

Queering Chinese Kinship

HONG KONG UNIVERSITY PRESS COPYRIGHT MATERIAL

Queer Asia

The Queer Asia series opens a space for monographs and anthologies in all disciplines focusing on nonnormative sexuality and gender cultures, identities, and practices across all regions of Asia. Queer studies, queer theory, and transgender studies originated in, and remain dominated by, North American and European academic circles. Yet the separation between sexual orientation and gender identity, while relevant in the West, does not neatly apply to all Asian contexts, which are themselves complex and diverse. Growing numbers of scholars inside and beyond Asia are producing exciting and challenging work that studies Asian histories and cultures of trans and queer phenomena. The Queer Asia series—the first of its kind in publishing—provides a valuable opportunity for developing and sustaining these initiatives.

Selected titles in the series:

Boys' Love, Cosplay, and Androgynous Idols: Queer Fan Cultures in Mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan

Edited by Maud Lavin, Ling Yang, and Jing Jamie Zhao

Contact Moments: The Politics of Intercultural Desire in Japanese Male-Queer Cultures

Katsuhiko Suganuma

Falling into the Lesbi World: Desire and Difference in Indonesia

Evelyn Blackwood

*First Queer Voices from Thailand: Uncle Go's Advice Columns for Gays, Lesbians and Kathoey*s

Peter A. Jackson

Gender on the Edge: Transgender, Gay, and Other Pacific Islanders

Edited by Niko Besnier and Kalissa Alexeyeff

Maid to Queer: Asian Labor Migration and Female Same-Sex Desires

Francisca Yuenki Lai

Obsession: Male Same-Sex Relations in China, 1900–1950

Wenqing Kang

Oral Histories of Older Gay Men in Hong Kong: Unspoken but Unforgotten

Travis S. K. Kong

Queer Chinese Cultures and Mobilities: Kinship, Migration, and Middle Classes

John Wei

Queer Politics and Sexual Modernity in Taiwan

Hans Tao-Ming Huang

Queer Singapore: Illiberal Citizenship and Mediated Cultures

Edited by Audrey Yue and Jun Zubillaga-Pow

Shanghai Lalas: Female Tongzhi Communities and Politics in Urban China

Lucetta Yip Lo Kam

Undercurrents: Queer Culture and Postcolonial Hong Kong

Helen Hok-Sze Leung

Editorial Collective

Chris Berry (King's College London, UK), John Nguyet Erni (Hong Kong Baptist University, Hong Kong), Peter Jackson (Australian National University, Australia), Helen Hok-Sze Leung (Simon Fraser University, Canada), and Shawna Tang (University of Sydney, Australia)

International Editorial Board

Dennis Altman (La Trobe University, Australia), Hongwei Bao (University of Nottingham, United Kingdom), Tom Boellstorff (University of California, Irvine, USA), Judith Butler (University of California, Berkeley, USA), Chow Yiu Fai (Hong Kong Baptist University), Lynette Chua (National University of Singapore), Ding Naifei (National Central University, Taiwan), David Eng (University of Pennsylvania, USA), J. Neil Garcia (University of the Philippines, Diliman), Joseph Goh (Monash University Malaysia), Meena Gopal (Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai, India), Thomas Guadamuz (Mahidol University, Thailand), David Halperin (University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, USA), Josephine Chuen-juai Ho (National Central University, Taiwan), Annamarie Jagose (University of Sydney, Australia), Travis Kong (University of Hong Kong), Song Hwee Lim (Chinese University of Hong Kong), Kam Louie (University of Hong Kong), Lenore Manderson (University of Witwatersrand, South Africa), Fran Martin (University of Melbourne, Australia), Meaghan Morris (University of Sydney, Australia), Dede Oetomo (University of Surabaya, Indonesia), Natalie Oswin (University of Toronto, Canada), Cindy Patton (Simon Fraser University, Canada), Ken Plummer (University of Essex, United Kingdom), Elspeth Probyn (University of Sydney, Australia), Lisa Rofel (University of California, Santa Cruz, USA), Vaibhav Saria (Simon Fraser University, Canada), Megan Sinnott (Georgia State University, USA), John Treat (Yale University, USA), Carol Vance (Yale University, USA), Meredith L. Weiss (State University of New York at Albany, USA), and Audrey Yue (National University of Singapore)

Queering Chinese Kinship

Queer Public Culture in Globalizing China

Lin Song

HONG KONG UNIVERSITY PRESS COPYRIGHT MATERIAL

Hong Kong University Press
The University of Hong Kong
Pokfulam Road
Hong Kong
<https://hkupress.hku.hk>

© 2022 Hong Kong University Press

ISBN 978-988-8528-73-8 (*Hardback*)

All rights reserved. No portion of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or any information storage or retrieval system, without prior permission in writing from the publisher.

British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Printed and bound by Hang Tai Printing Co., Ltd. in Hong Kong, China

Contents

List of Illustrations	viii
Acknowledgments	ix
Guide to Romanization	xi
1. Introduction: Queering Chinese Kinship	1
Part I: Cinematic Cultures	
2. Going Public: The Familial and the Political in New Chinese Documentaries	31
3. Localizing the Transnational: <i>Spring Fever</i> as a Queer Sinophone Film	50
Part II: Popular Cultures	
4. Entertainingly Queer? Illiberal Homonormativity and Transcultural Queer Politics in <i>Q Dadao</i>	73
5. Coming Out as Celebrities and Fans: Digital Self-Making, Carnavalesque Consumption, and Queer Vloggers on Bilibili	91
6. Rerouting Queerness: <i>Qipa Shuo</i> in the Rise of Chinese Online Video	110
7. Closing Remarks	126
Filmography	137
References	139
Index	156

Illustrations

Figure 2.1: Mama Xuan wiping tears in <i>Mama Rainbow</i>	41
Figure 2.2: Family portrait shot in <i>Pink Dads</i>	41
Figure 2.3: Meiyi talking to the camera in <i>Mama Rainbow</i>	43
Figure 2.4: Interview scene in <i>Pink Dads</i>	44
Figure 4.1: <i>Q Dadao</i> 's main poster	81
Figure 4.2: <i>Q Dadao</i> 's promotional poster	82
Figure 4.3: <i>Q Dadao</i> 's promotional poster	82
Figure 5.1: "Bullet curtain" comments from LJZ's vlog	105
Figure 5.2: "Bullet curtain" comments from CYL10's vlog	107

HONG KONG UNIVERSITY PRESS COPYRIGHT MATERIAL

Introduction: Queering Chinese Kinship

It was a cool Saturday night in Shenzhen in October 2014 as I entered a theater in the Huaxia Arts Center. Built in 1991, the Nanshan District arts center is in one of the city's most affluent neighborhoods and has been home to various artistic and cultural events since its establishment. Although I had frequented the fishing-village-turned-metropolis before, it was my first visit to the arts center. Looking around, I was surprised to find that the 700-seat theater was nearly full. Most of the audience were in their twenties. As the theater filled up and started to bustle with excitement for the imminent opening of the musical *Q Dadao* *Q 大道*, I began to wonder how many members of the audience were attracted, like me, by the gay character and plot advertised in the posters for the show. About a month ago, I had stumbled across a flyer about the show on *Zank*, a gay online social network in China. On the flyer, the Chinese musical adaptation of the Tony Award-winning Broadway hit *Avenue Q* was described as "explicit, bold, and pro-gay," exploring topics such as coming out and social prejudice. The flyer also offered an exclusive 25% discount for *Zank* users. I was intrigued by the flyer's explicit reference to homosexuality and targeting of gay audiences. In contemporary mainland China, queerness remains stigmatized and inhabits a generally unwelcoming social environment. It is also subject to vigorous censorship in the Chinese media, which is under constant state surveillance and control. It thus came as a surprise to me that a mainstream musical claimed not only to stage homosexuality but also to stage it in a positive light. Was it a marketing stunt to capitalize on Chinese queers' thirst for media representations? If not, what kind of queer identities would be imagined by the show?

At the curtain call two hours later, I was impressed and even more intrigued: the musical fulfilled its promise. It presented a sustained storyline about a character's struggle with his sexual orientation, which culminated in his final decision to come out on the stage. The gay character was also represented quite affirmatively as one of the show's leading characters. The highlights of the show included two moments. One was the performance of the number "*Ruguo Ni Shi*

Gay” 如果你是 Gay (“If You Were Gay”), in which the gay character’s straight roommate repeatedly assures him “if you were gay, it’d be okay”; the other was the gay character’s spectacular coming out scene toward the end of the musical, where he declared proudly on the stage, “I’m not afraid any more. I’m gay!” These two moments provided me with a sense of empowerment and validation that had been rare in Chinese mainstream cultural products, but my attention was caught by an announcement at the end of the show, introducing Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays China (PFLAG China) as one of the show’s official partners. The production team revealed that part of its revenue would be donated to this nongovernmental organization (NGO) dedicated to fostering a more tolerant environment for Chinese LGBTQ subjects within their families.

