

# Situating Sexualities

Queer Representation in Taiwanese Fiction,  
Film and Public Culture

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香港大學出版社

HONG KONG UNIVERSITY PRESS

Hong Kong University Press  
14/F Hing Wai Centre  
7 Tin Wan Praya Road  
Aberdeen  
Hong Kong

www.hkupress.org  
(secure on-line ordering)

© Hong Kong University Press 2003

ISBN 962 209 619 0

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British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

Cover photograph appeared originally in *Stir* 1 (June 1996), p. 64.

Reprinted with permission by the Awakening Foundation.

Printed and bound by Liang Yu Printing Factory Ltd., Hong Kong, China



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— Britta Erickson, *The Art of Xu Bing*

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# Introduction: Mobile Knowledges – Sexualities in Globalization

*We take up 'queer' not only to provide a space of reflection for Taiwan's nascent tongzhi movement. More than this, we also want to display the guaitai yizu (Queer Nation)'s rich cultural legacy. Under the collective identification of 'queer' we can examine anew those tongzhi lives, tongzhi histories, tongzhi styles and tongzhi perspectives which multiply and flow silently underground, and at the same time we can begin to imagine, rebuild and construct a collective culture of our own.*

*Queer Nation here is a politics, a strategy, a utopia, and a concrete existence. Here is where the guaitai yizu takes shape.*

— Ai Bao editorial, 1994

This passage appeared in June 1994 as part of a foreword in the second issue of the Taiwan lesbian magazine *Ai Fu Hao Zizai Bao* (*Ai Bao: Love Paper*), a special issue on 'Queer Nation'. Founded in December 1993, *Ai Bao* was Taiwan's first openly available lesbian or gay magazine. It represents one manifestation of a larger transformation in discourses on homosexuality in 1990s Taiwan, a transformation that can also be seen as part of a broad series of tectonic shifts taking place concurrently in cultures of gender and sexuality right across the Asian region.<sup>1</sup> In Taiwan, the 1990s witnessed not only an unprecedented explosion of public lesbian and gay cultures (in magazines, social and activist groups, and dedicated commercial venues), but also a boom in 'tongzhi fiction' (*tongzhi wenxue*), which garnered a remarkable number of prizes and

accolades from the mainstream literary establishment and became a clearly delineated movement with defining significance for 1990s Taiwanese literature.<sup>2</sup> Due in large part to the influence of the cohort of migrant intellectuals who returned to Taiwan from the US and Europe in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the decade also saw the appearance of queer theory within the island's academic cultures.

The appearance of 'Queer Nation' in *Ai Bao* might be understood to bespeak the appropriation in Taiwan of a language of sexual politics paradigmatically associated with early 1990s US activism; after all, in 1993, Henry Abelove was able to remark without undue irony that 'what Queer Nation really means is America'.<sup>3</sup> Such a view would interpret the *Ai Bao* passage as evidence of the newly global reach of a 'Western' sexual-political and theoretical culture (the impression is strengthened by a quotation, in English, from the Introduction to Michael Warner's *Fear of a Queer Planet* which appears on the journal's back cover). Indeed, it has been argued that the very appearance of recognizable homosexual subcultures, and of personal identity-formations comparable to those of 'lesbian' and 'gay' outside of the West, equates to 'Westernization', since these formations were initially produced in Europe and America.<sup>4</sup> Undoubtedly, *Ai Bao*'s 'Queer Nation' issue stands as an example of the paradoxical transnationalization of American queer nationalism. It suggests that one possible response to violence experienced at a local or national level is to mobilize a transnational imaginary, to identify, as Arjun Appadurai suggests, with a critical 'imagined community' that is global rather than national in scope.<sup>5</sup>

To speak of globalization is to raise the question of the nation-state's place in emergent transnational movements. If Queer Nation, the US-based activist movement of the early 1990s, already represented a challenge to the meaning of the American nation — defining it by sexual and political affiliation rather than by citizenship of a state or possession of an ethnicity — then the appearance of 'Queer Nation' in *Ai Bao* troubles the national all the more.<sup>6</sup> 'Queer Nation' as the *Ai Bao* foreword appropriates its English form and rewrites it in Mandarin is at once the sign of a globalizing sexual politics, and, as *guaitai yizu*, a localizing strategy that seeks ways of imagining a *tongzhi* community, history, culture and politics arising specifically from Taiwan. The unevenly globalized 'nation' in this redeployment of Queer Nation becomes an ambivalent sign, indexing the weakening of the ties of the nation-state on culture while simultaneously pointing to their continuing

hold. The passage, then, produces a queered Republic of China: the shadow-nation of *tongzhi* culture that 'flows silently underground'. What Queer Nation really means, in this sense, is Taiwan. Confusingly, 'Queer Nation' here marks the appropriation of a globalizing discourse on American queer nationalism for a local politics critical of the homophobia of the Republic of China (ROC) nation-state: a form of oppositional 'glocalization'.<sup>7</sup> By making the nation the sign of a global but localized sexual politics, the passage also provokes some productive questions. These include: What do we gain, and at what cost, by continuing to revere the nation as a master conceptual category in our analyses of contemporary cultures? How should we respond to the seemingly magnetic pull of ideologies of national distinction when engaging in analyses of inherently transnational cultural processes? In broader terms, how, in the contemporary world, can we approach the simultaneous situatedness and mobility of signs and cultures? In this sense, the extract indexes the continuing tensions among the local, the national, and the global, which necessarily subtend any discussion of sexual cultures at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

Through its deployment of a complex mix of Chinese and English terms, the passage also raises the question of what Rey Chow has called 'cultural translation'.<sup>8</sup> The passage and the issue as a whole use three terms which work in different ways as translations of one another: *guaitai yizu*, *tongzhi guo*, and 'Queer Nation'.<sup>9</sup> The question of the precise relation between 'Queer Nation' and its Chinese translations is already complex — additionally, though, we might consider the question of the meaning of the English-language 'Queer Nation' embedded in Chinese text in a magazine in Taipei, as against English text on a pamphlet in Salt Lake City.<sup>10</sup> As though intent on further complicating this snarl of questions, the *Ai Bao* issue offers us two translations of both 'queer' (*tongzhi*, *guaitai*) and 'nation' (*guo*, *zu*), none of whose translations back into English is a simple matter. Since its arrival in Taiwan Mandarin in the early 1990s, *tongzhi* has become the term most commonly used to refer to something like 'lesbian and gay', appearing frequently in book, magazine, TV and film titles; in the names of activist organizations; and in the common appellation of the '*tongzhi wenxue*' or '*tongzhi* fiction' movement, some of whose central texts this book discusses.<sup>11</sup> Paradoxically, although *tongzhi* appeared originally in Taiwan Mandarin, via Hong Kong, as a translation of the English term 'queer', because of its appropriation in the early 1990s by an increasingly active and visible

social movement based on a politics of sexual identity, it was soon recognized that *tongzhi* approximated more closely something like 'lesbian/gay' identity than queer.<sup>12</sup> *Guaitai*, meanwhile, is one of several terms which attempt more precisely to translate the meaning of queer, in this instance, as a literal translation of 'queer' as a refunctioned term of homophobic abuse: *Guaitai* might be translated as 'weirdo' or 'freak'. At issue here, then, is not simply a translation between English and Chinese, but also the translations between 'lesbian/gay' and 'queer' and the translation of that translation into Taiwan's cultural context. For the translation of 'nation', *guo* is a commonly used modern Mandarin term for country or nation, whereas *zu* has no obvious English equivalent: Depending on context it might be translated as 'clan', 'race' or 'nation'.<sup>13</sup> The irreducible plurality of the Chinese translation of Queer Nation intimates the inadequacy of a binary translational framework in which 'English' always confronts 'Chinese' as its mirroring other: The slippages and disjunctures among *tongzhi*, *guaitai*, *guo* and *zu* indicate that the thing referred to in such a framework as 'Chinese' is not itself a singular linguistic — or cultural — system. If such a convoluted traffic among signifiers seems tortuous, I elucidate it here because it is also so routinely encountered in everyday practices of cultural translation (as in the apparently straightforward activity of reading a lesbian magazine in Taipei) that it might stand as a synecdoche for the way in which sexual knowledges more generally travel, and in travelling are transformed, in contemporary cultures.

I suggested above that an argument might readily be made that the appearance of Queer Nation 'in translation' in Taiwan only attests to the cultural imperialism of US-style sexual politics. And yet, crucially, 'Queer Nation' *is* in translation here, which is to say it appears in the final instance as something other than the more or less familiar sign as which it began. This is most apparent in the passage's final sentence, which actively asserts the new localness of *guaitai yizu*, representing the 'queer nation' that takes shape *here*, in Taiwan. Thus, the passage potentially challenges the view that sees the inexorable and homogenizing spread of 'American sexual culture' across the globe, raising the possibility, rather, of the decentering of that culture in its new contexts and intimating that appropriation is not the same as replication and that translation is also rewriting. In a sense, the appropriation of 'Queer Nation' as the made-in-Taiwan *guaitai yizu* might be interpreted as a queer re-enactment of Homi Bhabha's parable about the decentering of



the 'English' authority of the Bible in the colonial encounter. The discovery by an English man or woman, Bhabha shows, of an English book among colonized peoples could suggest, on the one hand, the triumph of colonial authority, since it embodies the reassuring sign of an Englishness that has penetrated even to the farthest limits of empire. On the other hand, because the sign of Englishness can only be re-discovered *after* 'the traumatic scenario of colonial difference' has rendered Englishness momentarily absent or eclipsed, the Englishness which is belatedly re-found is split between its appearance as 'original', and its 'articulation as repetition and difference'.<sup>14</sup> Bhabha's suggestion that the reappearance of signs in contexts outside those of their initial production can effect the dislocation of the original signification of the sign, rather than simply implying the subjection by the original sign of the new context, enables conceptualization of the complex, multidirectional interactions of globally mobile knowledges and local contexts.<sup>15</sup> In the light of Bhabha's theory of hybridity, 'Queer Nation' as it is made in *Ai Bao* to describe Taiwan could be read not as a replica of 'America' but as a new sign: product of the interactions between the contexts of its initial production in the US and those of its appropriation in Taiwan.<sup>16</sup> The knotty entanglements of appropriation and translation in regard to sexual knowledges and cultures provide the central thematic of this book.

\* \* \* \*

I discovered the *Guaitai Yizu* issue of *Ai Bao* in early 1995. I had just landed in Taipei to begin researching what was to have been an MA thesis and to rescue my Chinese, rusty after four years of neglect in Australia following two years spent earlier in Beijing and Shanghai. A month or so after arriving in Taipei, on a treasured afternoon off from the agonies of transcribing the Mandarin television world news for my language class, I indulged myself in a visit to Fembooks, Taipei's famous feminist bookshop which I'd just managed, at last, to locate. The cover of *Ai Bao* declared it, in a roundabout fashion, to be a lesbian 'zine, and I seized on the issue with glee. Later, as I settled back in my room in Yungho to read the 'zine amid the nightly bellow and scream of traffic on Chungcheng Road, a photocopied, handwritten flier fluttered out from between the pages. Painstakingly, I made out the indistinct characters. They asked me:

Are you lonely?  
 Isolated?  
 Feel like you're the only *nütongzhi* in Taipei?  
 Do you long for an understanding friend to talk to?

