

OFFICIALLY SANCTIONED ADAPTATION AND AFFECTIVE FAN RESISTANCE: THE TRANSMEDIA CONVERGENCE OF THE ONLINE DRAMA *GUARDIAN* IN CHINA

CATHY YUE WANG

Name Cathy Yue Wang

Academic centre Macquarie University, Australia

E-mail address yue.wang23@hdr.mq.edu.au

KEYWORDS

Adaptation; Media Censorship; Chinese TV drama; Boys' Love Fandom; Fan Fictions.

ABSTRACT

This article examines how the adaptation process and fan engagement are constituted in the Mainland China media landscape by focusing on the phenomenally popular online drama *Guardian* (镇魂 2018). Through an in-depth analysis of this series, the article explores the contestation and negotiation between the “top-down expurgation” from the drama’s production team during its adaptation process

and the “bottom-up subversion” from the fans of this series during its reception and consumption. If the intentional expurgation signifies a strategy of survival confronting the restrictions imposed by censors, then the fans’ creative activities work as a kind of resistance to the (post)socialist ideology in China, where homosexuality has been considered a violation of patriarchal heterosexual family, where supernatural narratives have been viewed as backward superstitions, and socially wronged lower-class members are seen as a threat to social stability. The adaptation of *Guardian* from novel to drama and its reception becomes a battlefield of strategic compliance and resistance, where economic demand and political power, modern liberal attitudes toward gender, sexuality, and equality and traditional values concerning harmony, conformity, and authority contest and negotiate.

During 2012 and 2013, *Guardian* (镇魂), a fantasy novel about legendary gay romance by online writer Priest, became a hit among readers just as the author's many other works have done. As one of the most renowned authors among the female *danmei* (耽美) subculture, a subculture characterized by its explicit depiction of male homosexual relationship by (mostly heterosexual) female authors and for female readers, Priest's novels always generate a legion of loyal fans. In 2017, the novel was adapted into a web drama of the same title. In the context of Mainland China, where both LGBT-themed works and supernatural narratives are under severe regulation by the media authorities, *Guardian's* transformation from novel to drama underwent significant changes and compromises. To pass Mainland China's strict but vague media censorship and gain permission to broadcast online, *Guardian* as a web drama has expurgated from the original novel much sensitive content that may attract disapproval from media regulating authorities. This "top-down expurgation" functions predominantly on two interrelated layers: it highlights brotherhood to eliminate the visibility of homosexuality, and to replace supernatural and fantastic tropes such as ghosts with science fiction devices. As part of the replacement, the drama also deletes depictions of social inequality and moral corruption with the purpose of promoting an uplifting and positive outlook among citizens and thus maintaining a harmonious society. In this double purge, the ghost is aligned with the homosexual and the socially wronged, and thus becomes a metaphor of the marginal members of Chinese society who are excluded from the mainstream.

These expurgations are deemed acceptable by censors and the drama gained permission to be broadcast in the streaming platform *Youku* (优酷) from 13 June 2018 to 25 July 2018. By 2 August 2018, *Guardian* had attracted 3.4 billion video views on the streaming platform, and thus became a phenomenal Chinese web drama. On 2 August 2018, eight days after the final episode of *Guardian* was released on *Youku*, the series was banned for some unknown reason. On 10 November 2018, *Guardian* was re-released on *Youku* with some scenes missing. Some netizens argued that the show was banned because it "advocated feudal superstitions, exposed the dark side of society, and included some graphic depictions of bloody violence". But this information has not been confirmed. A more likely reason for this ban may be the drama's engagement with LGBT themes.¹

1 For more information on the ban, see http://www.sohu.com/a/244984591_509883.

A large group of fans known as "Guardian Girls"² was generated by the release of the serial, mainly out of love for the original novel and the exquisite and subtle performance of the two leading male actors. But fans are not satisfied with the "top-down expurgation" employed by the production team in the serial's visual representation. "Guardian Girls" creatively utilise a subversive strategy in their comments, artworks, and fictions, and these strategies, together with their affective investment, actively dismantle the monopoly of official discourse that aims to silence the marginal outcasts and maintain order. The fans' "bottom-up subversion" indicates the increasingly visible feminist and queer desire for alternative content in Chinese media, where representations of heterosexual romance subservient to the patriarchal ideology have long dominated the screen.

The tug-of-war between releasing and banning embodies a power struggle both between political authority and market economy and between official discourse and grassroots voices. If the "top-down expurgation" by the production team and corporate owners during the adaptation process signifies a strategy of survival in the face of restrictive censorship, then the fans' "bottom-up subversion" functions as a kind of resistance to the (post)socialist ideology in China, where homosexuality has been considered a violation of patriarchal heterosexual family, supernatural narratives have been viewed as backward superstitions, and socially wronged lower-class members are seen as a threat to social stability.

Henry Jenkins (2006: 169) points out that the interplay and tension between "the top-down force of corporate convergence and the bottom-up force of grassroots convergence" is the driving force behind the changing media landscape. In the case of China, the landscape is further complicated by the state authorities who control and censor the content of media products. In the traditional media scene, TV dramas are apt to reflect and reaffirm social ideology as much as they question it. In the new convergence cultural and trans-media environment, this struggle over ideology becomes more nuanced and complicated inasmuch as the advance of technology has made fans' comments and adjunctive creative

2 The majority of *Guardian's* fans are female; however, it does include some male fans. Here I use "Guardian Girls" as a convenient term to address this group, with full awareness of its demographic heterogeneity. On 20 July 2018, *Youku*, the streaming platform of *Guardian* had garnered sixty-six million likes from its users for the drama *Guardian*. As a marketing strategy, the company paid the advertisement fee to project pictures of the principal male actors of *Guardian* and "Guardian Girls" onto the big screens of twin towers located in Global Harbour of Shanghai. This episode shows media corporations acknowledging and collaborating with grassroots fans, turning the affective powers of online fans into visible capital signals.

works more available and accessible and thus less subject to control by corporate owners or political censorship. Through an analysis of *Guardian*, this article explores how the adaptation process and fan engagement are constituted in the media landscape of Mainland China. Between the “top-down expurgation” by the drama’s production team during its adaptation process and the “bottom-up subversion” by the fans of this series during its reception and consumption, *Guardian* has become a battlefield of strategic compliance and resistance. It is the site of a contest and negotiation between economic demands and political power, and between modern liberal attitudes toward gender, sexuality, and equality and more traditional values concerning harmony, conformity, and authority.

