

specialists of Chinese religion but will also attract a wide readership interested in popular culture and everyday life in Chinese society.

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*As Normal as Possible: Negotiating Sexuality and Gender in Mainland China and Hong Kong*, edited by Yau Ching. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2010. xii + 218 pp. HK\$195.00/US\$25.00 (paperback).

This rich anthology features work by nine emerging and established writers and highlights the range of current gay and lesbian studies scholarship on contemporary Hong Kong and greater China. The collection is divided into three thematic sections, entitled “Traveling Bodies”, “Communities” and “Representations”, and encompasses topics such as the social geography of lesbian bars and cafés in Hong Kong, a safe-sex educator’s lively account of her symbolic wedding to a gay man and a lesbian as a strike against marriage normativity, and a stimulating analysis of gender performance in two indie Chinese films. The individual essays variously provide foundations for new areas of inquiry, significant interventions in established debates, and much-needed materials for English-language classrooms.

Travis Kong’s important study examines the self-understandings and motivations of 30 Han Chinese “money boys” (*aka* MBs, male sex workers who serve men) in Beijing and Shanghai. *Contra* dominant pathological and public-threat paradigms characterizing male prostitutes as, respectively, hapless rural victims of urban decadence or vectors of HIV and other STDs, Kong emphasizes the MBs’ agency. Prostitution affords them access to the cultural cosmopolitanism and material consumerism that are perquisites of urban citizenship, and is thus a means of erasing their largely rural origins. Kong’s findings thus resonate with Zheng Tiantian’s work on female prostitution in contemporary Dalian (*Red Lights: The Lives of Sex Workers in Postsocialist China* [University of Minnesota Press, 2009]). Many MBs also identify the freedom and flexibility of working for oneself and the ability to pursue sexual relations and live as gay men as important incentives for becoming a prostitute. Nonetheless, MBs’ visions of their public and private selves are affected by the disdainful assessments of both gay and dominant society. They are dismissed as having low *suzhi* (human quality) and contributing to social chaos. Most informants divide work sex from personal sex (albeit not always clearly) by viewing the former as meaningless and the latter as intimate and affectively rich. This division, in turn, affects condom use: while condoms are normally used at work, they are rarely used in relations with their wives, girlfriends or boyfriends. These contestations underscore the labor of refashioning the self in contemporary urban China.

Amy Sim examines sexuality, migration and work in her discussion of lesbianism among Indonesian women migrants in Hong Kong, whose numbers now equal those of the long-established population of Filipina domestics. The incidence of same-sex relations is unclear (one study argued that 40 per cent of Filipina

workers engaged in same-sex relations), yet Sim demonstrates that lesbian, especially butch-femme, relations among Indonesian domestic workers in Hong Kong has become a prominent phenomenon in both Hong Kong and Indonesia. In relation to longstanding debates as to whether female same-sex relations subvert or confirm heteronormative notions of gender, she argues that her informants challenge heterosexuality and patriarchy while being intertwined with dominant social norms. For her informants, sexual shame focuses on the lack of premarital restraint in relations with men. Relations with women, by contrast, are bound by moralism but not shame. In fact, Sim argues that gaining sexual access to women and thus becoming a social male *tomboi* brought increased status without social stigma. Her analysis is persuasive, yet I still wonder if the population of Indonesian women migrants is uniformly accepting of female same-sex relations. What of employers or Hong Kong society as a whole? Acknowledging that female labor migration and economic independence do not overturn patriarchy in Indonesia, Sim underscores the capacity of women to challenge hegemonic structures in their intimate relations.

Eleanor Chung analyzes advances and setbacks in public Hospital Authority support for gender reassignment services for transsexual patients in Hong Kong. She also highlights a conundrum: the general public, including some medical professionals, disparage transsexuals as suffering from mental illness, yet the designation of a persistent disparity between a person's gender identity and anatomical sex as Gender Identity Disorder is necessary to receive state-supported medical services. In addition to recommending public education regarding transgenders, she proposes reclassifying a "mind-body intersexed" condition as a medical condition, not a medical illness, to avoid stigma while justifying the reception of public medical services.

