

COPYRIGHT NOTICE

Martin & Heinrich/Embodied Modernities

is published by University of Hawai'i Press and copyrighted, © 2006, by University of Hawai'i Press. All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form by any electronic or mechanical means (including photocopying, recording, or information storage and retrieval) without permission in writing from the publisher, except for reading and browsing via the World Wide Web. Users are not permitted to mount this file on any network servers.

NB: Illustrations may have been deleted to decrease file size.

Introduction to Part I

LARISSA HEINRICH and FRAN MARTIN

WHILE PREPARING THIS anthology we were struck by an item of entertainment news that seemed aptly to encapsulate some of the cultural and intellectual coincidences that inspired the present volume: the phenomenon of film director Ang Lee dressing up as the Incredible Hulk during production of his movie *Hulk*. Shortly after the film was released in 2002, an interview with the prolific director revealed that partway through production, Lee grew concerned about the characterization of the title character, which was to be almost fully computer animated rather than played by a body-builder as it had been in the earlier television series called “The Incredible Hulk.” The cutting-edge techniques used to animate the enormous green muscle-bound figure of the Hulk called for the use of a motion-sensor suit—a sort of full-body prosthetic that translates the wearer’s movements into digital data that animators can then transform into animated graphics. But the director worried that the animators might be unaccustomed to animating human body forms, commenting that they still needed “some realistic reference to begin with. Then there’s attitude, too, the body performance, the body language.”¹ Frustrated when an actor proved inadequate to the task, Lee—who trained as an actor prior to commencing his directing career—decided to don the motion-sensor suit himself. Lee wore the cumbersome suit for six to eight hours a day over a period of nine months, working tirelessly to create a physical performance and body language that would satisfy his exacting vision of the creature’s characterization.

Lee’s donning of the motion-sensor suit could not have happened at any other historical juncture; it marks a paradigmatically early-twenty-first century moment. Not only was the technology new, but it enabled the performance of a notably late-modern model of identity and the body. Lee framed his desire to wear the suit by appealing to the idea of an authentic corporeal humanity: He hoped that inserting his own flesh-and-blood frame into the prosthetic suit would lend an aura of reality to the digital code representing the Hulk on screen. But paradoxically, Lee’s effort underscores the highly syncretic, volatile character of bodies and identities today. As a dias-

poric Taiwanese-born director—hailed as a “national treasure” by Taiwan’s government for winning glory in the international arena—Lee-as-Hulk performs a kind of national and ethnic cross-dressing by creating a body-language for an archetype of white Americana.²

The hypermasculine muscularity of the Hulk marks this as a highly gendered national and ethnic identity. Further, the character is encumbered by numerous cultural references: for example, the myth of Hercules and the Freudian themes that self-consciously inform Lee’s direction of the plot—the relationship between Bruce Banner and his father in Lee’s film is fraught, and Lee admits to using the film to explore his relationship with his own father.³ The muscularity of the title character even carries specific historical and cultural resonances when we consider the Taiwanese body activating it. One might recall, for instance, that the Greco-European concept of musculature itself was largely without cognate in Chinese anatomical learning before the nineteenth century.⁴ Equally, as the 2008 Olympics draw near and propaganda about China’s desire to demonstrate its strength on the international stage intensifies, we might reflect on the long and uncomfortable history of racist western representations of China as the (weak and effeminate) “sick man of Asia.” Called upon to secure a core of human authenticity at the heart of the digital Hulk, Lee’s body in fact tends to undermine, rather than bolster, one’s faith in the organic body as guarantor of authentic humanity or cultural identity. A Taiwanese director inhabits the digital spectacle of hypermuscular Americanism for a global film audience—the national, ethnic, and ontological status of the resultant body-image on screen is uniquely difficult to determine, but in spite of Lee’s hopes it does little to restore belief in the human body as guarantor of unproblematic realness and presence. Hidden beneath layers of hi-tech costume and digital code, Ang Lee was, in short, performing “Hulk drag.”

As we prepared this manuscript, Lee’s Hulk drag struck us as highly suggestive in at least two ways. First, with its melding of muscle with machine and digital monster image with solid human flesh, the incident raises questions about both the conceptualization and the representation of human bodies in the hypertechnological, hypermediated world of late modernity. Second, the multiple national and ethnic crossings enacted in the Taiwan-born director’s performance of the American pop-culture myth for a global audience raises questions about the increasingly complex, mobile, and multiple meanings of “Chineseness” in light of intensifying cultural globalization. These two sets of complexly interrelated questions concerning contemporary body representations and modern “Chineseness” provide the impetus behind this book’s project.