1. GAY ROMANCE VERSUS BROTHERHOOD: THE ERASURE OF CARNALITY AND ITS RETURN THROUGH FAN’S VOICES

The original novel from which *Guardian* has been adapted was produced and circulated mainly among the *danmei* subculture,³ which features depictions of male-male same-sex romance created by and for women and sexual minorities (Yang and Xu 2017a: 3). Chinese *danmei* fictions and subculture first appeared in the 1990s, under the influence of Japanese boys’ love (hereafter BL) manga and BL fan culture. Japanese manga has a long history of depicting male homosexual stories by female artists and for female readers. Originated in the 1970s, this now fully matured BL subgenre has been viewed as a way to express repressed female desire and create alternative narratives for women under patriarchal society by its bold utilization of the female gaze and its subversion of heterosexual conventions (Aoyama 1988, McLelland 2000, Nagaïke 2003, Wood 2006). This genre came to China through the transit port Taiwan, and remains highly popular in China as well as in other East Asian countries.

3 The word *danmei* (耽美) is from the Japanese word *tanbi*, which literally means ‘addicted to beauty’. In Japan, this subculture is sometimes also called *yaoi*. In the Japanese context, there used to be a distinction between *shonen-ai*, a subgenre characterised by Platonic love between two beautiful and androgynous young boys, and *yaoi*, which often depicts pornographic male-male sex scenes (Wood 2006: 395). But the distinction has become obsolete in recent years and boys’ love (BL) now functions as an all-encompassing genre term. In China, fans often use *danmei* and BL interchangeably. For more details on Chinese *danmei* novels and culture, see Chiang 2016; Feng 2009; Martin 2012; Xu and Yang 2013; Yang and Xu 2017a, 2017b; Zhang 2017.

Although BL subculture originated in Japan, it is well acknowledged that it has a growing transnational readership and appeals to people from different national and cultural backgrounds, not only limited to Asian countries but also extending to the Anglo-European world (Wood 2006, Pagliassotti 2009). However, the unique political and cultural context renders the dissemination of *danmei* works more dangerous and challenging in China. Because of its “dual association with homosexuality and pornography”, the genre remains a vulnerable target of state censorship (Yang and Xu 2017a: 4). Unlike the laissez-faire Japanese and North American markets, the Chinese publishing industry as well as media production is under severe control and regulation by the party-state (Zhang 2017: 123).⁴ Most Chinese *danmei* narratives come in the form of fiction, rather than manga like Japan, and these novels are prohibited from publication in print form in Mainland China, although Mainland *danmei* authors could choose illegal self-publishing or be published by some Taiwanese publishers. Under such circumstances, as Feng (2009: 6) argues, online literature website becomes a safe haven for *danmei* works, and she appraises *Jinjiang* (晋江) Website (www.jjwxc.net) as such a place. Established in 2003, *Jinjiang* Website is one of the earliest and most influential Chinese literature websites, and publishes predominantly heterosexual romance and *danmei* novels by and for women. However, the Internet is not a utopia that is free of restraint and censorship, and the situation has worsened over the decade since the publication of Feng’s analysis of *danmei* fiction (2009). Several anti-pornography campaigns launched by the government in the past years have had a disastrous impact on online websites. With the biggest readership base and the most developed commercial connections, out of self-protection, *Jinjiang* issued a “stricter-than-government” self-censorship which banned “any depiction of body parts below the neck” (Yang and Xu 2017b: 174). Although the regulation also

4 This is not to say that in Japan and Anglo-European countries, fans enjoy complete freedom to create, circulate, and consume BL contents. In these countries, certain subgenres and plots are also under regulation from either publishing houses, or national law. Pagliassotti (2009) illustrates the adaptation strategies employed by U.S publishers to avoid or change certain potentially offensive contents from Japanese BL manga, such as underage sex, or incest plots. Wood (2013) illustrates how legal censorship influences retailers’ attitude towards BL works in U.S. However, Chinese fans undoubtedly face stringent censorship from the government “on a daily basis” (Yang and Xu 2017a: 11). Contents circulated on the Internet are also under regulation and may result in their creators and distributors receiving prison sentences. Recently, *danmei* author Tianyi (pseudonym) was sentenced to ten years imprisonment for illegally publishing her works for profits. See news reports on such cases: <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2018/nov/20/chinese-writer-tianyi-sentenced-to-decade-in-prison-for-gay-erotic-novel>.

applied to heterosexual romance genres, the *danmei* genre has been most heavily damaged.

Under such strengthening state- and self-censorship, the original novel from which the drama *Guardian* has been adapted was serialised on *Jinjiang* from November 2012 to March 2013.⁵ In other words, before it was adapted into TV drama and was subjected to expurgation, the creation and reception of Priest's original novel had already endured (self-) censorship. One of the reasons why Priest (a pseudonym, out of self-protection) as a prolific author could achieve high status among *danmei* fans in recent years is that she seldom describes explicit sex scenes between her male protagonists, and she never explores such thorny themes as underage sex, BDSM, incest, and non-consensual sex. This relatively safer style contrasted sharply with earlier Chinese *danmei* novels, which were more diverse in content and more daring in their exploration of forbidden themes and non-normative sexualities. Such a safer style also renders her novels more financially successful since it is easier to be published in print (after minor modification) and adapted into audio drama, television, film and animation. *Guardian* is such a case.

Although pre-modern Chinese elite culture embraces a soft and feminized masculinity and male same-sex intimacy (Hinsch 1992, Song 2004, Wu 2004), gay-themed media representation became taboo after the communist party came to power (Dong 2005, Lim 2006).⁶ In 2016, the series

Addicted (上瘾), which is based on another *danmei* novel, was removed from all Chinese video streaming websites by the order of SAPPRFT (State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television).⁷ This series boldly tried to include several kissing and intimate bed scenes between two male protagonists, and thus was cut off before its later episodes were released. With this lesson from a pioneering work, *Guardian* employed a more conservative adaptation strategy to disguise its homosexual relationship as homosocial bonding.

These recent endeavours to adapt popular *danmei* novels into TV dramas indicate that the market economy acknowledges the rising female purchasing power in new era China, yet the producing house must find a way to detour around the tight state control to communicate with their target audience. During this process, the tension and negotiation between economic and political powers are complex. Where Western slash narratives often queer some masculine and heterosexual narratives such as *Star Trek* (Russ 1985, Penley 1991), the adaptation process of *Guardian* from text to drama “de-queers” an explicit homosexual romance to a homosocial bonding to circumvent stringent censorship. Not only are kisses, caresses, and other intimate bodily gestures deleted from the pretext in the TV drama, but many dialogues which express the affection between the male protagonists, Shen Wei (沈巍) and Zhao Yunlan (赵云澜), are also excluded. For example, in 1.11 – which corresponds to Chapter 42 in the original novel – a scene in which Shen and Zhao drunkenly kiss has disappeared. Instead, a dialogue emphasising that they are “good brothers” has been substituted to feebly veil the erotic tension between the two characters (1.17, 40:30-40:40). Another common strategy is to add heterosexual storylines centred on minor female characters to dilute the intensity of homosexual attractions.⁸ But the most devastating strategy used by the production team of *Guardian* is its change of the ending. The original novel ends with the gay couple living “happily ever after”, but the drama ends with one of them dead and the other alive, but soulless and amnesiac. If deleting intimate bodily touches and adding female characters could be roughly counted as camouflage, while the text

5 For the original novel written by Priest, see: <http://www.jjwxc.net/onebook.php?novelid=1673146>. Because of the popularity of the TV drama, one overseas fan (RainbowSe7en) started to translate the novel voluntarily from Chinese to English on Wattpad (<https://www.wattpad.com/story/153357561-guardian-english-version-bl-novel>). The translation started from 29 June 2018 (after the drama had been released) and is ongoing. Wattpad is an Internet community for readers and writers to publish new user-generated stories in different genres. The users of Wattpad can directly interact with the writers and share their opinions with fellow readers. This is another proof of global and transnational BL fandom.