Kam Yip Lo Lucetta's qualitative study examines how Shanghai *lalas* (lesbians) use traditional marriage or "open marriage" to a gay man as strategies to obviate family pressures and achieve social autonomy. Natalia Sui-hung Chan provides a nuanced and rewarding analysis of the late Leslie Cheung's gender performance. Editor Yau Ching's insightful essay on the sexual and gender politics of esteemed Hong Kong film director Li Han-hsiang's *fengyue* films is the collection's *tour de force*. Arguing against prim or disapproving critics who overlook or dismiss this output, Yau invites us to consider these softcore pornographic films, several of which rework Pan Jinlian, Ximen Qing and other characters from *Water Margin* and *Jinpingmei*, as critiques of contemporary gender and sexual norms. Li's appreciation for sensuality and sex as components of modern social reform strikes me as resonating with the ideas of two Republican-era aesthete-reformers, Zhang Jingsheng and Pan Guangdan. Yau also proposes Li's pornography as "an irresistible invitation to contemplate the pornographic nature of visual images" (p. 130). The essay prompts viewing and consideration of Li's *fengyue* movies.

This collection should appeal to anyone interested in contemporary Hong Kong or greater China, yet it will be especially welcomed by researchers, teachers and by students in gender, queer and film studies, sociology and public health. The essays are crisply written, and will thus be valuable for teaching undergraduate and graduate students alike. One small but conspicuous error: *Farewell, My Concubine*

won a Hollywood Foreign Press Association Golden Globe for “Best Foreign Film” and the *Palme d’Or* at the Cannes Film Festival, among other awards (p. 134).

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*Understanding Chinese Families: A Comparative Study of Taiwan and Southeast China*, by C. Y. Cyrus Chu and Ruoh-Rong Yu. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009. xx + 297pp. £50.00 (hardcover).

This scholarly book is anchored in a series of empirical studies on topics ranging from co-residence and family size, family fertility, marriage and divorce patterns, housework and household decisions to intergenerational mobility and changing gender preferences on mainland China and Taiwan. The sample is huge. For the mainland, the 2006 sample cohort had 4,684 individuals between 25 and 68 years old, while the Taiwanese sample is equally large, and compares and contrasts three different cohorts—those born during 1935–53, 1954–64 and 1964–76. C. Y. Cyrus Chu and Ruoh-Rong Yu adopt a multi-disciplinary approach and apply various economic and sociological theories to establish sociological significance. Throughout the book, they continue a dialog with William Goode’s modernization thesis, which holds that there has been a worldwide convergence in family social organization, with the kin group’s influence being diminished along with bride price and dowry, and also parental control over whom their children should marry. In addition, along with the expansion of opportunities in the labor market, there is a greater freedom in mate choice and an increase in the divorce rate, which often accompanies the development of an individualistic ethos.

Chu and Yu’s survey found some support for Goode’s modernization thesis, but they found the modernization process to be far from uniform. In a transnational economy, parents from different social backgrounds hold conflicting attitudes toward their children. In addition, they found that there are few statistical differences, at least among one-child families. In effect, there is strong cultural uniformity in parental aspirations for their only child.

Their survey did find commonalities between Taiwan and mainland China. First, family size has fallen. On the mainland, family size shrank from a 1982 average of 4.36 to 3.45 by 2000. For Taiwan, family size steadily decreased from its 1961 high of 5.57 to 3.21 in 2003. Second, the average age for first marriage for both Taiwan and mainland China has risen steadily over the last 50 years, with women with higher education marrying latest. Birth control through oral contraception and the use of condoms has steadily increased in Taiwan, rising from 20 per cent in the 1980s to around 40 per cent at present. On the mainland, the percentage is much lower, as use of IUDs and sterilization are more common.

There are also interesting differences. In Taiwan, the decision to co-reside with the husband’s parents depends on the wife’s resources while, on the mainland, it depends on those of the husband. However, in both regions, the higher the