Embodied Modernities, then, presents a critical treatment of corporeality

and representation in Chinese contexts in the light of recent transformations in culture, technology, and body scholarship. Collectively, the essays gathered here offer a wide-ranging exploration of what embodiment means in the context of increasingly fractal understandings of Chinese identity. The central focus of the essays is body representation, as distinct from—though in some cases also incorporating—ethnographic accounts of lived body cultures. We have chosen to focus on body representations not because we think that material experiences of embodiment are reducible to textuality, but because, as the extant social sciences research on lived body cultures in modern China attests, ethnographies of quotidian bodily practices are clearly crucial to approaching a full understanding of what bodies mean in Chinese contexts. However, rather than conceiving of body representations and body practices as two discrete realms, we assume that to a large degree, publicly available representations of bodies shape lived experiences of bodies. Hence, as the chapters that follow demonstrate, by examining such representations in modern Chinese public cultures—be they popular fiction, film, print journalism, contemporary art, or digital video serials—we are able to view the structures of body knowledge that, to a large extent, *produce* the very bodies that modern social subjects experience in everyday life.

In recent years, scholarship on embodiment, Chinese identity, and modernity has undergone a series of radical shifts, leading to new and complex understandings of each term, as we discuss in detail below. The thirteen essays collected here bring these questions into suggestive proximity. Facilitating new dialogues between the history of science, modern literary studies, diaspora studies, cultural anthropology, and contemporary Chinese film and popular cultural studies, the volume directs critical attention to the question of the body between the late nineteenth and early twenty-first centuries across the People's Republic of China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Chinese diasporic cultures worldwide.

Studies on Pre-1949 Chinese Body Cultures

One might say that there are as many ways to approach the study of the body as there are disciplines: What constitutes “body studies” spans anthropology, art history, religion, philosophy, literary studies, and other disciplines across the humanities and social sciences. Body studies that focus on China span an equally broad spectrum.⁵ A foundational discipline that offers early examples of these prior to 1949 is the history of Chinese science, and its subset medicine, epitomized in the scholarly legacy of Joseph Needham's encyclopedic research on science and technology in China. Now-classic studies by medi-

cal historians like Paul Unschuld, Manfred Porkert, and Nathan Sivin all provide comprehensive philological explorations of Chinese medical approaches to explaining the body and its systems from the perspective of medical history, while tackling the challenging problem of how to translate central ideas and terminology between the Chinese and western Hippocratic approaches. How to explain descriptors for the body within a system that did not prioritize dissection-based anatomical learning? How to translate and explain Chinese body-related terms such as *qi*, *xue*, and *xin* that have no practical cognate in modern western medical and anatomical traditions?⁶ In looking for the material body and its textual traces, these works introduce key Chinese medical understandings of the body in the premodern period.

Scholarship on Chinese medical history and the history of science post-Foucault, meanwhile, has advanced the idea that corporeality, including the expression of disease, is shaped in a fundamental sense by cultural practice. Charlotte Furth's work on childbirth, "the growing body," and blood in Chinese medicine, as well as her more recent monograph, *A Flourishing Yin*, approach Chinese expressions of corporeality as the product of traditional understandings of the body and health in medical, philosophical, and folk traditions.⁷ Yi-Li Wu's work on classical Chinese gynecology, as well as her research into translations of Western-style gynecological anatomy in the late nineteenth century, likewise evaluates Chinese medicine and medical understandings of the body not according to how they measure against western models, but on their own terms.⁸ Taking us up to the late Qing and Republican periods, Hiroko Sakamoto traces important connections between social constructions of nationalism and conceptualizations of the human body in the opening decades of the twentieth century, while relatedly, Ruth Rogaski's new study, *Hygienic Modernity*, shows how concepts of "hygiene" (*weisheng*) introduced in this period and associated with "modernity" entailed not only ideas about human bodies but also ideas about race, scientific knowledge, and national sovereignty.⁹ Finally, in *The Expressiveness of the Body and the Divergence of Greek and Chinese Medicine*, Shigehisa Kuriyama compares and contrasts key conceptual lineages in western and Chinese anatomical traditions, treating them as equals and focusing not on questions of translation or "lack" of certain conventions or practices from one or the other tradition so much as a practical understanding of the distinctive ways in which these two systems conceived of and accounted for the workings of the human body.