6 The premodern male-male intimacy is largely practiced under the polygamy structure, in which a prominent man with enough wealth and status can have a main wife as well as multiple concubines and enjoy sexual liaisons with prostitutes and entertainers (both male and female). The homosexual acts between male patrons and boy servants or male cross-dressing opera actors, although running the risk of being critiqued by rigid Confucian moralists, have been tolerated as an aesthetic trend as long as the patron fulfils the primary duty required by the Confucian paradigm, which is producing male heirs for the family. This type of homosexual act should be carefully distinguished from modern homosexuality as a sexual orientation and identity. The modern and contemporary discrimination and marginalization of homosexuals in China is mainly based on heteronormative culture and out of the fear that sexual minorities may cause social instability. The influence of Confucian culture in contemporary China renders it less tolerant to homosexuality arguably because of “concerns about keeping the family intact” (Adamczyk and Cheng 2015). The Confucian notion of filial piety requires sons and daughters to fulfil the expected mission, including getting married and having children of their own.

7 The series *Addicted* is now available on YouTube, but remained unfinished after only 15 episodes. See news reports on its ban: <https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2016/mar/04/china-bans-gay-people-television-clampdown-xi-jinping-censorship>.

8 In another TV drama *S.C.I. Mystery* (S.C.I. 谜案集, 2018) adapted from a *danmei* novel, one male character is changed into a female character to make a gay couple into a heterosexual couple.

can still be “erotically charged for the viewer and appeal to a wider range of fantasies” because more is left to the audience’s imagination (Wood 2013: 59), then the change of ending has much more destructive power to erase significant queer meanings from the original text. Since a happy ending is largely part of readers’ expectations of a popular romantic melodrama (Brooks 1995), a genre to which most *danmei* novels inevitably belong, a distortion of such a convention has huge affective impact on reader’s response. If “the pattern of separate suffering prior to a happily-ever-after” of the melodrama mode confirms “the romantic, heterosexual coupling” (Kapurch 2012: 177), then with a story with two main male characters which concludes in separation and death conveys an unambiguous message to the audience, that any potential non-normative relationship (especially between people of the same sex) will end miserably.

Fans are not satisfied when confronted with these top-down expurgations and therefore employ diverse and vigorous tactics to resist. Especially dissatisfied with the heart-breaking ending, many fans write their own versions of the story to create a much happier closure. Even the original author Priest (under requests from disappointed fans) wrote a *fanwai* (番外), an extra story, as a response to the drama’s distortion of her work. Priest’s *fanwai* piece does not falsify the drama, but rather supplements it. She renders the story-world from the drama as one of the many parallel universes her characters inhabit, but indicates this one is an especially bad one. David Herman coined “storyworld” to suggest “the world-creating power of narrative,” and its ability to relocate interpreters from the actual, here and now world to an alternative possible world that is constituted by the deictic centre within the narrative (2002: 15-6). As Herman notes, different non-fictional narratives about the same topic will contrast with and compete with each other, whereas fictional narratives “cannot be falsified by virtue of their relation to other storyworlds” (2002: 16). Priest’s extra story to the drama verifies Herman’s argument, that the storyworld of a pretext and its adaptation could be viewed as parallel (story)worlds, with the latter extending and altering the scope of the former.

In the digital media landscape and Internet-connected era, the boundary between professional and amateur, between reader and author, between adapters and fans is radically blurring. Priest may be the author of the original novel, but she is also one of the fans of the TV drama. Several actors and actresses of the *Guardian* crew also claimed they are fans of Priest’s original novel, and they necessarily bring their understanding of the pretext into their performances, which

partially makes up for the clumsy alteration. The two male actors’ subtle performances maximize the homosexual undercurrents under the disguise of bromance. Restrained from physical intimate contact, they mobilise eye contacts, facial expressions, and body gestures to hint the romantic and sexual attractions between characters. One particular scene that is not described in the screenplay is even improvised by the two actors.⁹ In this scene, Zhao Yunlan (performed by Bai Yu) and Shen Wei (performed by Zhu Yilong) are sitting side by side in a taxi. Tortured by stomach pain, Zhao puts his head on Shen’s shoulder to rest, and Shen tenderly adjusts his position to make Zhao rest comfortably (1.08, 25:00-25:30). For Linda Hutcheon (2013: 82-3), there is an increasing distance from “the adapted novel as the process moves from the writing of the screenplay to the actual shooting” and what actors adapt is actually the screenplay. By spontaneously adding this conventional romantic scene, the two actors innovatively altered the screenplay to further its homosexual undertone. The producing team also tries to leave, in a limited way, visible traces of the queerness of the original story for audiences to recognize. In a word, the adaptation process of *Guardian* endured collaborative and complicated sometimes even paradoxical negotiations amongst its major players, including the director, the screenwriter, the original novelist, actors, and musical team, during which their identities as “producers” and “fans” are often fluid and unfixed, and the “sacrosanct elements like priority and originality” are upended (Hutcheon 2013: 122).

Although the fidelity debate has lost currency in recent adaptation studies (Leitch 2003: 161), in *Guardian*’s case, the distance between drama and novel still matters because it is involuntary and thus encodes significant political implications. From sexually explicit early *danmei* novels, to Priest’s rather safe style which only includes kissing and touching and steers away from actual penetration, to the drama’s further cleansing of any intimate bodily gesture, we see a gradual de-embodiment and abstraction of homosexual desire. In a way, the difference between homosexuality and homosocial bonding is the existence and absence of carnality.¹⁰ What most fan fictions of *Guardian* (both novel and drama) do is return the absent corporeal aspect to the relationship between two male characters. Preeminent in fan resistance against the puritanical power of the censor is a popular subgenre of fan-

9 For the improvising of some scenes, see the interview of Zhu Yilong by Juzi Entertainment: <https://www.bilibili.com/video/av26467710> (01:20-01:43).

10 Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s work (1992) has illustrated how homosociality and homosexuality are extremely close to one another, and the ostensible distinction between them is always porous.

fiction known as PWP (Plot? What plot?). PWP refers to short erotic scenes which describe sexual encounters with little or no story context.