The performance of *Q Dadao*, which I explore in detail in Chapter 4, brings together several interrelated issues central to this book. Situated at the intersection of transnational media encounter; local conditions of media control and market-oriented liberalization; globalized, West-originated identity politics; and the ubiquitous presence of Chinese blood kinship relations and ideologies, the Chinese musical reveals a complex picture of new modes of queer becoming in the contemporary People’s Republic of China (PRC). Importantly, contrary to the popular belief that queerness does not exist in the authoritarian party-state, or if it does, it must be privatized and underground, these modes of queer becoming take a distinctly public form: not only is queerness publicly represented, its engagements and negotiations with blood kinship values are also very much public in multiple senses of the word.

I argue that queerness constitutes a key dimension of public culture in the PRC today, and that it does so by negotiating, appropriating, and transforming the supposedly private domain of blood kinship relations and ideologies. The apparently oxymoronic combination of “queer” and “public culture” in the book’s title carries two important theoretical orientations. First, it alludes to Sedgwick’s (1990) seminal distinction between the minoritizing versus universalizing tendencies in queer analysis and insists on a universalizing approach. The book examines queerness and Chinese kinship in a process of mutual construction and cross-fertilization. The various modes of queer becoming it explores show not only how queer existence is enabled through continuous negotiation and appropriation of kinship relations and values, but also how interactions with queerness reveal Chinese kinship to be an unstable and potentially capacious site. The dynamics between queerness and Chinese kinship, therefore, are not only relevant to a small queer population, but also address a larger issue of “continuing, determinative importance to the lives of people across the spectrum of sexualities” (Sedgwick 1990, 2). Second, by marrying “queer” with “public culture,” I also evoke Appadurai and Breckenridge’s (1988) idea of public culture as a contestatory zone of cultural debate, where various types, forms,

and domains of culture encounter and interrogate each other to form a heterogeneous and heteroglossic discursive space (6). I argue that such a discursive space exists in China in tandem with persistent state intervention and censorship. The economic-driven growth of the country's media sector and the proliferation of networked communication technologies have given rise to creative and resilient ways for expressing queerness and envisioning queer politics. By exploring how queerness is articulated through a negotiation of blood kinship in post-2008 Chinese media products, this book unpacks the complexity of a globalizing China and the opportunities such a complexity affords for queer subjects.

Evoking the term "queer" to describe nonnormative sexualities and practices in China inevitably raises the interrelated questions of authenticity and translatability (S. Lim 2009). When researching Chinese queerness, I was often confronted by the question—both from other scholars and from myself, and from China and beyond—of whether the case I describe is "truly queer" or "queer enough," or if it is "just gay." The difficulty in theorizing Chinese queerness without being haunted by questions of authenticity and difference partly derives from the politics of the location in knowledge production, discussed later in this chapter. Moreover, it is largely engendered by tensions between the narrow and broad definitions of "queer." In a narrow sense, "queer" functions as an umbrella term referring to a spectrum of gender and sexual orientations, representations, and identities that include, for instance, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, two-spirited, and questioning (Kumashiro 2001; Yep 2003). What sets the definition of "queer" apart from sedimented labels such as "gay" and "lesbian" is its "capacious and deliberately inclusive" nature (Yep 2003, 61). In a broad sense, and particularly as a critical concept, "queer" signifies an anti-normative positionality that rejects categorization (Halperin 1997; M. Warner 1993). Anything that protests and challenges the normal can be regarded as "queer." The narrow and broad definitions of the term "queer" are in a contentious relationship: whereas "queer" can describe an array of sexual identities, its invocation of an anti-normative positionality decides that, to quote Sedgwick, "there are a lot of people that are gay that aren't queer . . . [and] there are probably a lot of people that are truly queer that aren't gay" (quoted in Yep 2003, 36). This tension denotes the complex dynamics between recognition and assimilation, and between survival and normalization. Indeed, conceptualizing queerness as an anti-normative form of sexual (non)identity begs the question of how normativity itself should be defined in the first place, and how anti-normative one needs to be in order to qualify as "queer."

As far as translatability is concerned, studies of queerness in Chinese-speaking societies have yielded meaningful local terms for Chinese homosexualities in English-language academia. The term *tongzhi* 同志, for instance, is favored by some scholars for its ability to foreground a local genealogy of homosexuality

characterized by the convergence between China's socialist and postsocialist histories (Chou 2000; Kong 2010; Zheng 2015). Although the use of this term suggests a much-needed insistence on local specificity, Howard Chiang (2014b, 354–55) and Hongwei Bao (2018, 31) insightfully observe that an “obsession” with indigenous terms risks missing the opportunity to bring into dialogue studies of queer cultures in different locales by evoking an orientalized and particularist vision of Chinese queerness.

My choice to use “queer” in this book as a signifier and as an analytical optic reflects two intentions. First, I wish to highlight and explore the connections between globalized queer knowledge, identities, and politics and local articulations of queerness. Second, I set out to displace Euro-American conceptualizations of queerness by unveiling and challenging their presumed universality. In discussing articulations of queerness vis-à-vis blood kinship relations in China, this book does not seek to offer a definition for a quintessential “Chinese queerness” or a case study of “queerness in China.” On the contrary, it rejects sedimented understandings of queerness by looking at how nonnormative sexualities take multifarious forms and how these forms are enabled by both local and transnational material and cultural conditions. “Queer,” therefore, is used as a deliberately open and capacious term here. As David Halperin (1997) beautifully put it:

Queer is by definition *whatever* is at odds with the normal, the legitimate, the dominant. *There is nothing in particular to which it necessarily refers.* . . . [It] demarcates not a positivity but a positionality vis-à-vis the normative. . . . [It] does not designate a class of already objectified pathologies or perversions; rather, it describes a horizon of possibility whose precise extent and heterogeneous scope cannot in principle be delimited in advance. (62, emphasis in original)

The interactions between queerness and normality and the way in which these interactions open horizons of hope and possibility are key themes of the book. The book effectuates a theoretical intervention in conceptualizing queerness by demonstrating the multifarious and ambivalent ways in which queerness is imagined vis-à-vis normality. I ground the theorization of queerness in lived experiences and contextualized cultural representations in contemporary China to challenge the ideological deadlock between queerness and family-and-kinship as an institution. The dichotomous formulation of queerness as radically oppositional toward blood kinship leads to an overgeneralized understanding of normativity, often used as a flattened label that escapes critical scrutiny. I insist that normativity cannot be reduced to a single representative institution; instead, it should be unpacked as a complex field of relations. In the same vein, queerness is not a competition regarding who is more radical, not least because radicality itself is historically and culturally specific and presumes certain social and political privileges. By situating the interactions between queerness and blood kinship

in specific social, cultural, political, and historical contexts, this book shows how “queer is constantly expanded, supplemented, and revised” (Liu 2010, 297) outside the Euro-American axis of knowledge production. Thus, this book is a contribution to the growing literature on queer China that examines how queerness is complexly and simultaneously shaped by global capitalist imaginaries and local conditions of postsocialism (Bao 2020b; Zhao 2020; Zhao and Wong 2020). As Bao (2020a) points out, it is impossible to offer a neat, linear historiography of Chinese queerness as it is characterized by contradictory articulations of identification and disidentification, and becoming and unbecoming (5–6). These intricacies offer a point of entry to rethink the manifestations and potentialities of queerness.

Another central subject matter in this book is “Chinese kinship,” a term I use to refer to Confucian blood kinship relations that function as the hegemonic form of relatedness in the PRC today. I write with full awareness of how a discussion of queerness and blood kinship might appear asynchronous at a time when alternative kinship formations, such as same-sex marriage and assisted-reproductive-technology-enabled queer families, are mushrooming around the world. The global phenomenon of same-sex marriage or partnership legalization in the United States, Ireland, Australia, districts of Tokyo, and recently Taiwan has challenged heteronormative definitions of marriage and family in profound ways. The steadily growing interdisciplinary field of queer kinship studies has also produced important scholarship on nonnormative kinship in North American (Weston 1991; Walters 2012), European (Andreassen 2018; Dahl 2018; Petersen 2016; Sullivan and Davidmann 2016), and Asia-Pacific (Bao 2018; Brainer 2019; S. Huang and Brouwer 2018) contexts, all of which expanded the purview of scholarly discussions of kinship relations and ideologies. Nevertheless, the liberal pluralist campaign for marriage equality also entails limitations and poses new challenges for imagining queer politics. Dreher (2016) identifies three major concerns arising from same-sex marriage victories. The first is the narrowing of representations around sexual citizenship and the risks of normalization of queer lives and intimacy. In a context where conventional marriage is valorized as the most desirable form of kinship structure and imagined as the ultimate goal of sexual politics, the diversity and complexity of queer lives and queer politics is in danger of being “narrowed or even erased,” replaced by “privatized and depoliticized family values” (189). Second, this development of a narrow sexual politics may be accompanied by an emergent “homonationalism” that “positions Western nations as guarantors of sexual freedom” (190). The term homonationalism is put forward by Puar (2007) as a critique of a sexual exceptionalism where queerness becomes complicit in the construction of a national imaginary in which racialized and sexualized others are disavowed. The surfacing of a regulatory queerness, as Dreher (2016) remarks, prompts “intersectional and coalitional approaches” outside the rhetoric of liberal sexual politics in order to

represent the complexity and heterogeneity of queer lives in different locales and cultures (189–90). Third, Dreher warns against the prevalence of a “triumphalist narrative” that sees same-sex marriage campaigns as certain and inevitable, and calls for continuous efforts that “positio[n] marriage equality as a starting point for conversation and contestation rather than a final goal or end of debate” (190).

