CityU Scholars

Queering/Queered Chinese-Language Cinematic and Cultural Imaginaries

Zhao, Jamie J.

Published in:
Jump Cut: A Review of Contemporary Media

Published: 01/01/2022

Document Version:
Final Published version, also known as Publisher's PDF, Publisher's Final version or Version of Record

License:
CC BY-NC-ND

Publication record in CityU Scholars:
Go to record

Publication details:
Zhao, J. J. (2022). Queering/Queered Chinese-Language Cinematic and Cultural Imaginaries. *Jump Cut: A Review of Contemporary Media*, *61*. https://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/jc61.2022/JamieZhao/index.html

Citing this paper
Please note that where the full-text provided on CityU Scholars is the Post-print version (also known as Accepted Author Manuscript, Peer-reviewed or Author Final version), it may differ from the Final Published version. When citing, ensure that you check and use the publisher's definitive version for pagination and other details.

General rights
Copyright for the publications made accessible via the CityU Scholars portal is retained by the author(s) and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing these publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights. Users may not further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain.

Publisher permission
Permission for previously published items are in accordance with publisher's copyright policies sourced from the SHERPA RoMEO database. Links to full text versions (either Published or Post-print) are only available if corresponding publishers allow open access.

Take down policy
Contact lbscholars@cityu.edu.hk if you believe that this document breaches copyright and provide us with details. We will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

Download date: 22/07/2024

JUMP CUT
A REVIEW OF CONTEMPORARY MEDIA

copyright 2022, *Jump Cut: A Review of Contemporary Media*
Jump Cut, No. 61, fall 2022

Queering/queered Chinese-language cinematic and cultural imaginaries

review by Jamie J. Zhao

> *Queer Representations in Chinese-Language Film and the Cultural Landscape* by Shi-Yan Chao (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2020). 412 pages, € 129.00 ($145), hardback.

The publication of the monograph *Queer Representations in Chinese-Language Film and Cultural Landscape* in 2020 initiated a rich, groundbreaking scholarly dialogue on the study not only of film, TV, and digital media but also opera, art, literature, and activism in the Sinosphere through queer and feminist perspectives. Its contributions to existing English-language scholarship on queer Chinese and Sinophone media and cultures are manifold. (For other significant publications published in the 21st century in the field, see, for example, Bao, 2018, 2020, 2021; Berry, Martin & Yue, 2003; Chiang & Heinrich, 2014; Chiang & Wong, 2020; Engebretsen & Shroeder, 2015; Leung, 2008; Lim, 2006; Liu, 2015; Martin, 2010; Martin et al., 2008.)

As the inclusion of "Chinese-language" in the title indicates, the book draws on what film scholar Chris Berry (2012) has conceptualized as a "transnational turn" in English-language Chinese film studies to highlight the differences and (inter-)connections of diverse queer media industries and landscapes that "could be called 'Chinese'" (p. 497). This book, the first monograph of the author, Shi-yan Chao, covers queer media cultures in three major "Chinese" sites (Mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan) and is an ambitious, comprehensive work. With over 400 pages, it consists of an introduction, three major sections (each containing two chapters), a short conclusion, and a ten-page bilingual filmography listing all the queer media materials discussed in the writing.

As noted in previous studies, Mainland China (also known as the People's Republic of China or PRC) has always been a largely heteropatriarchal, homophobic, authoritarian nation-state, even though it officially decriminalized homosexuality in 1997 and subsequently depathologized homosexuality in 2001. The PRC government has constantly censored explicit homosexual content in media and public spaces, deemed homosexuality "obscene," "abnormal," "vulgar," or "immoral" (Bao, 2021, p. 31; Shaw & Zhang, 2017, p. 273; Yang & Xu, 2016, p. 169), and cracked down on LGBTQ film festivals, gathering spaces, and communicative platforms (Zhao, Yang & Lavin, 2017, pp. xi-xxxiii). In contrast, its special administrative region, Hong Kong, is an intriguing, cosmopolitan geolocale that has been famous for its globally influential film industry. Yet, in the post-1997 years, it has also been unwillingly caught between the Chinese Communist Party's political governance and its British colonial legacy. (Hong Kong was colonized by the British Empire beginning in1841, but was handed over to the PRC in 1997). Hong Kong is thus believed to have a more "dystopian, rhizomatic, and multidirectional" queer media culture, which has been theorized as "postcoloniality beyond China-centrism" (Wong, 2020, p. 63).