The genre PWP undoubtedly belongs to pornographic writing, whose main purpose is sexual arousal. Pornography used to be viewed as a genre detrimental to female subjectivity for its objectification and subordination of women. However, there are feminist critiques of the anti-porn stance premised on the assumption that “pornographic discourse is recuperable for women and for a feminist agenda” (Ziv 2015: 6). PWP fan fictions fit with such an argument, which is explicitly set out in Joanna Russ’s pioneering article (1985) on Kirk/Spock slash fiction: “Pornography by Women, for Women, with Love”. The suffix “with Love” pinpoints the crucial difference between commercial male-oriented pornography and fan girls’ non-commercial pornographic writing. In PWP fan fictions inspired by *Guardian*, the depictions of explicit sex scenes and the description of characters’ emotional bonds are never separated. Sexual intimacy is often the embodiment of the couple’s emotional intimacy. Thus, the purpose of such PWP works is no longer simply sexual arousal in readers but also affective satisfaction. In yigulan-shan’s (一顾阑珊) “Sweet Dreams as Usual” (好梦如旧), a PWP fiction which gained most “likes” among fans on *Lofter*, oral sex is described as foreplay to intercourse between two male characters.¹¹ The depiction of physical sensation during oral sex has been endowed with metaphoric meaning:

Shen Wei’s eyes widened while he felt that Zhao Yunlan swallowed his penis gradually.

So hot.

Shen’s five fingers gripped Zhao’s short hair, and his body was tight.

The wind in Hell is cold, and his body, which had a ferocious mien, is also cold. Only after encountering Zhao, Shen finally knew that as well as cold there was heat in the world too. (My translation)

In this excerpt, the word “hot” in the second paragraph expresses the physical reaction to oral sex, while in the fourth paragraph, “heat” as the opposite of the coldness in Hell includes a metaphorical meaning. It not only refers to the

body’s reaction to the surrounding temperature, but also indicates a sense of belonging, caring, and intimacy born out of an intersubjective relationship. In other words, in traditional commercial pornography, sexual arousal and release is the ultimate goal, while in the amateur fan’s pornographic writing, sex is not the goal but only a process, through which the intense love and passion between characters become visible. There are two thousand words after the ejaculation of both characters in “Sweet Dream as Usual” (overall ten thousand words) which depicts their intimate feelings and memories. As Catherine Driscoll (2006: 86) argues, the sex scenes in PWP stories are rarely solely utilitarian, but contribute to the whole narrative and characterisation. She concludes that fan fictions intersect and reflect both the genres of porn and romance yet belong to neither. Fan fictions also attract the criticisms most frequently directed at both romance fiction and pornography. That is, they are aesthetically inferior and morally dubious (Driscoll 2006: 95).

Thus branded as aesthetically inferior and morally dubious, PWP stories come under the scrutiny of China’s cultural gatekeepers. To make their erotic and pornographic texts visible to other members of the community, *Guardian* fans need to employ a series of strategies and tactics to dodge the red line. In this process, they are doing what Constance Penley (1991: 139), inspired by Michel de Certeau, called “Brownian Motion”, or “the tactical manoeuvres of the relatively powerless when attempting to resist, negotiate, or transform the system and products of the relatively powerful”. In her examination of Kirk/Spock fandom (*Star Trek*), Penley has demonstrated that fans are “constantly involved in negotiating appropriate levels of technology for use” (1991: 141) in their activities such as zine publishing and the making of fan videos. In the case of Kirk/Spock fandom, fans’ efforts to keep technology accessible and democratic is to resist the corporate control of mainstream media and the capitalist system. In the Chinese context, fans’ tactical manoeuvres and technological sharing are mainly out of their struggle against authoritarian media control. One important online battlefield is *Lofter*. As one of the most popular online websites for Chinese fan works, like *Jinjiang*, it is also under strict regulation by the state. *Lofter* adopts a sensitive-content examination system to keep the works published online “clean” and “healthy”. Confronted with such a situation, Chinese technology-savvy fans employ several strategies. For example, a fan fiction author will publish only a preview of her work (written in Chinese) on her *Lofter*’s homepage. The preview is free of any graphic depictions of sex scenes. Then she will add an external hyperlink to this page,

11 The preview of this fiction is posted on *Lofter* (http://197141.lofter.com/post/1e15331e_eabcbdb). The full version could be seen from AO3 (<https://archiveofourown.org/works/15163085>). This is an exemplary practice of strategic detour through overseas websites to circulate sexually explicit contents among Chinese fans.

which points to the whole piece of work, published usually on AO3 (Archive of Our Own), a non-profit open source repository for fan works based in the United States. Since AO3 welcomes multi-language fandoms and is not banned by the China's notorious Great Firewall for now, it becomes an online refuge for Chinese fans who post their explicit boys' love fan fictions on it. Apart from detouring through overseas websites, another technological way to sidestep censorship is to convert long text into image, for the content of images is less detectable by the sensitive-content examination system. To put text-into-image upside down is a further guarantee. Sometimes fans may also use spaces and slashes between taboo words to avoid censorship (Jacobs 2015: 114). Many guides produced by fans on topics such as "how to use AO3 effectively and correctly" or "how to add text-into-image in your homepage" are available on *Lofter*, which indicates a community with a strong atmosphere of mutual support in the face of political power. These collaborative "guerrilla-warfare tactics" (Feng 2009: 15) help to consolidate a sense of solidarity, and technology empowers Chinese fans from a relative powerlessness position into certain agency.

2. GHOST VERSUS MUTANT: THE DEBATE ON RATIONALITY AND PASSION

The special identities of the two gay characters in Priest's novel add to the work's vulnerability to media censorship. Zhao Yunlan, the chief of Special Investigations Unit (SIU), a secret institution hidden within the police system, has been able to see ghosts since birth. His unit consists of a group of non-human staff, including a snake spirit, a ghost, a Buddhist monk, a zombie, and a talking cat. His male lover Shen Wei, under the guise of a university professor, is actually the Ghost Slayer, a half-god-half-demon creature who was born in the depths of Hell. The cases SIU deal with are mostly committed by grudging ghosts who seek vengeance on earth. In the later part of the novel, a larger storyworld based on Chinese mythology and the religious concept of reincarnation takes shape. It emerges that Zhao Yunlan is the reincarnation of the ancient Mountain God Kunlun, a contemporary of Nüwa, Fuxi, and Shennong, the three sovereigns in Chinese pantheon. The Mountain God Kunlun and the Ghost Slayer Shen Wei have been star-crossed lovers for ten thousand years. Such a supernatural storyworld touches another sensitive point in Chinese media: the ghost and its implied cultural and political implications.