This book, then, takes up the timely task of revisiting and rethinking blood kinship, which is an often-neglected site of inquiry in Euro-American theorizations of queer kinship. By doing so, the book reflects on the in/effectiveness of global queer liberalism and its choreographed progressive politics. Queer theory and queer kinship studies have much to gain from a careful consideration of the dynamics between queerness and families of origin, through which heteronormative assumptions about blood kinship can be productively problematized and redefined. In the Chinese context, destabilizing the ideological antagonism between queerness and kinship is not just a queer analytical perspective, but an essential condition for queer survival. Chinese cultural manifestations of queer negotiations within blood kinship offer a rich archive for recalibrating and expanding the concepts of both “queerness” and “kinship,” which are in constant contention and negotiation with each other. I underpin this mutually constitutive nature of the two concepts with the paradigm “queering Chinese kinship.” By using “queer” as a verb instead of a static adjective, I lay emphasis on the motions, processes, and transformations that are constantly occurring in the cultural production of queerness and kinship. In other words, in this book, “queerness” and “kinship” are not used as concepts with fixed meanings—instead, they are treated as open signifiers that *acquire* meanings in the process of discursive construction.

This book focuses on articulations of queerness vis-à-vis blood kinship relations in post-2008 Chinese media cultures. This is a particularly intricate and dynamic terrain, first from the commercialization of Chinese media sectors in 1979 as part and parcel of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP)’s economic liberalization policy, and later from the state-led development project for internet and communication technology that has fundamentally transformed how media is produced and consumed. Although Chinese media share a pronounced economic drive with their Western counterparts, they are distinguished by the authoritarian political and cultural environment in which they exist and indeed flourish. This condition of economic-driven cultural liberalization and persistent state censorship and control significantly shapes China’s cultural production of media. Lewis, Martin, and Sun (2016, 259) succinctly describe Chinese media cultures as characterized by a complex intertwining of socialist structural legacies and neoliberal logics. Moving from the more conventional media genre of cinema to emergent genres of musical and online video, this book shows how queerness is imagined vis-à-vis blood kinship in diverse and creative ways, and how the re-imagining and queering of Chinese kinship are simultaneously

enabled and restrained by complex media ecologies. By doing so, the book highlights the unevenness of global sexual modernities and neoliberal subjectivities, and the necessity of thinking outside the liberal pluralist vision of queer politics. This book assumes a universalizing point of view in its analyses of Chinese queer media cultures as public culture, and I have chosen to focus on publicly accessible, popular, and commercial media products. Meanwhile, it is important to note that a plethora of subcultural and underground queer media productions exist in China, the significance of which has been well explored in recent scholarship (Bao 2018; J. Tan 2016; Yue 2012; Jie Zhang 2012).

As one of the first systematic accounts of cultural articulations of queer kinship in non-Western contexts, this book brings together a number of fields of inquiry including queer theory, Asian and China studies, film and media studies, Sinophone studies, and queer kinship studies, and draws on critical theories across disciplinary boundaries in literary analysis, media studies, political science, cultural anthropology, and sociology. In this introductory chapter, I delineate this interdisciplinary research project by first presenting its theoretical and methodological approaches before situating my discussions in the contemporary Chinese context and specifying how the book contributes to relevant fields. To close this chapter, I outline the structure of the book and the arguments in each chapter to come.

Global Queer China

This book is born out of the intellectual tradition of queer Asian studies, a vibrant field brought together by a shared concern over the hegemony and insufficiency of Euro-American paradigms of queer knowledge production. As Petrus Liu (2010) famously argues in his essay “Why Does Queer Theory Need China?”:

The political success of U.S. queer theory is rhetorically derived from the imagination of the East as a civilization sealed off from the rest of the world. This binary opposition is not only implied by, but actually constitutive of, the major claims of poststructuralist queer theory. (300)

P. Liu’s assertion is based on a careful re-reading of the founding works of Euro-American queer theory, including Foucault’s *History of Sexuality* and Sedgwick’s *Epistemology of the Closet*, exploring how their vision of a universal theory of sexuality is premised upon a misunderstanding, if not dismissal, of “the East” as an otherized, homogeneous, and unfathomable entity. Queer theory needs China, P. Liu argues, because only through examination of non-Western cultures as reference points in queer knowledge production (rather than sites of difference) can an anti-universalist and global queer theory start to emerge.

P. Liu’s argument is emblematic of a collective endeavor to provincialize Euro-American queer theory in a global age. Scholars in queer Asian studies pay special attention to the movements, contentions, and resignification of

queerness in a world that is both increasingly connected and fundamentally uneven. In the introduction to their edited book *AsiaPacifiQueer: Rethinking Genders and Sexualities*, members of the AsiaPacifiQueer network challenge the binary view that regards non-Western manifestations of nonconforming genders and sexualities either as proofs for “sexual Westernization” or as repositories for “local essentialism” (Martin et al. 2008, 6). They offer a critical model of queer hybridization to “explore the complex processes of localization and interregional borrowing that shape sexual cultures in an increasingly networked world” (6). Further developing this transnational approach to Asian queerness, Chiang and Wong (2016) suggest that since “queer cultural formations do not merely follow the vertical logics of colonial modernity,” greater attention is needed on “less orderly, bilateral, and horizontal intra-regional traffics of queerness across different countries and regions” (1645). This decentering strategy is echoed by Audrey Yue’s critical paradigm of “Queer Asia as method,” in which she argues for a sustained focus on “practices that decenter the globalized formation of ‘queer’” in order to initiate “critical conversations on intra-regional cultural flows that are local *and* international” (Yue 2017, 21, emphasis in original). In his endeavor to bridge sociology and queer theory, Travis Kong (2019) also calls for attention to “the queer flows of circulation among and within non-Western societies that shape queer desires, identities and practices” (2), and proposes a transnational queer sociology that addresses “the asymmetries of the globalization process” and seeks to understand “the hybridity of contemporary non-Western experiences” (5). These theoretical positionalities have given rise to vibrant and fruitful discussions on queer Asia across different localities, including Japan (e.g., McLelland, Suganuma, and Welker 2007), Taiwan (e.g., H. Huang 2011), Singapore (e.g., Yue and Zubillaga-Pow 2012), Thailand (e.g., Jackson 2016), Korea (e.g., Henry 2020), Indonesia (e.g., Wijaya 2020), India (e.g., Chatterjee 2018), and Malaysia (e.g., Goh 2018).

In the study of queerness in Chinese-speaking societies more specifically, recent years have witnessed a burgeoning body of research exploring various facets of queer experiences, identities, strategies, and cultures. These studies cover a range of topics including intra- and international queer migration (Kam 2020; J. Wei 2020; T.-F. Yu 2020); gay and lesbian identities and queer activism (Bao 2018; Engebretsen 2013; Engebretsen, Schroeder, and Bao 2015; Kam 2012); kinship arrangements and negotiations (S. Huang and Brouwer 2018; Yingyi Wang 2019; J. Wei 2020; Zhu 2018); and queer intervention in underground, popular, and digital cultures (Bao 2020b; Chao 2020; S. Wang 2020; J. Zhao 2020; J. Zhao and Wong 2020). Collectively, this growing corpus of literature on global queer China captures what Bao (2020b) calls “postsocialist metamorphosis”: “a simultaneous and yet contradictory process” of envisioning and embodying queerness (5). In doing so, these scholars convincingly and insightfully demonstrate the situatedness of queer identities, politics, cultures, and knowledges,

and underline the urgency to contest, decenter, and re-imagine queer liberalism. Although a concern with Chinese blood kinship notably underpins most of the existing literature on queer China, there is yet to be a systematic study of the relationship between queerness and Chinese blood kinship in the context of the PRC. This book addresses this gap by exploring how interactions between queerness and blood kinship relations play a central role in the articulation of queer selfhood and culture in globalizing China.

Although this book focuses on the geographical location of the PRC, it also adopts a transnational approach that rejects seeing China as a static entity defined only by its national borders. In fact, as these chapters will show, contemporary China is always already global. The Western-centric notion of the word *global* plays a part—that is, China has been penetrated by transnational corporations and the capitalist logics of free trade and free market. More importantly, however, China is global in a far more complex, messy, and disjunctive sense. First and foremost, China is global in its self-positioning as a socialist country with “Chinese characteristics,” which denotes a developmentalist outlook that instrumentalizes global capitalism as a means to boost the domestic economy. As Rofel (2007) shows, China’s globalization in the 1990s and 2000s is characterized by a series of experiments in neoliberalism as the country transformed itself into a postsocialist state. This increasingly cosmopolitan outlook, fueled by the country’s aspiration to “connect tracks” (*jiegui* 接軌) with the world, has engendered a sea change in subject-making and cultural production. Importantly, the intertwining of socialist legacies and globalist and capitalist logics has determined that globalization in China is not a seamless process, but one characterized by asymmetries and frictions. The analysis of China offered here takes into consideration both the strong influence of global knowledge and cultural exchange traffic and the disjunctive processes of hybridization. Second, China is also global because in an age of accelerated flows of ideas and people, Chineseness inevitably spills over into more capacious, fluid, and heterogenous definitions. Sinophone studies scholars have long contended China-centrism by stressing the significance of articulations of Chineseness at the geographical margins of China, including Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia, and other Chinese diasporic communities (Shih 2007). By investigating “a historical process of heterogenizing and localizing of continental Chinese culture” (4), Sinophone studies reveal the complexities of history, geography, and identity in the making of China and Chineseness. Building on Shih’s pioneering work, several scholars have explored the cross-fertilization between queer studies and Sinophone studies. For example, Pecic (2016) suggests that combining the notion of the Sinophone with decentralized studies of non-Western queerness offers “exciting new ways of interrogating Chinese queer cultures that are both localised as well as transnational” (5). Chiang and Wong (2020) further argue for conceptualizing “queer Sinophone studies” as a critical field of inquiry aimed

