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# OBSESSION

Male Same-Sex Relations in China, 1900-1950

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## Introduction

This book is a study of male same-sex relations in China during the first half of the twentieth century. During this period, a rich vocabulary existed to describe such relationships, which were frequently discussed in translated sexological writings, literary works, publications concerning the Peking Opera field and, most prominently, tabloid newspapers. In these various social and discursive locations, which were either new, such as sexology and tabloids, or in the process of being transformed, such as opera and literature, urban citizens argued about the importance of a modernized understanding of gender and sex in order to strengthen the nation.

Male same-sex relations figured in many different ways across genres, and multiple conversations went on at the same time. From the early 1920s to the early 1930s, translators of Western sexology were divided between those who pathologized homosexuals for their social immorality and those who praised same-sex love as the foundation for a human utopia. At the same time, a group of iconoclastic literary writers followed the mode of Western decadent writing, presenting a beautiful image of intimacy between male friends and posing male same-sex love as a protest against conventional social and sexual norms, while cultural conservatives used tabloid newspapers as their forum, casting sex between men as a sign of the weakness of the nation. As the Japanese invasion deepened the national crisis from the late 1930s on, these conservative writers continued to blame men who had sex with other men for the misfortunes of the nation, and progressive literary writers also made an effort to erase the history of male same-sex relations in the Peking opera field.

With an increasing number of works on women's history in China, gender has proven to be an indispensable analytical category in the study of Chinese history. Masculinity, however, is rarely addressed as a way of broadening our understanding of twentieth-century China. In this book, I argue that by attending to discussions of emotion, virtue and masculinity in male same-sex relationships,



we can better understand shifting notions of nationalism, modernity and semi-colonialism during this period.

The term that I use for the title of the book, "obsession," is an English translation of the Chinese word *pi* (癖), which was one of the major conceptual frameworks to understand male same-sex desire in Chinese history. During the first half of twentieth century, the issue of male same-sex relations itself clearly became an obsession for Chinese writers, from conservative literati to progressive intellectuals. The period saw a persistent effort to define and redefine the meaning of male same-sex relations on the part of these writers to modernize China.

### Male Same-Sex Relations in Chinese History

Since the 1970s, prompted by the U.S. lesbian and gay movement and the development of new modes of social and cultural history writing, especially women's history, scholars have increasingly explored the role of male same-sex relations in U.S. and European history. Amid this burgeoning new literature,<sup>1</sup> similar works in Japanese history have also begun to emerge.<sup>2</sup> In the China field, literary scholars have done a considerable amount of work on male same-sex relations during the pre-modern era. For the modern period, Tze-lan D. Sang's *The Emerging Lesbian* provides a timely study of female same-sex relations in twentieth-century China. Recently, scholars have also begun to pay attention to changes in the male homoerotic culture of Peking opera in the earlier twentieth century.<sup>3</sup> Works on and from contemporary China are predominately sociological studies and journalistic reports on the lives of men who have sex with men.<sup>4</sup> The most in-depth study of male same-sex relations in contemporary China in English is anthropologist Lisa Rofel's work on emerging gay identities in Beijing.<sup>5</sup>

The study on sexual relationships between men in China first appeared in works about pre-modern literature. By examining literary representations, these works answer the question of how such relationships were understood in pre-modern Chinese literary writing. In his work on vernacular stories in late imperial China, Partrick Hanan mentions that love between men was treated with humor and as an occasion for intense *qing* (情, feeling).<sup>6</sup> Keith McMahon suggests that sex between men in Ming stories such as *Bian er chai* (弁而釵, A cap and hairpins) was described as more harmonious and pleasurable than sex between men and women.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, in her analysis of the seventeenth-century writer Li Yu's homoerotic story "A Male Mencius's Mother," Sophie Volpp argues that the narrative not only allowed love between men to fit into a Confucian system of gender values but also elevated it to a level of moral significance that surpassed that of relationships between men and women. What needs to be pointed out,

however, is that the story is a campy spoof and an exercise in wit. It is all very ironic.<sup>8</sup> In short, male same-sex relationships in late Ming (1368–1644) and early Qing (1644–1911) vernacular stories were humorously and positively depicted as a form of sexual attachment and emotional expression superior to sexual relationships between men and women.

Historical studies of male same-sex relationships during the imperial era are concerned with the social and official attitudes towards such relationships and ask when and whether a Western-style homophobia existed in China.<sup>9</sup> Some see a change in social and official attitudes towards male same-sex relationships—from indifference to moral denunciation and legal regulation—beginning in the early Qing, while others locate such a change only in the nineteenth-century. Vivien Ng identifies the 1740 Qing law that punished sex between men as a sign of this change and considers it as a backlash against the widespread sexual activities between men in the late Ming. She argues that the law, which aimed at maintaining proper gender roles, was a part of the process by which the Qing state consolidated its power. Written in Chinese and published in Hong Kong, a study by Xiaomingxiong<sup>10</sup> also finds a change of social attitude towards male same-sex relationships in China, but argues that the change began in the nineteenth century as a result of what he vaguely calls Western influence. Based on Ng and Xiaomingxiong's work, Bret Hinsch argues that the 1740 law was a result of both the Qing's growing sexual conservatism and Western moral influence, but locates the time of this change in the period beginning from the Ming-Qing transition. Although the specific chronological beginning of change was different for these three historians, they all conclude that a Western style of homophobia began to appear in the China during the Qing period.

The characterization of the 1740 Qing law as homophobic has been challenged by literary scholar Giovanni Vitiello. Basing his research on a literary anthology of male-male homoerotic writings compiled in the late Qing, Vitiello argues that in Ming-Qing China, sex between men was more than socially tolerated. It was common and widely accepted as an option for a man to satisfy his sexual desire. Sex between men was rarely condemned.<sup>11</sup>

The problem with this debate is the assumption that a uniform social attitude towards sex between men existed in late imperial China and that legal regulations and literary writings were a direct reflection of this social attitude. In his historical study of culture and society in Ming China, Timothy Brook questions how widespread the practice of sex between men was. He argues that it was exactly "the social and psychological pressure against *nanse*" (男色, erotic attraction to the male body) that "distinguished homoerotic love as an exclusive gesture within reach of only a tiny minority" of the social elite.<sup>12</sup> The literary writings about sex between men in late imperial China might only represent the opinions of the elite.



Endorsing Brook's argument, Sophie Volpp further argues that the massive quantity of writings on male homoeroticism should not be interpreted as indicating that sex between men was socially accepted in the late Ming Dynasty. She proposes that "Rather, they testify to the seventeenth century interest in classifying lust, in cataloguing all its permutations."<sup>13</sup> Examining both literary texts and belles-lettres (*biji*, 筆記), Volpp finds that the explanations of homoerotic desire were so fraught with contradictions that it is not possible to reach a uniform conclusion on late imperial attitudes towards male love. In these writings, sex between men was marginalized and localized as something strange, outside the norm.

In his historical study of the Qing legal code on sexual offenses, Matthew Sommer also complicates the question of what constitutes "homophobia" and poses a challenge to the conclusions of Xiaomingxiong, Ng and Hinsch that a Western-style homophobia became entrenched in China in the Qing Dynasty. Sommer argues that the tightened control on sex in the Qing dynasty was caused by internal social changes, such as the unbalanced ratio between men and women. The Qing law on homosexual rape aimed to prevent men from acting as women and thus to maintain a hierarchical gender order, but not to target the act of sex between men *per se*.<sup>14</sup>

Furthermore, based on his study of eighteenth-century documents on male same-sex relations in Fujian province, Michael Szonyi argues that there was never one all-pervasive attitude towards sex between men in China. He contends that, rather than tracing the change from laxity to moral denunciation, we should pay attention to the continuity of intellectual thought on homoerotic desire between the pre-modern and the modern period.<sup>15</sup>

The works that have touched on the topic of male same-sex relations in twentieth-century China tend to focus on how Western sexology was accepted in China and on whether same-sex relations were socially accepted or not. In *Sex, Culture and Modernity in China*, Frank Dikotter briefly treats the issue of male same-sex relations in modern China. Contending that a uniform social attitude persisted throughout Chinese history that disapproved of sex between men because it was non-procreative, he found that Chinese intellectuals did not grasp the Western idea of homosexuality.<sup>16</sup> Arguing against Dikotter, in her study of female same-sex desire in modern China, Tze-lan D. Sang stresses the agency of the Chinese translators of Western sexological knowledge and traces a process of intensifying stigmatization of same-sex relations with the continuing introduction of Western sexological works in modern China.<sup>17</sup>

In this book, I ask the following questions: What kinds of thinking about male same-sex relations circulated in twentieth-century China? What was the long-term historical trajectory of this thinking; how did it interact with

Western sexological knowledge; and how did it condition the dissemination and acceptance of Western concepts of homosexuality? How were these ideas, both Chinese and Western, transformed in the process of their interaction? How did the social and political context in which the process occurred determine the meaning of male same-sex relations, and in turn, what can those meanings tell us about nationalism, modernity, and semi-colonialism in twentieth-century China?

In the first half of the twentieth century, the issue of gender and sexuality was an important component of the "national character" (*guomin xing*, 國民性) discourse in China. By the time of the publication of *New Youth* in 1917, the effort to understand Chinese national character has transformed into a movement to criticize "flawed national character" (*guoming liegen xing*, 國民劣根性).<sup>18</sup> For example, Chen Duxiu (陳獨秀) considered his compatriots as "debased weak people" and described Chinese (male) youth as following:

They lack the strength to tie up a chicken in their hand, and they do not have the courage to be a man in their mind. Their faces are pale, and their bodies are as delicate as women's. As fragile as sick men, they can endure neither heat nor cold. How could a national group with such a weak body and mind shoulder a heavy burden?<sup>19</sup>

If Chen's statement only testifies that gender could be used as a convenient trope of the national character; works of other intellectuals such as Zhang Jingsheng (張競生) clearly connected the issue of sexuality with the problem of national character. Zhang even explained the weakness of Chinese people by analyzing a presumable degeneration of their sexual organs.<sup>20</sup>

In her seminal work *Translingual Practice: Literature, National Culture, and Translated Modernity, 1900-1937*, Lydia Liu provides a nuanced study of the national character discourse in modern China. As Liu points out, "The idea of national character subsumed human difference under the totalizing category of national identity and has proved tremendously useful in legitimatizing Western imperialist expansion and domination in the world."<sup>21</sup> Going beyond the interpretation of Said's *Orientalism*, which "often reduced the [East-West] exchange to a matter of specularly between the gazer and object of the gaze,"<sup>22</sup> Liu emphasizes a co-authorship of the Chinese national character myth, which was first invented by Western missionaries such as Arthur Smith, and later further reinvented by the Chinese intellectuals represented by Lu Xun. This co-authorship or the participation of Chinese intellectuals in creating and perpetuating the myth, Liu argues, should be understood in the modern historical context of imperialist violence, which "Chinese intellectuals had to endure, whether as radical, traditionalist or other, in the hope that they would



eventually come to terms with modernity.”<sup>23</sup> By subscribing and transforming the Chinese national character in the form of writing, Chinese intellectuals found the means to empowering themselves.<sup>24</sup>

It is in this context that I situate the issue of male same-sex relations in China. The semi-colonial era of the first half of the twentieth century saw Western and Japanese powers establish their sphere of influence, while the national government remained weak and the invading powers treated the Chinese people as second-class citizens. In this threatening wider context, both the newly established Chinese republican government and an emerging group of intellectuals sought means by which to modernize China. As the book demonstrates, it is a significant historical fact that the modernizing project of Chinese nation-state building involved a reconfiguration of indigenous knowledge about male same-sex relations and contestation of the meaning of sex between men. Anxiety on the part of intellectuals and a wider public about the national crisis manifested itself through public discussion about masculinities and male-male sexuality of Chinese men.