As early as the Republican period (1911-1949), the Guomintang (GMD) government had already embarked on an official campaign to eradicate superstitions and promote modern science (Pang 2011, Xiao 2013). Perhaps because ghost belief is so ubiquitous in pre-modern Chinese folk religion, and it closely relates to many practices viewed as barbarous and absurd from a modern Enlightened view, both GMD and its successor, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), extol an official ideology which eschews spiritual existence and advocates modern science. As Pang Laikwan's insightful research shows, the reason behind the state's anti-superstition film policy is twofold. First, it is the literal meaning of ghosts which a modern socialist state tries to eschew since folk beliefs about ghosts have been ingrained in the daily life of Chinese people since the distant past. Second, the rich allegorical potential of ghost images "might be encoded and decoded in ways over which the state has no control" (2011: 461). Horror-inducing ghosts are inclined to be vengeful and usually victims of injustice in their lives. Their return and haunting implicitly criticises the failure of legal investigation. As Patrick Colm Hogan (2011: 225) remarks, societies tend to "develop representations of justice that favoured official modes of criminal investigation and punishment and disfavoured individual initiatives outside the control of the state". Therefore, to make vengeful ghosts disappear from the screen is also to make the repressed members in society invisible, to avoid the reflection of social malaise and injustice.

The double implications of the ghost figure – both as a belief of pre-modern folk religion and as a reflection of contemporary social injustice – make it an unruly symbol that arouses horror not only among audiences but also among media authoritarians. To tame this threatening metaphor as it is manifested in the novel *Guardian*, the TV drama refashioned the supernatural story into the discourse of science. Therefore, all ghosts are transformed into aliens, who came to the earth in spaceships tens of thousands of years ago and, having mixed with the human species, thus became mutants with special superhuman abilities, who live underground at the core of the earth. At the same time, the mythological origin of the main characters' past lives is replaced by the trope of time-travel.

Apart from macro-level story transformation, micro-level replacements occur throughout. Many pre-modern folk religion practices have been sanitized, including the use of the Daoist yellow talisman to exorcise demons and ghosts, the reciting of Buddhist sutras as self-protection, and the fortune-telling based on one's birth chart ("the eight characters"

八字). For example, in Chapter 28, a strange phenomenon of *yinbingjiedao* (阴兵借道) has been described as a large group of ghosts who are newly dead people (caused by a natural disaster such as an avalanche) and who walk along a road in the world of the living and become visible to humans. Both Zhao and Shen had witnessed this phenomenon and had shown full respect to these unfortunate souls. In Episode 1.09 (19:35-20:25) of the drama, the same phenomenon has been mentioned in a dialogue between three characters and has been given a scientific explanation (“a short-term retrospective phenomenon in vision caused by the magnetic material of iron oxide which reacts in rain and snow”). These are but a slice of the holistic replacement of the discourse of the fantastic and supernatural with science and technology, and the subsequent hybrid of these two distinct discourses is detrimental to the overall storyline. This process of holistic transplantation assaults not only the so-called “superstitious” practices of folk religion, which did not fit into the category of institutionalised religion, the systematic and institutional religions such as Buddhism also become a target. A distrust of indigenous cultural and literary tradition and a preference for imported cultural tropes are also discernable. One member of the SIU team, the monk Lin Jing, has been changed into a genius software engineer who resembles a mad scientist figure. Shen Wei used to teach literature in a university in the original novel, but has now become a professor in biology. The Hell where dead people dwell becomes a settlement of an alien species, whose highest leader becomes the Occidental-sounding Regent instead of Yama who originated from Hinduism.

It is not purely a question of updating a backward and unscientific worldview by the rhetoric of progress, rationality, and Enlightenment on an epistemic level, as Prasenjit Duara (1991: 81) demonstrates in his study of the campaigns against popular religion in early twentieth-century China, but it is also a “politicization of knowledge” ending up “with a significant expansion in the power of the state”. In other words, what disturbs media censors is not only the existence of ghosts in a fantasy narrative such as *Guardian* because of its deliberate departure from consensus reality and the confusion it may cause to readers’ cognition, but also the symbolic meanings of the fantastic tropes and their represented social realities. Ghosts endow rich symbolic meaning, which are capable of becoming “instruments of political satire, vehicles for wild imaginations, channels for escapism, allegories of sexual freedom” (Pang 2001: 474). They can also be a metaphor to represent and reflect the darker side of society,

which inevitably dismantles the illusion of a harmonious society promoted by Chinese official discourse.

Several cases from the original novel reveal poignant issues emblematic of Chinese contemporary society, such as gender inequality, moral corruption, and many resurgent social vices. Suspects who committed crimes usually belong to the underclass and have to struggle to survive in a profit-driven society. They have been wronged and thus became revenging ghosts who seek justice in their own way, which calls into question the functionality of the legal system, the welfare facilities, and civil society. For example, the first case of the original novel tells a story about a girl, Li Qian, who murdered her grandmother, and about the return of the old woman’s ghost, a tragedy caused not by the evil of humanity but by the social milieu. Li Qian’s parents prefer sons over daughters and after her young brother is born illegally due to the one-child policy, she is abandoned by her parents. She thus lives together with her old grandmother and the two are extremely close. When her grandmother has a sudden stroke and dies, Li Qian uses the mysterious but powerful Sundial of Reincarnation to bring her grandmother back to life – the cost is to surrender half of her own lifespan. Moreover, without economic support and public welfare, she has to work extremely hard to do part-time jobs to earn her education fees. Her grandmother then suffers from Alzheimer’s disease, which worsens the situation. Li Qian starts to regret the decision to resurrect her grandmother: “... my only family suddenly passes away, my parents despise me, I struggle to pay tuition, and I can’t find a job here; I am pathetic, aren’t I? I have to...endure all of that; I really shouldn’t have brought grandma back, I should’ve just died with her” (par. 3, chap. 19).¹² Exhausted Li Qian finally decides to murder her grandmother by an overdose of pills, thus relieving herself from the burden of her grandmother’s care. Since Li Qian touches the Sundial of Reincarnation, one of the four Mystical Artifacts from Hell, she starts to see ghosts from the underworld. Her grandmother’s ghost returns to protect Li Qian from being devoured by a hungry ghost. What is chilling in this story is not the return of the dead, but how easily an extreme situation can turn a good person into a murderer. The neglectful parents, the competitive job market, and the unsound social welfare system all contribute to the crime committed by a once-caring girl. The TV version changes the parricidal act into a less chilling suicide, in which the grandmother willingly ends her own life to free her beloved granddaughter. By replac-

12 The translations are from RainbowSe7en’s online translation of *Guardian* in Wattpad.

ing an appalling crime with a self-sacrificial act, the TV drama also shuns the pungent social criticism behind Priest's novel. Moreover, these either ghost or human characters represent lower-class grudges and hatred that are deeply at odds with the official discourse of China that promotes "positive energy", which is roughly defined as an uplifting and positive attitude and emotion both in individuals and in collectives such as society and nation (Yang and Tang 2018: 15). Therefore, the replacement of ghosts by aliens in the adaptation of *Guardian* is an attempt to hide the internal violence and wounds caused by the rapid modernisation of China. The emphasis on science and progress erases local mythological and literary traditions of spectral narratives, thus revealing the authority's desperate clutch on linear development and economic achievement, with no regard to the casualties of such a rapidly developing society.