Returning a resounding, inward 'Yes!' to each question in turn, I read on:

You are not alone: The Lambda Society is here for you! Write to us at the following address ...

Interpellated compellingly, if also partially and strangely, as a *nütongzhi*, I wrote out a note in my overcareful characters and mailed it off the following day to the post office box specified. One night about a week later I got a phone call, and an anonymous female voice told me the time and place of the next meeting of the Lambda Society, National Taiwan University's *nütongzhi* social club.<sup>17</sup>

When my new friends at Lambda asked me at that first meeting how I found out about the society, they laughed when I told them about the flier in *Ai Bao*. 'How hilarious,' said Mei-mei, 'that's such an old flier! We made those ages ago — fancy it still being there and your answering it!' Indeed, the story of my belated stumbling and eager seizing on the forgotten flier in a back issue of *Ai Bao* seemed odder and more amusing to Mei-mei than the fact that a non-Chinese Australian like me should respond to the flier's call to identify herself as a *nütongzhi*. To my friends at Lambda, much to my joy and gratitude, I shared an obvious comradeship with them, despite our clearly variant national and cultural histories, because of my identification as *nütongzhi* and their identification as 'lesbian'. This does not mean that our different histories did not matter: These differences were a constantly tangible presence and a source, at different times, of curiosity, awkwardness, conflict, and delight. But in an important sense, the other members of Lambda — citizens of the Republic of China — and I — citizen of the Commonwealth of Australia — represented part of each other's yearned-for imagined community. Puzzling over the still-unravelling trains of cultural and historical events that made all this possible, along with everything else I learned about *tongzhi* and *nütongzhi* cultures in my year in Taipei in 1995 and half-year in 1997–98, provided the germ of the research project that grew into this book.

This book explores aspects of the cultural production and deployment of *tongxinglian* (homosexuality), understood as a modern sexuality formation, in 1990s Taiwan. It starts from the Foucauldian premise that sexualities, as organizations of knowledge, are produced by a power that binds but whose effects exceed the *merely* binding, compelling also unpredictable resistances.<sup>18</sup> Reflecting the double operation of the cultural laws that produce sexualities, the book on the one hand delineates the conditioning and constraining effects for *tongxinglian* of nation, city, family, and representational practice, while on the other hand it traces the lines of resistance within these symbolic structures, locating moments at which *tongzhi* cultural production articulates contestations of their organization. Methodologically, too, the book is shaped by the tension between the historiographic and the deconstructive, making visible the structures of nation, city, family, and writing only to finish by attempting to trouble their coherence through attention to the disruptive potential of the category *tongxinglian*. If the conceptual underpinning of this double movement is broadly Foucauldian, the questions that it compels are historical: Which laws, which constraints, which resistances — in short, what kinds of power — mark out the position of *tongxinglian* in 1990s Taiwan? If sexualities are understood as produced by historically contingent organizations of knowledge, then their structure necessarily varies with varying geocultural locations and historical contexts. As the above reading of the passage from *Ai Bao* indicates, though, accounting for the laws productive of sexualities in the current era can never be a matter of invoking simple ‘cultural difference’ or ‘tradition’. In the light of the intensified mobility of knowledge systems in globalization, it becomes impossible to conceive ‘cultures’ as singular, pure, or transparently knowable. If sexualities are the products of particular histories and cultures, and in globalization histories criss-cross one another while cultures become shifting organizations of knowledges of diverse provenance, then in this era, sexualities are inevitably constituted through cultural movement, conversation, and fragmentation. That is how this book reads *tongxinglian*.

The argument that organizes the detailed analyses in the chapters that follow is that although the production of *tongxinglian* and *tongzhi* in contemporary Taiwan is everywhere conditioned by transnational cultural flows, this does not entail merely the local replication of globally homogeneous models of hegemonic and dissident sexualities. Even leaving aside, for the moment, the compelling evidence that suggests that even

when considered within Euro-American contexts alone, the category 'homosexuality' is anything but stable, transparent, or homogeneous, the historical and cultural specificity of the terrain that this category and others (lesbian, gay, queer) encounter in Taiwan means that they are decisively transformed by their translation into that context.<sup>19</sup> I argue below that the *tongxinglian* that circulates in Taiwan today is intimately linked to the Republican Chinese modernity transplanted to Taiwan in the 1940s. The chapters of the book, however, demonstrate that *tongxinglian's* discrepant and multifarious contemporary instances are continuously produced out of the twists and turns of Taiwan's social present. Meanwhile, *tongzhi*, a formation of dissident sexuality that contests homophobic deployments of *tongxinglian*, was actively constructed during the 1990s out of the complex relations among local cultures, national histories, regional linkages and globally mobile sexual knowledges.

## Situating sexualities

### *Colonial histories and Taiwanese modernity*

In this book, I argue that the subjects of homo-/heterosexual definition and geopolitics are now more than ever inextricably enmeshed. However, compelling historical reasons exist for understanding these subjects as already entwined. The first of these reasons relates to colonial histories. Several scholars have noted the persistent characterization in European discourses of colonial and postcolonial 'others' as hyper-sexualized, frequently citing sodomy and, later, homosexuality as evidence. Both Rudi Bleys and João Trevisan have written in detail on pre-Enlightenment European identifications of cultural and religious 'others' with the vice of sodomy.<sup>20</sup> 'The Orient', in its association in the European imperial imagination not only with the erotic generally but specifically with effeminate masculinities and homoeroticism, has played a very particular role in the historical construction of sexualized geographies and hence of contemporary homosexualities. Joseph A. Boone, for example, argues that colonial representations of the homosexualized Arab male of the Near East, whether imbuing that figure with sexual promise, sexual threat, or ambivalent mixes of the two, constitute an important aspect of orientalist ideology left untheorized in Edward Said's account of orientalism.<sup>21</sup>

In Taiwan, too, colonial history conditions in the legal, social and cultural production of sexualities. Before discussing this in detail, however, it is necessary to consider the role of Taiwan's colonial histories in producing 'Taiwanese modernity' more broadly. Like mainland China as addressed by Lisa Rofel in *Other Modernities*, Taiwan can be approached as a site from which to consider 'how modernity is imagined, pursued, and experienced ... in those places marked by a deferred relationship to modernity'.<sup>22</sup> Any attempt to delineate the contours of Taiwanese modernity must take into account the exceedingly complex and heterogeneous character of the various modernization projects in Taiwan at the very least since the Japanese occupation. Indeed, Ping-hui Liao argues that this historical complexity warrants envisaging not a singular Taiwanese modernity but rather a disjunctive series of Taiwanese modernities, plural.<sup>23</sup>

Through the course of the last four centuries, the island of Taiwan has been subject to a succession of colonial regimes that have decisively shaped the complex, syncretic cultures of Taiwan today. The first colonizers to claim the lands occupied by Taiwan's indigenous inhabitants in the seventeenth century were European: In 1624, the Dutch colonized the island's south; two years later, the Spanish took the north, but they were ousted by the Dutch in 1642.<sup>24</sup> The next wave of colonization was Chinese, when Cheng Chenggong (Koxinga) defeated the Dutch to establish the Cheng Kingdom on the island in 1662.<sup>25</sup> Although the Cheng Kingdom was ethnically Han Chinese, Cheng's regime was separate from the Qing Empire at that time governing the Chinese mainland.<sup>26</sup> In 1683, Qing forces defeated the Cheng regime, and Taiwan was governed as an outlying possession of the Qing Empire for the next two hundred years.<sup>27</sup>

In 1895, Taiwan was ceded to Japan as part of the settlement at the end of the Sino-Japanese war under the Treaty of Shimonoseki and underwent fifty years of Japanese colonial rule.<sup>28</sup> In *Becoming Japanese*, Leo Ching writes in detail about the Japanese colonial administration's cultural modernization project in Taiwan as an aspect of Japanese imperialization. Ching shows that this led to many Taiwanese intellectuals in the colonial period effectively conflating modernization with Japanization.<sup>29</sup> Ping-hui Liao argues that the cultural effects of Japanese colonialism on the construction of Taiwanese modernity continue into the present to produce an 'alternative [Taiwanese] modernity in between Japanese and Chinese modernities', a form of double consciousness.<sup>30</sup>

In 1945, Taiwan was handed over to Nationalist China after Japan's

defeat at the end of the Second World War. Under US military protection, the Kuomintang (KMT) party fled to Taiwan from the Chinese mainland with the KMT army and its allies, following their defeat by the Communist forces in 1949, and occupied the island until the year 2000 as the government of the ROC on Taiwan. Where the Japanese had enforced the Japanese language, the teaching of Japanese culture and history, and Japanese law as instruments of colonial domination, the harshly authoritarian KMT regime now enforced Mandarin against both the local Minnan language and Japanese, taught Chinese culture and history in schools, and brought into force their own legal code.<sup>31</sup> With the mass immigration of mainland Chinese to the island after 1945, Taiwan's intellectual cultures absorbed many aspects of Chinese Republican modernity — for example, selected examples of the May Fourth modernist literature (excluding writers deemed 'leftist', like Lu Xun); and European scientific discourses including the sexology and Freudian psychoanalytic theory which had been translated in China in the early part of the twentieth century. From the second half of the 1960s, the KMT implemented cultural policies advocating the revival of 'traditional Chinese culture' as a direct response to the socialist modernity of the People's Republic of China (PRC).<sup>32</sup>

Antonia Yengning Chao's study of KMT modernization in the 1950s highlights the ways in which the KMT's project of modernizing Taiwan through the adoption and stockpiling of military technology links to the role of American financial aid and the relationship between the ROC and the US in this period. She writes:

[During the 1950s] the development of the military was not only an indicative measure of modernization, it was a footing from which to evaluate 'Sino-American' relations [ROC-US relations] and a marker by which to calculate the right moment for counter-attacking the communists.<sup>33</sup>

KMT military modernization was closely linked with cultural Americanization during the Cold War period, as the US encouraged Taiwan to arm itself as a bulwark against Communist expansion. The US maintained a military presence on the island throughout what is termed the *Meijun Shidai* (US military period), from the late 1940s through the mid-1960s, and then declining until diplomatic relations were eventually severed between the US and the ROC in 1979. This military

presence hastened the popularization of American popular music and culture, for example, through the establishment in 1955 of the American Force Network Taiwan radio station (*Meijun Diantai*). Massive economic aid from the US during this period was tied to decisive influence over the direction of the ROC's economic development as well as its cross-strait political and defence policy.<sup>34</sup>

Until the 1990s, the KMT's official position vis-à-vis the Chinese mainland was that eventually the KMT army would counter-attack the communists and retake the territory (*fangong dalu*). In the 1990s Lee Teng-hui, the first president of Minnan ethnicity, and from 2000 the Democratic Progressive party (DPP)'s Chen Shui-bian, the first non-KMT president, purported to support the goal of peaceful reunification with the mainland if and when living standards and economic development in mainland China parallel those of Taiwan. Only in 1999 did Chen openly begin to suggest that until such time, Taiwan might deal with the Beijing administration on a state-to-state basis. As I argue at length in Chapter 2, Lee Teng-hui's 1990s administration continued the project begun by the previous KMT president, Chiang Ching-kuo, in the years immediately before his death, of reorienting Taiwan toward a different kind of modernity, imagined through the rhetoric of liberal democratic pluralism and the redefinition of Taiwan's place in the global economy.