### Archival Marterils and Queer Approach

My initial research began at the Shanghai Municipal Archives. Unlike the Qing state, the Republican government did not criminalize sex between men, a legal departure explained in Chapter Four. But I still hoped to find archival documents on male same-sex relations. To avoid unnecessary inconveniences and possible hostility, I told the staff members that my research topic was about moral issues during the Republican period. I surveyed a wide range of records from divorce cases to criminal records and from prison records to homicide cases. No trace of male same-sex relations was found. It seemed that male same-sex relations did not compel any attention from the Republican government. Dismayed by the lack of information in these official documents, I followed the lead of Gail Hershatter’s work on prostitution in twentieth-century Shanghai<sup>25</sup> and moved to the Shanghai Library to begin to read the city’s major early twentieth-century tabloid newspaper. *Crystal* (*Jingbao*, 晶報) published from the late 1910s to the early 1940s, turned out to be a major source for this study. *Crystal* not only occasionally addressed the issue of male same-sex relations, often through discussions of Peking opera, but also pointed me to other sources such as the same type of newspaper in Tianjin, sex education books, and popular fiction published at the time. Meanwhile, I also looked for male homoerotic writings in modern Chinese literature.

When I moved to Beijing, I once again began at the municipal archives. This time, feeling I had nothing to lose, I told the staff member that I was looking for materials on male same-sex relations. After consulting a senior archivist,

the receptionist told me that because sex between men was not criminalized in Republican-period law and the archives only collected official documents, no records on the issue could be found. I thus gave up my hope to find any sources in the official archive.

Tabloids serve as major archival sources for this book. This type of newspaper first appeared at the turn of the twentieth century in the late Qing period, flourished during the Republican era, declined after the Japanese invasion in China in 1937, and eventually disappeared in the dawning years of the People’s Republic.<sup>26</sup>

Over this period, both tabloid writers and their audience changed. During the late Qing period, men educated in classical Chinese who had given up their hope to gain an official government post through the imperial civil service examinations entered the emergent newspaper business. Inheriting the tradition of Ming and Qing literati, they used tabloids mainly as a forum to comment on current political and social affairs and rank courtesans and actors.<sup>27</sup> Thus, in the early stage of tabloid publications, these writers wrote in classical Chinese and targeted a small circle of men like themselves who were also versed in the old form of writing. With the development of the commercial newspaper business and as a result of the abolition of the imperial examination in 1905, more and more educated men joined the ranks of those who made a living by writing for commercial publications. Accordingly, the social status of tabloid writers as a group also became diversified. There were handsomely paid famous writers and editors, but they were few. A majority of these who contributed to tabloids were members of the newly emerging urban middle and lower classes. Their writing thus reflected and represented the concerns, interests and tastes of the urban population.<sup>28</sup> To attract a wider reading public, these writers also changed tabloid language from classical Chinese to semi-classical vernacular Chinese,<sup>29</sup> and even increased the use of dialects and local slang.<sup>30</sup> According to Hong Yu, during the Republican period, the main audience of tabloids changed from a small group of educated elite to the middle and lower classes of the urban population, but the range of readers certainly traversed class boundaries, including government officials; old-style literati; students; clerks working in banks, offices, and shops; and prostitutes.<sup>31</sup>

A major form of tabloid writing is the so-called recreational article (*youxi wenzhang*, 遊戲文章). Tabloids were called small *xiaobao* (小報, small newspaper) in Chinese, while regular newspapers were called *dabao* (大報, big newspaper). In her study *Shanghai Tabloid Newspapers during the Late Qing and Republic Period* (*Wanqing minguo shiqi Shanghai xiaobao*, 晚清民國時期上海小報), Li Nan attempts to draw a boundary between the form of writing in big newspapers and that in the small. She calls big newspaper writing *baozhang wenti* (報章文體, newspaper



literary style) or *xinwenti* (新文體, new literary style), and small newspaper writing *xiaobao sanwen* (小報散文, small newspaper prose) or *youxi wenzhang* (recreational article).

According to Li, late Qing reformers such as Liang Qichao, Zhang Binlin, and Yan Fu changed the archaic classical Chinese writing style in an effort to make newspapers more accessible to the reading public. Newspaper literary style was a result of this endeavor. This type of writing, in Liang's words, "aims to be straightforward and easy to read, sometimes mixing vernacular with classical Chinese language and foreign grammar, not restrained by any rules."<sup>32</sup> Small newspaper prose, Li argues, blended the Chinese notation book (*biji*, 筆記) genre<sup>33</sup> and modern newspaper literary style, and under the influence of commercial publishing culture and the personal tastes of tabloid writers, transformed them into a kind of recreational article.<sup>34</sup> The major difference between newspaper literary style and small newspaper prose, Li points out, is that reformers used newspaper literary style as a political tool for social change, whereas tabloid writers composed recreational articles for entertainment purposes. In other words, newspaper literary style was meant to convey the *way* (*zaidao*, 載道), that is the correct moral value; while recreational articles were limited to expressing the writers' will (*yanzhi*, 言志).<sup>35</sup>

However, the difference between the two forms of writing was not as clear-cut as the above suggests, especially in the early period of newspaper publication, from the late Qing to the period of warlord rule. As Li admits, recreational articles in *Youxibao* (遊戲報, Recreation news), the first tabloid in China founded by Li Boyuan (李伯元) in 1897, also served a political purpose by commenting on current affairs.<sup>36</sup> It is more appropriate to say that the entertainment nature of small newspapers manifested itself more in the later Republican period, when the nationalist government tightened its control on media.

The term *youxi* (recreational), according to Leo Ou-fan Lee, might come from the name of *Youxibao* (遊戲報, Recreation news).<sup>37</sup> Recreational articles (*youxi wenzhang*), however, also appeared in the supplement pages of big newspapers in the early years of Republican era.<sup>38</sup> In fact, Lee locates a long essay defending the form of recreational articles, published in 1917 in the *Ziyoutan* (自由談, Freedom forum) section of *Shenbao* (申報, Shanghai journal, founded 1872), Shanghai's earliest and most respected Chinese newspaper.<sup>39</sup> In the essay *On Recreational Articles*, the writer, whose pseudonym was Ji Hang (濟航),<sup>40</sup> describes recreational articles as a type of comical satire (*huaqi fengshi zhiwen*, 滑稽諷世之文), arguing that it is superior to the form of the formal essay (*zhenglun*, 正論). Instead of providing one straightforward argument, a recreational article has multiple implications. Compared with political treatises, satires with witty and amusing language are more effective. With the deterioration of social morals

and government officials' performance, the author said, readers demanded more and more recreational articles to be written to vent their anger and frustration. That was why this form of writing became so widespread and popular, and the newspaper's value in general was accordingly enhanced. The writer claims that recreational articles could save the country and change social morals.<sup>41</sup>

As Lee further illustrates, during the period of warlord rule in the 1910s, using irony and parody, this type of writing satirized political leaders and mocked new social practices influenced by Western ideas.<sup>42</sup> "It has created a kind of public opinion, provided an open political forum unprecedented in history, and meanwhile almost established a practice that 'everyone is entitled to express one's opinion' (*yanzhe wuzui*, 言者無罪)."<sup>43</sup> Lee uses "almost" because with the ascendancy of the Nationalist government in 1927 and later the establishment of a censorship system in 1934, it became increasingly difficult and dangerous to criticize the government.<sup>44</sup>

Lee uses Lu Xun (魯迅) as an example of one who carried on the tradition of using recreational articles to fight against government censorship. But he also points out that Lu Xun treated many writers of different political persuasions with contempt, did not value or pay attention to positive social and cultural functions of various kinds of newspapers, and thus lost his opportunities to maintain a public forum.<sup>45</sup>

The form of the recreational article, however, did not die out. Instead, it flourished in the tabloid press. Although the writers themselves sometimes even claimed that they would stay away from politics, their social commentaries often included sarcastic remarks on current social and political affairs. As Hong Yu points out, sardonic recreational articles that exposed government corruption and social evil became a hallmark of tabloids.<sup>46</sup> Execration or cursing (*ma*, 罵) became part of the art of tabloid writing. For tabloids, "To curse requires the art of cursing. It should make the cursed speechless, and it should make the cursed debilitated. In small newspapers, ridicule, laughter, anger, and curses all constitute articles (*xixiaonuma*, *jiecheng wenzhang*, 嬉笑怒罵, 皆成文章)."<sup>47</sup> But as the national crisis intensified, this form of writing came to be considered as trivial and frivolous, and was strongly disapproved of by May Fourth writers.<sup>48</sup> Lu Xun once criticized the tabloid writers as follows: "No matter how miserable the matter is, (they) can always make it interesting—interesting in Shanghai style."<sup>49</sup> Zheng Zhenduo (鄭振鐸) also detested the entertaining tone of the tabloid. "They treat life as if it is a game, being sarcastic about everything, from serious national affairs to trivial matters."<sup>50</sup>

In her study of tabloid representations of "celebrities," Li Nan uses Eileen Chang's (Zhang Ailing, 張愛玲) term *liuyan* (流言, written on water, rumor or gossip) to characterize small newspaper writing.<sup>51</sup> Based on a passage of



Chang's article "Notes on Apartment Life" (*gongyu shenghuo jiqu*, 公寓生活記趣), Li explains the meaning of *liuyan* as rumor and gossip only to reinforce the established understanding of tabloid writers: They entertained the urban public by writing what people were curious about.<sup>52</sup>

Chang has her own explanation of the meaning of *liuyan* elsewhere. As Nicole Huang illustrates in her introduction to Andrew Jones's translation of Chang's collection of essays *Written on Water* (*liuyan*):

In her later writing, Chang recalls that the title phrase, *liuyan*, was from an English saying: "written on water." She explains the implication of the metaphor: She does not expect her writing to endure; instead, her work should be thought of as words written on water—or "flowing words," a more literal translation of *liuyan*—lingering momentarily and eventually fading. But she also hopes that her writing will be endowed with the spirit of "rumor" or "gossip"—a second denotation of the word *liuyan*—flowing freely and swiftly in order to reach the widest possible audience.<sup>53</sup>

Chang's own definition of *liuyan* serves as a better description of small newspaper writing. If it was a form of rumor or gossip, like Chang's work, tabloid writing also enjoyed a large readership.<sup>54</sup>

More often than not, gossip is unverifiable and simply imagined by curious minds. This raises the question how gossip could function as a historical source.<sup>55</sup> In her study of Xiao Hong's *Field of Life and Death*, Lydia Liu argues: "Since Chinese women are denied subject positions in male-centered historiographies, storytelling or gossip becomes the only means of transmitting women's unique knowledge about life and death among themselves."<sup>56</sup> In my own effort to write a queer history of China, gossip in the form of tabloids also proves a valuable historical source. In this book, instead of attempting to verify the content of gossip, I treat gossip itself as historical evidence, which, thanks to curious minds, not only left a record of male same-sex relations but also often revealed a connection between sexual issues and their social and political context. I analyze assumptions, logics and ideologies in the gossip to see how the connection between sex and politics was made and show the process in which, with their concerns about the survival of nation and preservation of conventional moral values, tabloid writers actually contributed to the stigmatization of male same-sex relations in modern China.