Besides explorations of medical understandings of the body in premodern and pre-Communist China, key studies that situate understandings of the body within broader religious, philosophical, and ideological discourses also form an important background to this book. Two exemplary models of this are

Kristof Schipper's *The Taoist Body*, and Catherine Despeux's *Taoïsme et corps humain*, which analyze understandings of corporeality in classical religious and philosophical tracts, exploring understandings of the body as a microcosm not of scientific principles but of Taoist philosophy. Though not focused exclusively on the body *per se*, Patricia Berger's *Empire of Emptiness*, on Buddhist art and political authority in the Qing, and Richard Vinograd's *Boundaries of the Self* follow a comparable method in outlining the connections between Buddhist and other religious belief systems and images of the human body in Qing dynasty China. Along similar lines, Mark Elvin's "Tales of *Shen* and *Xin*" has become something of a touchstone in the field of Chinese body studies for the model it proposes of a distinctively Chinese conceptualization of subject ("heart-mind," *xin*) and body ("body-self," *shen*) persisting from dynastic through Maoist times. Angela Zito's study of Grand Sacrifice, *Of Body and Brush*, meanwhile, reveals complex relations between ritual (*li*), the representation of the Emperor's body, and the production of subjectivity. All of these examples move decidedly away from the idea of regarding "the Chinese body" as a universally decodable object toward understanding the body as a changeable construct subject to the contingencies of culture and history.

Perhaps the most significant point of departure for this volume, though, is Angela Zito and Tani Barlow's 1994 edited collection, *Body, Subject, and Power in China*, which crystallizes very concretely many of the methodological developments in contemporary Chinese body scholarship discussed above. Zito and Barlow's volume engages with what were then newly emerging topics in Chinese body scholarship, including the nature versus culture paradigm, differential cultural constructions of bodies, and the gendering of bodies as a social process. The volume's individual chapters reflect in a direct way the initial impact of post-structuralist critical theories on Chinese body studies.¹⁰ They are marked by their collective approach to bodies not as transparent, stable objects of analysis, but rather as variable knowledge formations constructed through historically specific regimes of discourse and social discipline.¹¹ It is in this sense that *Body, Subject, and Power* provides the methodological point of departure for the present volume.

Tani Barlow's essay in that volume, "Theorizing Woman: *Funü*, *Guojia*, *Jiating*," models especially clearly the broad conceptual framework and the historicist methodology that we have presumed as central in preparing this volume. Adopting a groundbreaking approach, Barlow's essay traced a Foucauldian-style genealogy of Chinese concepts of femininity between the late imperial and the Maoist eras through attention to the three historically specific sociolinguistic categories. These are the kin-inflected *funü* (kinswoman) of the Qing, the modern, western-inflected *nüxing* (woman) of the

Republican period, and finally the collectivist *funü* (socialist woman) of China under Mao, which is instantiated most directly in the discourse of the state-run All-China Women's Federation. Provocatively, Barlow argued that since social subjectivity is staged within language, and since available categories for understanding gender vary historically, one cannot appeal to "Chinese women" as a transhistorical presence, but can only attend to the different ways in which femininity has been constructed in distinct historical periods. Thus, for example, it would be nonsensical to speak of "Chinese women" *per se* in the premodern period, when no overarching category of "women" existed, and female subject-positions were defined solely as kin-positions (mother, daughter, wife) within the patrilinear family. Similarly, the modern mainland Chinese term *funü* relates less to the premodern representations of femininity in China than to other categories installed as part of socialist modernization—categories like "worker" (*gongren*), "youth" (*qingnian*) and "proletariat" (*wuchanjieji*).¹² This Foucauldian approach to categories of social subjecthood has profoundly influenced much recent work in studies of Chinese corporeality and centrally informs the project of this book. Along with Barlow, Sang, and other contemporary scholars of gender and sexuality in modern Chinese contexts, we assume from the outset that modern categories of personhood are just that—*modern*.¹³ Categories like woman (*nüxing/nüren*), man (*nánxing/nánren*), homosexual (*tongxing'ai/tongxinglian*) and heterosexual (*yixing'ai/yixinglian*) trace their genesis back to the indigenization of Japanese and western sexology and gender concepts during the Republican period and constitute distinctively *new* ways of conceptualizing bodies, selves, desires, and kinship. As the chapters in Part I by Wu and Stevenson, Sang, and Epstein in particular demonstrate—once again following Foucault—it is imperative to distinguish conceptually between modern-style individual sexual and gender *identities* and premodern regimes of gendered, kinship, and sexual *behavior*.¹⁴ Thus, the focus of many of our chapters on representations of gendered and sexual bodies is not intended to provide an account, for example, of something like "women's/homosexual/transgendered bodies throughout Chinese history." Rather, this focus bespeaks our interest in exploring the historically variable ways in which gendered and sexual bodies have come to *mean* over the past one hundred and twenty years, across diverse Chinese societies.