Despite the banning of ghost narratives by the cultural gatekeepers, contemporary Chinese audiences nevertheless embrace this age-old genre wholeheartedly. The fondness of modern readers for ghost stories does not prove that they still believe in folk religion, nor would they show particular interest in the potential for political and ideological interrogation that inheres in such spectral figures. Rather, what they want is just a good entertaining story, which could arouse intense emotional responses such as terror and passion in their minds. Indeed, fans of *Guardian* are using their affective voices to counter the official discourse on rationality and progress. For example, most fan fictions insist on using the mythological and fantastic framework from the original novels instead of the thinly constructed science fiction setting invented by the drama. The pretexts they draw from are not limited to Priest's novel, but also includes various ghost narratives from classical literature. Moreover, their affective voices grant the otherwise elusive and invisible ghosts an embodied existence, manifested principally by the character of Shen Wei. In the following section, I will use fan fiction texts to illustrate how fans' embodied affective narrative counters both the TV drama's de-sexualisation of homosexuality and the obscuration of spectral beings.

3. A TEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF EMBODIED AFFECTION

The endowment of *qing* (love, emotions, desires, pathos) enjoys a preeminent status in traditional Chinese narratives especially in those dealing with ghosts and spirits: "The theme of death and resurrection by dint of love's invincible power

is widely recognized as highly original in Chinese literary history" (Lee 2007: 43). Such an emphasis on *qing* in Chinese ghost narratives fits with theories of affective narratology set out by Hogan (2011). The romance between Zhao Yunlan and Shen Wei inherits this affective tradition. Shen, originally a demon born from the depth of Hell, is transformed into a human by his deep affection for Zhao. Their ghost-human gay romance touches two taboo topics in the contemporary Chinese media landscape, the homosexual and the supernatural. Thus these star-crossed lovers (as alien-human bromance in the drama version) end up miserable in the last episode of the series, Zhao witnessing the death of his lover/friend Shen in the final battle against the villain, while he himself survives but with the loss of all his memories.

In the previous section, I have already examined the original author's reaction to this new ending. By providing an alternative narrative based on parallel world theory, Priest offers a morsel of consolation for heartbroken fans of both the series and the novel. Unlike this pain-relieving extra piece provided by Priest, some fan authors choose to face this sad ending head-on without blinking. "Dearest" (亲爱的), written by 66 and "PTSD" (巍澜 PTSD 一篇), written by budaixiong shuixingle (布袋熊睡醒了) continue the drama's ending with their narrative focus on Zhao's post-trauma experience.¹³ In these two texts, an amnesiac Zhao struggles to live in a world without his lover Shen. Although his mind has lost the memory of Shen, his body still feels the physical pain of loss. In "Dearest", the spitting of blood by a suspect triggers a physical reaction from Zhao, since it reminds him of the symptoms Shen endured before death. Zhao immediately loses consciousness, and hereafter always feels a dull pain in his chest, while constantly seeing an illusory redness. He also finds himself being followed by a female ghost who is dressed in red and spits blood. After exorcising this haunted female ghost, Zhao stops feeling any pain. The ghost figure has been obscured in the TV adaptation, yet it reappears in fan narratives such as this one to become the embodiment of the pain caused by love and loss. Although exorcising this ghost relieves Zhao from physical suffering, he also loses the ability to have emotions and feelings.

13 Originally, 66 (pseudonym) posted her fan fictions on the website *Lofter*. After being plagiarised by other netizens, she cancelled the account and deleted all the works. Afterwards, she posted on her *Sina Weibo* a link to Baidu Wangpan (a Cloud service provided by Baidu Company) as a more clandestine way to distribute her works to fans. For her "Dearest" and "Xiao Wei", see: https://www.weibo.com/5873034077/Hdso4neil?filter=hot&root_comment_id=0. For "PTSD", see <https://www.weibo.com/ttarticle/p/show?id=2309404270167357026630>.

The narrative arc of “PTSD” is very similar to “Dearest”. In this text, horrified by an icicle (the same weapon which killed Shen in the drama) which he sees in a movie, Zhao falls into a coma. In an attempt to find out why he has such an intense fear of an icicle, Zhao goes to a therapist for help, but to no avail. Near the end of the story, Zhao again suffers an attack of stomach trouble, which is reminiscent of the scene from both the drama and the novel in which Shen takes tender care of Zhao when he suffers from stomach ache. Zhao has a unique experience in his illness:

That night, he wrapped his body in a blanket, and the room was filled with dust and still air. Zhao Yunlan resisted the rhythmic collision of a vomiting impulse from his gastric mucosa, while he felt that something had completely and absolutely embraced him in the void.

He could tell this mysterious experience to no one. He took off all the clothes in this embrace, slowly opened his body and handed over his pain. It was the most nervous and yet the most reassuring moment in his life. After more than a year, he still could not remember anything, but he touched him with his body. The burned incense ash was piled up in the incense burner, the medicine bottle was in the refrigerator, the time was in the dead body of mosquitoes, and Zhao Yunlan was in his illness. He also embraced his own body, which has been forever damaged, as if to embrace the only relic that could prove love had existed. (My translation)

These two fan-authors’ narratives are fairly dark and grim in their depiction of the protagonist’ post-trauma experience and his unsuccessful recovery. Zhao’s mental depression and anxiety are manifested in a carnal and somatic way, including coma, physical illness, and optical illusions. The pain caused by the loss of a loved one becomes a series of pathological symptoms. As Shigehisa Kuriyama (1993: 58) has argued: “Desires and emotions figured centrally in traditional East Asian conceptions of disease, but they were never based in some disembodied psyche. They were invariably intertwined with somatic experience”. In “Dearest”, the pain has been embodied as the female ghost whose red clothes and spitting blood reflect Shen’s torture. In “PTSD”, although in the end Zhao “still could not remember anything” on an intellectual level, he felt Shen in a bodily way: “he touched him with his body”. His own body thus becomes the witness of their

love, even though the love has been forgotten in the mind. In these two short stories, the dead Shen is just like a ghost who remains invisible yet tangible. Although he has been erased in the mind of his lover, he has been incorporated into his embodied memory.

Another short story, “Xiao Wei” (小巍), also written by 66, is narrated through the perspective of Shen, and again constructs a parallel between love and biological instinct. Shen’s affection towards Zhao has been described in a corporeal way. For example, he swallows a piece of paper that inscribes the word Kunlun, the name of Zhao in his previous life, then vomits at the first sight of Zhao.