Out of modesty and her view of human life,<sup>57</sup> Chang considers her writing to be *liuyan*, rumor, gossip, and words that would not endure. But her work has survived political upheaval and ideological manipulation, and has become a classical testimony of human life in wartime Shanghai. Similarly, while official archives leave a void on the issue of male same-sex relations because of legal

stipulations of the Republican era, the tabloid press with its range of insatiable interests, from politics to personal matters, provides valuable sources for the present study.

Studies of Chinese tabloids have been ignored until very recently.<sup>58</sup> Many tabloid writers were also "Mandarin Duck and Butterfly" or "Saturday School" fiction writers, whose position has been marginalized in modern Chinese literary history because of the commercial nature of their work.<sup>59</sup> As Lydia Liu argues in *Translingual Practice*, the canon-making process of modern Chinese literature was an integral part of a concerted nation-making effort on the part of May Fourth writers in a world where Western discourses were privileged. In the process, May Fourth writers legitimized their own dominant position by marginalizing Butterfly writers.

Whereas Butterfly fiction thrived solely on the entertainment market and found its returns more or less guaranteed by popular consumption, May Fourth writers were bent on producing their own term of legitimacy by relying on theoretical discourses and institutionalized practices such as canon making, criticism and the writing of literary.<sup>60</sup>

Furthermore, May Fourth writers and critics used their own criteria to evaluate Butterfly writings, although not totally silencing them. As a result, Butterfly writers were relegated to the "traditional camp" and labeled as the "conservatives."<sup>61</sup> Because of the connection with Butterfly school writers, tabloid writing was rarely taken seriously in Chinese literary and historical study.

Another type of source used in this study is literary works on male same-sex relations in modern Chinese literature, which has been overlooked in the previous scholarship. In fact, writers of the so-called May Fourth literature were not a homogenous group with uniform literary tastes and theoretical persuasions during its early period. The early 1920s was characterized by conflicts between members of the Literary Association and those of the Creation Society. Although both aimed to fight against the "old literature," they had different goals in mind and debated on the means to achieve them. Generally speaking, the Literary Association, favoring realism, advocated "art for life" to resist the recreational literature represented by the Butterfly fiction, while the Creation Society, embracing romanticism, used the slogan "art for art" to defy the age-old principle of "writing in order to convey the correct moral value" (*wen yi zai dao*, 文以載道).<sup>62</sup> As Lydia Liu points out, it was the common goal of building a Chinese national literature as a part of world literature to shoulder "the enormous burden of explaining and justifying China's membership in the modern international community" that brought this group together.<sup>63</sup> Because



realism later developed into a dominant form in modern Chinese literary—especially fiction—writing and claimed to be the true descendent of May Fourth tradition, not only Butterfly literature was marginalized in the modern Chinese literary criticism and historiography, other literary schools were ignored as well.<sup>64</sup>

In his pioneering works on modern Chinese writers, Leo Lee clearly identifies a surge of romantic energy in earlier May Fourth literary works, especially those by the Creation Society writers such as Guo Moruo (郭沫若) and Yu Dafu (郁達夫).<sup>65</sup> As he explains, “much of this youthful energy” was “directed towards to the destruction of tradition,”<sup>66</sup> and central to this kind of romanticism was the celebration of individual personhood symbolized by an ardent pursuit of love:

For almost a decade, the keynote of this youthful emotional outburst was summarized in the amorphous word, love. For the May Fourth youths “riding on the tempestuous storm of romanticism,” love had become the central focus of their lives. The writers themselves were leaders of this trend. It was considered *de rigueur* to produce some confessional love pieces and to evolve a “modern” (or *me-teng*, in its chic Chinese transliteration) lifestyle based on love.<sup>67</sup>

Interestingly, my research found that love in the May Fourth spirit was not limited to love between men and women; it also included love between men.<sup>68</sup> Lee’s description also could be applied to the love between men in the literary works of writers such as Yu Dafu and his followers:

Love had become an overall symbol of new morality, an easy substitute for the traditional ethos of propriety which was now equated with conformist restraint. In the general wave of emancipation, love was identified with freedom, in the sense that by loving and by releasing one’s passions and energies the individual could become truly a full and free man—or women. To love was also considered an act of defiance and sincerity, of renouncing all the artificial restraints of hypocritical society so as to find one’s true self and expose it to one’s beloved.<sup>69</sup>

This kind of positive representation of love between men in May Fourth literature signals a new kind of interpretation of male same-sex relations in modern China. A point is further developed in Chapter Three.

This part of romantic writing is also often associated with the influence of fin-de-siècle decadent thought. In China, until very recently the association of decadence with May Fourth literature has remained a taboo in modern literary historiography.<sup>70</sup> In the U.S. in his path-breaking *A History of Modern Chinese Fiction 1917–1957* (1961), C. T. Hsia points out decadent features of Yu Dafu’s early short stories, and attributes them to the influence of both “the Japanese

and European decadent writers” and “those Chinese poets and essayists who have habitually bewailed their loneliness and poverty as outcasts from philistine officialdom.”<sup>71</sup> But Hsia contends that the decadence of Yu’s characters “is only superficial, far from incompatible with a scrupulous moral sensitivity.”<sup>72</sup> As he further writes, “If the decadence of Baudelaire is explicable only in terms of a Christian Faith, then, likewise, the guilt and remorse of Yü Ta-fu [Yu Dafu] is to be understood in the framework of a Confucian ethic, which had conditioned his upbringing.”<sup>73</sup> In other words, Yu lacked a sense of abandon supposedly at the end of the world understood in Christian belief as evident in some Western writers and was still overwhelmed by the burden of family and nation.

Moreover, Hsia points out the importance of sex in Yu’s work and its relationship with individual personhood and the nation. “To its contemporary student readers,” Yu’s story of *Sinking* (*chenlun*, 沉淪) “represents the discovery of sex as a serious concern. Through sex the hero has come to realize his personal failure as well as the national shame; impelled by the call to freedom and yet thwarted at every turn by traditional forces, the students shared more or less the same kind of frustration.”<sup>74</sup> Hsia further comments, “it is regrettable that none of his followers, while parading their eroticism and decadence, possessed his kind of honesty and seriousness.”<sup>75</sup>

Studies of fin-de-siècle decadence in Chinese literature are further developed by scholars such as Leo Lee, Lung-kee Sun, David Wang, and Shumei Shih. Lee traces a Chinese decadent mood to *The Dream of Red Chamber*, and argues that this kind of mood could be found in writings of Lu Xun, Yu Dafu, and Shanghai modernist writers. But he singles out Eileen Chang as the best Chinese decadent writer in that she is very suspicious about the belief that history is necessarily on a course of progress.<sup>76</sup> Arguing that “May Fourth ‘Darwinism’ implied both the notion of ‘progress’ and that of ‘degeneration,’”<sup>77</sup> Sun emphasizes that the fin-de-siècle mood in fact permeated the intellectual thought of May Fourth Era.<sup>78</sup> Contending that modern Chinese literature had an indigenous origin and that modernity was accompanied simultaneously by decadence, Wang draws attention to decadent features of late Qing literature that exerted profound influence on the later modern writers such as Lu Xun, Yu Dafu and Lao She (老舍).<sup>79</sup> In her study of modernism in China, Shih points out that for the May Fourth generation writers such as Yu Dafu, “the phenomenon of premature death among British decadent writers” was “a symbol of their thorough rebellion against civilization built upon nations of conventional morality.” Their depiction of sexual desire often “operates as a metaphor for the national and the social” and for “the tension between cosmopolitanism and nationalism.”<sup>80</sup>



Building on this scholarship, I argue that representations of love and sex between men in works of Yu Dafu and his followers, be it characterized as romantic energy or a decadent feature, are still a reflection of the May Fourth spirit of anti-traditionalism and these young intellectuals' concern about the survival of Chinese as a nation.

Male same-sex relations were, however, not always represented positively as love against traditional moral constraints in modern Chinese literature. With the end of the first United Front in 1927 and the beginning of the Nationalist white terror, some writers turned to "revolutionary literature" and did not hesitate to use it as political propaganda to promote and represent proletarian revolution.<sup>81</sup> Others searched for an alternative route to develop May Fourth literature. Prominent among the latter were Ba Jin (巴金) and Lao She. Among their achievements, Ba Jin was known for his fierce youthful energy and his continuing use of the theme of love to fight against conventional Confucian morals, and Lao She's use of vernacular language reached a high level that the first generation of May Fourth writers could only dream of.<sup>82</sup> The commonality between the two writers was their compassion toward people at the bottom of that social hierarchy. Unsurprisingly, in the 1930s, each of them wrote a short story about *dan* actors (male actors playing female roles) in traditional Chinese operas. Different from previous literary images of *dan* actors as objects of homoerotic desire or righteous companions of their scholar friends in male same-sex relations, Ba Jin and Lao She presented *dan* actors as victims of sexual and economic exploitation in the theater system.

The portrayal of *dan* actors was further developed in Qin Shou'ou's (秦瘦鷗) *Qiu Haitan* (Begonia, 1941), a popular novel, and Wu Zuguang's (吳祖光) *Fenxueye guiren* (The man who returned on a snowy night, 1943), a Western style play. In these two works, the typical Butterfly story of warlord-actor-concubine triangle was transformed into a serious appeal for social change.<sup>83</sup> The *dan* actor appears as a respectable human being with an independent mind, who despises his patron's homosexual intention and pursues an equalitarian heterosexual love of his own. This series of modern literary works, along with old records of literati, late Qing and Butterfly school fiction, and tabloid writings on *dan* actors are the materials analyzed in Chapter Five.

In terms of readership, until the 1920s, Tabloid and Butterfly fiction certainly enjoyed a wider audience than May Fourth literature.<sup>84</sup> But in the 1930s, according to Lydia Liu, "the distinction between elite literature and popular fiction is difficult to maintain," notably "because fiction writers confounded the distinction by bringing out bestsellers." Bai Jin's novel *Jia* (Family, 1931-2), "embodied both the legacy of May Fourth literature and the commercial success of Butterfly fiction."<sup>85</sup> Because of the Japanese invasion in the late 1930s, even

some famous popular writers took a clear political stand for "national unity and resistance." As Perry Link points out, "This move drew them closer to the May Fourth writers, who all along had been saying that literature should serve the modern nation."<sup>86</sup> Thus the 1940s saw a convergence of popular and elite literature. *Begonia* and *The Man Who Returned on a Snowy Night* enjoyed huge commercial success in wartime Shanghai and Chongqing respectively.