If *Body, Subject, and Power in China* reflected the initial impact of contemporary critical theory on Chinese body scholarship, then taken as a whole, this volume demonstrates the further development of post-structuralist methodologies in this field. Thematically, unlike Zito and Barlow's volume, it focuses solely on the modern period, defined loosely around the twentieth century—indeed, as we discuss below, the idea of Chinese modernities is a guiding rubric

for the book as a whole. As well as bringing together new work on representations of embodiment in late-nineteenth-century and Republican-era “thresholds of modernity,” the collection also brings into focus recent developments in late-modern Chinese body representation over the decade since *Body, Subject*’s publication. From the premodern bodies of the *xianggong* catamite and the hypermasculine hero of the popular novel *Yesou puyan* through to the globally mobile, late-modern star bodies of Bruce Lee and Maggie Cheung and the violently fragmented bodies of contemporary mainland Chinese experimental art, the bodies discussed in this volume are approached as the effects of historically specific regimes of representation and power. From the perspective of the late-modern moment at which this volume has been written, modern Chinese bodies seem anything but self-explanatory and historically constant; instead, they appear to be the unpredictable effects of radically contingent, ceaselessly transforming constellations of cultural knowledge and practice.

Republican Culture as an Alternative Modernity

If a primary aim of this book is to rethink Chinese body politics in the light of recent developments in both body scholarship and body cultures, this general project is focused more finely through attention to the idea of Chinese modernities, especially in light of recent scholarship on alternative modernities. In this sense, the book’s project is twofold: It seeks both to rethink Chinese bodies by approaching them as an aspect of Chinese modernities and to offer a fresh view of those sets of experience through the lens of changing representations of bodies. The point of reference for our approach to Chinese modernities is an influential strand of scholarship on non-western modernities that has emerged from studies of postcolonial societies and cultures and globalization over the past ten years. Writing variously on “alternative,” “other” or “hybrid” modernities, scholars including Arjun Appadurai, Aihwa Ong, Lisa Rofel, Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar, and Lydia Liu have contributed to a fundamental reorientation of the very notion.¹⁵ Collectively, this work demonstrates that modernity, a state of culture once presumed to be both inherently western (based on the European Enlightenment values of humanism, scientific rationality, and social progress) and potentially universal, is in practice “not one but many,” not (only) western but also manifest in distinct syncretic formations across the diverse non-western sites of colonial and postcolonial encounters.¹⁶ Such an approach leads away from the once-assumed opposition between a modern west and a non- or premodern non-west, and toward renewed attempts, in Ong’s words, “to consider how non-western societies themselves make modernities after their own fashion, in the remaking of rationality, capi-

talism and the nation in ways that borrow from but also transform western universalizing forms.”¹⁷ To Ong’s list of the elements of western modernity that emerge, re-made, from these local sites, we would add the modern body. Like rationality, capitalism, and the nation, this body in its Chinese incarnations is also a product of modern times; its modernity is mapped in a newly acquired scientific tracery of nerves, blood vessels, and musculature as much as in its novel metaphoric potential to signify at different times both universal humanity and the painful emergence of a modern Chinese nation.¹⁸ Indeed, in a strong sense the body, understood as a series of constantly transforming concepts and practices in cultural and historical context, can be interpreted as symptomatic of Chinese modernities.

Over recent years, the cultural history of Chinese modernity in the Republican period, between the founding of the Republic of China in 1911 and the Communist revolution and founding of the People’s Republic of China in 1949, has become the focus of a rapidly expanding field of inquiry. As Wen-hsin Yeh observes, this trend can be attributed both to the relatively recent access researchers have gained to archives housing materials pertaining to this period in the People’s Republic, and to a broad shift in scholarship toward a focus on the micro-level of everyday cultural practice rather than the top-down effects of large-scale institutional structures.¹⁹ Shu-mei Shih identifies a further reason why the Republican period may have attracted such intense interest.²⁰ Shih highlights the cultural and historical parallels between the 1920s–1930s and the 1980s–1990s by pointing out mainland Chinese intellectuals’ engagement and subsequent re-engagement with western modernity and modernism, first in the context of China’s semi-colonization by European and Japanese powers, and half a century later in the context of post-Mao cultural internationalization. In this account, a hybrid formation of Chinese modernity emerged in the Republican period from China’s ambivalent engagement with modern metropolitan Western and Japanese cultures, interrupted, as it were, by Communist nationalism between 1949 and 1979. This pattern would reassemble in a new but related form in the China of the “New Era.”²¹

