway, *Freud, Biologist of the Mind: Beyond the Psychoanalytic Legend* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979).
- 51 On the association of male homosexual practice with national backwardness in the Republican period, see also Wenqing Kang, *Obsession: Male Same-Sex Relations in China, 1900–1950* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2009), 115–44; Cuncun Wu and Mark Stevenson, “Male Love Lost: The Fate of Male Same-Sex Prostitution in Beijing in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries,” in *Embodied Modernities: Corporeality, Representation, and Chinese Cultures*, ed. Fran Martin and Larissa Heinrich (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2006), 42–59.
- 52 Larissa Heinrich, *The Afterlife of Images: Translating the Pathological Body between China and the West* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008).
- 53 Altman, *Global Sex*, chap. 6; Lisa Rofel, *Desiring China: Experiments in Neoliberalism, Sexuality, and Public Culture* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), chap. 3; Judith Farquhar, *Appetites: Food and Sex in Post-Socialist China* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002), chap. 5. See also Loretta Wing Wah Ho, *Gay and Lesbian Subculture in Urban China* (London: Routledge, 2010); Travis Kong, *Chinese Male Homosexualities: Memba, Tongzhi, and Golden Boy* (London: Routledge, 2010); Joanna McMillan, *Sex, Science and Morality in China* (New York: Routledge, 2006); and James Farrer, *Opening Up: Youth Sex Culture and Market Reform in Shanghai* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2002). On the argument for an emphasis shift in modern Chinese historiography to the Republican era, see Frank Dikötter, *The Age of Openness: China before Mao* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008); and my argument about turning points in the history of sexuality in Howard Chiang, “Liberating Sex, Knowing Desire: *Scientia Sexualis* and Epistemic Turning Points in the History of Sexuality,” *History of the Human Sciences* 23, no. 5 (December 2010): 42–69.
- 54 Lisa Rofel was the only China scholar (besides David Eng, who perhaps should be more correctly considered as an Asian American specialist) invited to the state-of-the-field queer studies conference called “Rethinking Sex,” held at the University of Pennsylvania in March 2009. For a review of the conference, see Regina Kunzel, “Queer Studies in Queer Times,” *GLQ* 17, no. 1 (2010): 155–65.
- 55 This thesis is elaborated more fully in Howard Chiang, “Why Sex Mattered: Science and Visions of Transformation in Modern China” (PhD dissertation, Princeton University, 2012).
- 56 This is evident in such edited volumes as, in chronological order, Berry, Martin, and Yue, eds., *Mobile Cultures*; Martin and Heinrich, eds., *Embodied Modernities*; Martin, Jackson, McLelland, and Yue, eds., *AsiaPacificQueer*; Yau, ed., *As Normal as Possible*; and Liu and Rofel, eds., “Beyond the Strai(gh)ts.” More nuanced presentation of queer identity, culture, and practices in Chinese East Asia can be found in monograph-length works, including Fran Martin, *Situating Sexualities: Queer Representation in Taiwanese Fiction, Film, and Public Culture* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2003); Sang, *The Emerging Lesbian*; Helen Leung, *Undercurrents: Queer Culture and Postcolonial Hong Kong* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2008); Ho, *Gay and Lesbian Subculture*; Kang, *Obsession*; Kong, *Chinese Male Homosexualities*; and Fran Martin, *Backward Glances: Contemporary Chinese Cultures and the Female Homoerotic Imaginary* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010).
- 57 Some authors, such as Helen Leung, are far less vulnerable to this critique than others.
- 58 Joseph Massad, *Desiring Arabs* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 41.
- 59 Note, for instance, how strikingly similar are the titles of Massad’s and Rofel’s books.

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- 77 Chow, *Writing Diaspora*, 47.
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- 100 *Lan Yu*, directed by Stanley Kwan (2001; Hong Kong: Universe, 2002), DVD.