The sources of this book also include Chinese translations and appropriations of Western sexological writings, mainly by Hu Qiuyuan (胡秋原) and Pan Guangdan (潘光旦). In modern Chinese literary history, Hu is known briefly as one of the "Third Category Men" because of his non-partisan political stand and his defense of independence and integrity of literary production, free from party dominations, in a debate with some major theorists of the League of Left-Wing Writers in the early 1930s.<sup>87</sup> Less known is his work of compiling and translating the essays by the British advocate of homosexual love Edward Carpenter, and Hu's debate with an obscure writer by the name of Yang Youtian (楊憂天), the content of which was published in a book in 1930.<sup>88</sup> Pan had a close connection with the *Crescent Moon* group,<sup>89</sup> but is best known as the foremost eugenicist of modern China. Tze-lan Sang has studied Hu Qiuyuan and Pan Guangdan's work in the context of female same-sex desire in modern China. In Chapter Three, I situate these sexological writings in relation to male same-sex relations, comparing them with literary and tabloid representations of sex and love between men.

Initially, I envisioned a study on male same-sex relations over the course of the whole twentieth century. Because the issue largely disappeared from the public arena in socialist China, few written sources on the second half of the twentieth century could be found. Research on this period would involve a very different methodology from that on the Republican period, perhaps having to rely heavily on interviews instead of written sources. Moreover, because of the vastly changed social and political context of socialist China, it deserves a separate investigation, which is my next project. Thus, I limited the time scope of this study to the first half of the twentieth century, from 1900 to 1950. I intentionally avoid framing this study in accordance with major political events such as the 1911 Revolution and the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949. While political upheavals contribute to changing understandings of gender and sexuality, the change was much more gradual and did not clearly correspond to the particular years in which political events occurred.

Over the past decade, queer scholars have constantly reworked the concept of queerness to hone it as a useful tool for social and historical analysis. Initially, Michael Warner suggested that queerness constituted a challenge to the social order.<sup>90</sup> Recently, José Muñoz has proposed an understanding of queerness as a



utopia that has “yet to come” that enables adherents to fight against contemporary normative forces.<sup>91</sup> Carla Freccero formulates queerness as *différance* whose traces were irrepressible in language.<sup>92</sup> This book also adopts a queer approach to the historical study of China, in that it uses non-official archival sources and resists the naturalized understanding of heterosexual relations as the only way of human life. Like these other queer views and approaches, each of which is partially shaped by disciplinary locations and subjects of investigation, this study also closely examines gendered and sexual significations embedded within language, pointing out the processes by which heterosexual norms were produced and searching for historical moments when a queer utopia was imagined to challenge the conventional gender and sexual order.

### The Structure of the Book

This book is composed of five chapters. The first chapter examines the language available to discuss male same-sex relations in early twentieth century China and traces its historical genealogy, especially the idea of male favorites (*nanchong*, 男寵), obsession (*pi*, 癖), and freak (*renyao*, 人妖). I argue that indigenous Chinese understandings of men who had sex with men during this period shared with the modern Western definition of homosexuality a comparable internal contradiction in the conceptualization of sexuality and gender as revealed by Eve Sedgwick. As semi-colonial China attempted to pursue modernity and achieve independent nationhood, Chinese intellectuals introduced the Western idea of homosexuality into China. The interaction between indigenous Chinese thought and modern Western knowledge produced new meanings of male same-sex relations in China, one of which was articulated by politically nationalistic but culturally conservative tabloid writers, who accused men who had sex with other men of being unmanly and blamed them, like women of the time, for the weakness of the nation.

The second chapter analyzes translated sexological works and their social impact on the understanding of male same-sex relations in China during the first half of the twentieth century. The discussion begins with a 1930 debate between two Chinese translators Yang Youtian and Hu Qiuyan, which summarized the major ideas drawn from Western sexology that circulated in China from the 1910s to 1930, including works exemplified by Richard von Krafft-Ebing and Edward Carpenter. It proceeds to tabloid writings that employed the translated term *tongxing lian'ai* (同性戀愛, homosexuality) in the 1930s, and a 1946 essay by the eugenicist Pan Guangdan, in which he applied Havelock Ellis's thought to male same-sex relations in Chinese classical documents. Based on these readings, the chapter argues that Chinese translators chose Western sexological writings as their political persuasions dictated. The pathologized

understanding of homosexuality was introduced in order to condemn men who had sex with other men for corrupting moral values; whereas the homophile idea that glorified homosexual love was elaborated to imagin a utopian society. Tabloid writing suggested that the term homosexuality caused some writers to pay attention to intimate relations between male peers, but the meaning of such relationships was far from settled according to the Western sexological definition of homosexuality. Pan's work suggested that the effort of Chinese intellectuals to modernize indigenous sexual knowledge was persistently carried out throughout the first half of the twentieth century.

The third chapter examines the depiction of intimate relations between men in literary works by Yu Dafu, Guo Moruo, Huang Shenzhi, Ye Dingluo, and Ye Lingfeng from the early 1920s to the early 1930s. It argues that these writings signaled a historical moment in China when male same-sex love was positively portrayed as a beautiful human experience. Similar to Hu Qiuyan's position in his translation of Edward Carpenter's work, these writers deemed male same-sex love as a foundation of a utopian human society. They differentiated this kind of same-sex love from the old hierarchical model of male same-sex relations and relegated the latter to China's past, considering the former as meaningful as freedom of heterosexual love in the protest against conventional social morality.

The fourth chapter focuses on conservative views of sex between men mainly by examining writings of two major urban tabloid newspapers, *Crystal* in Shanghai and *Heavenly Wind* in Tianjin. Tabloid writers represent a group of people whose point of view has rarely been given attention in the work of historians of modern China. They were culturally conservative, in favor of maintaining the old Confucian gender order, but politically nationalistic, concerned about the survival of China. This chapter argues that, during the first half of the twentieth century, sex between men was severely stigmatized in a new way by these tabloid writers. While recognizing that some translators of Western sexology contributed to this stigmatization, I argue that they were not the sole culprits in bringing about this effect. The national crisis also produced social anxieties among cultural conservatives such as these tabloid writers, who played a more significant role than some sexology translators in the process of stigmatization.

In Peking Opera, male actors who played female roles served as a major popular image for the interpretation of male same-sex relations during the first half of the twentieth century in China. Based on analysis of writings on Peking Opera in various genres including historical writings and commentaries, tabloid news reports, government edicts, and literary works, the final chapter argues that the first half of the twentieth century saw a changing meaning of



the actor-patron relationship in the Peking opera field. In the past, it had been considered evidence of refined taste for literati to patronize female-role actors and form intimate relationships with them. With the deepening national crisis, establishing a masculine image of Chinese men in the international arena became a public concern. The actor-patron same-sex relationship was reconfigured by conservative literati and progressive intellectuals alike as a source of shame for the nation and was gradually erased from both tabloid and literary writings.

Together, these five chapters recover a part of modern Chinese history that many think never existed. By resisting an understanding of gender and sexuality as naturally given, and by investigating the processes by which their meanings were produced, this book demonstrates the important work that masculinities and male same-sex relationships did in the historical formation of nationhood, modernity and semi-colonialism in China.

# 1

## The Language of Male Same-Sex Relations in China

A huge vocabulary describing male same-sex relations, and men engaged in such relations, suggests that the issue was not a silent one in China during the first half of the twentieth century. These terms included: *duanxiupi* (斷袖癖, the obsession with the cut sleeve), *fentaozhihao* (分桃之好, the love of sharing a peach), *Longyangjun* (龍陽君, the name of a male favorite in history), *nanchong* (男寵, male favorite), *nanse* (男色, male beauty), *nanfeng* (南風, southern mode, or 男風, male mode), *xianggong* (相公, young gentlemen or Peking opera actors who play female roles working as male prostitutes), *tuzi* (兔子, rabbit), *pijing* (屁精, ass expert, or fairy), *renyao* (人妖, freak, fairy, or human prodigy), *jijian* (雞姦, buggery or sodomy), *zouhanlu* (to take the land route, 走旱路), *houtinghua* (後庭花, flowers of the rear garden), *jiangnan zuonü* (將男作女, to use a man as a woman), and *tongxing lian'ai* (同性戀愛, same-sex love or homosexuality). All of these terms appeared in tabloid newspapers, social commentaries, sexological writings, or literary works. Some of them were derived from historical stories or Western sexological terminology, and others were local slang and figurative language.

This chapter will first trace the historical origins of the expressions for male same-sex relations prevalent in China during the first half of the twentieth century and then explore the relationship between the meanings of the Chinese terms and the Western sexological concept of homosexuality. By doing so, it seeks to go beyond the question of whether male same-sex relations were socially accepted or not, since rarely does a society have a uniform understanding of sexual behaviors. Instead, I argue that Chinese thoughts on male same-sex relations circulating in the early twentieth century provided fertile ground for the dissemination of the Western sexological idea of homosexuality because the two shared comparable conceptual contradictions.

While recognizing that negative meanings could potentially be derived from indigenous understandings of male same-sex relations, I am more interested



## 2

### Sexology

As argued in the previous chapter, Western sexological understandings of male same-sex relations could gain a footing in China during the first half of the twentieth century because they shared comparable conceptual contradictions with indigenous Chinese thoughts on the issue. This chapter discusses the content of different kinds of Western sexological writings on homosexuality; and how the introduction of this new knowledge into China shifted attention toward sexual relations between men of equal social status. It also explores how the motivations of Chinese intellectuals who introduced the concept of “homosexuality” in China were connected to the social and political context of colonial modernity.<sup>188</sup>

The Western term “homosexuality” was translated as *tongxing ai* (同性愛) or *tongxing lian'ai* (同性戀愛) in Chinese, and could simultaneously mean “same-sex love” and “same-sex sex(uality)” at the same time. This term appeared in sexual education manuals and major journals on women, education, sex, and love, as well as in urban tabloid newspapers from the 1910s to the 1940s. Some of these publications employed sexological concepts such as “perversion” and “disease” as shown in Tze-lan Sang’s study;<sup>189</sup> others simply used *tongxing'ai* or *tongxing lian'ai* as an alternative catch-all term for the wide range of indigenous Chinese expressions for same-sex relations discussed in the previous chapter. From the 1920s to the earlier 1930s, male same-sex relations became a subject of serious debate in educational journals and books among Chinese intellectuals interested in Western sexological ideas. For commercial writers, the issue became an entertaining topic to discuss in urban tabloid newspapers.