Following from our interest in probing further historical questions raised by Shih and others about the unpredictable cultural continuities and discontinuities between these two key moments of contemporary Chinese history, the essays included here fall into two sections, the first addressing the Republican period and the second the contemporary.²² Many of the chapters in the first part of this book (especially Zito, Wu and Stevenson, and Epstein) are interested in how Republican Chinese body representations reveal current excitements and anxieties about China’s cultural engagement with the west, a theme of transnational cultural flow and the hybrid character of Chinese mo-

modernities that returns strongly in almost all of the essays in the book's second section.²³ By sketching out these broad cultural linkages, *Embodied Modernities* aims to contribute to the growing body of work exploring the genealogy of present-day Chinese experience.²⁴

While Shih's book on Chinese literary modernism, *The Lure of the Modern*, proposes the city and the nation as the two critical thematic foci for discussions of Chinese modernity and modernism, we propose that consideration of body representations offers an equally illuminating rubric through which to approach Chinese modernities. First, since the body is experientially central to individual, quotidian experiences of modernity, representations of the body across a wide range of texts reveal a series of broader themes that are central to the broader cultural experience of modernity. Second, like the city and the nation, the body has been subject to particularly rapid and thorough-going reconceptualizations over the past century, hence changes in how bodies have been represented in this period reveal key cultural transformations that have accompanied the processes of modernization. These include the translation of scientific discourses on anatomy, medicine, gender, and sexuality; the implementation of a Maoist vision of the collective body of Chinese socialism; and the articulation of transforming discourses on the modern Chinese nation and cultural identity allegorized as body representations (for example, the notorious "sick man of Asia" in the early twentieth century, or the spectacularly anticolonial figure of the late-twentieth-century Hong Kong action star, Bruce Lee). In all of these, body representations can be seen not merely as random instances of Chinese cultural production, but as in fact exemplary of some of the central preoccupations of modern Chinese cultures. In other words, between the late nineteenth and the early twenty-first centuries, the cultural modernities of mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and the Chinese diaspora have to a significant degree been figured in and through representations of human bodies.

A key text in the new wave of Republican Chinese modernity studies is Leo Ou-fan Lee's study of 1930s and 1940s Shanghai.²⁵ As Yeh has observed, a central significance of Lee's study lies in his methodological departure from previous studies on the May Fourth period by focusing on popular commodity culture rather than the elite realm of philosophical discourse—further to this, we might add that Lee's approach also marks a shift from the methodologies of Cold War-era area studies to a focus on cultural history and urban imaginaries, an approach that has more in common with contemporary cultural studies.²⁶ Shifting attention from elite literature and the high culture of Republican Chinese modernism, Lee looks to the everyday culture embodied in commercial graphic art, popular film, fiction, periodicals and pictorial jour-

nals, fashion, and the popular imaginary to construct his account of the Republican “Shanghai modern.”²⁷ This volume echoes Lee’s move away from the presumption that elite intellectual culture provides the key to understanding modern Chinese complexities.²⁸ The authors of the chapters in Part I discuss popular fiction and theater, and the focus on popular cultural forms and popular responses to other cultural forms continues through Part II. Looking to martial arts fiction rather than May Fourth classics, or to the cross-dressing of popular entertainer Mei Lanfang rather than the agonized national body inscribed by Lu Xun produces a very distinct view of the experiences and meanings of Chinese modernities—a view we think is more broadly representative because it engages seriously with mass-cultural forms and popular readings.

If one of the aims of this volume is to contribute to the study of modern popular cultural forms and experiences that have frequently been sidelined by the scholarly privileging of elite culture, this attention is also echoed in other aspects of the volume’s thematics. We proposed above that Chinese modernities are already, by definition, “other” to the presumptive centrality and universality of Euro-American modernity. What interest us more specifically in this volume are the margins of that margin: works and experiences that have been considered peripheral to the mainstream of modern Chinese cultures. The volume addresses these margins in two major ways. First, many of the chapters focus on representations and experiences of “othered” bodies and subjects, especially gender nonnormative persons (female masculinities and male femininities), women, and youth cultures. Second, many of the chapters in Part II take up a geocultural focus on areas other than the Chinese mainland—Taiwan, Hong Kong, and the worldwide Chinese diaspora. These areas have sometimes been considered the geocultural peripheries of a China whose presumptive focus tends to fall on the mainland (this question is discussed further below and in the Introduction to Part II). Our desire to focus so strongly on marginalized aspects of modern Chinese cultures is undergirded by the conviction that, in a fundamental sense, centers are always defined by their structuring and dependent relation to their peripheries. According to that logic, Chinese modernity as a grand narrative, whenever and wherever this narrative is appealed to, is necessarily defined as much by its excluded “others”—those subordinated subjects who cannot easily be counted within its scope—as by those forms of culture and subjectivity that it privileges.²⁹ By turning critical attention to what has often been left out of dominant histories of modern Chinese social life, this volume is particularly interested in nonnormative formations of gender and sexuality (addressed in detail by Wu and Stevenson, Zou, Sang, Martin, and Berry). Given the centrality of gender and sexual ideologies to the dominant modern imaginaries, we feel that analyzing these