Diverging from these two "Chinese-speaking" societies, the "other China," Taiwan, (also known as the Republic of China or ROC) has been considered one of the most progressive Asian countries in terms of the progress of its feminist and queer movements (e.g., it elected its first woman president in 2016, who also happened to be unmarried and of mixed Han-indigenous Paiwan background; and Taiwan in 2019 became the first Asian country to legalize same-sex marriage). Nevertheless, Taiwan's mediascape has also been largely shaped, if not frustrated, by tensions among its indigenous groups. The island's long settler colonial history has been influenced by East Asian, Southeast Asian, and European cultures, and its two contemporary political parties. (The parties are the Kuomingtang, KMT, or Nationalist party which retreated from Mainland China to the island in 1949 and maintained postwar martial law till 1987; and the Democratic Progressive Party or DPP which "continues to bid for Taiwanese independence" from the PRC. Cheng, 2020, p. 44). This intricate situation of entangled gender, ethnic, and sexual minority histories and cultures in Taiwan has created a relatively queer-friendly yet self-contradictory queer media environment. Contemporary Taiwan's queer mediascape has continually negotiated with local, inter-Asian, and transnational sociocultural, political, and economic forces, such as Western, Japanese, and traditional Chinese gender and sexual ideologies (see Cheng, 2020; Martin, 2010). Chao's writing thoroughly unfolds these nuances as his book simultaneously differentiates between and links the queer media industries and cultures in these three Chinese-speaking societies.

Chao explores a broad array of important, pioneering ideas and topics including

- Taiwanese familial systems and queer films,
- Mainland Chinese lesbian documentaries,
- queer readings of socialist Chinese melodramas of the 1960s,
- the queer potential of Chinese-language operas,
- queer connotations in premodern, classical Chinese epics and mythologies, and
- various types of camp discourses in mass and queer media from Hong Kong and Taiwan.

Although there have been some studies discussing transgender figures, cross-dressing performances, and homosocial and homoerotic narratives in Chinese-language cinemas (e.g., Tan, 2000, 2007; Wu, 2010), Chao pays careful attention to the queer characteristics and traditions of diverse Chinese dialect operas, such as Shaoxing and Cantonese operas, gendered performances and beauty norms in indigenous Taiwanese culture, and local religious rituals that are constantly appropriated in contemporary official political discourse and entertainment media productions. His attention to these modes of discourse unveils another queer layer of Chinese-language media and cultural landscapes. This subtle queer nature of Chinese-language theater, performing arts, and religious beliefs and practices, as well as cross-media adaptations, has often been undervalued if not completely ignored in existing queer Asian, Chinese, and Sinophone scholarship.

Relevant to this emphasis on the queerness of different "Chinese-language" cultures is Chao's use of the word "Sinophone." The two terms are often used interchangeably in his writing. However, some scholars tend to exclude China from Sinophone studies, which is considered a radical way to undermine the ethnic-Han-centrism that "privileges China as the original homeland" for Chinese-speaking communities in other parts of the world (Yue, 2012, p. 96) and to highlight "the value of difficulty, difference and heterogeneity" in imagining Chineseness (Shih, 2007, p. 5). Other writers, especially some film scholars, use "Sinophone" to include China as well as Chinese dialects and Chinese-language cultures in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and other diasporic communities—a move which acknowledges both regionalism and transnationalism in the circulation of Chinese-language media and sociocultural traditions (Lu, 2007; Martin, 2010; Yue, 2012).

As queer Sinophone scholar Fran Martin (2014) eloquently states, these two ways of conceptualizing "Sinophone" highlight the "tensions between what might be called centripetal versus centrifugal understandings [of Chineseness]" (p. 36). In line with this view, Chao's "loose" uses of the terms "Chinese-language" and "Sinophone" in the book also serve as a friendly gesture that encourages a productive approach to recognizing both the roots (the regionalism that "problematizes Sino-centrism as a force that constitutes Chinese identity and representation") and routes (the transnationalism that "confronts the flows that affect the political economy of" Chinese-language cinema and media) of imagining Chinese queer cultures and lives (Yue, 2012, p. 97; also see, Chiang & Wong, 2020, p. 10; Martin, 2014, p. 36).