In this chapter, I first discuss a 1930 print debate between two Chinese intellectuals, Yang Youtian (楊憂天) and Hu Qiuyuan (胡秋原, 1910–2004). This debate encapsulates the major forms of Western knowledge on same-sex relations that circulated in the two decades prior to its publication in China. Both of them subscribed to social Darwinist thinking about human evolution and considered homosexuality an important step in the evolutionary process.



However, Yang deemed homosexuality a sign of atavism while Hu believed that same-sex love would prevail in future forms of human society. The central difference between these two writers lies in their interpretation of the Western concept of homosexuality. Yang emphasized the dimension of physical sex, whereas Hu highlighted the aspect of emotional love. Their debate suggests that this interpretive difference was caused as much by the confused usage of the term "love" in Western sexological writing as by its Chinese translation *ai* and *lian'ai*, in which the meaning of love was often conflated with that of sex.<sup>190</sup>

The second part of this chapter analyzes a 1932 tabloid discussion of questions raised by the new concept of homosexuality. This discussion suggests that while old ideas continued to shape understandings of the new vocabulary, a change in the conceptualization of male same-sex relations did occur in China during this period. While old understandings tended to formulate male same-sex relations mainly as class and gendered hierarchical relationships modeled on those between emperors and male favorites or patrons and actors, the new idea of homosexuality brought attention to sex between male peers, such as schoolboys, soldiers, and friends of similar age and equal social status. This discussion also reveals the difference between tabloid writers, who composed recreational articles with an entertaining tone on the issue of male same-sex relations, and the May Fourth intellectuals, who wrote serious essays to introduce Western sexology.

The last section of this chapter turns to a 1946 sexological treatise, which reinterpreted Chinese classical records on same-sex relations, by Pan Guangdan (潘光旦), a prominent advocate of Western theories of eugenics and sexology in modern China. Pan's work exemplifies how modern sexological knowledge could be applied to the ancient Chinese history of male same-sex relations, and represents the continuing efforts of Chinese intellectuals to introduce Western scientific ideas in order to modernize indigenous Chinese thought during the first half of the twentieth century.

Through a discussion of these writings, this chapter argues that Chinese intellectuals, influenced by social Darwinist evolutionary thinking, were concerned with the possibility of Chinese people becoming extinct. They introduced Western sexological understandings of male same-sex relations in order to reform society and strengthen the nation. Whereas in the West, sexological knowledge pathologized homosexuality as socially deviant, thus reducing it to an individual psychological problem, in China sexology as a form of modern knowledge was used more to diagnose social and national problems. No medical institution was founded to treat homosexuals during this period, and sexological knowledge remained in the domain of public opinion and scholarly investigation. As Chinese writers and thinkers introduced Western sexology to

China, male same-sex relations were stigmatized more as a disruptive social deviance than a personal medical condition.

### The Debate on *Tongxing'ai* (Homosexuality or Same-Sex Love)

In 1930, Shanghai *Beixin shuju* (北新書局, Beixin bookstore) published a book entitled *Tongxing'ai wenti taolun ji* (同性愛問題討論集, A collection of discussions on the issue of homosexuality), which consisted of two sections: *Tongxing'ai de wenti* (同性愛的問題, The issue of homosexuality) by Yang Youtian (楊憂天) and *Tongxing'ai de yanjiu* (同性愛的研究, Research on same-sex love) by Hu Qiuyuan (胡秋原).<sup>191</sup> According to Hu, Yang's "The Issue of Homosexuality" first appeared in the journal *Xin nüxing* (新女性, *New Women*),<sup>192</sup> published by Beixin bookstore possibly in early 1929. Hu's "Research on Same-Sex Love" was written in February 1929 as a response to Yang's piece and first was published in the April and May issues of the same journal in Shanghai. *Beixin Bookstore* later published the two pieces together in one book.<sup>193</sup>

Almost nothing is known about Yang Youtian, all we know is that his piece was written in Japan.<sup>194</sup> Yang Youtian may well have been a pseudonym, a homophone meaning "someone surnamed Yang who is concerned about the heavens," as suggested in the Chinese term *qiren youtian* (杞人憂天, a Qi [kingdom] man concerned about the heavens, i.e. groundless anxiety). Although Yang may have mocked his own anxiety as groundless, his writing was dominated by the concern that same-sex relations had spread like a disease in contemporary China. Hu Qiuyuan was a young Marxist-socialist intellectual, studying in Japan, when the book containing their debate was published.<sup>195</sup> By contrast, his understanding of same-sex relationships was strongly influenced by Edward Carpenter, known for his view that same-sex love could be extended to universal love, and serve as the foundation of a future society. While Yang's piece condemned homosexuality as a social disease, Hu's piece celebrated same-sex love as a social ideal.

Yang claimed that he was neither a Ph.D. in sexology (*xingxue*, 性學) nor an expert on education, let alone a psychologist or a physician. In his writing, he aimed to openly bring up the topic of homosexuality and call on solutions from experts.<sup>196</sup> His understanding of homosexuality came from various European sexologists and criminologists such as Albert Moll, Richard von Krafft-Ebing, Otto Weininger, Cesare Lombroso, and Karl Heinrich Ulrichs, as well as a Japanese counterpart Sawada Junjirô.<sup>197</sup> Social Darwinist evolutionary thought fills his writing in a conspicuous way.

At the very beginning of his article, Yang explained that homosexuality (*tongxing'ai*) was a sexual perversion (*biantai de lian'ai*, 變態的戀愛) according to psychologists, and a sexual inversion (*diandaoxing de lian'ai*, 顛倒性的戀



愛) according to neuropathists.<sup>198</sup> He claimed that everyone had homosexual tendencies, especially children.<sup>199</sup> He translated Krafft-Ebing's terminology "psychical hermaphroditism" into *jingshen de ban yinyang* (精神的半陰陽, half yin and half yang psyche) and stressed that this condition also existed among adults in various intensities.<sup>200</sup> Yang further explained homosexuality by introducing Krafft-Ebing's concept of "antipathic sexuality," translating it as *yixinghua de xingfen* (異性化的性分), which, according to Yang's logic, was sexual attraction to a member of the same sex, who resembles one of the opposite sex. He viewed this antipathic sexuality as latent in the bodies of both men and women. When it developed, the person's natural sexual instinct (attraction to the opposite sex) ceased to function totally or partially, and he (or she) began to love people of the same sex. The development of latent antipathic sexuality could also be divided into two categories: congenital and acquired. Congenital homosexuality was the outbreak of psychical hermaphroditism. Acquired homosexuality was caused by the oppression of members of the opposite sex. It was a kind of sexual reaction (*xing de fandong*, 性的反動). Likewise, homosexuality could also be divided into temporary and permanent categories.<sup>201</sup> Clearly, the typology offered here is confusing and internally contradictory. If psychical hermaphroditism, which Yang posited as the cause of antipathic sexuality, exists in every human being, the category of acquired homosexuality could not be established. However, it seems that Yang really meant to assert that a homosexual tendency was latent in everyone. Homosexuality could not only occur automatically in congenital homosexuals, but could also be acquired by others through external forces. Everybody was in danger.

Although Yang understood homosexuality as sexual perversion or inversion, he disagreed with Krafft-Ebing's diagnosis of homosexuality as neurosis, a diseased condition of the central nervous system, on the grounds that it lacked sufficient anatomical and physiological evidence. He strongly believed that homosexual tendencies were congenital and inherited in the human body.<sup>202</sup> Yang's contradictory understanding of homosexuality and his disagreement with Krafft-Ebing crystallized his position on the issue of same-sex relations in China at that time. He insisted that homosexuality was a social rather than a medical issue. His social Darwinist evolutionary thinking led him believe that the phenomenon of homosexuality belonged to a primitive stage of human development. He supported his belief by introducing Otto Weininger's finding that homosexuality existed among animals and further argued that human homosexuality was atavistic.<sup>203</sup> Yang concluded that, for most people, homosexual tendencies were latent and their outbreak was triggered by social factors.

After further descriptions of and sexological explanations for different types of homosexuality, Yang listed seven kinds of environmental triggers of homosexuality that had been formulated by Sawada Junjirō, without acknowledging the Japanese sexologist.<sup>204</sup> These environments included ones governed by imperial and religious prohibitions on sexual intercourse with members of the opposite sex, as well as single-sex settings such as schools and the army. Homosexuality could also be caused by curiosity, or by the assumption that sexual intercourse with members of the opposite sex was unclean, or by repulsion towards the opposite sex as a result of forced sexual intercourse, as experienced by, for example, prostitutes. Homosexuality could also be a local custom.

Yang identified the behavior of male homosexuality as ranging from embracing, handshakes, kisses, solitary and mutual masturbation to sexual intercourse. He claimed that "this kind of sexual relationship between men (*zhezong nanxingjian de lian'ai*, 這種男性間的戀愛) was spreading to every part of Chinese society and cutting across different social classes," including students, prisoners, laborers, office clerks, salesmen, sailors, and soldiers.<sup>205</sup> The seriousness of the issue needed to be recognized, Yang argued, whether from the standpoint of educators or that of social policy makers.<sup>206</sup>

For sexual relationships between women (*nuxing jian de lian'ai*, 女性間的戀愛), Yang listed six additional causes. Women had fewer opportunities to acquire sexual knowledge; the time period that was appropriate for them to marry was very short; it was easier for them to fall in love; relationships among women tended to be more intimate; and they were affected by the fear of pregnancy. Moreover, Yang elaborated:

Female homosexuality, like male homosexuality, has also spread to different social classes, among female students, female workers, nurses, rich wives of the upper class, wives and concubines, unmarried women of respectable families (*xiaojie*, 小姐), female prisoners, female inn-keepers, female shop-keepers, female clerks, actresses, prostitutes, and nuns. The phenomenon of homosexuality never fails to exist.<sup>207</sup>

Without giving any explanation, Yang claimed that homosexuality tends to increase as a society develops; therefore, it became urgent to prevent it from spreading.<sup>208</sup> Since no effective method existed to cure congenital homosexuality, preventive measures should be aimed at the social causes, which Yang listed as the state of being single (*dushen*, 獨身), the loss of love (*shilian*, 失戀), single-sex schools, seduction by elders, and imitation of homosexual behavior.<sup>209</sup> However, Yang admitted that society could not guarantee that every man would find a wife and that every woman would find a husband. The only suggestion he could



make was co-education, so that men and women would have more chances to meet each other.

By insisting on the importance of discussing homosexuality, pointing out its existence in contemporary China, providing a sexological explanation for it, and more importantly, advocating for co-education, Yang positioned himself against cultural conservatives who wanted to maintain gender segregation and keep the topic of sex a social taboo. Meanwhile, by claiming that heterosexuality was the only correct sexual behavior, Yang aligned himself with iconoclastic intellectuals who advocated free choice through (heterosexual) romantic love (*ziyou lian'ai*, 自由戀愛). Social Darwinist evolutionary thinking remained central to his thought. Throughout the essay, Yang made very explicit connections between human development and the issue of homosexuality.<sup>210</sup> He was determined at the moment he wrote to make people aware of the existence of homosexuality in China so that they could be vigilant against it because, for him, homosexuality was atavistic and thus threatening to Chinese evolution.