marginalized formations reveals just as much about the structuring anxieties and suppressed histories of currently dominant gender and sexual regimes as it does about the subjects that these chapters most directly address.³⁰ Our approach here might be called “peripheralist”: It aims to illuminate the contours of dominant gendered and sexual formations through attention to those ways of being that, through the workings of cultural history, have been excluded from serious scholarly consideration.

Arranged in two approximately chronological sections, the chapters in this volume trace a historical trajectory from the initial indigenization of modern European understandings of the body around the turn of the nineteenth century to more recent developments in the ways bodies are understood and represented. The contributors to Part I read traces of that modern body’s traffic both in the aspirations of local modernist intellectuals, specifically in public debates over the abolition of footbinding and male prostitution, and in western conceptualizations of disease, gender, and the nation that crop up in Republican-era literary and theatrical cultures. In Part II we encounter late-modern texts that wrestle with the specter of the global organ trade, hotly contested ideologies of gender and sexuality, the violence of urban hyperdevelopment, diasporic cross-cultural encounters, Taiwanese digital video fan practices, and the transnational projections of Hong Kong cinema. As a whole, then, the book demonstrates how changing trends in the public representation of both privileged and marginalized bodies encode many of the broader preoccupations of modern Chinese cultures. Nation-building, sex and gender, health and illness, medical science, state politics, changing cities, and transcultural interactions are seen afresh through attention to the multiform modern and late-modern body-texts in which these concepts and processes leave their traces. This focus on changing representations of bodies thus presents an alternative, and, we feel, a productive way of approaching Chinese modernities.

Dispersing Chineseness

As observed above, this volume thinks through the margins of Chinese modernities by focusing on what were once considered the geopolitical peripheries of “Chineseness.” The book includes work on all four of the areas that make up what has been variously referred to as “greater China” and “transnational China” — the People’s Republic of China on the mainland, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and the worldwide Chinese diaspora.³¹ But our intention in including chapters on all of these areas is emphatically not to imply that all of them can be unproblematically subsumed within a greater whole called “China,” nor that these disparate areas are culturally united through some shared cul-

tural essence. In distinction to Tu Wei-ming's famous defense of the diasporic periphery as the emergent center of a reconfigured and organic "cultural China," this collection suggests precisely a *dispersion* of China and Chineseness in the contemporary world, such that no transparent, unitary, or final meaning can be attached to those terms.³² Rather than the irresistible centripetal force that "China" is often presumed to exert — not least in the aggressive political centrism and territorial expansionism of the People's Republic today — the idea of Chineseness that emerges from this collection is instead a centrifugal one, underscoring its actual fragmentation, both geocultural and conceptual.³³ In this, our approach is aligned with those of other scholars engaged in mapping the shifting, plural, and internally discontinuous meanings of Chinese identity today.³⁴ There do exist, of course, certain historical threads linking the discrepant modernities of the People's Republic of China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Chinese diasporic cultures. Indeed, as we outline below, a central project in several of the essays collected here is to track the strands of influence linking body representations at distinct historical moments and geographic sites that remain, in Xiaobing Tang's phrase, "absorbed in the same maelstrom of [Chinese] modernity."³⁵ However, equally as important as these historical linkages are the countless ways in which the sites analyzed differ from each other. The examples discussed in the chapters of this book do not add up to any complete or sum entity that one might designate "the modern Chinese body." Rather, they reveal the impossibility of reaching such a neat conclusion, foregrounding instead the multiplicity and heterogeneity of modern Chinese body representations. Given all this, a note on our use of the term "Chinese" is in order. In the pages that follow, this adjective is not used to imply an equation of all of the different nouns it qualifies. More simply, it is used to designate texts and practices that are either written, performed, or experienced in a Chinese language, or have primary investments in exploring the multiple significances and effects of the idea of "Chineseness" in the modern period.³⁶