Thus, if one can speak of 'Taiwanese modernity', one must acknowledge that the referent of that phrase is a multilayered and internally fractured social, cultural and historical space. If there is a Taiwanese modernity, it is a highly syncretic formation that has been shaped in fundamental ways by Japanese colonialism, Chinese Republican culture, the US military presence and economic aid, and KMT Cold War political and cultural practice. In the past two decades, this mix has been further complicated by the attempts of successive central governments to redefine Taiwan's modernity through appeals to the values of democracy, liberalism, and pluralism. As a result of these histories, modernity in Taiwan is defined more by rupture and disjuncture than by any universal or unifying qualities.

Although Taiwan's early colonial experience was as a Dutch and Spanish possession, its more recent colonization by East Asian powers distinguishes it from the ex-European colonial third-world nation-states often taken to be emblematic of 'postcoloniality'.<sup>35</sup> In this regard like Hong Kong, Taiwan has never gained, and may never gain, independent nationhood. Instead, in the modern period, the island passed from Qing

rule to Japanese colonial rule to rule by the mainlander-controlled KMT, under which Taiwan existed not as a nation in its own right but as the seat of government for the Republic of China and a 'springboard' for the mythical counter-attack against the communists, and under which the island's majority of Minnan-speaking 'native' Taiwanese were to varying degrees denied social power and cultural autonomy. Further, as Fredric Jameson has noted, the very high degree of modernization in Taiwan — modernization marked Japanese as much as Western — precludes a classic postcolonial struggle posed according to 'the traditional' versus 'the Western'.<sup>36</sup>

Despite the variance of Taiwan from the model assumed in many discussions of postcolonialism, I nevertheless find aspects of postcolonial theory useful in thinking through Taiwan's current situation. Rey Chow helpfully identifies two possible meanings of the 'post' in 'postcolonial', a prefix around which a significant amount of interpretive difficulty has accumulated: 'having gone through', on the one hand, and 'after', on the other.<sup>37</sup> The above discussion of Taiwan's unconcluded colonial histories should make it clear that it would be ill-advised to speak of the island as though it existed in a time fully 'after' colonialism, as if a complete decolonization had been effected and the society were now at last out from under the shadow of the colonial. Rather, in speaking of postcolonial Taiwan, I draw on that work in postcolonial studies that addresses the ways in which the postcolonial is marked by the continuing presence of aspects of the colonial and by their transformation, rather than their eclipse, in postcolonial presents. The sense in which I find it most useful to understand the 'post' in 'postcolonial' is as the sign of the conditioning historicity of the colonial within the global relations of the present.<sup>38</sup>

Taiwan's complex colonial history and unevenly postcolonial present condition the production and management of the category *tongxinglian*. The legal regulation of sexualities provides one illustrative example. Prior to its ceding Japan in 1895, Taiwan had been subject to the Qing legal code since 1683, which from 1679 contained a statute against male-male rape (*qiangxing jijian*, 'forcible sodomy'), in 1734 superseded by a similar statute that remained in force until the end of the Qing Dynasty.<sup>39</sup> The Japanese Criminal Code, which unlike the Qing code made no reference to either 'homosexuality' or 'sodomy', was brought into force in Taiwan from 1923 to 1945. The Republican code that governs Taiwan today, first drafted in Nationalist China in the 1920s



and 1930s, was brought into force in 1945.<sup>40</sup> Similar to Japanese law, no direct reference is made anywhere in the Republican legal code to either sodomy or *tongxinglian*, although the neologism *tongxinglian* had been available since the 1920s. However, as Antonia Yengning Chao demonstrates, under KMT-enforced martial law during the 1960s and 1970s, an article prohibiting ‘wearing odd outfits’ (*qizhuang yifu*) was vigorously enforced to persecute cross-dressing T (butch) lesbians and male homosexuals, and the act of cross-dressing was routinely associated by authorities with the nefarious activities of communist spies loyal to the People’s Republic of China.<sup>41</sup>

In contemporary Taiwan, the laws most often used to discipline men showing homosexual behaviour in public are from the Criminal Code (passed in Nationalist China in 1935 and brought into force in Taiwan from 1945) and the Social Order Statute (within the Administrative Code; implemented in 1990). These laws criminalize behaviour that is ‘deleterious to fine customs’ (*fanghai shanliang fengsu*) and that which is ‘deleterious to custom’ (*fanghai fenghua*).<sup>42</sup> Echoing legal codes elsewhere, denotation of lesbianism and even the suggestion of the possibility of sex between women is totally absent from the ROC legal code. During the 1990s, Taiwan’s Family Law Code was subject to vigorous criticism from feminist groups for its intense patriarchal bias, which, among other omissions and violences, leaves no space for an active feminine sexual subject. Feminist groups including the Women’s Awakening Foundation (*Funü Xinzhi Jijinhui*) were actively involved from the mid- to late 1990s in redrafting the Family Law code in an attempt to rectify this masculine bias.<sup>43</sup>

On one hand, the absence of direct reference to homosexuality in the colonial legal codes of the Japanese and KMT administrations fails to produce *tongxinglian* or any equivalent category legally as a substantial, coherent group of either behaviours or persons. On the other hand, current criminal and social order laws continue effectively to link unruly sexualities (those that are public, homosexual, and non-familial) with imagined threats to the nation of the Republic of China, as I discuss in Chapter 1, while the legal code’s rhetorical preclusion of the possibility of sex between women has tended to produce *nütongxinglian* as an absence or impossibility. Taiwan’s legal code, shaped by the two most recent waves of colonization by Japan and the KMT, results in a very particular production of intra-gender eroticisms: as a group of behaviours not expressly prohibited or even named, but nevertheless closely

circumscribed, in certain forms, by a set of laws that remains anxiously preoccupied with protecting the moral and cultural integrity of the Chinese nation as defined by the KMT colonizers.

Culturally and socially as well as legally, contemporary *tongzhi* cultures bear the marks of Taiwan's colonial histories. For example, Chao demonstrates how the design and practice of working class lesbian 'T-bars', in existence since the mid-1980s, draw on the Japanese-style bar culture that has lingered in Taiwan's red-light districts since the Japanese occupation.<sup>44</sup> Like Japanese bars, the T-bars that Chao analysed in the mid-1990s provided hostesses to accompany and encourage patrons to drink and were centrally organized around karaoke performance. Socially, the linguistic and cultural divide between the predominantly Mandarin-speaking north of the island and the predominantly Minnan-speaking central and southern regions fractures emergent *tongzhi* communities as it does the island's social life more generally. The population of Taipei, the seat of the KMT administration between 1949 and 2000, is composed of a greater proportion of 1940s mainlander immigrants and their offspring (*waishengren*) than the regions and secondary cities in the central and southern parts of the island. The centre of the island's economy and government, Taipei is also generally better resourced than other regions, and Mandarin-speaking Taipei culture continues to exert cultural hegemony over Taiwan as a whole, even in the new era of Chen Shui-bian's nativist DPP administration. Taipei is the definitive centre of the *tongzhi* movement, whereas the Minnan-dominated cities and regions of the island's centre and south appear to be experienced and represented as somewhat peripheral to the emergent *tongzhi* culture that continues to mirror the northern bias of the waning KMT colonizer culture.<sup>45</sup>

### *Racist science*

The subjects of homosexuality and the geopolitics of colonialism and post-colonialism also prove closely entwined in that, as Ann Laura Stoler argues at length in *Race and the Education of Desire*, the nineteenth-century historical construction of sexuality and of 'the homosexual' in Europe coincides closely with, and is informed by, the invention of 'race' and the racialized body.<sup>46</sup> Both Rudy Bleys and Siobhan Somerville argue convincingly for the constitutive intermeshing of the sexological invention of the homosexual with what Bleys calls 'the ethnographic imagination'.<sup>47</sup>

In this argument, Foucault's nineteenth-century homosexual, who was 'a type of life, a life form, and a morphology, with an indiscreet anatomy and possibly a mysterious physiology' was enabled by the invention of 'race' and by the history of colonialism, which in turn compelled that invention.<sup>48</sup> Rethinking Foucault's argument in *The History of Sexuality Volume 1*, Stoler traces the modern discourse on sexuality as constituting the inner truth of the individual further back than nineteenth-century sexology and psychoanalysis, to European discourses on race and sex in the colonial encounter.<sup>49</sup> Stoler argues that:

the nineteenth-century discourse on bourgeois sexuality may be better understood as deriving from the recuperation of a protracted discourse on race that provided the discourse on sexuality with many of its most salient elements.<sup>50</sup>

In this sense, the twentieth-century homosexual-as-embodied-individual is already inhabited by the history of colonial encounters.<sup>51</sup>

The Chinese translation and dissemination of evolutionary and 'race' theories and later, sexology, is also linked in a second sense with the geopolitics of 'scientific' knowledge in the context of European colonialisms. As instances of Western 'science', for China's modernizing intellectuals in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, these European discourses exemplified the desired condition of intellectual modernity, even as popular unrest continued over the economic exploitation of China by its European colonizers.<sup>52</sup> The incursion of a modern regime of biopower, which assumes that the biology of the individual's body encodes information about his or her essential attributes and capacities, was extended in the new set of discourses on homosexuality (*tongxing'ai*) that emerged in the 1920s. Tze-lan Deborah Sang demonstrates that the neologism *tongxing'ai* likely entered the Chinese language as a Japanese loan word, and the Japanese term *doseiai* (the same *kanji* as the Mandarin *tongxing'ai*) was probably translated from German sexological texts.<sup>53</sup> Sang makes a sensitive and very convincing argument for the messiness of the translation of European sexology in Republican China. Against Bret Hinsch's assertion of a radical epistemic break between tradition and modernity vis-à-vis Chinese conceptualizations of homosexual behaviour, Sang follows Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick in arguing:

that there are competing conceptual models for sexuality coexisting at the same time, and that if there are new ones, they do not simply

supplant the old ones. Instead of the kind of radical, total epistemic change theorized by Foucault, we may discover that the discursive shift from traditional categories to '*tongxing ai*' was not drastic and unidirectional, but mild and diverse in its effects.<sup>54</sup>

Although Sang demonstrates that the effects of the discursive invention of *tongxing'ai* in the 1920s were diverse and even contradictory, the coinage of the new term does mark the advent of a novel way of conceptualizing same-sex relations that affected at least some Chinese intellectuals at the time and eventually, if still unevenly, became popularized.