This dual emphasis on Chinese roots and routes in studying queer Chinese-language cinema and other media has been most evident in the existing scholarly debates concerning the translinguistic traveling and mutations of the two terms, queer (*ku'er*) and *tongzhi* ("comrade"; the Chinese phrase for gay) across Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Mainland China through the trans-geocultural circulation of queer Chinese-language cinemas (Bao, 2018; Lim, 2006).

The term *tongzhi* was "effectively mobilized to refer to people sharing the same political ideals" in modern and contemporary China (Bao, 2018, p. 69), and was closely "associated with rebelliousness during its use in anti-Qing uprisings at the end of the imperial period and continued to be used by both Nationalists and Communists" in modern China (Engebretsen & Schroeder, 2015, pp. 4–5). Since the mid-1990s, the term has become more common in denoting non-heterosexual desire and subjectivity both in Chinese-speaking lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) communities and in official media (Lim, 2006, p. 12). The popularity of the use of *tongzhi* in the Chinese-speaking world helps to "acknowledge the temporal coevality (the 1990s) of its circulation with the emergence of representations of male homosexuality in cinemas from China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong" (Lim, 2006, p. 12). At the same time, the creative use of this socialist term "reflects both a conscious departure from the socialist past and the desire to become fully a member of global neoliberal capitalism on the part of many members of the varied LGBT communities in Chinese-speaking contexts," which ultimately demonstrates a surge in transcultural *tongzhi* media and activism in the Sinophere (Bao, 2011, p. 133, 2018; also see, Rofel, 2007).

In a dissimilar way, the Western-originated term, "queer," has become popular and was translated as *ku'er* ("cool kid") or *guaitai* ("weirdo") in 1990s' Taiwan (Lim, 2006, p. 12). Queer/*ku'er* was officially introduced to Mainland China through Beijing-based sociologist Li Yinhe's scholarly translation of Western feminist and queer theories in 2003 (Bao, 2018, pp. 29–30). Around the same time, in the early 2000s, the term was quickly adopted by many Mainland Chinese filmmakers and artists to denote a form of aesthetic avant-gardism (Bao, 2018, p. 30) **[Image 1].** This trajectory led to the double meanings of queer/*ku'er* in the Chinese-speaking world as either subversive, cosmopolitan, and avant-garde, or as a self-identification point for nonnormative gender and sexual minorities (or both).

In the introduction to Chao's book, "Processing *Tongzhi*/Queer Imaginaries," the terms *tongzhi* and queer are carefully discussed in relation to the social-political atmospheres of the three Chinese-speaking societies and their media landscapes. Drawing on the existing conceptualization of the two terms, Chao presents the translocal genealogy of *tongzhi*/queer cultures in Chinese-speaking societies and historizes Chinese-language (*huayu*) film and media studies. He also spells out the differences between the two terms in the Chinese-speaking context, his creative combination of them, and their potential:

> "While *tongzhi* emphasizes identity and serves as the rallying call for social movements, queer defies fixed identity categories and stresses the heterogeneity of both identity and human subjects. … By stressing the term *tongzhi* in this project, I include a more affirmative connotation in terms of identity politics than the word 'queer' tends to do. By using '*tongzhi*/queer,' jointly or in parallel, I aim to capture the nuanced dynamics between *tongzhi* and queer politics, and those of social movements and media representations." (Chao, p. 15)

With a growing number of English-language academic publications using the terms *tongzhi* and queer (sometimes interchangeably without clarification) in the study of Chinese-language media and cultural studies, Chao's remarks on the varying meanings and powerful alliance of the two terms are particularly useful.