If Yang did not clearly spell out national concerns when he wrote about the issue of homosexuality, Hu had a clear vision not only of the future of China but also of that of the world. Inspired by the British socialist writer Edward Carpenter, Hu envisioned a new society based on universal love, which he considered an extension of same-sex love.<sup>211</sup>

"Research on Same-Sex Love" was not a literal translation of Carpenter's work. Hu sometimes reorganized the British writer's works and added his own comments in the Chinese context. Employing Carpenter's ideas, Hu disputed Yang's point of view and pointed out that Yang's understanding of same-sex relations was oversimplified. Hu's interest in the topic of same-sex love seems related to both his socialist convictions and his personal experience. Hu became interested in revolutionary ideas when he went to college in Wuchang in 1925. Under the influence of his close friend Yan Dazhu (嚴達洙), Hu joined the Chinese Communist Youth League. On a December night in 1927, being suspected to be a communist, Yan was executed by the military government in Wuchang. Hu had a narrow escape because, after a gathering with Yan and two other friends earlier that evening, Hu did not return with Yan to the Wuchang University campus, where Yan was killed. Afterwards, Hu was also searched for by the Wuchang police for possibly being a communist and had to escape to Shanghai to continue his study.<sup>212</sup> It is therefore plausible to say that Hu's work not only was inspired by Carpenter's vision of a utopian society based on universal love but also was a dedication to his beloved friend who suffered a young death. It is worth noting that in the 1920s, Carpenter's works served as a major source to justify and celebrate same-sex relations in China.

At the very beginning of Hu's part of the book, he made a clear distinction between "same-sex love" and male same-sex relations in Chinese history. He argued that Chinese people should not devalue same-sex friendship and love only because the Chinese terms such as *longyang*, *nanse* and *nanfeng* reminded them of unequal sexual relationships between men in the past. This kind of thinking, Hu suggests, was similar to that criticized by Lu Xun, when he spoke mockingly of men who, at the mere mention of *lian'ai* (love), immediately fantasized about women's bodies. To refute Yang, Hu wanted to separate friendship and love from sexual desire, and therefore to highlight the value of friendship and love.

Using Carpenter's ideas, Hu pointed out that Yang's problem was to confuse love with sexual desire. To construct a persuasive argument, Hu first discussed love (*lian'ai*) in general instead of talking about same-sex love (*tongxing'ai*) in particular. He argued that a modern concept of love values the unity of soul and body (*lingrou yizhi*, 靈肉一致), and the connection between love and friendship. The new concept of love also promoted the purification of love and the sublimation of sexual desire.

Hu introduced the idea that men and women are "a continuous group"<sup>213</sup> to explain the concept of intermediate sex (*zhongxing*, 中性), and directly used the foreign neologism "urning" to refer to homosexuals, people with a congenital combination of the psychological characteristics of both sexes.<sup>214</sup> Following Carpenter, Hu insisted that urnings were not pathological. To refute Yang's description of the physical and psychological features of homosexuals, Hu suggested that, in terms of body structure, most urnings barely differed from other men and women, and stressed the naturalness of urnings' tendency to love members of their own sex.

To defend same-sex love, Hu also made a clear distinction between natural and "unnatural" homosexuals:

But here I must draw the special attention of the readers to a serious statement. These congenital urnings (*lian'ai tongxing zhe*, 戀愛同性者) are absolutely different from those who, out of a kind of curious carnal desire, indulge in sex or adopt same-sex intercourse due to a lack of opportunities for ordinary sexual satisfaction (such as what happens in schools and the military). This often-confused distinction is fundamental to (the understanding of) the significance of same-sex love.<sup>215</sup>

For Hu, the distinction between the "natural" and the "unnatural" was one between love and sex. Only after making the distinction could one understand the value of same-sex love. At this point, although Hu accused Yang of confusing love and sex, Hu equally condemned presumably "unnatural" same-sex sexual activities.



To further refute Yang's argument, Hu redressed some common misunderstandings of same-sex love, arguing that it was neither limited to a small minority of the population, nor a disease. Moreover, same-sex love did not necessarily involve sex and the individuals did not lack volition and aptitude, but were in fact talented and sensitive. The phenomenon of same-sex love was not simply circumstantial, happening only when people were young or when individuals of the opposite sex were not available. And these men were not misogynists. Hu claimed that these corrections were all based on modern scientific research. The evidence he presented all came from Western sources.<sup>216</sup>

After detaching love from sex and redressing common misunderstandings of same-sex relationships, Hu spent a substantial part of the essay presenting stories of same-sex love, homoerotic artistic works (in art, philosophy, literature, and music), and lifestories of such inclined artists in Western civilization from antiquity to the present. The examples of same-sex relationships ranged from the Biblical story of love between David and Jonathan to the revolutionary friendship between Marx and Engels; from the noble friendship between Emerson and Thoreau to the passionate love between Verlaine and Rimbaud. Literary examples ranged from the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* and Sappho's lyrics, to Shakespeare's sonnets and Baron's poetry. Hu argued that loving friendship not only played a central role in the lives and works of great artists, but that the sincerity, passion, purity, endurance, and sorrow reflected in their lives and works demonstrated the depth and nobility of same-sex love.

Following Carpenter's idea in "Affection in Education," Hu advocated that love should play an important role in education. In schools, educators should recognize the positive value of same-sex love and correctly channel it for knowledge transmission, instead of keeping it silent or exaggerating the dark side of such relationships. In the Chinese context, Hu agreed with Yang's desire to expose a social secret, namely, the pervasiveness of same-sex relations in schools and other locales. But in contrast to Yang, who simply denounced homosexuality and proposed co-education, Hu believed that same-sex love was not equal to homosexual sex and contended that it could be beneficial to society. Hu advocated that the spirit of same-sex love should spread throughout society and that the future world should be based on this love. As society developed, sex and procreation would yield to love. And then, based on love, a communist society would replace the inhuman capitalist society and the barriers between people based on race, language, class, and gender would crumble.

The debate between Yang and Hu summarizes the way in which sexological ideas were used to understand male same-sex relations in China from late 1910s to the early 1930s, and suggests that the translated Chinese term *tongxing'ai* remained contested. As in the West, sexology was not always used

to the disadvantage of people who engaged in same-sex relations.<sup>217</sup> Chinese intellectuals used the knowledge differently, according to the dictates of their political and ideological persuasions. Concerned about Chinese evolution, Yang used sexological knowledge to pose same-sex relations as a social problem. Equally concerned about the nation, Hu introduced Carpenter's idea, celebrating same-sex love and envisioning a bright future based on it.

What the two writers shared, however, was that they both denounced "acquired" or "unnatural" homosexual activities. Their attitude marked a changed understanding of male same-sex relations in China. In the past, same-sex relations had been conceptualized mainly in hierarchical terms. With the introduction of "homosexuality," Chinese intellectuals recognized that same-sex relations could happen between social peers in new environments such as schools, armies, prisons, and working places. Although old understandings were still alive, this new awareness was a change brought about by the dissemination of Western sexological ideas of homosexuality and intensified by concerns about national survival of the time.

### Detecting Homosexuality

The new understanding of male same-sex relations made intimacy between men appear less innocent than it was in the past, and enabled some writers to question or name certain scenarios as "homosexuality" (*tongxing lian'ai*) which otherwise would not be comprehended as such according to old Chinese models. This kind of questioning and naming reveals the contested meaning of "homosexuality" in the 1930s.

For example, a 1932 *Heavenly Wind* article, written by Qiu (秋), talked fondly about his close relationship with another man Tian (田), and their recent meeting and parting during the writer's recent trip to the Kailuan (開灤) Coal Mine Peking opera club. Both Qiu and Tian were amateur actors.<sup>218</sup> Three days later, another writer named Yugao (羽高) published a commentary in the same newspaper, naming the relationship Qiu described as "homosexual feeling" (*tongxing lian'ai zhi qing*, 同性戀愛之情). The article was sarcastically entitled "All Readers, Please Study: Who Knows the Sex (*cixiong*, 雌雄) of the Birds?<sup>219</sup> Could Mr. Qiu and Mr. Tian Openly Write about It?"

In this commentary, Yugao called readers' attention to Qiu's language by selectively quoting from his article:

Tian, a *dan* actor of the opera club [of the Kailuan Workers Association], is young and beautiful, remarkably bright, and extremely lovely. He and I are bosom friends. Every time I was in Qinhuangdao (秦皇島), Tian would invariably come and have an intimate talk with me. Usually, he would stay overnight and we would hold each other, sleeping in the



same bed. I was really moved that he came alone especially to see me regardless of cold weather and the long distance. Upon seeing him, I felt enlivened instantly. I expected that we could once again share the same pillow and blanket, talking all night. But something came up and he had to leave. I blamed him for not keeping his promise. My words were a little harsh, and tears covered his cheeks. The love was so deep that it caused such a phenomenon. It was really a wonder.

After the quotation, Yugao commented:

I, therefore, wondered and analyzed this passage with care, discerning a pervasive scent of sex (*xiangyan*, 香艷) between the lines. One phrase says, "to hold each other sleeping in the same bed," and another goes, "to share the same pillow and blanket." Eventually, it is stated that "the love was so deep." Thus, the homosexual feeling is wriggling and becoming increasingly irrepressible.

After labeling the feeling of two men homosexual, Yugao returned to his title question.

It is so fortunate that Mr. Qiu and Mr. Tian are in love. We are so jealous, but yet wonder which one changes from female to male (*hua ci wei xiong*, 化雌為雄)<sup>220</sup> when the two hold each other, sleeping on the same pillow and enjoying their love. Mr. Qiu is older, perhaps, and therefore unwilling to lie down as a female. [We] hope that the two of you will openly write about it so that [we] can study together.<sup>221</sup>

This sarcastic commentary clearly demonstrates a tension in the writer's understanding of male same-sex relations. On the one hand, the new concept of homosexuality enabled him to name intimacy between two men of equal social status as "homosexual feeling." On the other hand, the very question of who played the female betrayed his old understanding of male same-sex relations as a gendered hierarchical relationship in which one man had to act as a woman.

Yugao's commentary generated two more articles by different writers in the same tabloid newspaper a few days later. "Bian cifu zhi shuo" (Reputing the understanding of the prone female, 辨雌伏之說) by Bingxin Liulang (冰心六郎)<sup>222</sup> was a serious defense of Tian, and "Jie da huanxi" (Everyone is satisfied, 皆大歡喜) by Quede (lack of virtue, 缺德) was a wild graphic fantasy of sex between Qiu and Tian.

Bingxin refuted Yugao's speculation and denied any sexual relations between Qiu and Tian. According to Bingxin, both men were his friends. Tian was a nice-looking young man, who studied Peking opera *dan* roles in his spare time. He was a person of such strict self-discipline and strong determination that even men harboring sexual intentions hardly dared approach him. Qiu had

met Tian the previous summer, and "fell for him instantly" (*yijian qingxin*, 一見傾心). At Qiu's request, the writer introduced him to Tian, who respected Qiu as a veteran amateur actor, and the two men became close friends. "Only Mr. Qiu enjoyed making sophisticated jokes (*xinghao yaxue*, 性好雅謔) that Mr. Tian could not appreciate. Sometimes, because of this, Tian was unhappy for days."<sup>223</sup> As for the insinuation that Tian might act sexually as a woman, the writer said that he could by no means believe it.