at de-essentializing both Chineseness and queerness by analyzing how they are articulated in and through one another. Whereas Sinophone studies and queer Sinophone studies focus more heavily on non-PRC locales in their efforts to challenge China-centrism, this book seeks to engage both fields by teasing out the same complexities and heterogeneity that underlie Chineseness in the contemporary PRC. As I will show, intensifying regional and global exchanges have enabled expressions of nonnormative sexualities that constantly challenge official definitions of Chineseness. The imagining of queerness as integral to, instead of incompatible with, Chinese kinship ideology redefines the contours of Chineseness. The intersection with queerness thus productively destabilizes the heteronormative and hegemonic construction of Chineseness in the PRC. A scrutiny of the cultural politics of Chineseness inside China contributes to Sinophone studies' anti-hegemonic and anti-imperial project by revealing the fundamental heterogeneity of Chineseness.

This book's study of queerness in contemporary China, in short, evokes a global framework of analysis. On the one hand, it examines how asymmetrical and disjunctive forces of globalization give rise to fundamentally new manifestations of queerness in China that challenge the presumed universality of Western queer experiences and politics. On the other hand, it also explores how Chinese queerness complicates state-promoted, nationalistic definitions of Chineseness through connections with transnational and intraregional circuits of queer knowledge. By doing so, this book contributes to envisioning a truly global queer theory that regards Euro-American queer formations as one of *many* reference points for conceptualizing queerness, rather than the center.

Thinking through Kinship: Queer Representations, Queer Becoming

Family and kinship have always been a central concern in queer representations and queer becoming in Chinese societies. Commenting on the emergence of gay and lesbian culture in China at the turn of the twentieth century, Chris Berry (2001) noted how increased film and video representation of gay men, lesbians, and other queer characters is characterized by "the social mapping of gay identity in relation to family and kinship" (213). He identifies two dominant ways in which queerness is defined and socially positioned: first, queerness "appears as a problem within the networks of kinship obligations that constitute the family and bind the individual into it" (213). The problem posed by queerness for the family in these representations, in other words, is not sexual behavior in and of itself, but is instead a dramatized conflict between "two different models of selfhood"—one based on "an exclusive sexual and social identity" and one closely linked to the performance of one's role in the family (215–16). In this sense, Berry suggests, situating queerness as a family problem opens discussions

about the divide between “a local relational self and a foreign-originated psychological self,” which further constitute a ground for observations of “ongoing hybridity and contradiction” (217–18). Second, in both mainstream and queer models of film production, queerness is represented with a heavy reference to the family. Differing markedly from the post-Stonewall Anglo-American model that imagines queerness as “a matter of self-expression” based on the breakup with blood families and joining of alternative queer communities, East Asian representations of queerness are either integrated with the obligations of traditional family roles or “located in and defined by the hazy amorphous spaces of marginality” (224–25). Such a mode of representation, Berry posits, reveals the possibility for “challenge, review, renegotiation, and renewal” against the historical and cultural specificities of Anglo-American models, and showcases how “international circulation of cinema and video from East Asia enables . . . emergent . . . queer identities to participate in the constitution of an increasingly globalized gay culture” (213).

Similarly, in her discussion of the family in Taiwanese queer literature and film, Fran Martin (2003) remarks that “the idea of ‘gayness’ bears a necessary relation to the idea of ‘family’, albeit a tense and ambivalent one” (119). Rejecting the essentialist approaches that configure queerness as *either* a sexual subject grounded in Euro-American psychoanalytic traditions *or* a cultural subject grown out of “the Chinese family” as a stable, self-sufficient, and generalized organization, Martin understands “queerness” (*tongxinglian* 同性戀) and “family” (*jia* 家) as discursive products situated in complex relations (119–20). *Jia*, Martin argues, is a “discursive and ideological site that produces effects for the production of *tongxinglian*, which is itself . . . a similarly shifting and unstable site, incessantly made and remade in the circuits of contemporary culture” (120). She situates this intricate relationship between “sexuality” and “family” in the “transcultural mobilities of the knowledge-systems that inform them” (143). Local queers’ engagements with the family, she suggests, both appropriate Euro-American queer theories’ critiques on essentialized sexuality and gender categories, and simultaneously displace the sign of “queer” from these conditioning contexts by way of hybridizing global and local sexual knowledges. As a result, “fundamentally new formations of culture and sexuality” (24) are produced, whose intricacies and heterogeneity exceed the scope of any single 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” (17).

Berry’s (2001) and Martin’s (2003) discussions of queerness in Chinese-speaking societies foreground family and kinship as a pivotal site where queer selfhood and culture are imagined and embodied. Importantly, “the Chinese family” is not essentialized as a generalized and inelastic institution, but as a discursive sign that acquires meaning in its contentious yet productive relationship

with queerness. As both authors have pointed out, kinship is a site of complex encounters of global queer knowledge, identities, and politics, as well as a site of constant transformation, appropriation, and resignification. A careful study of family and kinship is thus of particular importance in Chinese contexts as it informs understandings of global queerness and queer cultural production. Accordingly, I next engage with theories in kinship and queer kinship studies, most of which are born out of the Euro-American context, to devise a critical approach to theorize the interactions between queerness and kinship in contemporary China.

Most commonly associated with anthropology, "kinship" as an analytical concept has been deployed to investigate and understand domestic and generational relationships that constitute the fundamental ways through which people become socially related. In the mid-twentieth century, kinship studies became a central field in anthropology, focusing strongly on the typology of lineage systems and descent groups. Directing attention to the emerging nuclear family, early kinship studies bore a strong gender bias with an exclusive focus on men. The notion of natural reproduction as the foundation of kinship also remained unchallenged (Carsten 2000, 10–11). Claude Lévi-Strauss's milestone work *Elementary Structures of Kinship* (1969), for example, offers a structuralist account of marriage and alliance based on an examination of the incest taboo as the first and most important cultural imprint of human society. The prohibition of incest, Lévi-Strauss explains, functions both to establish the family as the basic human unit by preventing the formation of sub-units of sexual partners within a group, and to facilitate the further constitution of larger units such as clans, tribes, and eventually societies by necessitating marriages (29–41). Surveying various forms of marriage in "primitive" human societies, Lévi-Strauss points out that the rules of exogamy and endogamy in marriage are decided by the need to exchange women as reproductive persons among different groups. Different rules of marriage, on the other hand, set up different relations of reciprocity and sociality among intermarrying groups (42–55). Situating elementary kinship in the context of cultural and social exchange, Lévi-Strauss's account demonstrates that kinship relations are distinctly cultural. This point of view powerfully challenges the Aristotelian understanding of the family as a natural and self-generated entity and has inspired later scholars focusing on the cultural politics of kinship and gender. Notably, in her seminal essay "The Traffic in Women," Marxist feminist Gayle Rubin (1997) engages with Lévi-Straussian theory through a problematization of his central idea of "the exchange of women." Highlighting the gendered power relations implied by the concept, Rubin argues that instead of being regarded as a "cultural necessity," "the exchange of women" should be seen as a "profound perception" of an unbalanced social system that calls for an analysis of the "political economy of sexual systems" (39). Rubin's response reveals that Lévi-Strauss's initial aim to account for rather than reflect on the

genesis of kinship has largely limited his book's analytical potential to abstracting a set of universal rules of kinship, instead of scrutinizing the power mechanisms behind these rules.

American anthropologist David Schneider (1968) powerfully critiques such a function-oriented analysis of kinship in his groundbreaking work *American Kinship: A Cultural Account*. Schneider negates the biogenetic undertone of earlier kinship studies and identifies American kinship as "a cultural universe of relatives" that revolves around two orders: "the order of nature" and "the order of law" (27). The core symbol of "blood" in American kinship, for instance, may be derived in natural terms through the sharing of "the stuff of a particular heredity," or may also be enshrined in law "imposed by man and [consisting] of rules and regulations, customs and traditions" (27). Schneider's approach to kinship highlights the complex relationship between the biological and the social, opening up a whole new field of enquiry for later scholars (Carsten 2000, 22). In a more recent account, Carsten (2000), arguing from a Schneiderian tradition, configures kinship not as a single, unified site of inquiry, but as plural and heterogeneous "cultures of relatedness" (34). In Carsten's edited book, Charles Stafford (2000) offers an interesting case study of Chinese kinship and patriliney by describing "the cycle of *yang*" (養) as a system through which relatedness is generated. Distinguishing the cycle of *yang* from the paradigm of lineage and descent, Stafford suggests that in the Chinese context, the provision of a kind of "all-encompassing nurturance" from the parents establishes a complex and "almost inescapable obligation" for the children to care for them in old age (41). This elaborate system of debt and return of *yang* is intriguing particularly because (a) it entails the possibility of producing relatedness between foster parents and children without a "natural" tie of descent; (b) it can be enacted without consideration for a descendant, as opposed to the popular belief about Chinese kinship as descendent-oriented; and (c) a failure in the "cycle of *yang*" may provoke a termination of relations of descent on itself, indicating that socio-economic instead of biological concerns may independently encompass relatedness (42–43). Combined with Carsten's theoretical contemplations, Stafford's observations invoke a reconceptualization of kinship as a multifaceted, intersecting site shaped by various cultural practices. In other words, instead of being biologically determined or socially coded, kinship may be understood as a *process* of relatedness-building and meaning-making.