Moreover, Chao emphasizes that the book is “anchored by four main themes or discourses: the Chinese familial system, Chinese opera and melodrama, camp aesthetics, and documentary film” (p. 301). In this sense, the book also makes the ambitious theoretical move of going beyond the relatively narrow scope of most scholarship on Chinese and Sinophone cinematic and literary portrayals of LGBTQ groups to explore how hetero-patriarchally structured familial values, media and cultural industries, and state policies have both constrained and implemented various queer “audio-visual elements” in these and other forms of media (p. 19).

More specifically, as a Taiwan-born, U.S.-trained Chinese-language film scholar, Chao has researched and taught in the field of cinema studies at various distinguished universities in the United States and Hong Kong for over a decade. His solid academic training in Anglophone queer media studies, his broad knowledge of the film industries and cultural histories of Mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan, and his sophisticated understanding of the transcultural LGBTQ world and politics are synthesized in stimulating ways in the book. His writing draws on key theoretical frameworks and concepts within Chinese and Sinophone queer film studies, such as Berry’s (2000, 2001, 2004) influential discussions of the tension between homosexuality and the hetero-patrilineal family in Chinese-speaking societies and Martin’s (2010) conceptualization of Chinese-language media representations of lesbian tomboyism. In addition, Chao carefully references relevant foundational Western gender, queer, and transgender scholarship, such as Judith Butler’s (1990) and Eve K. Sedgwick’s (1993) works on “performativity,” Richard Dyer’s (1979) and Alexander Doty’s (1993) theorization of queer stardom and spectatorship, and Esther Newton’s (1979) discussion of “camp.” Chao explains his use of Western-originated queer theory “as a form of analysis that systematically challenges any theoretical or discursive practice which naturalizes sexuality” (p. 26). Suturing these with queer Chinese and Sinophone media studies, Chao produces fertile, novel syntheses for “lesser-studied titles, or … more familiar titles from new perspectives” (p. 32).

Chao states his aim as, “locat[ing] the transmedial representations of *tongzhi*/queer subjects within the interactive and interdependent relations between the socio-economic and the cultural, the global and the regional, the regional and the local, and the local and the individual” (p. 17) He presents two chapters that address the relation between familial discourses and state politics in different ways in Section One, “Against Families, Against States.”

Chapter 1, “The Chinese Queer Diasporic Imaginary,” starts with a historical account of the intertwined discourses on the ideologies of Confucian filial piety (*xiao*), the familial home (*jia*), and the family-state (*jia-guo*)—all of which have been shaped in interesting ways by traditional Chinese values and various modern, political mentalities in Mainland China (those of the Chinese Communist Party) and Taiwan (those of the KMT government, aimed at sustaining the legitimacy of the ROC). Chao pays particular attention to the father-son relationship in Taiwan’s patrilineal social settings in his analyses of the 1986 Taiwanese gay film *Outcasts* (dir. Yu Kan-ping) **[Image 2]** and Tsai Ming-liang’s Taipei trilogy (including *Rebels of the Neon God* made in 1992, *Vive L’amour* made in 1994, and *The River* made in 1996) **[Images 3, 4, and 5]**. He argues that these films employ various male-homosexual tropes, such as the discourses on *niezi*, Nezha, AIDS, ghostliness, and local theater opera, in order to contest the Han-centric, heterosexual-structured “familial nationalism” in (post)colonial Taiwan (p. 63, p. 95) **[Image 6]**.

In particular, Chao’s analysis of *Outcasts* pays attention to the trope of “*niezi*” that represents a scenario in which “male homosexuals are banished from their familial homes, deprived of full entry to the public sphere, and ultimately exiled from the dominant family-state imaginary” (p. 65). Yet, by constantly incorporating in its storyline the tensions between the native Taiwanese and Taiwan’s colonial traumas brought on by Japan and Mainland China, the film creates an alternative mediascape—“a Chinese queer diasporic imaginary” that “juxtaposes queer politics and Chinacentric nationalism, thereby foregrounding the relative significance of the peripheral politics of Taiwan and Hong Kong vis-à-vis Mainland China” (p. 39).