As well as the translation and dissemination of sexological concepts and categories from the 1920s onward, the extensive lecture tours to China in the early 1930s by Magnus Hirschfeld, leader of the German homosexual rights movement and pre-eminent proponent of the scientific 'third sex' theory of homosexuality, helped promulgate the modern, minoritizing, medical argument that homosexuality — in this respect like race — might be explicable as a biological trait of the individual.<sup>55</sup> Sang shows that the work of Havelock Ellis inspired Chinese intellectuals as early as the 1920s, including Zhang Jingsheng, who tried to replicate Ellis's case studies in China.<sup>56</sup> Pan Guangdan's translation of Ellis's *The Psychology of Sex* was completed in 1941 and published in 1946 and marks an early use of the term *tongxinglian*.<sup>57</sup> Interestingly, Dikötter observes that Zhu Yunjing's *History of Man's Sexual Life* (1936) draws heavily on German sexual ethnographies of 'primitive' peoples, suggesting a connection between 'racial inferiority' and 'sexual abnormality' in some of the Chinese work in this period, which reflects the link made between the same two subjects in European work produced from the colonial encounter.<sup>58</sup> Such examples suggest that in Republican China, comparably though by no means identically with the situation in Europe, the medical discourse that constructs homosexuality as an inherent trait of particular bodies is historically linked, to a degree, with an earlier discourse that constructs 'race' in a similar way.<sup>59</sup> Thus the medical construction of a *tongxing'ai* or *tongxinglian* body should be seen in the context of the earlier body-reading discourse on race, which is itself a translated and recontextualized outgrowth of the ideology and history of European colonialisms, now pressed into the service of a racialized, modern Chinese nationalism.

The linkage of a biological conception of 'Chinese race' with a

biological conception of 'sex' in the service of nationalism suggests that the production and regulation of sexualities in the Republican period served a central symbolic function in the construction of a Chinese modernity. Sang argues that in introducing Western sexology into China, 'people like Zhang Jingsheng and Pan Guangdan ... are eager to introduce "science" into China, and to project the Chinese into the world history of human sexuality'.<sup>60</sup> The implantation in the early twentieth century of the categories of *tongxing'ai* and *yixing'ai* (heterosexuality) thus emerges as an aspect of the project of constructing Chinese modernity. Although, as Sang insists, the effects of this implantation on the Chinese societies of the time were diffuse and uneven, it is undeniable that seventy-odd years later, its mutated results in the popular and quasi-medical categories *tongxinglian*, *yixinglian* (heterosexuality) and *shuangxinglian* (bisexuality) constitute an extremely influential discourse on sexuality in Taiwan.<sup>61</sup>

However, what is of primary interest for me in this book is precisely the failure of the sexual knowledges of Euro-American modernity to account exhaustively for the production of *tongxinglian* in contemporary Taiwan. Like Sang on the Republican period, what interest me here are the gaps and slippages within and between discourses on sexuality in the 1990s, such that no *one* model — be it a Euro-American psychoanalytic or medical model, a contemporary model of a global 'gay identity', or a 'Chinese' model based on the centrality of reproductive familiarity — can finally account for the intricate heterogeneity of contemporary Taiwanese *tongxinglian*.

### *Nationalism/sexuality*

A third respect in which questions of 'homosexuality' prove enmeshed with issues of transnational flow relates to the difficulty of disentangling nationalist discourses from discourses on sexuality. In *Nationalisms and Sexualities*, Parker, Russo, Sommer and Yaeger problematize the pervasive assumption of the separateness of 'nation' and 'sexuality' that has often been bolstered by the presumptively 'public' status of nation and the purported 'privateness' of sexuality.<sup>62</sup> They note the frequency with which nationalist discourses are themselves already eroticized, hence effectively inhabited by the sexual, in the language, for example, of 'love of country'.<sup>63</sup> Sexualities are conceptually articulated to the nation-state-

based world system also insofar as the attribution of 'bad' sexualities — notably homosexuality — to national 'others' has proven a popular rhetorical strategy for diverse nationalist projects. Chris Berry discusses the attribution of homosexuality by spokespeople for the PRC and Cuba to 'the West', and by the contemporary Brazilian nation-state to European colonizers — and we might add, by the martial-law-period KMT to the 'Chinese Communists'.<sup>64</sup> Berry summarizes the common pattern in the following way:

the geocultural history of visible homosexuality is like ... one of those fairground games where the player stands poised with a mallet over a number of mock ice holes waiting to see which the seal will pop up from. Homosexuality is a convenient discursive trope; a political conjuring trick made to appear first here, then there according to the needs of the players. However it is manipulated, it is always abjected, always part of the collective other and not part of the collective self it is deployed to construct and defend.<sup>65</sup>

The crucial symbolic role played by the sign of 'homosexuality' is not limited to the earlier period of European colonial world hegemony but extends to produce effects in the exchanges of contemporary geopolitics.

The first section of this book deals in detail with the transforming symbolic relationship between *tongxinglian* and the 'Chinese' nation of the Republic of China on Taiwan. Through discussion of critical responses to the paralleling of a *tongxinglian* theme and a national allegory in Pai Hsien-yung's *Crystal Boys*, Chapter 1 analyses the Republic under the KMT in the martial law period as a paranoid state. In Chapter 2, I argue that in the 1990s, the familiar scenario of the state's abjection of homosexuality is complicated by then-Mayor Chen Shui-bian's administration's ambivalent embrace of 'tongzhi rights' as a sign of Taipei's modernity. This newer model, which has seen various official spokespeople in Taiwan articulating a slightly uneasy endorsement of equality for sexual minorities as a means of materializing Taiwan as a 'modern, progressive democracy' is discussed again in Chapter 5 in relation to Ang Lee's film *The Wedding Banquet*. The examples discussed in Chapters 2 and 5 suggest that although Berry's metaphor of homosexuality as ill-fated fairground seal remains pertinent to the geopolitics of homosexuality in many parts of the world, it does not account exhaustively for all of the complex ways in which homosexuality functions in shoring up national projects, since increasingly some nations

have sought to define themselves by publicly *claiming* particular versions of homosexuality rather than always by straightforwardly repudiating it.<sup>66</sup>

The Taiwanese literary history that provides the background for the emergence of 1990s *tongzhi wenxue* has also been crucially shaped by questions about nationalism and transnationalism. Specifically, this history has been organized around questions about the relationship between literary culture in Taiwan and European literary modernism on the one hand, and the relationship between literary culture in Taiwan and the 'Chinese' nation on the other. Histories of contemporary Taiwanese literature frequently take as a starting point the modernist movement of the 1960s. In 1960, students at Taipei's National Taiwan University launched the journal *Xiandai Wenxue* (*Modern Literature*), whose primary goal was the introduction and translation of leading modernist writers from the US and Europe.<sup>67</sup> The form of Taiwanese modernism that developed in the work of the writers who founded *Xiandai Wenxue* and others was characterized both by its humanism and by its continuation of the challenge posed to traditional Chinese literature by the May Fourth literary movement.<sup>68</sup> Leo Ou-fan Lee suggests that the extension of the 'white terror' (*baise kongbu*) of KMT authoritarianism and political censorship into the realm of literary production induced a political apathy or defeatism, which was partly responsible for the turn toward this highly aestheticized and apparently depoliticized form of literary modernism.<sup>69</sup> The rapid economic growth of the 1960s in turn precipitated the rise of a new middle-class and hence a growing readership for the new modernist literature.<sup>70</sup>

Author and critic Chang Shi-kuo points to the rapid industrialization and urbanization of Taiwan's traditionally rural agricultural society from the 1960s onward as part of the impetus for Taiwan's second major postwar literary movement, *xiangtu wenxue*, or nativist literature. Chang points out that the major readership for this 1970s social realist literature which concentrates on the simple, rural life of Taiwan's past and the dislocations and upheavals of its present was an urban middle class, which felt the need to establish a lost national authenticity existing prior to the urban, industrial present that had been precipitated by Taiwan's linkage into a transnational economic system. Others have suggested that it is no coincidence that this literary movement, appealing to the native and the traditional as opposed to the Western, should have appeared during the period of Taiwan's increasing diplomatic isolation after its expulsion

from the United Nations in 1971 and Nixon's historic visit to Beijing in 1972.<sup>71</sup> The rise of *xiangtu wenxue* contributed significantly to the debates, beginning in the 1970s, around the ideological opposition of the 'Taiwan jie' ('Taiwan complex') to the 'Zhongguo jie' ('China complex'), the former signifying a primary cultural identification with the island of Taiwan as the *xiangtu* writers tended to emphasize, the latter an identification with 'China' such as was promulgated by KMT rhetoric.<sup>72</sup> The *xiangtu wenxue* movement of the 1970s was answered in film by the Taiwan New Wave (*Taiwan Xin Dianying*) of the 1980s. This cinema, generally understood as being born in 1982 with Edward Yang (Yang Dechang), Ke Yisheng, Zhang Yi, and Tao Dechen's portmanteau film *In Our Time* (*Guanyinde Gushi*), shared with *xiangtu wenxue* the desire to excavate Taiwan's repressed colonial history.<sup>73</sup> In a general sense, this overtly politicizing, left-leaning artistic movement can be seen to parallel and in some instances to prefigure the rise of the Taiwanese nativist, anti-KMT, pro-independence *dangwai* (outside the Party) political movement which eventually led to the formation of the DPP in 1986.<sup>74</sup>

Commentators discussing the new literary scene which had emerged in Taiwan by the end of the 1980s point to the rapid social, economic and political changes of that decade as determining factors in the development of the literature of the 1980s 'new-generation authors' (*xin renlei zuojia*).<sup>75</sup> Politically, the 1980s witnessed massive changes associated with the weakening of the old-style KMT hegemony: The DPP was legally established in 1986, and the KMT declared the end of martial law in 1987.<sup>76</sup> At the same time, party censorship of literary and political texts ceased, signalling an end to the bureaucratic regulation of culture.<sup>77</sup> While the island's economy boomed, social change was impelled by continuing island-wide urbanization, the rise of electronic media and information technology in everyday life, an explosion of new literary and cultural journals and magazines, and what some have called the emergence of a post-industrial society.<sup>78</sup> Diverse cultural critics converge in judging that the unprecedented social upheavals of the 1980s led to a literary scene fragmented into a plethora of different styles.<sup>79</sup>

Lü Zhenghui notes two major tendencies in the early 1980s literary scene: the popularity of 'social' or 'political' fiction that deals critically with the subject of KMT brutality during the white terror period, and the rise of an identifiable group of women writers.<sup>80</sup> The mid- to late 1980s witnessed a further major shift in literary production and criticism as political and economic liberalization accelerated and the discourse



of postmodernism (*houxiandaizhuyi*) became popularized, particularly following Fredric Jameson's 1987 tour of the island.<sup>81</sup> Although post-structuralist theory had been discussed in elite academic forums such as *Chung-Wai Literary Monthly* in the early 1980s, it was not until after mid-decade that the move toward contemporary literary theory broadened to become a major cultural influence.<sup>82</sup> *Tangtai* (*Contemporary Monthly*) was launched in March 1986 and began translating and introducing contemporary Euro-American theory to Taiwan's readers.<sup>83</sup>