The Essays: Part I

The essays collected in the first part of this volume, "Thresholds of Modernity," share a common concern with mapping the chaotic transition between premodern and modern regimes of subjecthood and corporeality. The section title draws from Angela Zito's discussion of the negative representation of footbinding in the late nineteenth century, which, she proposes, positions its abolition as a symbolic threshold marking modernity's nether limit. As the section title implies, all these essays focus on body cultures in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, not only for the intrinsic historical

interest of the primary material, but for the new light this analysis sheds on emergent regimes of body knowledge that would remain influential throughout the modern era. Framing representations of footbinding as the ground for a series of cultural encounters—both discursive and actual—between China and the west, Zito’s essay compares discussions of footbinding at three distinct historical and cultural moments. These are the anti-footbinding discourse of late-nineteenth-century missionary women in China, critiques of footbinding by western radical feminists in the late twentieth century, and discussions of Chinese women’s bodies in present-day international and postcolonial feminisms. Zito traces a common thread linking all of these seemingly unrelated critiques: the tendency for each to press “footbinding” into service in a strictly *fetishistic* way. That is, Zito proposes that for the past one hundred and twenty years, the reified image of the Chinese woman’s bound foot has consistently enabled cultural critics to displace onto a convenient “other” contradictions and anxieties that more properly pertain to the immediate cultural and historical contexts of the critics themselves.

Zito’s essay deploys a cross-historical methodology that is taken up elsewhere in this book. Rather than proposing a direct causal relation between the distinct moments under discussion, this approach sketches a more indirect historical logic. Sharing something in common with Foucauldian genealogy, it is a way of writing “histories of the present.”³⁷ This methodology is also employed in the chapters by Heinrich (contrasting Lu Xun’s turn-of-the-century anatomical imaginary with body representations in contemporary Chinese art and literature), Martin (juxtaposing Taiwanese lesbian author Qiu Miaojin’s late-1980s writing with Yu Dafu’s 1932 description of a monstrous female homosexual), and Berry (who finds in Bruce Lee’s star body a transfiguration of the classical *wu* ideal of martial masculinity). This approach should be carefully distinguished from a transhistorical approach, which would disregard historical specificity to propose that cultural phenomena persist, unchanging, through time eternal. In contrast, the cross-historical approach emphasizes change as much as linkages. It appeals to the past heuristically and interestingly, as a means of shedding light on particular aspects of the present.

Dealing, like Zito, with the transition between imperial conceptualizations of corporeality and modern body regimes, Wu and Stevenson’s essay investigates the shifting meanings of the low-class, effeminate, rigorously cultivated catamite body of the feminine-role (*dan*) actor in Beijing opera—known socially as the *xianggong*—in the opening decades of the twentieth century. The authors argue that with China’s cultural modernization, the once-common figure of the *xianggong* was effectively erased from history; it was omitted from both the emergent sexological discourse of homosexuality as *tongxing’ai*, and

from new official histories of Chinese national theater. In discussing the decline of the *xianggong*, Wu and Stevenson touch on a theme common to several of the essays in the first part of the volume: the response of Republican Chinese intellectuals to the crisis of the semi-colonial Chinese nation and the attendant vexing issue of national modernization framed as westernization. In this context, the authors argue that cultural panic over male prostitution in Republican Beijing led to the disappearance of the *xianggong*'s social role, and it was sparked not by any direct intervention by western powers, but instead by a new sensitivity on the part of Chinese intellectuals and officials to a perceived western gaze. This represents an important complication of the influential proposal that sexual modernization in China equates straightforwardly to sexual westernization and the consequent suppression of an indigenous premodern Chinese "tolerance" for sex between men.³⁸ Instead of a clear-cut opposition between western sexual modernity and Chinese sexual tradition, Wu and Stevenson argue that the suppression of the *xianggong* role in early twentieth-century Beijing entails a more complex scenario. They contend that as part of the nation-building project, Chinese intellectuals sought to transform local body cultures in a self-policing response to the perception of a censorious—yet in large part *imagined*—western gaze. Such a formulation underscores the agency of local intellectuals in shaping modern Chinese body cultures. At the same time it also challenges the notion, implicit in some of the extant scholarship, that sexual modernity in China resulted from ideologies of western sexual-scientific modernity somehow imposing themselves, autonomous and unmediated, upon premodern Chinese subjects.³⁹