From its earlier focus on descent and lineage based on the presumption of universal heterosexual procreation to its more recent emphasis on symbolic and cultural meanings, kinship studies in anthropology is increasingly adopting a cultural constructivist stance, scrutinizing the power mechanisms behind particular models of kinship. This culturalist approach to kinship shares similar concerns with queer studies in examining and interrogating normalization and cultural supremacy. Furthermore, a steadily growing body of works in queer

Wang 2020), as well as proliferating cultural texts that feature a queer undertone (see A. Wong 2020). Second, though the book touches upon other queer issues such as bisexuality and transgender, the cultural texts it studies are mainly concerned with homosexuality, particularly male homosexuality. This bias is partly caused by the higher public visibility of gay issues in China, itself a product of a gendered unequal social structure that I critique in Chapters 5 and 6. The aforementioned queer cultural forms and topics about queer sexualities are important sites of critical inquiry, and a nuanced analysis, though beyond the scope of the current book, may usefully supplement and complicate the picture of the Chinese queer public culture it delineates.

Structure of the Book

Five case studies form the core of this book. These case study chapters are conceived relatively independently, and each explores the representations of queerness and blood kinship relations in one particular media genre. The book is woven with two overarching concerns. First, it looks at how the interactions between queerness and blood kinship form part and parcel of contemporary Chinese public culture, marking out a clear challenge toward the privatization of sexuality. This theoretical orientation distinguishes the book from the works on Chinese queer cultures that focus on underground queer articulations. By investigating how queerness is publicly represented and negotiated, I expand the analytical framework in theorizing queer cultures by underlining their relevance to public culture at large. Second, the book also adopts a transnational lens in understanding queer selfhood and cultures. Rather than subscribing to a model of Western dissemination or insisting on China particularism, it treats queerness as an open and dynamic concept that gains meaning through movements. These can be movements across various domains of private and public lives, and also movements across geographical and cyberspaces. Taken together, the case studies show how queerness is constantly rerouted, reconfigured and reimagined through its contact with different sociocultural conditions, politics of subject-making, and media practices.

Taking readers through a range of genres in contemporary Chinese cinematic, popular, and digital cultures including documentary, arthouse film, musical theater, and online video entertainment, the five core chapters explore different manifestations and cultural politics of queering Chinese kinship. Chapter 2 looks at queering Chinese kinship as an activist agenda by exploring the relationship between the queer and the public in two recent queer community documentaries by Popo Fan: *Mama Rainbow* (2012) and *Pink Dads* (2016). In its exploration of how these two films appropriate blood kinship relations and ideologies to promote queer activism, the chapter observes a querying and queering of the public that is emblematic of new openings in postsocialist China for queer negotiation and

embodiment. It also identifies queering Chinese kinship both as a social practice and as a starting point to understand Chinese queer media cultures. Further investigating cinematic cultures, Chapter 3 discusses queering Chinese kinship as a negotiative strategy in artistic expression by analyzing the queer Sinophone film *Spring Fever* (Lou 2009). Situating the film in the transnational film-making practice of “Sixth Generation” directors, the chapter explicates how queering Chinese kinship is deployed in Chinese cultural production and circulation as a strategy that contributes both to hybridizing transnational film aesthetics with local conditions for queer expression, and to negotiating with state media control and censorship.

Switching the focus to commercial and popular cultural products, Chapters 4 through 6 discuss the relationship between queering Chinese kinship and local conditions of illiberal homonormativity. Chapter 4 offers a case study of an imported and translated Broadway musical, *Q Dadao* (2013). Examining how the musical presents an apparently entertaining queer image on the stage while promoting kinship-based activism off-stage, the chapter identifies paradoxical cultural politics where queering Chinese kinship can be at once assimilationist and subversive, as well as enabling and delimiting. Chapter 5 develops this discussion by probing into the production and consumption of coming-out vlogs on the video-sharing platform Bilibili. Looking at how queering Chinese kinship can at once be appropriated as a key dimension in the queer vloggers’ commodifying self-making processes and be used a gateway to a queer utopia, this chapter explores the ways in which commercialized spaces enable transformative queer politics through the engagement with blood kinship relations and ideologies. Chapter 6 remaps queering Chinese kinship by investigating how the emerging genre of online video engenders intraregional connections and structures of homonormativity. Focusing on one episode of the phenomenal online talk show *Qipa Shuo* (Mou 2015), the chapter observes how common kinship ideologies serve as the basis for a deterritorialized, regional imaginary of Chineseness evoked to critically reassess identity politics and coming-out strategies. These intraregional networks of queer knowledge production and exchange, I caution, also entail new structures of homonormativity and cultural hegemony.

The landscape of queer cultures in contemporary mainland China is anything but coherent, clear, and stable. It is saturated by disjunctiveness, complexity, and ongoingness. Instead of presenting a definitive picture of what “queer Chinese kinship” is like or should be, therefore, this book attempts to capture the dynamics between queerness and Chinese kinship across various sites of cultural representations. In doing so, it showcases how converging local, regional, and transnational flows of discourses produce situated sexual knowledges that not only engender distinct queer experiences, but also prompt a fundamental rethinking of existing notions of kinship ideologies, national and cultural imaginaries, and conceptualizations of queer identities and politics.

Closing Remarks

As I hope is clear from preceding chapters, queer public culture, centered on a close engagement with blood kinship relations, is complex and vibrant in illiberal China. Through various tactics—including negotiating boundaries of cultural intelligibility, creatively circumventing censorship, and harnessing the power of popular and commercial cultural products—Chinese queer culture carves out a resilient albeit precarious space where queerness is envisioned and embodied. Casting a contrast to the common perception of queer culture in the PRC as avant-garde and underground, these multifarious queer articulations have a distinctly public dimension. Indeed, despite stringent censorship against queer-themed cultural products, queer sensibilities have found their way into Chinese popular culture and are enthusiastically embraced, particularly by the country's youth. This peculiar moment of simultaneous control and proliferation of queerness has profound implications not only for understanding queer China, but for thinking through queer cultural production in the world more broadly.

I have argued that critical attention to the interactions between queerness and blood kinship is key to unpacking the complexities, paradoxes, and potentialities of queer China. I am acutely aware of how such an argument apparently evokes a regressive queer politics, especially when Euro-American scholarship on new reproductive technologies and queer parenting has posed serious challenges to the biogenetic connotations of kinship. What I set out to achieve is not a “nostalgic” return to the questions of if and how one should come out to one's family; rather, I reflect on the efficacy and limitations of the coming-out-based model of queer politics that has been a keystone of queer liberalism and its linear-progressive logic. Chinese queers are not trapped in the Stone Age of queer politics because they live under an illiberal state and a powerful family institution. Instead, the omnipresence of blood kinship ideologies and the in/elasticities of illiberal media cultures give rise to creative and fundamentally new articulations of queerness that not only form part and parcel of contemporary Chinese public culture, but also complicate the understandings of global queerness.

As stated early on, I do not concern myself with defining quintessential characteristics of contemporary Chinese queerness (nor do I deem this possible). Instead, I focus on the gaps, slippages, and ambivalences in theorizing Chinese queerness, treating them as important sites of knowledge production. By way of conclusion, I focus on the new directions the book opens in conceptualizing queerness. A discussion of the intricate relationship between queerness and normality is followed by a reflection on the convergence between queer Sinophone studies and China studies, and capped off with an outline of the theoretical potential of thinking about queerness through blood kinship.

From Critiquing Normality to Queer Criticality

The book endeavors to destabilize the ideological antagonism between queerness and the blood family, a common conception underscored by a view of (a) blood kinship as a normalizing institution and (b) queerness as resolutely against all norms. The book calls for a more nuanced approach by showing how, in the Chinese context, queer people's interactions with normality are ambivalent, flexible, and creative. As Butler (1993) suggests, it is important for queer studies "to avow a set of constraints on the past and the future that mark at once the *limits* of agency and its most *enabling conditions*" (20, emphasis in original). A queer project, then, is not simply about outlining liberating practices and celebrating autonomy: it is about confronting the constraints and possibilities of present conditions, and working through the messy and disjunctive processes that bring queerness into being, often in ambivalent ways. Only through these efforts can we get closer to a queerness "never fully owned, but always and only redeployed, twisted, queered from a prior usage" (Butler 1993, 19).