During this period there emerged a new literary movement whose authors, including Huang Fan, Chang Ta-chun, Dong Nian and Lin Yaode, are characterized colloquially as the 'new generation authors' (*xin renlei zuojia*).<sup>84</sup> Writing by these authors encompasses an unprecedentedly wide variety of styles, including realism, surrealism, metafiction, 'psychological literature' (*xinli wenxue*) and feminist writing. Literary culture in this period begins to include alongside traditionally high cultural literary forms popular forms such as fantasy, mystery, martial arts fiction and science fiction.<sup>85</sup> As Meng Fan and Lin Yaode forecast in 1990, this movement of the 'new generation writers' toward a literary 'postmodernist' aesthetic continued as an influential strand in the literary scene of the 1990s.<sup>86</sup> Established author Chu T'ien-wen's prize-winning 1994 novel, *Notes of a Desolate Man* (*Huangren Shouji*), discussed in Chapter 3, is emblematic of the 1990s mainstreaming of a postmodernist literary aesthetic. The social context for this writing is a historical moment of political liberalization, increasing urbanization, the gradual emergence of an unevenly post-industrial society in which culture is increasingly subject to commodification, and the unprecedented burgeoning of minority and civil rights politics in the environmental, labour, feminist, Indigenous and gay and lesbian movements. This moment is also marked by Taiwan's interpolation into globalized circuits of knowledge production, which enables its writers to contribute to movements such as literary postmodernism. Such a moment provides the context for the generation of 1990s *tongzhi* writers whose work I discuss in this book. The 1990s explosion of social movements based in the politics of identity also produced a new moment in film, Taiwan's Second Wave, to which Ang Lee and Tsai Ming-liang, whose films *Wedding Banquet* and *The River* are discussed in Section 2, properly belong.

As I have argued elsewhere, Taiwan's literary history in the 1990s could be characterized precisely by the stunning rise to prominence and

critical acclaim of a literature of transgressive sexuality written by a new generation of young writers.<sup>87</sup> The new *tongzhi* or *ku'er* fiction was remarkably successful throughout the decade in earning prestigious prizes from the literary establishment and played a key role in defining the literary terrain during those ten years. This book discusses writing by Pai Hsien-yung, Chu T'ien-wen, Chen Xue, Chi Ta-wei, and Qiu Miaojin. Pai Hsien-yung belongs to an older generation of writers and writes in a humanist modernist style. His novel *Crystal Boys*, discussed in Chapter 1, is a classic treatment of martial-law-period Taipei *waishengren* culture. Chu T'ien-wen falls in an intermediate position as a writer who built her reputation as a screenwriter and author of fiction in the 1980s and was already well established and critically respected by the 1990s.<sup>88</sup> Her 1994 novel *Notes of a Desolate Man* is discussed in Chapter 3 as a key site for the representation of the changed relationship among *tongxinglian*, the city, and the state in the 1990s. The final three authors clearly belong to the new generation of 1990s *tongzhi* — or, often by preference, *ku'er* — writers, which also includes Hong Ling (Lucifer Hung) and Wu Jiwen.<sup>89</sup> Chen, Chi and Qiu were all relatively young when their work rose to fame, born in the late 1960s or the early 1970s, and each writes with the *ku'er wenxue* movement's characteristic candour on same-gender desire and sex. Their work often exaggerates the stylistic syncretism and play which has marked much Taiwanese writing since the mid-1980s: For example Chi's novella 'The Membranes' (*Mo*), discussed in Chapter 7, mobilizes codes of fantasy and science fiction, and Qiu's novel *The Crocodile's Journal* (*Eyu Shouji*), analysed in Chapter 8, alternates a Kafkaesque surrealism with a psychological-realist first person narrator journal form.<sup>90</sup> Although many of these *tongzhi* writers have been the recipients of major literary prizes, their writing, along with the ascendant *tongzhi* social movements, has also been controversial, as the chapters that deal with their work demonstrate.

### *Mobile sexualities*

The appearance of a queer literature movement in 1990s Taiwan highlights another way in which sexualities relate to transnational mobility: insofar as oppositional or politicized sexual identities and categories are themselves mobile by way of regional and global cultural flows. The rise of the category *tongzhi* in 1990s Taiwan is another

example of the constitutive mobility of sexualities and sexual cultures today.<sup>91</sup> The term *tongzhi* began circulating in Taiwan after 1992, when it arrived from Hong Kong as part of the Chinese translation for a 'New Queer Cinema' section in Taipei's annual Golden Horse Film Festival, which focused on the work of American and European independent queer filmmakers ('New Queer Cinema' was translated by Hong Kong film writer Edward Lam [Lin Yihua] as *Xin Tongzhi Dianying*).<sup>92</sup> Previously, although same-sex sexual subcultures had existed, there had been no generic term like *tongzhi* which at once positively politicizes sexual identification and notionally includes both men and women.<sup>93</sup> *Tongzhi* has since become the most common term in Taiwan for something like 'lesbian/gay', and in colloquial usage often replaces the older terms *tongxing'ai* and *tongxinglian*.<sup>94</sup> Etymologically meaning 'same will', *tongzhi* is the common translation of 'comrade' as in both CCP and KMT rhetoric, and is appropriated to mean something like 'lesbian/gay' partly because the first character is also the first of *tongxinglian*. *Tongzhi* is thus readable as a cheeky citation of both Chairman Mao and the 'National Father' (*Guofu*) of the Republic of China, Sun Yat-sen, whose famous sentence, 'the revolution has not yet succeeded; comrades we must struggle still' has been appropriated for the *tongzhi* political struggles waged throughout the 1990s and continuing today.<sup>95</sup> The 'queer' of 'queer theory' and 'queer literature', in contrast, has appeared severally in academic and literary language since the mid-1990s as the phonetic transliteration of the English term 'queer' in *ku'er*, as the more literal translation *guaitai*, and occasionally as *xie*, a term connoting obliqueness or wickedness, which approximates queer both phonetically and semantically.<sup>96</sup> In each of these deployments, queer as it operates in Taiwan has connoted a conceptual dialogue with Euro-American post-structuralist critiques of identity politics as well as a literary aesthetic — notably in the writings of young '*ku'er*' authors Chi Ta-wei, Hong Ling and Chen Xue — which favours the deconstruction of anticipated categories of gendered and sexual identity, rather than the promulgation of 'positive images' of *tongzhi*. Thus, neologisms like *tongzhi*, *ku'er* and *guaitai* emerged in 1990s Taiwan as examples of glocalization in the domain of sexual knowledge: critical, selective appropriations and reworkings of terms and concepts that originated elsewhere. However, as I hope to demonstrate, the role of the public and subcultural *tongzhi* cultures that have emerged since the early 1990s is not simply that of responding to signs of lesbian, gay or queer that arrive fully formed from

across the seas — as if *tongzhi* cultures were permanently doomed, like the author stumbling on the forgotten *Ai Bao* leaflet, to a state of belated interpellation. Rather, the politics and practice of sexual dissidence in Taiwan actively draw on and transform local as well as global knowledges. In doing so, they produce fundamentally new formations of culture and sexuality, attention to which, I hope, might productively shift the ways in which sexuality is understood to function in the world today.

## Approach

### *Reviewing the queer moment*

The 1990s saw the continuing effects of a broad shift across the humanities and social sciences since the 1980s, away from the conception of ‘identity’ as substantial, positive and transparently knowable and toward an anti-essentialist focus on differences.<sup>97</sup> This shift toward the anti-foundationalist approaches that characterize post-structuralism produced wide-reaching effects in many areas. These include sexuality studies, with the rise of queer theory; postcolonial studies, with its emphasis on hybridity; globalization studies, with the stress on disjuncture; cultural studies work on China, with the deconstruction of ‘Chineseness’; and scholarship on sexualities in a transnational frame, which since the mid-1990s has tended to emphasize cultural syncretism, flow, and discontinuity rather than positing stable, discrete or universal sexualities. As examples of post-structuralist thought, each of these movements bears a relation to the fracturing of the presumptively universal subject of Western philosophy — part of what Stuart Hall has called ‘the decline of the West’ — which was not simply compounded but triggered by experiences of decolonization.<sup>98</sup> Postcolonial critics, for example, point out that the violence with which European colonial powers subjugated colonized peoples in the colonial encounter constitutes a significant challenge to the values of humanism and rationality that underpin Western liberalism.<sup>99</sup> Both Bhabha and Gilroy write of the repressed history of colonialism as inscribed as a counter-history within Western modernity: a counter-history with the power to displace the authority of its narratives of progress and order.<sup>100</sup> In a related vein, other critics connect the decentering and fragmentation of postmodernism to

the legacies of colonialism.<sup>101</sup> Rosemary Hennessy writes, specifically with regard to the rise of queer theory as a form of post-structuralist thought:

If the centered subject's historical possibility lay in its relation to the political centrality of the West with its ideological mandate to make the rest of the world its object, in the decentered subject of postmodernism lurks the synecdoche of the decline of the great imperial powers, a mark of the shifting hegemony of the United States and Europe.<sup>102</sup>

In lesbian and gay studies in the 1990s, the movement that came to be known as 'queer theory' effected a troubling of the identity categories 'gay' and 'lesbian' held out by the minoritizing, ethnic model of gay and lesbian identity in the 1970s and 1980s. As 1990s feminist theory did with 'women' and postcolonial theory did with 'race' and 'culture', queer theory was concerned to disrupt the assumed universality and internal coherence of previous categories of identification in 'gay and lesbian identity'.<sup>103</sup> Indeed, queer could be understood as itself produced out of the fracturing of the homogenizing categories of 'gay' and 'lesbian' by the insistent irruption of the 'other' kinds of difference that became newly ascendant in the population flows resultant from decolonizations.<sup>104</sup> Several writers, for example, make a periodizing argument in which queer's fragmentation of 'identity' and concomitant privileging of 'difference' is enabled in part by the earlier critique of white feminism by women of colour.<sup>105</sup> Drawing its problematization of essentialism from post-structuralist theory, work around queer sought to interrogate 'heterosexual/homosexual' definition as a set of cultural and epistemological products, rather than examining 'homosexuals' as discrete individuals.<sup>106</sup>

One of the ways in which the queer movement makes its presence felt most insistently in this book is in that many of the literary, critical and activist *tongzhi* texts examined in its pages were written at the moment when the politics and theory of 'queer' were in the process of translation into activist and scholarly scenes within Taiwan. In this moment, lesbian graduate students from National Taiwan University published a 'zine imagining a Taiwanese 'queer nation' as *guaitai yizu*; *ku'er* author Chi Ta-wei won a *China Times* literary prize for his postmodernist queer science fiction novella, 'The Membranes' (discussed in Chapter 7); and gay journalist Lucas Hsien-hsiu Lin published columns urging an 'in-yer-face' reclaiming of the term *tongxinglian* whose stigma, he argued, closely approximated that of the English term 'queer' deployed

as homophobic abuse.<sup>107</sup> As much as a conceptual starting point for my own analyses, then, 'queer' haunts this book as a motley assemblage of translated artifacts. It has often been noted that 'queer' as deployed within the Euro-American cultural and academic centres has been a wildly discontinuous phenomenon: at once a political umbrella-term designed to include a spectrum of various non-straight sexualities and genders (as shorthand for the unwieldy 'lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender'); an anti-assimilationist activist movement critical of comfortable, white, middle-class lesbian and gay identities; a fulcrum for HIV/AIDS activism; a politicized, postmodernist movement in film and video; and an academic trend bringing the post-structuralist deconstruction of identity into the domain of lesbian and gay studies. If queerness is already discontinuous and multiple in its various Euro-American manifestations, it becomes all the more so in translation. As noted at the beginning of this Introduction, it is translated by not one but a plethora of differently nuanced terms (*ku'er*; *guatai*; *xie*; *tongzhi*). 'Queer' in 1990s Taiwan refers to a literary style; an activist movement seeking civil rights for sexual minorities (including sex workers as well as lesbians and gay men); an academic enterprise that drew on the work of Judith Butler, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, and Judith Halberstam as well as Monique Wittig and Adrienne Rich to unpack the cultural construction of non-straight sexualities in a local context; and a mode of identification that drew together sexual subcultures in new and compelling ways.