Quede, meanwhile, humorously admitted that he could not suppress his urge to answer Yugao's call to study the "homosexuality" (*tongxing lian'ai*, 同性戀愛) expressed between Mr. Qiu and Mr. Tian. Instead of seriously defending Tian as Bingxin did, Quede insisted that sex between the two men could happen, but he corrected Yugao's assumption that one of the two men had to act as a female and opined that it was not necessary to make the distinction between male and female in sex between men.

The two innocent young men enjoy each other's company. It would not be a surprise if they shared the same bed on a rainy night, as men did in ancient times. But quite a bit of sexual feeling (*chunse*, 春色) is hidden when [Qiu] says that [he and Tian] shared the same pillow and blanket and held each other sleeping. When the two bodies came into contact, lips would naturally be joined, and two guns would rise simultaneously, ready for action. Holding a hermit, one has no way to get enraptured. Holding a beautiful man, one does not lack means to pacify one's urge. At this moment, each would spontaneously fit the other's need. It can be known that both men could be male and female (*kexing keci*, *yiyong yici*, 可雄可雌, 亦雄亦雌). Qiu is older, and unwilling to lie down as a female. However, even if Tian is young, how could he forget to fly as a male? As long as they are together, they should benefit from each other, alternating their roles of top and bottom, and host and guest. Each is considerate of the other and everyone is satisfied. Deep love leads to this usual situation. Mr. Yugao values Qiu over Tian. Not only do onlookers feel that it is unfair, but the two men themselves might also disapprove.<sup>224</sup>

To conclude the article, Quede challenged Yugao to organize his own group of men to compete with Qiu and Tian, since Yugao was so jealous of them.

At first glance, Quede seems to make fun of sex between men. But a further reading suggests that he asserts that sex was a way to express feelings, and consequently could easily happen between men. Sexually explicit, the article reveals a very important new understanding of male same-sex relations, contrary to Yugao's assumption, that men who love men do not have to be distinguished by gender roles. In other words, male same-sex relations do not have to be conceptualized within a framework of gender hierarchy. Interestingly, by articulating what Yugao only implied, Quede pointed out Yugao's own



desire for sex with men and made him equally susceptible to the behavior he had ascribed to Qiu and Tian.

This was not the end of the discussion. In the same newspaper three days later, an article raised the question: "Shei zui quede?" (Who has the least virtue? 誰最缺德). It was written by someone whose pseudonym was Wo Wo Wo (me-me-me, 我我我), but the content seems to reveal that it was Qiu himself, the writer of the first article.<sup>225</sup> In the article, the writer defended homosexuality (*tongxing lian'ai*), saying that it had existed between men and between women throughout history, all over the world. There was no need to make a fuss about it. Intimacy between two men was arranged by destiny (*yuanding sansheng*, 緣定三生), and it was nobody else's business. Wisely, instead of denouncing the man who claimed himself lacking in virtue for writing graphically about sex, the writer singled out Yugao, who provoked the havoc, as the one who had the least virtue.

This debate suggests the new understanding that male same-sex relations could occur between social peers had made everyone susceptible to the accusation of homosexuality. At the same time, this understanding of egalitarian relationships competed with the old model of male same-sex relations conceptualized in terms of class and gender hierarchy. As the meaning of homosexuality continued to be debated through the introduction of sexological writings into China, popular interpretations of the idea in tabloid newspapers remained equally unsettled. The translated expression "homosexuality" (*tongxing lian'ai*) did not always carry the connotation of such sexological terms as perversion or inversion.

Changing understandings of male same-sex relations did not stop writers from describing their experiences of sexual intimacy with other men. In a 1938 article also published in *Heavenly Wind*, a writer unequivocally described his sexual attraction to a beautiful man and the physical proximity between them.<sup>226</sup> No subsequent articles criticized him, as had been the case six years earlier.

While some Chinese writers applied the sexological concept of homosexuality to contemporary Chinese society, others aimed to relate the new knowledge to the Chinese past. Among those writers who used sexological knowledge to reinterpret male same-sex relations as written about in Chinese historical records, Pan Guangdan performed the most serious work.

### Sexological Reinterpretations of Same-Sex Relations Documented in Chinese Historical Records

Pan Guangdan (潘光旦, 1899–1967) was a prominent advocate of Western scientific theories of eugenics and sexology. He is well known for his annotated translation of Ellis' *Psychology of Sex*, published in 1946, to which he appended his own essay entitled "Examples of Homosexuality in Chinese Documents"

(*Zhongguo wenxian zhong tongxinglian juli*, 中國文獻中同性戀舉例).<sup>227</sup> In this essay, Pan applied the sexological concept of homosexuality to the ancient Chinese context and used Western sexological knowledge to re-narrate the history of same-sex relations in China. Pan's effort to render Chinese historical records of same-sex relations into sexological language indicates his belief in the scientific value of eugenics and sexology and the need to replace indigenous knowledge with Western modern science and make scientific knowledge about sex available to young people in China.

Pan explained that he was dissatisfied with the situation in China, where young people were taught almost nothing about sex and where the scant information about sex that was circulated lacked scientific content. This dissatisfaction became the motivation for his translation of Ellis's work.<sup>228</sup> In his teens, Pan explained, he had furtively read many sex-related books. Those books and illustrations, he commented, "may have philosophical, moral and artistic significance. But in terms of scientific value, they could be said to be equivalent to zero."<sup>229</sup> Pan first encountered scientific works on sex through books that his father brought back from Japan. In retrospect, Pan expressed gratitude for his father's open-minded support of his reading of those books and attributed his later healthy growth, in sexual and intellectual terms, to his father's encouragement.

In 1920, Pan first read Ellis' *Studies in the Psychology of Sex* at the age of twenty while he studied at the Qinghua School (*Qinghua xuexiao*, 清華學校). In 1922, Pan traveled to the United States to study biology at Dartmouth College and later at Columbia University. According to Fei Xiaotong (費孝通, 1910–2005), a renowned anthropologist, Pan's studies in the United States underscored his persistent desire to strengthen China through eugenics.<sup>230</sup> Respecting Ellis as an authoritative sexual psychologist and a great humanist, Pan felt an intellectual connection with Ellis and made a promise to himself that he would translate Ellis' work into Chinese. Pan began translating *Psychology of Sex* in 1939, and eventually finished in 1941, thereby "fulfilling his own promise of twenty years."<sup>231</sup>

One of the major contributions Pan made to the introduction of sexology in China was to standardize the Chinese translation of "homosexuality" as *tongxinglian* (同性戀). When the Western term first entered China in the late 1910s and early 1920s, it had been translated into Chinese as *tongxing'ai* (同性愛), adopting the same characters in Chinese as those in the Japanese translation *doseiai*, and sometimes alternating with the expression *tongxing lian'ai* (同性戀愛). However, just as the English term "love" could mean both emotional love and physical sex in sexological writings at the turn of the twentieth century,<sup>232</sup> a situation that Carpenter attempted to change by making an explicit distinction



in his writing,<sup>233</sup> the meaning of the Chinese term *ai* (愛, love) or *lian'ai* (戀愛, love) was equally confusing and contested during this period.<sup>234</sup> In the writings of iconoclastic intellectuals who advocated *ziyou lian'ai* (自由戀愛, free choice of romantic love) against the practice of arranged marriage, the emotional dimension of *ai* or *lian'ai* was much more valued than the sexual aspect. For cultural conservatives who wanted to maintain Confucian gender norms, however, *ai* or *lian'ai* simply meant irresponsible physical sex between young men and young women, and *ziyou lian'ai* was no different from the old Chinese idea of *shiluan zhongqi* (始亂終棄, beginning with illicit sex and ending with desertion). Therefore, when *ai* or *lian'ai* were used to refer to same-sex relations in the phrases *tongxing'ai* or *tongxing lian'ai*, emotional love and physical sex were similarly conflated, as demonstrated above in the debate between Yang and Hu.

In his 1927 essay *Feng Xiaoqing* (馮小青, a seventeenth-century Chinese woman, whose life story Pan studied as a case of narcissism),<sup>235</sup> Pan translated the English term "homosexuality" as "*tongxinglian*" (同性戀) instead of the more commonly used "*tongxing'ai*" (同性愛) or "*tongxing lian'ai*" (同性戀愛). But the translation "*tongxinglian*" did not gain much circulation in the 1920s and the 1930s.<sup>236</sup> In his translation of Ellis's *Psychology of Sex* and his appended essay, Pan again used the term *tongxinglian*.

Pan himself did not directly explain why he used "*lian*" instead of "*ai*" to translate "homosexuality." But, in a discussion of the proper Chinese translation of the English term "romantic love," he made a distinction between the connotation of "*lian*" and that of "*ai*." As he said, "compared with the word *ai*, *lian* has a stronger meaning of sexual love." Furthermore, he contended, the word "*luan*" (變) could be used interchangeably with "*lian*" (戀) in classical Chinese.<sup>237</sup> Clearly, the top part of the ideograph for *luan* was the same as *lian*, and the two words were pronounced identically in classical Chinese. The word "*luan*" was usually used in the term *luan tong* (變童, catamite), referring to beautiful boys used for men's sexual pleasure.

By making the connection between *lian* and *luan*, and translating "homosexuality" into *tongxinglian* instead of *tongxing'ai* or *tongxing lian'ai*, Pan related Chinese historical records of male same-sex relations to the Western sexological concept of homosexuality. More importantly, by separating *lian* from *ai*, choosing *lian* over *ai*, and coining the Chinese term *tongxinglian*, Pan cleared up the confusion about the term *ai* and *lian'ai* and reserved these two terms for the Western idea of romantic love that highlighted the emotional quality of the relationship, while using the single word *lian* to connote the sexological concept of sexuality. This translation diluted the meaning of emotional love while intensifying the idea of sexuality. Thus, the Chinese term *tongxinglian* as a

translation of "homosexuality" sounded more clinical and more scientific than the ideologically ambiguous *tongxing'ai* and *tongxing lian'ai*.

Indeed, Pan began his essay "Examples of Homosexuality in Chinese Documents" by tracing the earliest records of what he believed were Chinese equivalents of "homosexuality" (*tongxinglian*). The material he identified was a piece of writing on *luan tong* (變童). Pan emphasized that the *wan tong* (頑童, playing boy) mentioned in *Shangshu* (尚書, Documents Classic) was the same as *luan tong* (變童) described in other classical Chinese records, arguing "if *wan tong* refers to what was later called *nanfeng* (男風, male mode) or *nanfeng* (南風, southern mode), this is without a doubt the earliest record of *tongxinglian*."<sup>238</sup>

In his writing, Pan used the Chinese term *tongxinglian* both for the English term "homosexuality" and "homosexual." He sometimes conceptualized *tongxinglian* as a relationship. He wrote: "It can be seen that the phenomenon of homosexuality (*tongxinglian de xianxiang*, 同性戀的現象) not only existed, but also was widespread in the Shang and Zhou (1100 to 771 B.C.E.) periods."<sup>239</sup> At other times, Pan used the term to refer to the men involved in same-sex relations. Discussing the Eastern Jin (317–420) writer Ruan Ji's (阮籍) poem about two historical male favorites, Anling (安陵) and Longyang (龍陽), Pan commented that "this is certainly an example that specifically celebrated two *tongxinglian* of the Warring States period and used the poem to express his own feelings."<sup>240</sup> Evidently, *tongxinglian* meant "homosexuals" in this context.