Therefore, rather than attempting to categorize a cultural practice as *either* truly queer *or* not queer enough, I seek to think beyond this dichotomy by evoking a framework that, in retrospect, could be best described as queer criticality. Such a framework regards critical queerness not as the end product of queer cultural production, but as an analytical lens through which to tease out the nuances and paradoxes of queer becoming. As Rogoff (2003) suggests, in criticality, scholars have a "double occupation" (para. 17): they should analyze, unveil, and critique, and at the same time share and live out the very conditions they are able to see through. Criticality, in other words, combines critical theory's future-oriented research agenda with an emphasis on the potentiality of the present. Rose Weil (2011) further argues that in the study of gender and sexuality, criticality requires "less focus on the hegemonies of heterosexuality and . . . the heteronormative order, and more on the discontinuities, challenges, and transformations, . . . and how they are lived . . . in complex ways that are chosen and not chosen" (130). Similarly, I aim to tease out in this book present-focused potentialities and offer future-oriented critique as I untangle the intricate intertwining of normalization

and subversion in queer cultural production in China. This means that although identifying and critiquing heteronormativity and homonormativity are important, I focus more on the realities and subtleties of queer lives that are inevitably shaped by normality.

This vantage point is particularly useful when exploring the dynamic site of Chinese blood kinship. Chinese queers' aspirations to get "close to normal" within the blood family have given rise to a constellation of practices that approximate and appropriate normality, blurring the lines between the normal and the abnormal. Within this context, an approach of queer criticality helps to fruitfully capture the main tensions underlying Chinese queer culture today. In what follows, I outline these tensions, explain how a perspective of queer criticality contributes to a more nuanced understanding, and discuss directions for future research.

Theorizing queerness between assimilationist politics and subversive politics

Assimilation has long been a central concern in the discussion of queerness for its tendency to create a narrow and exclusive sexual politics. Sycamore (2008) eloquently describes assimilation as a "tyranny" through which "the borders are policed" (3). Assimilationist politics, therefore, may lead to a constructed distinction between "good" and "bad" queer subjects contingent upon state-sanctioned standards and privileges. In this sense, scrutinizing queer sexuality's intersection with other identity facets such as gender, race, and class and interrogating exclusive practices of assimilation are undoubtedly essential tasks for queer studies. In the meantime, queer practices and cultural production in China raise questions about the perceived opposition between assimilation and resistance, and between conservativeness and radicality. As shown through the case studies in this book, such an opposition is unstable and problematic. Indeed, it seems that the expectation of a queer subject to be as radical as possible and to resist all norms is fraught with the same pitfall that underpins the logic of assimilationist politics itself, for it also takes for granted a series of privileges that are in fact highly contingent upon specific social, cultural, and political conditions. As Ahmed (2004) reminds us, the queer ideal of maintaining a perpetually transgressive life comes at an enormous social, psychic, and economic cost (151). Therefore, she encourages us to see assimilation and transgression *not* as political choices that individuals make, but as "effects of how subjects can and cannot inhabit social norms and ideals" (153). Queer lives, she writes, "do not suspend the attachments that are crucial to the reproduction of heteronormativity, and this does not diminish 'queerness,' but intensifies the work that it can do" (152). Resonating with this statement, I have endeavored in this book to unveil simultaneously the problem *and* potential of apparently assimilationist practices, instead

of dismissing them simply as not radical enough. I argue that these efforts should be key to any project that aims to understand queerness beyond simplistic and dichotomous terms, and I make a case for a careful and prolonged engagement with the material, cultural, and social structures that make queer practices and expressions possible in the first place. In the array of media genres explored here, these structures are almost invariably heteronormative and saturated by the lure of assimilation. The details of these case studies suggest that queerness resides precisely in the paradoxical and dialectical tensions between assimilationist politics and subversive politics: it is only by getting close to normal and by “uncomfortably inhabit[ing]” dominant social structures (Ahmed 2004, 147) that queer subjects can work on and rewrite heteronormative scripts. Such a process challenges scholars to closely attend to the intertwining of enabling and delimiting aspects of queer practices and politics by both acknowledging subversive potentialities despite practical limitations and identifying and critiquing assimilationist tendencies that would lead to a domesticated politics.

The question of illiberal homonormativity

The book's three chapters on popular culture are threaded by an engagement with the notion of “illiberal homonormativity,” which updates Duggan's (2002) critique by situating it in China's illiberal environments. While homonormativity warns against the risk of a consumption-based queer culture anchored in domesticity, illiberal homonormativity accentuates the complexity and ambivalence of commercialized queer cultural products and related consumptive practices in China. China's illiberal political and social environments have created a major setback for a liberationist queer approach: as media censorship and social stigmatization persist, commercial cultural products remain one of the very few channels through which queerness survives and indeed thrives, as evidenced by the proliferation of straightforward coming-out narratives and implicit queer sensibilities that appear in tandem with the state's persistent crackdown on queer-themed cultural products. The notion of illiberal homonormativity indicates that although queerbaiting and queer mainstreaming remain relevant concerns in China (for example, see Ng and Li 2020), they should be situated within local genealogies and conditions that are markedly different from the US context on which Duggan bases her theorization. As the book has shown, in China, the booming commercial market for queer sensibilities has created key opportunities for queer representation, activism, and self-making that would otherwise not have been possible. Since commercial products' unique importance to Chinese queer cultural production will likely endure in the foreseeable future as new spaces of representation and self-presentation open up, a central issue for studying queer China, then, will be the productive tensions emanating from the marriage between queerness and commerciality. The illiberal homonormativity

approach taken in this book may offer a framework for future research. More specifically, I believe that the following questions are essential for unpacking the intricate cultural politics of commercial queer cultural products: In what ways has the commercial channel enabled otherwise-impossible queer expressions? How does it negotiate with state power? How have commercial concerns shaped and constrained the queerness represented? What kind of enabling and delimiting queer politics does such a representation engender? Addressing these questions will help researchers to tease out queer potentials and identify homonormative tendencies in queer China's paradoxical and disjunctive landscape.

Queerly Transnationalizing Chineseness

This book is titled *Queering Chinese Kinship: Queer Public Culture in Globalizing China*, which, as I hope is clear from previous discussions, registers two key arguments about queerness and Chineseness: first, queer culture is public culture in the PRC, and constitutes a pivotal site of negotiation with state-sanctioned notions of Chineseness; second, such a domain of queer public culture has always been connected to intraregional and global circuits of cultural production, blurring the line between the local and the global. In other words, despite the book's place-based focus, it de-essentializes geographically bound conceptualizations of identities by juxtaposing queerness and Chineseness, and teases out their productive tensions. The book's approach, then, corresponds to what Chiang (2014a) has described as "queer Sinophonicity," which suggests that both Chineseness and queerness find their most meaningful articulations in and through one another, since they promise to denaturalize each other continuously (20).

While the emerging field of queer Sinophone studies aims to set in dialogue queer experiences across diverse Sinophone locales mostly outside of mainland China (Chiang and Wong 2020, 4), this book argues for a cross-fertilization between queer Sinophone studies and China studies by showing how a careful exploration of queer cultures in the PRC bears relevance to a broader understanding of queer Sinophone articulations. I am aware that this approach could spark controversy, especially because queer Sinophone studies has made it a key objective to challenge China-centrism through a focus on the periphery; however, challenging China-centrism should not be equated with dismissing the "center." Seeing the PRC as a dark, powerful, overbearing, and homophobic political entity may evoke a seemingly empowering politics of resistance, but it fails to meaningfully confront and challenge the country's continued influence on formulations of Chineseness at a transnational scale. The very notion of "China-centrism" also begs the question of who actually *occupies* the center. As the book has shown, the PRC is so heterogeneous and complex that it is naïve to assume that there is one totalizing "center"; instead, the center-periphery

Index

- accents, 120, 121
- acceptance, 37, 40, 42, 45, 47, 48, 57, 85, 95, 99, 100, 104
- ACG (Animation, Comic, and Games), 91, 92, 93, 94, 97
- activism, 22, 31, 86, 87, 101, 129; audio-visual/video-based, 45, 47; kinship-based, 27; queer, 8, 26, 32, 49, 73, 88; social, 37, 38, 110
- activist, 26, 31, 31, 42, 44, 45, 49, 85, 87, 108, 109
- aesthetic, 27, 32, 33, 38, 39, 42, 43, 43, 44, 45, 51, 52, 53, 56, 57, 58, 60, 69, 77, 79, 99, 113
- affective, 20, 25, 33, 36, 38, 39, 40, 42, 45, 47, 48, 49. *See also* emotional, 15, 16, 20, 42, 43, 45, 49, 58, 64, 102, 133
- affordances, 94, 96, 97, 104, 109
- Ahmed, Sara, 39, 40, 128, 129
- ambivalent, 4, 11, 76, 88, 101, 127
- anthropology, 7, 12, 13, 134
- appropriate, 11, 18, 26, 37, 38, 46, 109, 128, 131
- art-house, 50–53, 57
- Asia, 8, 11, 74, 110, 111, 120, 124, 125
- assimilation, 3, 27, 76, 88, 89, 128, 129
- authenticity, as a theoretical question, 3; as representational strategies, 99, 100, 101, 104, 108
- authoritarian 2, 6, 22, 62, 75
- Bao, Hongwei, 4, 5, 7, 8, 22, 25, 31, 33, 37, 49, 74, 75
- becoming. *See* embodiment
- Beijing, 23, 31, 33, 36, 38, 73, 137
- Berry, Chris, 10, 11, 32, 62
- Bilibili, 27, 91–102, 103, 105, 108, 109
- binary, 7, 8, 16, 35, 45, 64, 121, 125
- bisexual. *See* gay
- BL (Boys' Love), 55, 76, 77, 78, 79, 93, 96, 97, 98, 108, 137. *See also* GL (Girls' Love), 93, 96, 97, 98, 108
- blood kinship. *See* family
- Broadway, 1, 27, 73, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86
- bromance, 76–79
- bullet curtain, 91–95, 97, 98, 102–9
- Butler, Judith, 16, 17, 65, 127, 134
- Cannes, 51, 52, 54, 69
- capital: capital flows, 22, 23, 52, 52, 75, 75, 94, 108, 110, 111, 120, 124; cultural capital, 96, 98, 101
- carnavalesque, 91, 92, 102, 103, 105, 107–9
- CCP (Chinese Communist Party), 6, 20, 52, 58, 65, 66, 75, 78, 131
- celebrity, 77, 92, 108, 109, 118, 123
- censorship 1, 3, 6, 22, 23, 27, 51, 70, 74–76, 78–80, 86, 88, 89, 91, 94, 103, 108, 122, 126, 129
- Chiang, Howard, 4, 8, 9, 115, 130
- children, 13, 18, 19, 20, 37, 44, 46–48, 52, 86, 87, 118
- China-centrism, 9, 10, 130
- Chinese kinship. *See* family
- Chineseness, 9, 10, 27, 56, 57, 112, 116–21, 130, 131. *See also* Sinophone, 9, 10, 27, 50, 51, 54–57, 62, 69, 120, 121, 127, 130, 131
- Chou, Wah-shan, 4, 15, 142