The process of researching this book has been underpinned by an ongoing attempt to read queerness 'in translation', both figuratively and literally (as a relative newcomer to sexuality studies living in Taipei in 1995, many are the passages from Diana Fuss or Gayle Rubin that I first encountered in Hsiao-hung Chang or Josephine Chun-ruì Ho's Chinese translations). In researching this book, I have been unable *not* to assume the cultural, epistemological, and practical limits of 'queer', since the cultural specificity of the concept has been highlighted at every turn by its transplantation to and rewriting for a different set of contexts. More than a toolkit of theories simply to 'apply' to the literary and cultural texts I analyse, the queerness that circulates in the pages that follow is, I hope, always itself contextualized as the product of specific historical and discursive regimes: one that, like any cultural product, can become mobile and in doing so, can be instructively transformed. As well as informing the methodology I use to analyse the circulation of categories of sexuality in 1990s Taiwan, 'queer' is itself an example of the phenomena I address.

# Conclusion

## Currents and tendencies

As I hope is clear from the preceding chapters, queer representation in the variety of sites discussed in this book is so multiple, shifting, and ambiguous — qualities that apply to representations within a given text as much as across different texts — that any attempt to categorize the sites analysed into neatly bounded groups based on how they represent queerness risks erasing the very hermeneutic discontinuity and contradiction that makes them so interesting. The provisional taxonomy I propose in what follows, then, attempts to name not so much a set of categories into which all the examples discussed in the book might be neatly slotted, but rather a range of ideological and representational currents or tendencies that run through the sites analysed. Thus, some texts are animated by more than one of the tendencies I identify, and many of the sites discussed are crosscut by more than one of these currents. The tripartite taxonomy below is not anything so grandiose as an attempt exhaustively to account for the discursive construction of *tongxinglian* in 1990s Taiwan. Instead, it is a necessarily unfinished project, an attempt to articulate some of the more salient representational strategies that emerge from the selection of examples discussed in the foregoing chapters.

## Cosmopolitan gay

The range of cultural sites discussed in this book describes a historical trajectory: from the late martial law period in the early 1980s, the time of publication of Pai Hsien-yung's *Crystal Boys* and the early critical responses to it, up to the mid-to-late 1990s, when the *tongzhi* fiction, films and movements discussed in the later chapters appeared within Taiwan's public sphere. I have tried to show that this relatively brief time span was witness to a significant shift in the ways in which official culture represented Taiwan's cultural location to its citizens. Very broadly, this was a shift from an emphasis on maintaining the integrity of the nation of the Republic of China — in explicit and implicit opposition to and defence against the People's Republic — toward an increasing emphasis on how Taiwan could best fit into a globalized cultural and economic system. This book has described a broad, general, and incomplete shift in dominant representations of Taiwan's cultural location, from protector of the true Chinese nation and culture, toward an ascendant and now dominant imaginary in which Taiwan is defined instead by its participation in globalized circuits of culture and capital.

This shift in official constructions of Taiwan's cultural location entails a parallel mutation in discourses on sexualities and in the category *tongxinglian* in particular. As I suggested in the Introduction, older formulations assuming that homosexuality is always and only figured as the enemy of the nation need now to be rethought in the light of more recent claimings of gayness by some national governments. Consideration of the ways in which various official and culturally influential spokespeople have represented *tongxinglian* in 1990s Taiwan leads to the realization that a notably distinct mode of representation of *tongxinglian* emerged in that decade: a mode that might be designated as the 'cosmopolitan gay'. This mode of representation is legible in different ways, among the examples discussed here, in Ang Lee's *The Wedding Banquet*; in the rhetoric of Chen Shui-bian's Taipei City Government; and in Chu T'ien-wen's *Notes of a Desolate Man*. It entails the linkage of the sign *tongxinglian* more strongly with an aspiration to participate in contemporary 'world culture' than with the material and ideological conditions of *tongzhi* life and experience within Taiwan. Illustrating this we see Ang Lee's film, in which a middle-class, diasporic Taiwanese man lives in New York City in a gay relationship with a Caucasian American, officially feted for demonstrating Taiwan's 'cultural



miracle' of attaining democratic modernity. Comparably, as I argued in Chapter 2, in the mid-1990s, Chen's Shui-bian's City Government's vocal claims to support *tongzhi* rights were made primarily in relation to its platform of modernizing and democratizing the capital city, a project that was underwritten by a very specific version of urban modernity that entailed privileging middle-class citizen-consumers, *tongzhi* and non-*tongzhi* alike. Chu T'ien-wen's novel, meanwhile, with its worldly narrator and extensive citation of Euro-American philosophy and culture, self-consciously positions itself as far-flung inheritor of the modern European discourse of *fin-de-siècle* homosexual decadence.

The change in emphasis in official discourses from the national to the global and the accompanying ambivalent and uneven desire on the part of aspects of mainstream and official culture to embrace a despecified gayness as signifier of cosmopolitan (post)modernity also have major implications for avowedly *tongzhi* cultural production. The contemporary, critical *tongzhi* texts and practices discussed in the foregoing chapters — from the fiction of Chen Xue, Chi Ta-wei, and Qiu Miaojin and the films of Tsai Ming-liang to the activism of the Tongzhi Space Alliance and masked *tongzhi* protestors — can each in different ways be read as responses to these altered conditions. In distinction to the disingenuousness of the 'cosmopolitan gay' mode of representation, the *tongzhi*-produced texts and practices are in general committed to working through the effects produced by the local contexts of their production — albeit local contexts everywhere conditioned by translocal flows. Indeed, a central project of *tongzhi* authors, filmmakers, and cultural commentators in the 1990s was precisely to contest the 'cosmopolitan gay' mode of representation from the point of view of the local. We see this contestation, for example, in the Tongzhi Space Alliance's explicit criticism of Chen Shui-bian's vision of a 'happy, hopeful Taipei City' that would effectively erase the historical *tongxinglian* presence from the newly 'public' spaces of the city's centre, as well as in the *tongzhi* critiques of the classism of *The Wedding Banquet's* wishful resolution of the family conflict, and of the ambivalent homophobia lurking within the worldliness of *Notes of a Desolate Man*.

### Unquiet ghosts, injured subjects, and critical self-revelation

I argued in Chapter 4 that Chen Xue's figuration of her lesbian

protagonist as an unquiet, floating angel in ‘Searching for the Lost Wings of the Angel’ might be read in relation to Naifei Ding’s observation of the remarkable proliferation of liminal, non-human life forms in Taiwan’s *tongzhi* fiction.<sup>1</sup> From Chen’s angels to Qiu Miaojin’s lesbian/crocodile in *Crocodile Diary* and Chi Ta-wei’s queer, android brain-in-a-box in ‘The Membranes’, many of the texts analysed in this book contribute to a critical reworking of the pervasive ideology that effectively excludes *tongxinglian* from the realm of the human, where ‘human’ is defined by the subject’s active biological and ideological reproduction of the heteronormative family. Elsewhere, following Foucault, I have referred to this *tongzhi* obsession with anthropomorphic animals, spirits, cyborgs, ghosts, vampires and the like as a reverse discourse that cites *tongxinglian*’s exclusion from the human realm in order effectively to criticize that exclusion by effecting a textual return of the outcast in these disquieting figures of queer haunting.<sup>2</sup>

Such figurations bear an interesting relation to normativity. Rather than representing *tongzhi* or *ku’er* subjects as belonging to that realm to which in reality they are barred entry by heterosexist familialism — that is, the realm of the ‘normal person’ (*zhengchangde ren*) — these figurations opt to literalize and spectacularize *tongxinglian*’s demonization. This is a less austere and moralizing project than it may sound: Many of the spirits and ghouls that populate the pages of *tongzhi* fiction are markedly playful and humorous. One thinks, for example, of Hong Ling’s sly, Goth vampires or Qiu Miaojin’s cartoonishly cute crocodile.<sup>3</sup> Such queer non-human forms produce a *tongxinglian* that, instead of being repulsive, is now rendered, precisely, as loveable (*ke’ai*). Interestingly, too, rather than asserting any disingenuously ‘positive image’ of *tongzhi*, this reverse discourse on homosexual abjection shares with the tactic of *xianshen* that I discuss below a commitment to working through and making visible the conditions of *tongzhi* injury.

In Chapters 7 and 8, I analysed two related tactics of public *tongzhi* response to the abjection of *tongxinglian* by dominant aspects of Taiwan’s social system. Both tactics hinge on a resistant manipulation of the public visibility of the *tongzhi* subject. The masking tactic has *tongzhi* appear in public space in such a way that it directs an implicit accusation back at the viewing public (‘it is not I who am shameless, but you who allow me no face’), while Qiu Miaojin’s quasi-autobiographical writing effects a resistant exhibition of the lesbian subject whose representation is at once solicited and prohibited by mainstream public culture. In both

instances what is made visible is a *tongzhi* subject that is always injured, as it were, in advance. In the masking tactic, this subject appears as injured by virtue of having been denied a face; in Qiu's fiction — in her other writings as much as in *The Crocodile's Journal* — the emergent lesbian subject is revealed as suffering acute psychological anguish from the unbearable stresses of inhabiting a prohibited subject position.<sup>4</sup> I have referred to Qiu's fictional representation of this always-already-injured lesbian subject as a strategy of *xianshen*: making visible the *tongzhi* self, or 'coming out'. In what follows, I broaden my discussion of *xianshen*, both to elucidate more closely the model I am proposing and to investigate the extent to which this model may also be germane to other instances of *tongzhi* cultural production discussed in this book.