The embodied affection is observed by fan reviewers of these derivative texts. One comment from *Sina Weibo* on “Xiao Wei” reads:

Apart from the fantasy of pink bubble-style romance and superficial heroism, Wei/Lan has been so vividly connected to the world through blood and flesh [...] The original novel from Priest nurtures the heart like a river, while the words from 66 penetrate the bones like a needle. (bayidianyingzhipi-anchang [巴依电影制片厂] 03 January 2019)

Another reader’s review of “Xiao Wei” posted on *Lofter* is titled “Because love is flesh, is the flower born out of blood” (Сумасшедшая 28 August 2018).¹⁴ From these comments, we could see that fan-readers express their responses to fan fictions in a similar corporeal way (“through blood and flesh”, “love is flesh”), they are also capable of distinguishing the literary style of the original novel and the target fan fiction (“Priest’s novel nurtures the heart, while 66’s works penetrate the bones”). Scholarship on online fan fiction often underlines their distinction from traditional literary activities by emphasising the interactive and spontaneous aspects of this new mode. Yet as some studies show, fans often view their role as reviewers seriously and frequently engage “in the kind of analysis preferred by literary critics” (Thomas 2011: 18). The readers’ feedback on some *Guardian* fan fictions fit with this observation. They resemble traditional literary critics but in a more affective and metaphoric way.

Judith Zeitlin (2007: 14) has emphasised the pervasiveness of *qing*, the affective element, in Chinese ghost stories: “although in abstract terms, *qing* is conceptualized as a universal force of nature, in its embodied form, *qing* is a

14 http://tobeaherobybeingazero.lofter.com/post/1d1313ec_efc3abfb.

ghost and a woman". In *Guardian's* case, *qing* is both a ghost and a gay man. I underline the embodied affective aspects in fans' narratives and reviews of *Guardian* because it is exactly this crucial aspect that has been lost in the censorship. Therefore, the fans' reclamation of carnal desire and strong emotional bonds is crucial in their resistance to the officially sanctioned adaptation of the drama. The change from homosexuality to homosociality erases the existence of carnal desire, and because of the invasion of science fiction tropes, rationality replaces the role of passion and emotion. Fans' embodied affective narratives are fighting back to target precisely what is lacking in the drama's storyworld: the mutual, intense, and sensuous love between two male characters.

4. CONCLUSION

Chinese censorship has a long history of claiming a moralist and didactic method towards cultural products. As Zhiwei Xiao (2013: 112) points out, as early as 1926, to receive censors' endorsement and official award, a film "would have to be realistic in its portrayals of social life, have a positive and uplifting moral message, encourage scientific inquiry, and bring audience some educational benefits". Among many sensitive topics, works which "contradict the principle of modern sciences and promote superstition" and which include "graphic depiction of sex, nudity" are under special regulation (Xiao 2013: 124). To maximise the deterrent effect of such regulations, the language used in officially issued policies and protocols is deliberately ambiguous, vague, and imprecise, which not only grants the censors more space to exercise their power (Xiao 2013: 125), but also effectively encourages self-censorship among artists and media producers (Ng 2015: 242). The top-down adaptation process of *Guardian* from novel to drama showcases this closely interlinked mechanism of censoring and self-censoring, resulting in a sanitised version which promotes modern science, praises brotherly bonding, deletes depictions of the dark side of society and conveys uplifting moral messages to its audience.

Equipped with online communicative technology and myriad social media platforms, fans in the twenty-first century are no longer passive receivers of media products and government regulations, but have become significant players in the convergence culture along with media corporations and government authorities. In my analysis of the online fandom of *Guardian*, I have demonstrated how

members of the fan community reinforce their subjectivity through advanced technology, strategic tactics, and mutual support in their counter-discursive online activities. Moreover, the embodied affective narratives of some fan fictions compensate for the absence of sexual and spectral scenes in the TV drama.

Throughout this article, I have conducted a cultural study of the online drama *Guardian* largely based on the interaction between the "top-down" force of media corporations and the "bottom-up" force of grassroots fans, with the political force of government censors an ever-present consideration. Many studies on media fandom have already demonstrated the active fans' "poaching" of the source text and their subversive resistance to corporate ownership and mainstream ideology (Jenkins 1992). However, some scholars (Gwenllian-Jones 2002, Gray et al. 2007) have questioned the accountability of this "incorporation/resistance paradigm" that generally dominates fandom studies in that it does not adequately encompass the diversity of fandom activities. Indeed, in *Guardian's* case, just like in the general *danmei* fandom, fans' diverse reactions could not be sweepingly characterised as "resistance" or "counterpublic" (Chiang 2016, Yang and Xu 2017b). Some fans acquiesce in the censorship and others are more radical in their expression of discontent. Some fans disapprove of certain subgenres and topics in fan writing, while others appeal for more freedom in all kind of fictional imaginations, and different groups of fans are sometimes overtly hostile to each other. In addition, fans' writing of *Guardian* predominantly focuses on the romantic relationship and seldom touches serious social issues such as disparity between rich and poor and gender inequality. As some researchers point out, the *danmei* fandom in China is mainly composed by middle class girls who reside in big cities (Yang and Xu 2017a, Zhang 2017), and thus class inequality and urban-rural disparity is hardly a concern in their writing, which prevents their resistant writing from engaging with broader social issues. Indeed, the majority of *Guardian* fans do not consciously view themselves as political dissidents. What they have enjoyed most in the fandom of *Guardian* is having "fun", to be amused or to be touched. By laughing at the numerous funny catchphrases and visual/textual memes based on the drama, or crying at the sincere love between two men, they are affectively engaged in this fandom. My hypothesis is that this affective fandom germinates subversive potential.