- cinema, 6, 11, 23, 25, 32, 50, 51, 53, 55–58, 62, 120
- citizenship, 5, 86, 88–91
- class, 21, 34, 58, 88, 124, 128, 131, 134
- close-to-normal, 119, 120, 123, 124
- close-up, 40, 43, 59, 61, 65, 99, 117
- come out/coming out, 1, 2, 14–17, 27, 15, 35, 38, 39, 82–85, 91–93, 95–109, 111, 115–20, 124, 126, 129
- commercial/commercialization, 6, 7, 17, 23–25, 27, 46, 50, 52, 54, 69, 73, 74, 77, 79, 80, 88–98, 101, 102, 105, 108–12, 115, 120, 122–24, 126, 129–31. *See also* consumption, 23–25, 27, 50, 77, 79, 88, 91–93, 97, 98, 101–3, 105, 108–11, 115, 120, 124, 129
- community, 9, 11, 14–17, 26, 31, 33–37, 49, 49, 55, 56, 62, 87, 91, 93, 94, 96–99, 101, 102, 108, 111, 112, 114, 115
- confrontational, 85, 88, 106, 119, 120
- Confucian, 5, 15, 18, 19, 21, 62, 65, 66, 106, 117, 131
- conservative, 102, 108, 122, 123, 134
- consumption. *See* commercial/commercialization
- contention, 6, 9, 17, 32, 35, 38, 56, 70, 73, 123, 131, 134, 135
- counterpublic, 34–37
- cultural intelligibility, 16, 51, 63, 65–68, 70, 90, 102, 126
- cultural production, 6, 9, 12, 22–25, 27, 49, 56, 70, 73, 74, 91–94, 97, 109, 110, 122, 124, 126–31
- depoliticized, 5, 85, 86, 88, 101, 105, 109, 122, 123
- desire, 17, 32, 33, 45, 49, 50, 56, 57, 64, 93, 98, 101, 107, 119
- detrterritorialized, 27, 112, 116, 117
- digital: documentaries, 31, 37; masquerade, 102–5; media/cultures, 8, 22, 23, 25, 26, 63, 92, 103, 111, 112, 124; platforms/infrastructure, 91, 94, 96; self-making, 91, 92, 96, 98, 108
- director, 33, 43, 47, 50, 65, 68, 85. *See also* filmmakers, 31, 31, 32, 33, 36, 45, 50–53, 58, 69
- documentaries: New Chinese Documentaries, 31, 32; queer community documentaries, 26, 31–34, 36–40, 50, 108
- domestic, meaning national, 9, 21, 22, 23, 52, 75, 76; meaning private, 12, 21, 36, 46, 58, 60, 61, 106, 131
- Duggan, Lisa, 88, 89, 123, 124, 129
- economy, 9, 12, 19, 23, 36, 46, 53, 54, 112, 118
- embodiment, 11, 27, 31–33, 35, 38, 43, 45, 47, 49, 59, 63, 64, 68, 74, 104, 108, 117, 119, 126. *See also* becoming, 2, 5, 10, 17, 33, 124, 127
- emotional. *See* affective
- English-language. *See* Euro-American
- entertainment, 23, 26, 80, 111–13, 120, 122, 123
- entrepreneurial, 91, 92, 96, 97, 108
- epistemological, 14, 17, 46, 48, 132
- Euro-American, 4–7, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, 18, 55, 76, 77, 79, 86, 116, 119, 126, 134. *See also* English-language, 3, 95, 111
- exclusive 1, 10, 12, 52, 87, 91, 110, 111, 120, 124, 125, 128, 132
- family: blood family/biological family/family of origin: 2, 3–6, 9, 11, 13–15, 17, 18, 22, 25–27, 31, 33, 46, 48, 49, 62, 66, 67, 86, 91, 92, 95, 96, 98–101, 103, 106–9, 112, 115, 122–24, 126–28, 133, 134; chosen family/nonnormative family/queer family, 5, 15, 14, 17, 62; family and kinship as an institution: 10–12, 15, 17, 19, 21, 22, 87, 122; family values: 5, 18, 21, 37, 87; nuclear family: 12, 15, 65, 123, 124. *See also* blood kinship, 2–6, 9, 17, 18, 22, 25–27, 31, 33, 46, 49, 67, 91, 92, 95, 96, 98–101, 103, 106–9, 122–24, 126–28, 133, 134; Chinese kinship, 2, 5, 6, 10, 13, 15–18, 21, 26, 27, 31–33, 38, 40, 42, 45–51, 57, 58, 60, 66, 67, 70, 73, 87–92, 108–11, 117, 119, 124, 128, 132; filial piety, 18, 20, 21; marriage, 5, 6, 12, 16, 19, 20, 50, 54, 58–62, 66, 68, 75, 89, 121, 122, 129, 132–34; queer kinship, 5–7, 12, 14, 15, 17, 18, 131–35; relatedness 5, 13, 21, 48, 66
- fan, 76, 92, 96, 98, 99, 101, 108, 116
- Fan, Popo, 26, 33, 37, 43, 137

- filial piety. *See* family
- film festival, 31, 38, 51, 52
- filmmakers. *See* director
- freedom, 5, 15, 21, 32, 75, 102, 118, 119
- gay, 1–3, 8, 10, 11, 14, 16, 26, 35, 37, 41, 44, 48, 50, 51, 54, 55, 59, 62, 64, 69, 74, 76, 77, 79, 80, 82–88, 92, 95, 97, 99–101, 104, 108, 111, 113, 119, 120, 123, 124, 132. *See also* bisexual, 3, 51, 54, 64, 104, 123; homosexual, 21, 46, 54, 59–61, 63, 64, 68, 77–80, 83, 85, 86, 97, 100, 104, 117, 118, 123; lesbian, 2, 3, 8, 10, 14, 16, 37, 50, 62, 92, 95, 97, 99, 101, 104, 106, 113, 132; LGBTQ, 2, 37, 38, 55, 84, 86, 87–89, 98–101, 123, 133; same-sex, 5, 6, 15, 45, 77, 78, 87, 97, 101, 132, 133; transgender, 3, 26, 48, 54, 123
- gender, 3, 11, 12, 14, 16, 19, 20, 22, 26, 48, 50, 60, 61, 65, 68, 80, 99, 101, 105, 106, 113, 115, 123, 124, 127, 128, 131, 132, 134
- generation, 20, 50, 52, 69, 84, 117, 133; Fifth Generation, 51, 52; Sixth Generation, 27, 51–53, 69
- genre, 6, 26, 27, 57, 58, 77, 84, 113, 114
- GL (Girls' Love). *See* BL (Boys' Love)
- globalization, 2, 4, 8–11, 21–23, 51, 52, 54, 56, 69, 73, 115. *See also* transnational, 2, 4, 8–10, 21–23, 26, 27, 50–54, 56–58, 67, 69, 70, 73–77, 79, 86, 89, 92, 93, 106, 114, 115, 130, 131, 133
- government, 20, 24, 74, 75, 76, 87, 93, 122
- hegemony, 5, 7, 10, 14, 27, 32, 34, 48, 56, 56, 73, 110–12, 120, 121, 132, 133
- heterogeneity/heterogeneous, 3, 4, 6, 10, 11, 13, 31, 32, 52, 56, 115, 120, 121, 130, 134
- heteronormative, 5, 6, 10, 15, 16, 32, 34–36, 38–40, 42, 45, 46, 48, 49, 51, 56–62, 64, 66, 67, 69, 88, 89, 101, 105, 106, 109, 121–24, 127–29, 131
- heterosexual, 13, 14, 16, 17, 39, 40, 48, 54, 59, 60, 61, 63–66, 80, 83, 88, 89, 94, 97, 104, 117, 123, 127, 131
- Hollywood, 54, 55, 57, 76, 85, 113
- homonormativity, 27, 73, 88–91, 109, 112, 120, 122–24, 128, 129. *See also* illiberal homonormativity, 27, 89, 91, 109, 129
- homosexual. *See* gay
- identity: gay/sexual/queer identity: 1, 3, 8, 10, 11, 14, 17, 22, 27, 35, 39, 45, 47–49, 58, 61, 66, 67, 69, 86, 80, 83, 85, 88, 100, 101, 103, 104, 108, 112, 116, 119, 120, 122, 123, 132; identity politics, 2, 27, 83, 85, 116, 119, 120
- ideology: kinship ideology, 10, 38, 88, 118; official ideology, 19, 52, 69, 76
- illiberal, 27, 73–76, 78, 79, 89–91, 101, 109, 126, 129, 134
- illiberal homonormativity. *See* homonormativity
- imaginary, 5, 25, 27, 81, 100, 112, 117, 118–120, 124, 129, 134, 135
- individualistic/individualism, 14, 20, 21, 23, 81, 100, 113, 114
- intimacy, 5, 33, 40, 46, 121
- intraregional, 10, 27, 27, 115, 116, 119, 120–22, 124, 125, 130
- Keane, Michael, 75, 76, 114, 125
- Kinship. *See* family
- legitimacy 4, 16, 16, 17, 20, 21, 34, 66, 75, 87, 114, 121
- lesbian. *See* gay
- Leung, Helen Hok-Sze, 50, 51, 55
- LGBTQ. *See* gay
- liberalism, 6, 9, 14, 17, 85, 89, 126, 133, 134
- liberationist, 35, 83, 84, 85, 86, 89, 119, 129, 132
- local, 2–5, 8, 11, 18, 20, 22, 27, 35, 37, 50, 51, 53–58, 63, 65, 66, 67–70, 73–79, 81, 82, 85, 88–90, 93, 95, 110, 112, 115, 122, 124, 125, 129, 130, 133
- Lou, Ye, 27, 51, 52, 55, 60, 61, 64, 65
- love: parental/familial: 38, 40–42, 45, 48, 87; homosexual: 54, 59, 97, 98, 117
- mainstream, 1, 2, 11, 37, 50, 52, 53, 55, 73, 74, 77, 79, 80, 87, 91, 93, 97
- Malaysia, 9, 111, 114, 116
- marginalized, 33, 42, 60, 62, 67, 69, 93, 98, 102, 104, 113, 114, 119, 121
- market, 9, 24, 36, 75, 76, 80, 97, 112, 115, 121, 129
- marriage. *See* family