A similar *niezi* trope can also be found in *Rebels of the Neon God* through its symbolic comparison of the tale of the rebellious Taoist God, Nezha with the film protagonist’s implicit homoeroticism and his tensions with his heterosexual natal family. In Chinese mythology, Nezha is imagined as a young boy born in a strict military family who had intense confrontations with his father and the social institutions. These eventually led to Nezha’s suicide through which he returned his flesh and bones to his parents (in order to save them from being punished by another god). After his reincarnation, Nezha established his own autonomy and reconciled with his father. As Chao finds, this Chinese trope of Nezha “manifests the trajectory of a particular kind of Chinese male subjectivity—from rebelling against filiality to repaying one’s filial liabilities before gaining one’s autonomy” (p. 86). At the same time, this mythological figure also symbolizes both a “ghostly existence” and “homelessness” after his radical break from his kin relationships (p. 87). The use of cultural tropes of ghostliness and homelessness are also evident in the latter two films of Tsai’s Taipei trilogy in which the subject’s homosexual desire has become more prominent.

The book’s second chapter, titled “*Two Stage Sisters*: Comrades, Almost a Love Story,” presents a fresh queer reading of the political melodrama *Two Stage Sisters* (dir. Xie Jin, 1964) and the historical context of the film’s production (Maoist/socialist China) **[Image 7]**. The film narrates the experiences of two Chinese female Shaoxing opera performers who lived through the Sino-Japanese war, the Chinese Civil War, and the early socialist China era after the founding of the PRC (from 1935 to 1950). Socialist China has been known for its official patriarchal appropriation of women’s gender, body, and sexuality to serve the interests of the nation-state in self-modernization. One of the most widely known cases is “socialist feminism” (also known as “socialist androgyny”) that the PRC propagandized at the time, which encouraged a distorted sociocultural atmosphere that desexualized women’s bodies and forced them to wear loose-fitting, plain-colored clothes similar to men’s. Homosexuality, especially lesbian desire, was paradoxically rendered invisible (though also possibly encouraged in the name of socialist comradeship in same-sex groups) in this social-political environment. Chao’s textual analysis of the film links the narrative to both the queer residues (e.g., all-female troupes

and cross-dressing performances) and the political manipulation of Shaoxing opera in socialist China. He argues that these two apparently contradictory discourses of female same-sex intimacies and socialist, revolutionary politics and ideologies coexisted and were magically merged in the film to present an imaginary of alternative familial relationships between women in a highly politicized context.

Section II, "Camp Aesthetics," features two chapters on local reconfigurations of Western-derived camp cultures in Hong Kong and Taiwan. Chapter 3, "Mass Camp in Contemporary Hong Kong Cinema," offers both a valuable historical record and a critical discussion of mass camp and its influences on the rise of gender parody in Hong Kong films since the 1970s. This has been an understudied topic in Chinese-language media and cultural studies. Chao understands mass camp as a mainstream discourse in Hong Kong that has been characterized by a "purging of its cultural 'stigma'" (p. 152). He believes that it often manifests itself in mainstream, commercial Hong Kong cinema as a combination of homophobic jokes and gender-norm-transgressing images, featuring "mockery, consumerism, and entertainment" (p. 173).

I find Chao's analysis of the role of dubbing in cinematic camp performances and appreciation in this chapter particularly strong and thought-provoking. Unlike most scholarly discussions of gender-bending in Hong Kong cinema and media that tend to focus on visual styles and aesthetics, Chao's analysis of classic cross-gender movie stars and characters, such as the self-castrated male martial artist, "Asia the Invincible," in the famous film *Swordsman II* (dirs. Ching Siu-tung and Stanley Tong, 1992), shows that the gendered nature of dubbing actively contributes to "the 'bifurcation' between sound and image" and perpetuates "an ironic relationship between viewers and texts" that encourages camp appreciation from audiences (p. 165, p. 179) **[Image 8]**.

Chapter 4, "Toward an Aesthetic of *Tongzhi* Camp," discusses another form of camp—*tongzhi* camp—through a reading of three Taiwan films featuring camp expressions: Zero Chou's *Corner's* (2001) and *Splendid Float* (2004) and Tsai Ming-liang's *The Hole* (1998). *Corner's* is a documentary that captures the precarious space of a gay bar in 21st century Taipei which has been consistently threatened by the predominantly heteronormative social environment. As Chao suggests, this "compressed *tongzhi*/queer living space" is represented as being filled with "negative [queer] feelings such as shame and melancholy" through the documentary's aural-visual deployment (p. 221). At the same time, the director's creative deploys aural elements, such as voiceover, diegetic music, and diverse languages and pitches used by the subjects in the documentary. This artistic manipulation of the soundtrack also bridges and contrasts these queer feelings in the dominant heteronormative world with the parodic drag performances (female impersonations) and the camp expressions and aesthetics of the performers in the bar (the marginalized *tongzhi*/queer space).