One difficulty that Pan encountered was that indigenous Chinese understandings of male same-sex relations tended to make a distinction between the desiring subject and the desired, while the sexological concept of homosexuality did not, giving equal subjective status to both parties. To solve this problem, Pan created a new term for the desired, "*tongxinglian de duixiang*" (同性戀的對象, the object of homosexual desire). For example, Pan mentioned the old saying "*Meinan pochan, Meinü poju*" (美男破產, 美女破居; Beautiful men bankrupt [you], and beautiful women ruin [your] place) and explained "the beautiful men referred to here, since they are mentioned alongside beautiful women, were no doubt the objects of homosexual desire (*tongxinglian de duixiang*)."<sup>241</sup> In classical Chinese expressions, such as *hao nanse* and *hao nüse* (obsessed with female beauty), a male subject was assumed, although the subject did not appear. The saying that Pan discussed above advised men that both beautiful men and beautiful women were dangerous. The analogy suggests that the beautiful men were in fact those who had sex with other men. Thus, Pan renamed them as objects of homosexual desire.

Male favorites obviously belonged to this category of objects of homosexual desire. In turn, Pan cautiously described emperors who had male favorites as "being suspected of having some homosexual inclination" (*fan yixie tongxinglian*



qingxiang de xianyi, 犯一些同性戀傾向的嫌疑),<sup>242</sup> and referred to the relationship as homosexuality (*tongxinglian*). He qualified the degree of homosexuality between emperors and male favorites by dividing the male favorites into the two groups, non-eunuchs and eunuchs. Each group was further divided into two subgroups according to the intensity of the subgroups' homosexual (*tongxinglian*) relations with emperors.<sup>243</sup> As Pan suggested, not every emperor-male favorite relationship was homosexual.

In his discussion of emperor-male favorite relations, Pan made two connections between Chinese classical records on male same-sex relations and Western sexological knowledge of homosexuality. One concerned the relationship between male homosexuality and femininity, and the other the relationship between male homosexuality and castration, which was brought up by the issue of eunuchs in Chinese history.

On the relationship between male homosexuality and femininity, Pan found that some non-eunuch male favorites were called *ru* (孺) in historical records and determined that this particular classical Chinese word was worthy of study. According to Pan, the original meaning of *ru* was "boy" (*ruzi*, 孺子). Later in classical Chinese, the word could also mean "wife" (*qi*, 妻), and it further developed to refer to a special kind of men who could do the work of wives. Thus, Pan concluded, the male favorites named Ji Ru and Hong Ru were apparently such men.<sup>244</sup> Having established this connection between male favorites and women in the Chinese historical record, Pan began to reinterpret this understanding according to sexological theories.

Both "wife" and "boy" could be referred to by the single word "*ru*." This usage could even be supported by modern theories of biology and physiology of sex. Because in terms of the degree of growth and differentiation, compared with her male counterpart, the female is relatively undeveloped, or [we can say] grows earlier but stops even earlier, taking a form of arrested development (*zhongtu zuzhi*, 中途阻滯). Therefore, this phenomenon is very similar to infantilism (the English term is Pan's explanation of the Chinese term, *youzhi zhuangtai*, 幼稚狀態). Women with sharp voices and no hair growing under their jaws look like children. Furthermore, [since feminine men look like women,] it is of course reasonable to use the same word for some feminine men and women who usually act as wives. Generally speaking, men of passive homosexual inclination more often than not very much resemble women. No further explanation is necessary.<sup>245</sup>

Pan further suggested that the meaning of the words *you* (優, musician), *ling* (伶, actor) and later *xizi* (戲子, actor) were the same as that of *ru*, all referring to men who charmed other men with their sexual appeal. Pan qualified his observation by adding that not every non-eunuch male favorite could be called "*ru*." For

example, Dongxian, the protagonist of the legendary emperor-male favorite "cutting sleeve" story, was an exception, because he belonged to the literati class, and did not do women's work.

On the relationship between castration and homosexuality, Pan did not find a semantic example as useful as the word *ru* in Chinese classical records. He acknowledged the disagreement among Western sexologists as well as among Chinese historians on the connection between the two phenomena, but sided with those who believed that castration led to homosexuality, saying that "generally speaking, eunuchs either tended to have homosexual inclinations or became objects of homosexual desire more easily."<sup>246</sup>

In his discussion of the Chinese semantic meaning of *ru* and of the issue of eunuchs, Pan not only related Chinese records on male same-sex relations to Western sexological understandings of homosexuality, but also established a connection between homosexuality and femininity, and between homosexuality and castration in the Chinese context. Clearly, he understood homosexuality as either an underdeveloped psychological state or a symptom related to damage to the sexual organ. In the same essay, Pan called the behavior of homosexuality "mentally unbalanced" (*jingshenshang bujianquan*, 精神上不健全).<sup>247</sup>

Meanwhile, Pan himself was interested in views of homosexuality throughout Chinese history and did not hesitate to express his judgment. He found that during certain periods and in certain places the phenomenon of homosexuality became "a tendency of social perversion" (*yizhong shehui bingtai de qushi*, 一種社會病態的趨勢).<sup>248</sup> He admitted that in the Northern and Southern Dynasties (317–589), "homosexuality was not particularly discriminated against in the society," but attributed the phenomenon to "an extremely low moral standard" (*daode guofen bianbo*, 道德過分貶薄).<sup>249</sup> Using the Qing scholar Yuan Mei's (袁枚) story of Hu Tianbao (胡天寶), a local deity in Fujian who answered the prayers of men who longed for male lovers,<sup>250</sup> Pan generalized about social attitudes toward male same-sex relations in China: People "only laughed at it, made fun of it, but were not angry at it." "This is exactly the consistent attitude towards this kind of perversion (*biantian*, 變態) in Chinese society." "Only with such a tolerant attitude could homosexuality become a mode in certain places and periods." "In the West before the Napoleonic code, the price of homosexuality was death!"<sup>251</sup> Apparently, Pan disapproved of the Chinese attitude.

Another question that interested Pan was the Chinese understanding regarding the causes of homosexuality. He commented that "there were not many people who provided explanations of this issue in [Chinese] history, and what was said was mostly inaccurate. From an age without developed scientific thought, we should not expect too much in this respect anyway."<sup>252</sup>



Nonetheless, Pan found four explanations for the causes of homosexuality in Chinese records. He first mapped out two general categories, theories of acquisition and theories of homosexuality as nature-born or fated. He then further divided each of these categories into two. Thus, the first explanation was one of environmental seduction (*huanjing jieyou shuo*, 環境劫誘說) and the second was the theory of degeneration of the will (*yizhi duoluo shuo*, 意志墮落說, or moral corruption). The third was the belief that a man had to repay the sins that he had committed in his previous life (*yin'e guobao shuo*, 淫惡果報說). The fourth was the belief that marriage was determined according to one's previous life: If a marriage was not consummated in previous life, the husband and wife need to reunite in present life even though they reincarnate as two men (*yinyuan lunhui shuo*, 因緣輪回說).

About the four explanations, Pan asserted, "The first one has always played a role in society. The problem with the second one is that we cannot say that one could always act out of one's own will. As of today, we have to give up the third and fourth theories and replace them with a theory of heredity."<sup>253</sup> But the problem was, as Pan pointed out, that "the four theories only explain passive homosexuals (*beidongde tongxinglianzhe*, 被動的同性戀者) and say nothing about active homosexuals (*zhudongde tongxinglianzhe*, 主動的同性戀者)."<sup>254</sup> In response to these questions, Pan suggested, the modern science of sexual psychology could be expected to provide answers.

Although Pan clearly understood that no satisfactory explanations for the causes of homosexuality were provided by West sexology, he nonetheless pinned his hope to its future development to provide answers. Embedded in this expectation was an assumption that homosexuality represented an abnormal pathological condition that required curing. Pan's translation of Havelock Ellis's work and his re-interpretation of same-sex relations in Chinese historical records using sexological language represented his effort to modernize China by providing Chinese people with a scientific knowledge of sex during the first half of the twentieth century. In this process, male same-sex relations were re-conceptualized and new terminology was invented and put into use. Pan's essay and his use of the modern Western concept of "homosexuality" might have helped to pathologize men involved in same-sex relations. But the impact of his work needs further study. Pan's translation of *Psychology of Sex* and the appended essay were not published until 1946,<sup>255</sup> only three years before the success of the Communist revolution. To study their impact, we need to go beyond the scope of the present research and find out how his work was received after the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949.

During the first half of the twentieth century, as China faced the colonial threat and was influenced by social Darwinist thought, Chinese intellectuals worried deeply about national survival. In order to modernize and strengthen China, they introduced Western scientific forms of knowledge, including the sexological concept of homosexuality. Similar indigenous understandings of male same-sex relations conditioned the dissemination of this Western idea, which, meanwhile, also changed Chinese thought in the new social and political context. One important change involved the introduction of a set of psychological terms to interpret male same-sex relations, such that men of equal social status became susceptible to the accusation of homosexuality.

However, Chinese intellectuals did more than use modern Western sexology to pathologize male same-sex relations in China. Armed with Carpenter's socialist thinking, Hu Qiuyuan propagated the ideal of same-sex love as a foundation for future social organization. Using Krafft-Ebing's sexological concepts, Yang Youtian focused more on locating social problems than on diagnosing personal medical conditions. The attention brought to bear upon men of equal social status by the new concept of homosexuality raised an awareness of sex between men, but, as writings published in the tabloid *Heavenly Wind* suggest, not everyone took the issue seriously.

Pan Guangdan's translation of Havelock Ellis's work and his own study of classical Chinese records of male same-sex relations evinced a persistent effort by Chinese intellectuals to introduce Western scientific knowledge of sex and to revise Chinese indigenous understandings of sexual relations during the first half of the twentieth century. The introduction of sexology undoubtedly contributed to the stigmatization of male same-sex relationships. But stigmatization was not achieved by the spread of sexological knowledge alone. The final two chapters of this book will show how the meaning of male same-sex relationships changed in the Peking opera field within a context of public concern about the national image; how writers of different political persuasions tried to erase the history of male same-sex relations; and how men who had sex with other men were blamed for the weakness and crisis of the nation. However, before turning to these issues, the next chapter will first address the literary representation of intimacy between men. From the 1920s to the early 1930s, the question of male same-sex relations raised by the introduction of sexological treatises was discussed in similar terms in literary writings.