Foregrounding as they do the experience of an injurious collective gaze directed at the *tongxinglian* subject within culture, the tactics of *tongzhi* self-representation effected by Qiu's fiction and by the *tongzhi* masking tactic derive much of their power from the relation each bears to a foundational shame associated with *tongxinglian*. Indeed, whether *tongzhi* cultural production negates this founding moment of shame by effecting a performative declaration/instantiation of *tongzhi* pride, or whether it dramatizes the painful dynamic of shame itself as these tactics do, it seems likely that any form of *tongzhi* representation must address, in some way, that initial interpellation into the abjected and shameful subject-position of *tongxinglian*. An autobiographical anecdote by Lucas Hsien-hsiu Lin nicely illustrates the centrality of shame to identification as *tongxinglian*:

Starting from the day she found out I was a *tongxinglian*zhe my mother went through considerable agonies over how to refer to my sexual orientation. Before we knew about the fashionable neologism *tongzhi*, the newspapers and television would have her call this son of hers, who didn't fancy girls, 'tongxinglian'. Even though on the face of it 'tongxinglian' bears no pejorative connotations whatever, my mother and I both knew all too clearly just what kind of freaks *tongxinglian*zhe were imagined to be: their mystery, lasciviousness, pathology, and the AIDS virus concealed in their blood ... all this prevented my mother from being easily able to think of me, the son she herself had raised, in relation to such a term.<sup>5</sup>

Although essentially a positive story about his mother's continuing love and support of him following the revelation of his homosexuality, Lin's

anecdote nevertheless aptly illustrates the dilemma of identifying oneself as *tongxinglian*. For Lin's mother, the very term *tongxinglian* was so inherently antipathetic to the love between mother and son that she wanted to preserve that she was driven, for a time, to refer to her son's sexuality with such awkward phrases as 'people in that group to which you (pl.) belong' (*xiang nimen zhege zuqunde ren*), in order to avoid saying *tongxinglian* and in avoiding that utterance, to enable herself to continue seeing her son as the lovable person she felt him to be.<sup>6</sup> Lin's article is clearly written a significant time after the initial moment when Lin himself first felt interpellated as *tongxinglian*, and the central argument he makes in this piece is for a resistant reclamation of the term. The article ends with the defiant self-nomination: 'That's right, I really am *tongxinglian*, *tongxinglian*, *tongxinglian*, *tongxinglian* ... and so what!'<sup>7</sup> But such a defiant reclamation is of course necessitated precisely by the fact that previously, as Lin's mother's response attests, *tongxinglian* had been not a proud but a shameful designation, effecting a kind of foundational injury to the subject so hailed. This injury then had to be dealt with in the years that followed: first by evading the injurious term, and later by refunctioning it as a signifier of anti-homophobic resistance.

Writing about the possible relation between queerness and shame, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick quotes Michael Franz Basch on the emergence of the shame response in infant development: 'the shame-humiliation response ... represents the failure or absence of the smile of contact' that the infant seeks on its caregiver's face, in the communicative circuit that is sometimes called primary narcissism.<sup>8</sup> Thus, Sedgwick extrapolates:

Shame floods into being as a moment, a disruptive moment, in a circuit of identity-constituting identificatory communication. Indeed, like a stigma, shame is itself a form of communication. Blazons of shame, the 'fallen face' with eyes down and head averted ... are semaphores of trouble and at the same time of a desire to reconstitute the interpersonal bridge.<sup>9</sup>

I return below to the relation Sedgwick signals here between shame and sociability. For the present, I simply propose that to be called and to identify oneself as *tongxinglian* is to be called into being, as it were, at that moment of disruption: to be constituted as a subject, paradoxically, by a *failure* of identificatory communication (that is, to be interpellated into an abjected subject-position).<sup>10</sup> Sedgwick's theorization of shame makes good sense of Lin's anecdote, above: It is precisely this shame-

inducing disruption to the communicative relation between mother and son that Lin's mother refuses to allow in refusing to consider her grown son in relation to the inherently shaming term *tongxinglian*. Under these circumstances, to refer to Lin openly as *tongxinglian* would result in a physical or mental *turning away* of mother from son and son from mother, since as Lin notes, both people were all too keenly alive to the shame compelled by the term. Yet the prior, foundational moment when the subject him or herself first responds to the collective, shaming cry of '*tongxinglian!*' illustrates Sedgwick's point about the productive capacity of shame — despite its ostensibly purely 'negative' overtones — to delineate identity, since 'shame, as opposed to guilt, is a bad feeling that does not attach to what one does, but to what one is'.<sup>11</sup> Althusser's famous parable of the policeman's curbside hail that interpellates the individual as subjected to and a subject of ideology implies, in Judith Butler's terms, the 'conferral of identity through the self-ascription of *guilt*'.<sup>12</sup> But the accusing and injurious cry '*tongxinglian!*' (much like the cry of 'queer!' and differently from the Althusserian policeman's by-comparison benign 'hey, you!') inaugurates the *tongxinglian* subject through the self-ascription of a particular and differential *shame*.<sup>13</sup>

What options are there, then, for self-representation by those brought into social being by such a 'bad feeling' about what they are? In what follows, I want to develop further the account of *xianshen* I introduced in Chapter 8 by analysing a particular kind of *xianshen* that occurs in some *tongzhi* texts and practices, which I think can be interpreted as a direct response to the dilemma of the foundational, subject-forming, injurious shame of interpellation as *tongxinglian*. Not coincidentally, the particular instances that seem best to characterize the mode of *xianshen* I want to analyse are all ones that have been criticized through various versions of the 'negative images' critique. They include Qiu Miaojin's fiction, which has been criticized by Liou Liang-ya and Patricia Sieber for its supposed masculine identification and purported corroboration of homophobic media scandal, respectively; the *tongzhi* masking tactic, criticized by Lucas Hsien-hsiu Lin for failing effectively to manifest a publicly recognizable *tongzhi* subject; and Tsai Ming-liang's queer-themed films, criticized by some for the image they are claimed to promulgate of gay life as alienated and devoid of hope.<sup>14</sup> Against such criticism, in what follows I want to consider in detail the implications of representations, like these, that orbit around the key idea of *tongxinglian* as an injured or abjected state. How can one interpret, and what insights

might one salvage from, representations that to some extent abjure the sassy celebration and proud assertion of *tongzhi* identity to linger instead on the 'negative' elements of shame, pain, depression, alienation — in short, subjective injury — which, they seem to suggest, are in some way constitutive of the subject of *tongxinglian*?

In 'Where is the Love?', an essay on Tsai Ming-liang's paradoxically titled film *Vive l'Amour*, Chris Berry focuses on a notable feature of all Tsai's films: 'the performance of negative feelings and emotions by the main actors [that] enables or demands [a particular] kind of spectatorial relationship'.<sup>15</sup> Among the *tongzhi* texts I have discussed here, the self-conscious performance of pain and injury that Berry observes in Tsai's films is most clearly seen in Tsai's film *The River* — in which the camera's agonizing focus on Xiao Kang's neck spasms and the enthusiastic ministrations of endless acupuncture needles and massaging hands to his flesh suggests a further concretization of the theme. But I think Berry's theorization of this kind of painful public performance also relates to other texts discussed in the foregoing chapters and centrally informs the particular model of *xianshen* toward which I am working. Berry relates the performance of the characters' emotional pain in *Vive l'Amour* to the Japanese affective term *amae*, meaning something like 'the desire to be indulged', as theorized by Takeo Doi.<sup>16</sup> Distancing himself from the cultural essentialism for which Doi has been criticized — among others by Peter Dale, who argues that *amae* is nothing more than primary narcissism — Berry uses the concept of *amae* to argue not for the 'uniqueness' of Japanese affective and social life, but rather for the possibility of an as-yet untheorized spectatorial position in relation to particular Taiwanese, Korean, and Vietnamese films.<sup>17</sup>

To interpret Tsai's films through the idea of a spectatorial position based on 'the desire to be needed for the purpose of [the characters'] indulgence' is to see the films as a deliberate, public laying bare of injury before spectators with the implicit idea that the revelation of this injury will evince an active response in the spectators so positioned: a sympathetic response — in Berry's terms, a kind of 'loving' one — that is precisely what the characters lack and crave.<sup>18</sup> This is a compelling interpretation of Tsai's films. Even more specifically, however, given *amae*'s structural parallel with primary narcissism, and the fact that the shame response has been theorized as evolving through a disruption of primary narcissism's communicative circuit, I find Berry's interpretation especially apposite for considering how Tsai's film-cycle represents

queerness, and by extension, for considering representations of queerness made by other *tongzhi*-affiliated cultural producers.

In the particular version of *xianshen* I am suggesting, the injured, abjected subject who has, by definition as *tongxinglian*, suffered and been produced by that 'disruptive moment' of shame when the collectivity fails to maintain identificatory communication with it, displays itself and its pain for the look of that same collective other. I noted, above, Sedgwick's argument that since its indicative instance occurs in the communication circuit between an infant and its caregiver, 'shame both derives from and aims towards sociability', and signals a desire to re-establish the disrupted interpersonal bridge between the two.<sup>19</sup> If the form of *xianshen* I am discussing can be seen as the revelation to a collective spectator of the constitutive injury of the *tongxinglian* subject — an injury occasioned in the first place by that same collective spectator's shaming accusation and injurious withholding of the identificatory gaze — then *xianshen* draws on and intensifies the originary shame's impulse towards sociability. The public revelation of a constitutionally wounded *tongxinglian* self in Qiu's fiction, in Tsai's films, and in the *tongzhi* masking tactic could be understood precisely as an attempt to reconstitute the interpersonal bridge between the *tongxinglian* subject and the social collectivity, even as it is also a tactic whereby the social collectivity is held to account for that subject's injury in the initial shaming.

It is in this impulse toward sociability and forging an affective link with implied spectators — in Berry's terms, a link of 'love' — that this kind of *xianshen* differs from the paranoid impulse that places its faith in the demystifying project of exposing hidden violence.<sup>20</sup> This is a hairsbreadth distinction, but an important one. The impulse in the particular *tongzhi* representations I am referring to seems less to say, 'See how secretly evil the system is: Join with me to overthrow it!' than it seems to say, 'See how the collectivity with which you are complicit has injured me: Now, instead of injuring me further, will you not instead indulge and love me?' In place of the paranoid structure of 'us and Them', the critical self-revelation of *xianshen* assumes the structure 'I (or us) and you', and seeks to open up an effective interaction between speaker(s) and addressee.<sup>21</sup> It is as if these texts addressed their non-*tongzhi* audience, 'You injure me or are complicit in my injury; I reveal my injury to you; thus I both accuse you of it, and ask you for reparation, in the form of the restoration to me of your love.' In Elspeth Probyn's words in a different but related context, unlike the discourse on queer pride,

such critical revelation of a wounded self in *xianshen* is 'a strategy that doesn't downplay shame and disgust, but rather makes of these affects a ground for a very public airing of the injustices registered in bodies'.<sup>22</sup> One might further argue that more than being predicated on the paranoid impulse to reveal hidden violence and overthrow its perpetrator, this kind of *xianshen* draws on a reparative impulse that symbolically 'repairs' both *tongxinglian* itself, making it newly lovable (*ke'ai*), and the hostile collective spectator, as its plea for empathy implicitly casts this spectator as capable of offering love.<sup>23</sup>

Given all this, the particular *xianshen* tactic I am discussing seems not centrally predicated on the *ressentiment* of the injured queer subject: The *tongzhi* self that manifests through this kind of *xianshen* seems less to seek revenge on the social system it locates as the site of blame for its injury than to seek, as it were, a public hearing — better, a witnessing — of its injured state.<sup>24</sup> In *States of Injury*, Wendy Brown makes a sustained critique of the effects of late modern, North American politicized identity, a category that encompasses an ever-expanding panoply of identities including lesbians and gay men. Importantly, because of the organization of the law and related state institutions in North America, this form of politicized identity is in the first instance constituted, and always underwritten, by what Brown terms a 'social injury or marking'.<sup>25</sup> For this reason, in Brown's analysis, North American legally regulated identity is centrally structured by, and cannot escape, Nietzschean *ressentiment*, meaning that '[p]oliticized identity ... enunciates itself, makes claims for itself, only by entrenching, restating, dramatizing, and inscribing its pain in politics; it can hold out no future — for itself or others — that triumphs over this pain'.<sup>26</sup> In this sense, in Brown's account, identity politicized as it is through North American law and related institutions is always doomed to frustrate its own aim toward freedom.

