
Acknowledgments

Every book has an origin story, and this one is no exception. One of the earliest moments when I realized that my approach to history has been crippled by the available categories can be traced to the way *Transgender China* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), the first book I edited, was received. Specifically, some Anglophone readers criticized the ways in which the term *transgender* was used to describe a range of phenomena in Chinese culture that they did not deem sufficiently genuine to the concept as it is understood in the West. Many of the examples discussed in *Transgender China* were simply not “trans enough” for these readers. For a field that was just beginning to acquire shape and foundation, I was surprised by the degree of boundary policing imposed by its interlocutors. Perhaps I should not have felt so dismayed, but those reactions pushed me to think harder about the promise and limitations of transgender discourse.

There was a subsequent episode that led me to rethink my approach to trans studies. In 2016, I was invited to talk about transgender issues at a workshop on marriage and the family in China. In a room full of (presumably straight) sociologists and demographers, my paper met an enthusiastic and supportive response from the group. There was one question that caught me off-guard, though, and has left a legacy on my thinking over the years. One senior participant asked me to provide a quantitative estimate of the number of trans people in the country. I could sympathize

with the interest in such statistical measures in social science, especially in terms of their function as an aggregate indicator at the population level. But as a historian of sexology, I was deeply suspicious of such numerical measures and the practicality of acquiring them. Apart from the notorious difficulty with definition and sampling, Chinese academia remained—and remains—extremely hostile to lesbian and gay studies, let alone transgender research. More importantly, queer theory has taught me to challenge a purely minoritarian conceptualization of variance.

If the critical reception of *Transgender China* raised the question of what a non-Western perspective can bring to the study of “transgender,” my experience at the workshop convinced me of the need to reorient the way transness and queerness are understood in the field of Asian studies. This book coins *transtopia* as a neologism in order to peel back the layers of cross-cultural politics in antitransphobic inquiry. In the journey of developing this new rubric, I have been blessed with the company of Hongwei Bao, Ari Heinrich, Benjy Kahan, Alvy K. Wong, Lily Wong, and Shana Ye. Hongwei and Benjy, in particular, read the entire manuscript and offered prescient suggestions on how to make it better. Like them, Ari, Alvy, Lily, and Shana responded to my multiple last-minute queries with plentiful patience and advice. I am also grateful for the rich dialogues and exchanges with Adam Dedman, John Erni, Jun Pow, E. K. Tan, Linh Vu, James Welker, and Alan Michael Williams. They engaged with various parts of the manuscript at different stages of the writing process.

Since graduate school never taught me how to write a second monograph, my appreciation of the friends and colleagues in my academic network has grown exponentially by day. My intellectual and spiritual debt accumulated over the years as I became increasingly reliant on that network for writing this book. In the course of researching and completing this study, I learned boundlessly through conversations with Shu-mei Shih on Sinophone theory, Susan Stryker on trans historicism, and Helen Hok-Sze Leung on queer Sinophone films. Observant readers will find the footprints of Shu-mei, Susan, and Helen throughout the book. The introduction of the book benefited enormously from the feedback of Gabrielle Bychowski, Angelina Chin, and Leah DeVun. Chapter 1 could not have been written without the meticulous input of Laura Doan, Alexa Huang, Ryan Jones, Leila J. Rupp, and Katie Sutton. I thank Ta-wei Chi, Hoching Jiang, and Mark McConaughy for their helpful comments on the early drafts of chapter 2. They pointed out blind spots and suggested

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Although I have presented fragments of this study at numerous venues and gatherings, a few of them served as a catalyst for what was to become *Transtopia in the Sinophone Pacific*. The first time I proposed the main idea

behind this project occurred at “Sinophone Studies: An International Research Workshop” at New York University, Shanghai, in August 2016. I thank Celina Hung for organizing the event and inviting me to participate in it; I am also indebted to Yuting Huang’s extensive feedback both during and after the workshop. I circulated an early draft of chapter 4 at the Toronto-based Critical China Studies Working Group in February 2018. I am grateful for the feedback of Joshua Fogel, Zhipeng Gao, Joan Judge, Noa Nahmias, Shana Ye, and other participants of the seminar. I delivered a preliminary version of chapter 1 at the Cross-Cultural Women’s and Gender History Colloquium at the University of California, Davis (May 2018), and the History of Sexuality Seminar at the Institute of Historical Research, the School of Advanced Study in the University of London (May 2019). I thank Quinn Javers and Jana Funke for chairing my presentations and the thoughtful conversations that followed over coffee and dinner. Chapter 2 was first conceived as a Henry J. Leir Chair Lecture delivered at Clark University in September 2018. This was made possible through Robert Tobin’s generous invitation, which encouraged me to develop an early draft of the chapter. I presented a more polished version of the same chapter at the landmark “Sinophone Studies: Interdisciplinary Perspectives and Critical Reflections” conference organized by Shu-mei at UCLA in April 2019. In that same year, I gave a systematic discussion of the concept of transtopia twice at Stanford University: the first time as part of the Feminist/Queer Colloquium at the Stanford Humanities Center and the second time as part of the Trans History Lecture Series in the Department of History. I thank Alexis Bard Johnson, Laura Stokes, and Matthew Sommer for their warm hospitality. My colleague Omnia El Shakry expressed enthusiastic support toward the theoretical underpinnings of my work when she attended the Stanford Humanities Center event. The Graduate Institute of Taiwan Literature and Transnational Cultural Studies at National Chung Hsing University has invited me to present my work related to this project on multiple occasions, and I am fortunate to have taught the full manuscript of this book for the first time there as part of the graduate seminar on Sinophone studies in December 2019. The colleagues there deserve special mentioning for their friendship in the last decade: Kuo-wei Chen, Huei-chu Chu, Kuei-fen Chiu, Chia-li Kao, Dominique Liao, and Min-xu Zhan. I thank the participants at all of these venues for their perceptive questions and suggestions.

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All translations from foreign sources are my own except where noted. East Asian names are given in the customary order, with family name

preceding personal name. In general, the book follows the Pinyin system per scholarly convention in the United State, but I use other transcriptions if they are common, for example, in some names. In this study, I use LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) and LGBTQ (queer) interchangeably.

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Last but not least, gratitude is due to my family for their support. Writing a book is a selfish feat. I remain astonished by how my parents, Hui-Min Chiang and Mei-Fang Yang, put up with my radical departure from their traditional views and how my husband, Hao-Te Shih, tolerates my endless demands for solitary moments. I am lucky to share my life with someone who is willing to see me through this task yet again, after *After Eunuchs*.

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