- marriage equality, 5, 6, 20, 102, 121, 122, 133, 134
 Martin, Fran, 6, 8, 11, 24, 35
 masquerade, 103–5
 McLelland, Mark, 8, 78, 97
 meaning-making, 13, 25, 31, 33, 103
 melodrama, 57, 58, 62, 67
 microcelebrity, 92, 96, 98, 103, 108, 109
 model, 8, 11, 14–16, 26, 34, 48, 49, 62, 66, 85, 121, 124, 126
 musical, 1, 2, 6, 26, 27, 73, 74, 79–89

 neoliberal 6, 7, 75, 89, 91, 123
 networked 3, 8, 39, 42, 110, 124, 124
 nonconforming/non-normative, 3, 4, 5, 8, 10, 14, 16, 21, 34, 45, 74, 78, 101, 113, 119, 124
 non-Western 7–9, 74, 116, 132, 133
 normality, 3–5, 13, 16, 17, 21, 56, 61, 68, 73, 74, 78, 87, 119, 123, 127, 128
 normalization, 3, 5, 13, 17, 127
 nuclear family. *See* family

 official, 2, 10, 34, 35, 51, 52, 69, 70, 78, 87, 92
 opposition, 7, 14, 17, 56, 121, 128
 outlook, 9, 67, 105, 109

 paradigm, 6, 8, 13, 17, 18, 119
 parent-child, 39, 42, 45, 47, 48, 107, 108, 123
 participatory, 25, 62, 91, 94, 103
 performance, 1, 2, 10, 36, 42, 44, 45, 80, 86, 96, 102
 perspective, 6, 18, 24, 37, 59, 60, 70, 88, 115, 116, 122, 128, 134
 PFLAG (Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays), 2, 37, 38, 44, 47, 48, 86, 87, 88, 108, 150
 platform, 27, 37, 91–98, 103, 105, 108, 109, 112, 113, 114
 popular culture, 23, 25, 73–76, 79, 84, 89, 91, 110, 126, 129
 postsocialist, 4, 8, 9, 22, 26, 32, 50, 56, 58, 70, 73, 86, 122
 poststructuralist, 7, 17, 24
 potential, 13, 23, 33–35, 39, 42, 49, 58, 64, 69, 87, 88, 91, 92, 94–96, 102, 103, 105, 111, 113, 115, 124, 127, 128
 private, 2, 5, 19, 20, 23, 26, 32, 34–37, 46, 47, 53, 54, 57, 59, 61, 61, 62, 69, 75, 114, 120, 123

 privileges, 4, 14, 102, 117, 120, 124, 128
 propaganda, 21, 23, 69, 78, 122

Q Dadao, 1, 2, 27, 73, 74, 79–81, 84, 86, 88, 89, 138
 queering 6, 17, 18, 26, 27, 31, 39, 46–51, 57, 67, 68–70, 70, 73, 88, 90–92, 96, 99, 101, 108–11, 124, 132, 133, 135
 queer kinship. *See* family

 radical, 4, 19, 35, 122, 124, 128, 129
 realities, 19, 47, 53, 55, 65, 68, 80, 81, 82, 107, 128, 134
 recognition, 3, 16, 66, 86, 87
 regional, 10, 27, 37, 56, 73, 109–12, 114–17, 119–22, 124, 131
 reimagine/reimagination, 14, 26, 33, 38, 45, 47, 49, 68, 88, 101, 103, 106, 108–10, 113, 115, 119, 124
 relatedness. *See* family
 reproduction/reproductive, 11, 12, 24, 40, 88, 89, 124, 126, 128, 131–33
 reroute/rerouting/rerouted, 26, 110, 111, 113, 115, 117, 119, 120, 121, 123, 125
 Robinson, Luke, 32, 33, 36
 Rofel, Lisa, 9, 50, 54, 75, 86, 122

 same-sex. *See* gay
 scholarship, 5, 7, 17, 34, 57, 74, 94, 95, 126, 134
 screen, 33, 43, 92, 97, 103, 104
 Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky, 2, 3, 24, 100
 selfhood, 9, 11, 15, 17, 22, 26, 32, 62, 100, 101, 103, 104, 109, 110, 113, 114, 117, 122
 Shanghai, 16, 66, 73, 87, 121
 Shih, Shu-mei, 9, 56, 120
 Singapore, 8, 9, 76, 111, 116
 Sinophone. *See* Chineseness
 socialist, 4, 6, 9, 32, 75
 storytelling, 38, 57, 62, 63, 67
 strategy, 8, 15, 16, 18, 19, 24, 27, 45, 49–51, 53, 57, 67–70, 73–75, 79–82, 86–91, 101, 109, 110, 112, 116, 118–20, 122–24
 streaming, 36, 76, 77, 78, 112
 subculture/subcultural, 7, 38, 54, 68, 69, 76, 77, 93, 95–97, 101, 108, 112
 subjectivity, 7, 17, 33, 58, 61, 75, 93, 113
 subversive, 27, 55, 57, 102, 103, 106, 108, 128, 129

- surveillance, 1, 59, 61, 76
- survival, 3, 6, 16, 17, 18, 22, 53, 56, 67, 68, 70, 76, 87, 110
- Taiwan, 5, 8, 9, 21, 35, 50, 55, 111, 114, 116, 119, 121, 122, 133
- talent, 110, 111, 113, 114, 120, 124
- television, 23, 76, 78, 112, 113, 116, 122
- theatre, 1, 26, 44, 57, 74, 80
- theorize/theorization, 4, 12, 14, 15, 18, 25, 34, 47, 68, 89, 110, 112, 124, 129, 133–35
- tolerance, 15, 85, 87, 133
- tongzhi*, 3, 15, 33, 35, 36, 44, 46, 47, 55
- traditional, 11, 18, 19, 21, 23, 25, 106
- transcultural, 11, 73, 74, 89
- transgender. *See* gay
- transnational. *See* globalization
- underground, 2, 7, 8, 26, 35, 50, 52, 55, 68, 69, 74, 126
- undertone, 13, 26, 52, 58, 59, 62, 63, 77, 85, 89
- urban, 19–21, 35, 52, 69, 88
- utopian, 63, 64, 65, 67, 105, 109
- vantage point, 18, 112, 115, 124, 128
- visibility, 23, 26, 36, 54, 85, 88, 104, 114, 123
- visual, 58, 59, 64–66, 68, 69, 93, 97, 100, 104, 116, 117
- vlogs, 27, 92, 95–103, 106, 108, 109
- website, 31, 36, 55, 87, 91, 92, 112
- wedding, 19, 59, 61, 100
- Weston, Kath, 5, 14
- xianchang*, 32, 33, 38, 39, 42–45
- Yue, Audrey, 7, 8, 56, 68