The feature-length drama *Splendid Float* narrates the story of a drag queen troupe in Taiwan **[Images 9 and 10]**. Chao finds that the film presents female impersonations as both a survival strategy for queers to find "pleasure and solace … in a heteronormative, hostile environment" and "a local aesthetic taking shape at the intersection of class and ethnicity" (p. 227). The unique camp aesthetics of the troupe are borne on its appropriation of local Taiwanese feminine culture and language in the impersonations, which shows that "*Tongzhi* culture is not foreign, but firmly ingrained in this island" (p. 230).

Different from Zero Chou's work and other abovementioned queer films by Tsai, *The Hole* is a seemingly heterosexual musical drama. Nevertheless, focusing on the film's "theatricality and aestheticism," as well as the "role-playing" feature of the acting, Chao's queer reading of the director's appropriation of musical genre reveals an uncomfortable mismatch between the film's musical numbers and its diegesis. Chao believes that these features create a camp sensibility in this "straight" musical similar to the *tongzhi* camp in *Splendid Float* (pp. 234–236). Ultimately, considering both forms of camp as performative discourses, Chao emphasizes that "while *tongzhi* camp and mass camp may share characteristics such as irony, theatricality and (sporadic) humor, *tongzhi* camp nonetheless differs from mass camp due to its agents' continuous negotiation of negative feelings" (p. 244). In other words, *tongzhi* camp "simultaneously affirms *tongzhi*/queer experience and subjectivity" (p. 197).

The last section, "Documentary Impulse," is relatively short, containing two chapters on the queer subjectivities and potential of Chinese documentary filmmaking. Chapter 5, "Coming Out of *The Box*, *Lalas* with DV Cameras," explores lesbian subjectivities in two Chinese lesbian documentaries shot in digital videos, *The Box* (dir. Ying Weiwei, 2001) and *Dyke March* (dirs. Shi Tou and Ming Ming, 2004) **[Images 11]**. Chao probes a particularly urgent, crucial issue in Chinese-language LGBTQ studies, namely "the lack of public and scholarly accounts of lesbian subjects in China" (p. 250). While criticizing *The Box* for its director's "disengaged approach" to local Chinese lesbian subjects in a feminist documentary targeting non-*tongzhi* audiences (p. 260), Chao commends *Dyke March* for presenting "transcultural imagination and practice," raising local queer consciousness, and "enhancing [the] public visibility" of *tongzhi* communities (pp. 267–268). Chao terms these filmmakers "*lalas* with DV cameras [*lala* meaning queer women in the Chinese-speaking context] who are [or who at least politically identify with] lesbians, who are highly aware of the varied experiences and issues associated with being a *lala*, and who express this political concern in their work" (p. 268). He also describes a recent trend in the development of lesbian documentary filmmaking in China that "emphasizes both collaboration and the specificity of a lesbian identity" (p. 247).

Chapter 6, "Performing Gender, Performing Documentary in Postsocialist China," focuses on two DV documentaries about female impersonation in postsocialist China: *Tang Tang* (dir. Zhang Hanzi, 2004) and *Mei Mei* (dir. Gao Tian, 2005). Chao's analysis of the two films links the subjects' *fanchuan* (gender-role reversal) performances to local Chinese cross-dressing operatic traditions. By examining the distinctive aesthetic and generic styles of the documentaries, Chao shows that different from the ways in which *Mei Mei* presents its subject's life and experiences, *Tang Tang*'s integration of fiction into documentary filmmaking and its

reflexive style underlie the performative feature of both gender and the documentary genre. Chao's analyses of the two documentaries also reveal that the cross-dressing performers portrayed in the films are queer subjects in the making who have been constantly negotiating their performances and identities with contemporary China's gendered postsocialist and transcultural imaginaries.