- 101 In October 1994, the *Daoyu bianyuan* (島嶼邊緣) magazine hosted a local workshop on queer and women’s sexuality in Taipei, Taiwan. It was arguably the first sustained forum where scholars, authors, and activists debated on the proper translation and meaning of “queer” in Chinese-speaking communities. See Josephine Ho, ed., *Ku’er: Lilun yu zhengzhi* (酷兒: 理論與政治) [Queer politics and queer theory], special issue, *Working Papers in Gender/Sexuality Studies* nos. 3–4 (Jungli, Taiwan: National Central University Center for the Study of Sexualities, 1998), 47–87. For a more recent collection of essays, see Queer Sounding Editorial Board, ed., *Ku’er xinsheng* (酷兒新聲) [Queer sounding] (Jungli, Taiwan: National Central University Center for the Study of Sexualities, 2009). For insightful contextualizations of queer (literary) culture in late twentieth-century Taiwan, see Chi Ta-wei (紀大偉), “Ku’er lun: Sikao dangdai Taiwan ku’er yu ku’er wensue” (酷兒論: 思考當代台灣酷兒與酷兒文學) [On ku’er: Thoughts on ku’er and ku’er literature in contemporary Taiwan], in *Ku’er kuanghuan jie* (酷兒狂歡節) [Queer carnival], ed. Chi Ta-wei (紀大偉) (Taipei: Meta Media, 1997), 9–28; Chu Wei-cheng (朱偉誠), “Tongzhi•Taiwan: Xinggongmin, guozu jiangou huo gongmin shehui” (同志•台灣: 性公民、國族建構或公民社會) [Queer(ing) Taiwan: Sexual citizenship, nation building, or civil society], *Nüxue xuezhì: Fūnǚ yu xìngbié yánjiū* (女學學誌: 婦女與性別研究) [Journal of women’s and gender studies] 15 (2003): 115–51; Fran

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- 102 Jens Damm, "Discrimination and Backlash against Homosexual Groups," in *Politics of Difference in Taiwan*, ed. Tak-Wing Ngo and Hong-zen Wang (New York: Routledge, 2011), 152–80, on p. 172.
- 103 Leung, *Undercurrents*.
- 104 Ackbar Abbas, *Hong Kong: Culture and the Politics of Disappearance* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 27.
- 105 On the meaning, history, and politics of the term *tongzhi*, see Chou Wah-shan, *Tongzhi: Politics of Same-Sex Eroticism in Chinese Societies* (New York: Haworth Press, 2000). On queer culture and politics in late twentieth-century Hong Kong, see Leung, *Undercurrents*; Kong, *Chinese Male Homosexualities*. On the introduction of queer theory to Taiwan, see Song Hwee Lim, "Queer Theory Goes to Taiwan," in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Queer Theory*, ed. Noreen Giffney and Michael O'Rourke (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2009), 257–75; Song Hwee Lim, "How to be Queer in Taiwan: Translation, Appropriation, and the Construction of a Queer Identity in Taiwan," in *AsiaPacificQueer: Rethinking Genders and Sexualities*, ed. Fran Martin, Peter Jackson, Mark McLelland, and Audrey Yue (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 235–50.
- 106 Personal e-mail communication with Jens Damm on August 23, 2011.
- 107 For an erudite study of the history of twentieth-century Taiwanese (literary) thought through the lens of colonial modernity, see Fang-Ming Chen (陳芳明), *Zhimindi moden: Xiandaixing yu Taiwan shiguan* (殖民地摩登：現代性與台灣史觀) [Colonial modernity: Historical and literary perspectives on Taiwan] (Taipei: Maitian, 2004). On colonial modernity and Taiwan's medical history, see Fan Yan-qiu (范燕秋), *Jibing, yixue yu zhimin xiandaixing: Rizhi Taiwan yixueshi* (疾病，醫學與殖民現代性：日治台灣醫學史) [Diseases, medicine, and colonial modernity: History of medicine in Japan-ruled Taiwan] (Taipei: Daw Shiang Publishing, 2006). See also Ming-Cheng M. Lo, *Doctors within Borders: Profession, Ethnicity, and Modernity in Colonial Taiwan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002). For general historical and theoretical perspectives on colonial modernity in East Asia, see the essays in Barlow, ed., *Formations of Colonial Modernity*.
- 108 This observation therefore challenges some of the conventional interpretations of Taiwanese intellectual history from the viewpoint of literature. These conventional readings tend to "acknowledge" the historical significance of gender and sexuality only with the rise of women's/feminist literature (女性文學) and gay and lesbian literature (同志文學), along with the literatures of aborigines (原住民文學), military dependents' villages (眷村文學), and environmental groups (環保文學), in the post-1987 era. Critics have called the 1980s in Taiwan's literary history the decade of "identity literature" (認同文學). See, for example, Fang-Ming Chen (陳芳明), *Dianfan de zhuiqiu* (典範的追求) [Paradigm search] (Taipei: UNITAS Publishing, 1994), 235; Fang-Ming Chen (陳芳明), *Houzhiming Taiwan: Wenxue shilun jiqi zhoubian* (後殖民台灣：文學史論及其周邊) [Postcolonial Taiwan: Essays on Taiwanese literary history and beyond] (Taipei: Maitian, 2002); and Fang-Ming Chen (陳芳明), *Taiwan xin wenxueshi* (台灣新文學史) [New Taiwanese literary history] (Taipei: Linking, 2011).