But at the end of this essay, Brown questions the link between the pain of injury that catalyzes and underwrites politicized identity and the desire for revenge that she argues the law both assumes and ensures must follow as a matter of course.<sup>27</sup> Very suggestively for the theory of *xianshen* toward which I am working, she writes:

[I]t is ... possible that we have reached a pass where we ought to part with Nietzsche ... . For if I am right about the problematic of pain installed at the heart of many contemporary contradictory demands for



political recognition, all that such pain may long for — more than revenge — is *the chance to be heard into a certain release, recognized into self-overcoming, incited into possibilities for triumphing over, and hence losing, itself.*<sup>28</sup>

Although Brown addresses the specific and limited historical context of the emergence of bureaucratically regulated identities in late twentieth-century North America, her discussion of possible ways out of the dilemma faced by politicized identity — that such identity seems doomed endlessly to reinscribe the injury that founds its being — is remarkably pertinent to the kinds of 1990s Taiwanese *tongzhi* cultural production I am discussing. The writing of this *tongzhi* fiction, the making of these *tongzhi* films, and these public manifestations of *tongzhi* social presence through activist politics can be understood as precisely a demand for the political (and cultural, and social) recognition of the founding injury attending identification as *tongxinglian*. In this instance, the particular tactic of *xianshen* that I have been delineating — that of revealing the *tongzhi* subject as constituted and underwritten by the painful injury of a subjectivating shame — can be seen precisely as the expression of a desire for the release of this pain; its self-overcoming through public recognition; and the incitement into possibilities for triumphing over itself, of which Brown writes.

The situation in Taiwan vis-à-vis the legal and bureaucratic regulation of homosexual identities, however, could hardly be more different from that in North America (though *tongzhi* activists have lobbied assiduously over the past decade for various forms of legal protection for the rights of the ROC's *tongxinglian* citizens). In the present situation, the concern that *tongzhi* rights may become so thoroughly protected by ROC law as damagingly to reinscribe *tongzhi* identity as a state of injury is hardly a pressing one. My argument is not that the idea of *tongxinglian* as a state of injury is inscribed by the law: As we have seen, the ROC legal code in its current form tends on the contrary to produce *tongxinglian*, indirectly, as itself injurious to the 'cultural tradition' of the society. Rather, *tongxinglian* is inscribed as an injured state by the particular forms of *tongzhi* cultural production I am discussing. Yet, differently from Brown's account of the effects of the North American legal regulation of identities, I suggest that the spectacularization of *tongxinglian* as injury in these examples implies a desire for and a belief in the possibility of reparation, more than it implies *ressentiment*.

This version of *xianshen*, then, manifests a distinctive kind of sexual subject that is defined by its plea for the political, cultural, and social recognition of its founding pain; and rather than seeking revenge, it imagines reparation through the restoration of the 'love' that has been denied it. The sexual subject that is revealed (*xian*) in such a *xianshen* effects a fully politicized display of its own wounded self (*shen*). Such an intentional, public display has some parallels with the film-based theory of a spectator position based in *amae*, as discussed above, except that more than the individual psychic realm indexed in psychoanalytic discourses this revelation pertains to the fully public, political, and historically conditioned realm of *tongzhi* cultural production and self-representation.

By delineating in such detail the particular mode of *xianshen* I interpret as underlying these particular texts and practices, I by no means intend to suggest that this is the only or even the dominant mode of manifesting *tongzhi* selves in contemporary Taiwan. Clearly, more than one way of representing *tongzhi* subjects exists, and one might find just as much to say about those several modes of *xianshen* that manifestly *do* rely on the potent energies of queer *ressentiment*.<sup>29</sup> What is particularly interesting about the kind of *xianshen* that I have argued can be read in Tsai's films, Qiu's fiction, and the *tongzhi* masking tactic is that it constitutes a mode of queer self-representation and politics that contrasts markedly with modes more familiar in Euro-American contexts, although it is comparably politicized and public, and demonstrably compelling as a point of identification for non-straight individuals. The conceptualizations of the queer self and of the best means of representing that self publicly that underpin this tactic differ distinctly from the construction of queer selves and political efficacy on which the discourses and practices of Euro-American, post-Stonewall lesbian and gay 'coming out' have hinged. Whereas the latter tactic disavows shame to embrace an identity based on pride, the former spectacularizes shame's injury as the basis for imagining identity. Whereas the latter has often tended to take a rhetorically adversarial — in some senses, 'paranoid' — stance toward heterosexist society, the logic of the former implies a desire for recognition and reparation rather than reprisal.<sup>30</sup> To make these distinctions is not to privilege one tactic over the other; certainly, it does not imply that the form of *xianshen* I am describing is in any essential or final sense 'better' or more appropriate than dominant Euro-American tactics for publicly materializing queerness. Rather, what interests me

about this mode of *xianshen* is that as a form of queer self-representation that is at odds in some fundamental respects with Euro-American forms and, as I have shown, is conditioned by discourses of shame, 'face', and familiarity that are local and particular rather than general and universal, this kind of *xianshen* illustrates precisely the constitutive multiplicity and disconcerting unpredictability of contemporary sexualities within a global frame.

### Shifting sexualities, restless palimpsests

Gay cosmopolitanism, a reverse discourse on homosexual abjection that spawns shoals of lovable queer spirits, a mode of manifesting *tongxinglian* so that it reveals a sexual subject marked by a constitutive injury: What can these currents and tendencies in the representation of *tongxinglian* — three among an indefinite number of possible and existing ones — tell us more broadly about the production of sexualities in the world today? Such representational strategies and tactics are enabled by the intricate intermeshing of a wide array of conditioning factors that are all simultaneously in play in turn-of-the-century Taiwan, as they are elsewhere in the world, though differently: global capital flows and local folk beliefs, colonial histories and the populism of present-day municipal governments, transnational movements of knowledge and intimately embodied pleasures, novel nationalisms and post-structuralist theories of sexuality, regional circuits of media and popular culture and trans-Pacific conversations on queer activism. In this, like all the cultural sites analysed in this book, these representations attest to the fact that 'what is said about sex' at the end of the twentieth century becomes, for most people in the world, more than ever polyglottic and translational.<sup>31</sup>

This book has shown that at the close of the twentieth century, the combined effects of Taiwan's colonial histories and its contemporary positioning within accelerating transnational circuits of knowledge and capital produced a situation in which an array of discontinuous discourses on sexuality coexisted in a radically heterogeneous discursive field. In Appadurai's terms, the field of sexualities in turn-of-the-century Taiwan might be described as constituted by multiple, disjunctive ideoscapes.<sup>32</sup> As the term disjuncture implies, and as I have tried to show in the foregoing chapters, in such a situation multiple conceptualizations of sexualities coexist in weird simultaneity, the relationships between them

ranging from near-continuity to radical incommensurability. To illustrate this concisely, one might consider that in the roughly defined decade that this book has addressed, *tongxinglian* has been interpreted as connoting (at least) all of the following, sometimes simultaneously: Taiwan's entry into cultural modernity through liberal tolerance; morally depraved Westernization that undermines the Chinese nation as it undermines the family; authentic Chinese tradition; dangerous pathology; avant-garde literary and film production; and radical-democratic minority politics.

The strange and uneven simultaneous legibility of these and many other discourses brings to mind the image of a palimpsest, whereby the cultural text of sexuality emerges as a shifting and unpredictable entanglement of discursive traces of diverse historical and geocultural derivation. The disparate effects and associations produced by *tongxinglian* makes *tongxinglian* appear as not so much an 'empty signifier' as an internally multiple and highly flexible one, whose multiplicity and flexibility index some of the defining conditions of sexual cultures today. To argue that homosexual definition is marked by a radical incoherence is nothing new: That is precisely the argument famously made by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick in relation to Western cultures over a decade ago.<sup>33</sup> But if modern Euro-American understandings of homosexuality are already definitionally incoherent, then sexual knowledges become all the more incoherent when subjected to the stresses and fractures occasioned by the accelerated globalization of cultures in recent decades.

Recognizing *tongxinglian* in 1990s Taiwan as a transcultural palimpsest constituted by traces of diverse and plural knowledges on sexuality suggests the possibility of such an interpretation being broadened to address the general question of how sexual knowledges are constituted within cultural globalization. The readings of *tongxinglian* undertaken in this book have revealed a historically conditioned relation between that term and Euro-American 'homosexuality' which is neither a relationship of identity (homogenization) nor one of 'otherness' (cultural particularism), but rather one of disconcerting proximity.<sup>34</sup> *Tongxinglian*, in other words, is marked less by any definitive distance from Euro-American homosexuality than by its tendency to draw disquietingly close to it, whilst remaining nonetheless distinct. For all the discursive trafficking between *tongzhi* and 'lesbian/gay', between the mask and the closet, and between *xianshen* and 'coming out', *tongxinglian* emerges as a sexuality formation that is constitutively marked by its historical and

cultural specificity to the same degree as it is by its foundational imbrication with 'homosexuality'. Conceptualizing sexualities in this way, as proximate knowledges, reveals the inadequacy of both the cultural particularism that would cast sexualities as unique and ineffable products of a particular culture and of the globalization thesis that sees interaction with 'Western' understandings of sexuality as productive of a unilateral homogenization of sexual cultures worldwide. Both of these views rely on the questionable assumption that the default state of modern cultures is geographically bounded and historically discrete. In contrast, this book's analysis of *tongxinglian* suggests that sexualities today resemble less inert, autochthonous formations planted in the soil of a given location ('China', 'the West') than densely overwritten and hyper-dynamic texts caught in a continual process of transformation that occurs with the ongoing accretion of fresh discursive traces. The *tongxinglian* of 1990s Taiwan is one such restless palimpsest; doing critical justice to the many others — not least, to the manifold homosexualities that circulate in contemporary Euro-American contexts — hinges on recognizing the endless intricacy of the historical relations that hold these multiple modernities in tension, together and apart.

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