The book concludes with a brief discussion of key ideas, major interventions, and promising directions for further research. In the conclusion, Chao once again raises the issue of rethinking the cinematic representations of queer subjects who are also considered geopolitical, linguistic, and ethnic minorities in Chinese-speaking societies through the concept of "a Chinese queer diasporic imaginary." Nevertheless, it might be a surprise to some readers that the book does not thoroughly examine some of the more recent films relevant to this topic, such as *Alifu: The Prince/ss* (dir. Wang Yu-ling, 2017) **[Image 12]**, which features an indigenous Taiwanese transgender character, or the documentaries *Lesbian Factory* (dir. Susan Chen, 2010) and *Rainbow Popcorn* (dir. Susan Chen, 2013) **[Image 13]**, which address Filipino lesbian migrant workers in Taiwan. Some further discussions on how this "Chinese queer diasporic imaginary" might be useful for understanding media portrayals of queer, ethnic-minority subjects physically located within and outside contemporary Mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan would help to highlight the connections across LGBTQ communities globally and link this book to more recent queer diasporic and queer transnational studies of the Chinese and Sinophone worlds (see, for example, Bao, 2020; Shernuk, 2020). Similarly, while Chao's queer reading of the mythological figure, Nezha, is particularly interesting and persuasive, an investigation of the recent queer-connoted, transnationally successful Mainland Chinese animation film *Ne Zha* (dir. Jiaozi, 2019) **[Image 14]**, which attracted a huge number of global queer fans online, would be particularly relevant but is also missing from the book. However, considering the scope and the length of the book, such omissions are understandable and should not keep this book from being regarded as a theoretically robust, well-written scholarly work that helps to redefine the field of contemporary Chinese-language queer cinema, media, and cultural studies.

Overall, *Queer Representations in Chinese-Language Film and the Cultural Landscape* is an innovative, much-needed contribution that breaks down the boundaries between Sinophone and Anglophone queer media studies and documents a rich array of queer texts and contexts spanning three major Chinese-speaking societies. It offers new perspectives for investigating both LGBTQ representations and queer sentiments, audio-visuality, connotations, and aesthetics of mainstream, even propagandistic, Chinese-language cinema and media. As one of only a few scholarly books that devotes a major section to Chinese-speaking lesbian media cultures, it serves as a powerful call for enhancing public and scholarly attention to queer women in the Sinosphere.

References

Bao, H. (2011). "Queer comrades": Transnational popular culture, queer sociality, and socialist legacy. *English Language Notes, 49*(1), 131-137.

Bao, H. (2018). *Queer comrades: Gay identity and tongzhi activism in postsocialist China*. Copenhagen: NIAS Press.

Bao, H. (2020). *Queer China: Lesbian and gay literature and visual culture under postsocialism*. London: Routledge.

Bao, H. (2021). *Queer media in China*. London: Routledge.

Berry, C. (2000). Happy alone? Sad young men in East Asian gay cinema. *Journal of Homosexuality, 39*(3/4), 187-200.

Berry, C. (2001). Asian values, family values: Film, video, and lesbian and gay identities. In G. Sullian & P. A. Jackson (Eds.), *Gay and lesbian Asia: Culture, identity, community* (pp. 211-231). New York: Harrington Park Press.

Berry, C. (2004). The sacred, the profane, and the domestic in Cui Zi'en's cinema. *positions: East Asian Culture Critique, 12*(1), 195-201.

Berry, C. (2012). Chinese film scholarship in English. In Y. Zhang (Ed.), *A companion to Chinese cinema* (pp. 484-498). Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.

Berry, C., Martin, F. & Yue, A. (Eds.) (2003). *Mobile cultures: New media in queer Asia*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Butler, J. (1990). *Gender trouble*. New York: Routledge.

Cheng, J. (2020). Viscerality—choreographies of flesh: The geopolitics of visceral violence in *Warriors of the Rainbow: Seediq Bale* (2011). In H. Chiang & A.K. Wong (Eds.), *Keywords in queer Sinophone studies* (pp. 38-61). New York: Routledge.