REFERENCES

- Adamczyk, Amy and Yen-hsin Alice Cheng (2015). "Explaining Attitudes about Homosexuality in Confucian and non-Confucian Nations: Is There a 'Cultural' Influence?" *Social Science Research* 51: 276-89. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssresearch.2014.10.002>
- Aoyama, Tomoko (1988). "Male Homosexuality as Treated by Japanese Women Writers." In *The Japanese Trajectory: Modernization and Beyond*, edited by Gavan McCormack and Yoshio Sugimoto, 186-204. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Brooks, Peter (1995). *The Melodramatic Imagination: Balzac, Henry James, and the Mode of Excess*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.
- Chiang, Feichi (2016). "Counterpublic but Obedient: a Case of Taiwan's BL Fandom." *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 17(2): 223-38. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14649373.2016.1170311>.
- Dong, Lan (2005). "Tracing Chinese Gay Cinema 1993-2002." *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* 7(2): 1-8. <https://doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.1260>.
- Driscoll, Catherine (2006). "One True Pairing: The Romance of Pornography and the Pornography of Romance." In *Fan Fiction and Fan Communities in the Age of the Internet*, edited by Karen Hellekson and Busse, 79-96. Jefferson: McFarland.
- Duara, Prasenjit (1991). "Knowledge and Power in the Discourse of Modernity: The Campaign against Popular Religion in Early Twentieth-Century China." *Journal of Asian Studies* 50(1): 67-83. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2057476>.
- Feng, Jin (2009). "'Addicted to Beauty': Consuming and Producing Web-based Chinese 'Danmei' Fiction at Jinjiang." *Modern Chinese Literature and Culture* 21(2): 1-41 <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41491008>.
- Gray, Jonathan, Cornel Sandvoss, and C. Lee Harrington, eds. (2007). *Fandom: Identities and Communities in a Mediated World*. New York and London: New York University Press.
- Gwenllian-Jones, Sarah (2002). "The Sex Lives of Cult Television Characters." *Screen* 43(1): 79-90. <https://doi.org/10.1093/screen/43.1.79>.
- Herman, David (2002). *Story Logic: Problems and Possibilities of Narrative*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.
- Hinsch, Bret (1992). *Passions of the Cut Sleeve: The Male Homosexual Tradition in China*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Hogan, Patrick Colm (2011). *Affective Narratology: The Emotional Structure of Stories*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.
- Hutcheon, Linda (with Siobhan O'Flynn) (2013). *A Theory of Adaptation*. Second Edition. London and New York: Routledge.
- Jacobs, Katrien (2015). *The Afterglow of Women's Pornography in Post-Digital China*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Jenkins, Henry (2006). *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*. New York and London: New York University Press.
- Kapurch, Katie (2012). "'Unconditionally and Irrevocably': Theorizing the Melodramatic Impulse in Young Adult Literature through the *Twilight Saga* and *Jane Eyre*." *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* 37(2): 164-87. <https://doi.org/10.1353/chq.2012.0014>.
- Kuriyama, Shigehisa (1993). "Concepts of Disease in East Asia." In *The Cambridge World History of Human Disease*, edited by Kenneth F. Kiple, 52-9. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lee, Haiyan (2007). *Revolution of the Heart: A Genealogy of Love in China, 1900-1950*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Leitch, Thomas M (2003). "Twelve Fallacies in Contemporary Adaptation Theory." *Criticism* 45(2):149-71. <https://doi.org/10.1353/crt.2004.0001>.
- Lim, Song Hwee (2006). *Celluloid Comrades: Representations of Male Homosexuality in Contemporary Chinese Cinemas*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.
- Martin, Fran (2012). "Girls Who Love Boys' Love: Japanese Homoerotic Manga as Trans-national Taiwan Culture." *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 13(3): 365-83. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14649373.2012.689707>.
- McLelland, Mark J (2000). "The Love Between 'Beautiful Boys' in Japanese Women's Comics." *Journal of Gender Studies* 9(1): 13-25. <https://doi.org/10.1080/095892300102425>.
- Nagaike, Kazumi (2003). "Perverse Sexualities, Perverse Desires: Representations of Female Fantasies and 'Yaoi Manga' as Pornography Directed at Women." *U.S.-Japan Women's Journal* 25: 76-103. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/42771904>.
- Ng, Lynda (2015). "China's Elusive Truths: Censorship, Value and Literature in the Internet Age." In *Censorship and the Limits of the Literary: A Global View*, edited by Nicole Moore, 233-46. New York and London: Bloomsbury Publishing.

- Pagliassotti, Dru (2009). "GloBlisation and Hybridisation: Publishers' Strategies for Bringing Boys' Love to the United States." *Intersections: Gender and Sexuality in Asia and the Pacific* 20. <http://intersections.anu.edu.au/issue20/pagliassotti.htm>.
- Pang, Laikwan (2011). "The State against Ghosts: A Genealogy of China's Film Censorship Policy." *Screen* 52(4): 461-76. <https://doi.org/10.1093/screen/hjr039>.
- Penley, Constance (1991). "Brownian Motion: Women, Tactics, and Technology." In *Technoculture*, edited by Constance Penley and Andrew Ross, 135-61. Minnesota and London: University of Minnesota Press.
- Russ, Joanna (1985). "Pornography by Women, for Women, with Love." In *Magic Mommas, Trembling Sisters, Puritans and Perverts: Feminist Essays*, 79-99. New York: The Crossing Press.
- Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky (1992). *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Song, Geng (2004). *The Fragile Scholar: Power and Masculinity in Chinese Culture*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.
- Thomas, Bronwen (2011). "What Is Fanfiction and Why Are People Saying Such Nice Things about It?" *Storyworlds: A Journal of Narrative Studies* 3:1-24. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5250/storyworlds.3.2011.0001>.
- Wood, Andrea (2006). "'Straight' Women, Queer Texts: Boy-Love Manga and the Rise of a Global Counterpublic." *Women's Studies Quarterly* 34(1/2): 394-414. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40004766>.
- (2013). "Boys' Love Anime and Queer Desires in Convergence Culture: Transnational Fandom, Censorship and Resistance." *Journal of Graphic Novels and Comics* 4(1): 44-63. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21504857.2013.784201>.
- Wu, Cuncun (2004). *Homoerotic Sensibilities in Late Imperial China*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Xiao, Zhiwei (2013). "Prohibition, Politics, and Nation-Building: A History of Film Censorship in China." In *Silencing Cinema: Film Censorship around the World*, edited by Daniel Biltereyst and Roel VandeWinkel, 109-30. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Xu, Yanrui and Ling Yang (2013). "Forbidden Love: Incest, Generational Conflict, and the Erotics of Power in Chinese BL Fiction." *Journal of Graphic Novels and Comics* 4(1): 30-43. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21504857.2013.771378>.
- Yang, Ling and Yanrui Xu (2017a). "Chinese *Danmei* Fandom and Cultural Globalization from Below." In *Boys' Love, Cosplay, and Androgynous Idols: Queer Fan Cultures in Mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan*, edited by Maud Lavin, Yang Ling, and Zhao Jing Jamie, 3-19. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.
- (2017b). "'The Love That Dare Not Speak Its Name': The Fate of Chinese *Danmei* Communities in the 2014 Anti-porn Campaign." In *The End of Cool Japan: Ethical, Legal, and Cultural Challenges to Japanese Popular Culture*, edited by Mark McLelland, 163-83. London and New York: Routledge.
- Yang, Peidong and Lijun Tang (2018). "'Positive Energy': Hegemonic Intervention and Online Media Discourse in China's Xi Jinping Era." *China: An International Journal*, 16(1):1-22. <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/688045>.
- Zhang, Charlie Yi (2017). "When Feminist Falls in Love with Queer: *Dan Mei* Culture as a Transnational Apparatus of Love." *Feminist Formations* 29(2):121-46. <https://doi.org/10.1353/ff.2017.0019>.
- Zeitlin, Judith T (2007). *The Phantom Heroine: Ghosts and Gender in Seventeenth-Century Chinese Literature*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.
- Ziv, Amalia (2015). *Explicit Utopias: Rewriting the Sexual in Women's Pornography*. New York: State University of New York Press.

TV Series Cited

- Addicted* [上瘾] (2016)
Guardian [镇魂] (2018)
S.C.I. Mystery [S.C.I. 谜案集] (2018)