Chiang, H., & Heinrich, A.L. (Eds.). (2014). *Queer Sinophone cultures*. London: Routledge.

Chiang, H., & Wong, A.K. Introduction—queer Sinophone studies: Interdisciplinary synergies. In H. Chiang & A.K. Wong (Eds.), *Keywords in queer Sinophone studies* (pp. 1-15). New York: Routledge.

Chiang, H, & Wong, A.K. (Eds.). (2020). Keywords in queer Sinophone studies. London: Routledge.

Doty, A. (1993). *Making things perfectly queer*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Dyer, R. (1979). *Stars*. London: BFI Publishing.

Engebretsen, E.L., & Shroeder, W.F. (with Bao, H.) (Eds.). (2015). *Queer/*Tongzhi *China: New perspectives on research, activism, and media cultures*. Copenhagen: NIAS.

Guo, J. (2011). Where past meets present: The emergence of gay identity in Pai Hsien-yung's *Niezi*. *MLN, 126*(5), 1049-1082.

Leung, H.H. (2008). *Undercurrents*. Vancouver: UBC Press.

Lim, S.H. (2006). *Celluloid comrades*. Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press.

Liu, P. (2015). *Queer Marxism in two Chinas*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Lu, S. (2007). *Chinese modernity and global biopolitics*. Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press.

Martin, F. (2010). *Backward glances: Contemporary Chinese cultures and the female homoerotic imaginary*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Martin, F. (2014). *Transnational queer Sinophone culture*. In M. McLelland, & V. Mackie (Eds.), Routledge handbook of sexuality studies in East Asia (pp. 35-58). London: Routledge.

Martin, F, Jackson, P.A., McLelland, M., & Yue, A. (Eds.) (2008). *AsiaPacifiQueer: Rethinking genders and sexualities*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press.

Newton, E. (1979). *Mother camp: Female impersonation in America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Rofel, L. (2007). *Desiring China: Experimenting in neoliberalism, sexuality, and public culture*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Sedgwick, E.K. (1993). Queer performativity: Henry James's *The Art of the Novel*. *GLQ, 1*(1), 1-16.

Shaw, G., & Zhang, X. (2017). Cyberspace and gay rights in a digital China. *China Information, 32*(2), 270-292.

Shernuk, K. (2020). Ethnicity—a queerness of relation: The plight of the "ethnic minority" in Chan Koon-Chung's *Bare Life*. In H. Chiang & A.K. Wong (Eds.), *Keywords in queer Sinophone studies* (pp. 80-102). New York: Routledge.

Shih, S. (2007). *Visuality and identity: Sinophone articulations across the pacific*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Tan, S.K. (2000). The cross-gender performances of Yam Kim-Fei, or the queer factor in postwar Hong Kong Cantonese opera/opera films. *Journal of Homosexuality,* 3/4, 201-211.

Tan, S.K. (2007). Huangmei opera films, Shaw Brothers and Ling Bo: Chaste love-stories, genderless cross-dressers and sexless gender-plays? *Jump Cut, 49*. https://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/jc49.2007/TanSee-Kam/

Wong, A.K. (2020). Postcoloniality—postcoloniality beyond China-centrism: Queer Sinophone transnationalism in Hong Kong cinema. In H. Chiang & A.K. Wong (Eds.), *Keywords in queer Sinophone studies* (pp. 62-79). New York: Routledge.

Wu, C. (2010). Queering Chinese-language cinemas. *Screen, 51*(1), 38-53.

Yang, L., & Xu, Y. (2016). "The love that dare not speak its name": The fate of Chinese *danmei* communities in the 2014 anti-porn campaign. In M. Mclelland (Ed.), *The end of cool Japan* (pp. 163-183). New York: Routledge.

Yue, A. (2012). Mobile intimacies in the queer Sinophone films of Cui Zi'en. *Journal of Chinese Cinemas, 6*(1), 95-108.

Zhao, J.J., Yang, L, & Lavin, M. (2017). Introduction. In M. Lavin, L. Yang, & J.J. Zhao (Eds.), *Boys' love, cosplay, and androgynous idols: Queer fan cultures in mainland China* (pp. xi-xxxiii). Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 2.5 License.