Maram Epstein's chapter, too, touches on the relation between body representations and the difficult emergence of the modern Chinese nation. Identifying a tendency in the extant scholarship to assume that modern Chinese representations of masculine bodies in crisis are always simply allegories for the crisis of the emergent nation, Epstein argues that this view needs to be tempered by an understanding of the historical roots of the "male marginality complex" in late imperial popular fiction. Engaging with a 1929 redaction of the eighteenth-century novel *Yesou puyan* (*A Rustic's Words of Exposure*), Epstein finds in the novel's protagonist, Wen Suchen, a wishful resolution of the tension between individual autonomy and the Confucian ritual imperative—a tension that she argues already fractures imperial-era Chinese masculinity well before the crisis of the modern nation. Epstein draws a contrast between the 1929 redaction of *Yesou puyan* and the eighteenth century original, observing that the Republican edition shows a relative wane of emphasis on the question of Chinese–foreign relations and a correspondingly increased interest in masculinity and sexuality. Epstein discerns in the Republican re-

daction a new association of sex with pleasure rather than reproductive duty, a new anchoring of masculine and feminine genders in sexed bodies, an increased importance of the body to masculine identity, and—resonating with Wu and Stevenson’s discussion—a new tendency to frame sexual relations between men as deviant behavior. Epstein thus positions the 1929 redaction of *Yesou puyan* as a kind of barometer of changing conceptualizations of sexed and gendered bodies in China in this period. Her observations are congruent with those made by other contributors to this section, who also find modern, scientific, European ideas of the body blending with older local understandings of social status and ritual role to produce fundamentally syncretic modern understandings of body and self. We might call this messy, incomplete transition from ritual-based understandings of the self-as-social-role to models that incorporate elements of European body-science the *corporealization* of the modern Chinese social subject.

Picking up a thread from Wu and Stevenson, John Zou’s essay about the star body of *dan* actor Mei Lanfang also addresses the corporealization of modern Chinese masculinity. He argues that by theatrically foregrounding the incongruity between man’s body and woman’s clothing, Mei Lanfang’s celebrity cross-dressing paradoxically contributes to the emergence of a modern notion of essential maleness, or what Zou calls the notion of the “unclothed and essentially male body.” As Zou points out, this emergent gender-essentialism at the level of the body stands in sharp distinction to the imperial encoding of the social and political identity of the masculine subject in and through his clothing. Given Mei’s perverse reinforcement of the rising ideology of masculinity as above all a bodily state, Zou provocatively proposes that the cross-dressed yet symbolically unclothed Mei can be understood as an embodiment of Republican Chinese modernity itself.

While several of the earlier chapters underscore Republican-era intellectuals’ indigenization of elements of western scientism and the consequent corporealization of the modern Chinese social subject, Tze-lan D. Sang draws attention to the incompleteness of this project by focusing on popular culture in Wang Dulu’s serialized martial arts novels of the early 1940s. Sang proposes that the transgender or “intersexual” body of Yu Jiaolong, the hard-fighting hero/ine of Wang’s novel *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, bespeaks the survival of a late imperial popular taste for representations of female masculinity; this survival contrasts with the heteronormative and essentialist constructions of gendered bodies advocated by a modernizing elite. Sang argues that the literary figure of Yu Jiaolong provokes the reader’s desire for a “gender-queer body,” making Wang’s text more radical, from the viewpoint of contemporary queer and transgender theory, than Ang Lee’s 2000 film adaptation, which

Sang suggests actually suppresses Yu Jiaolong's transgender status. Thus although, like Zou, Sang focuses on a popular-culture figure that embodies transgender erotic appeal, her conclusion about Yu Jiaolong's radical potential provides an interesting counterpoint to Zou's proposal that Mei Lanfang's cross-dressing in fact *reinforced* the modern understanding of sex and gender as immanent within bodies. Sang frames Yu Jiaolong's heroic, transgendered body as the trace of an alternative, popular understanding of sex, gender, and bodies that persisted stubbornly alongside, yet counter to, twentieth-century discourses of gender essentialism. As several authors explore in Part II, however, the normative force of gender as a binary, corporeal structure that appeared to gain in strength as the twentieth century progressed would emerge as a key focus for critique by sexual and gendered "others" at century's end.

Notes

1. See Alsetter, "Trailer Park."
2. See for example Kao, "Fame"; Government Information Office, "Republic."
3. See for example Anthony, "The Long and Shirt of it."
4. Kuriyama, *Expressiveness of the Body*.
5. On premodern Chinese body cultures see, for example, Kristofer Schipper's, Jean Lévi's, and Catherine Despeux's studies of the Daoist body in classical texts and religious cultures. Schipper, *Taoist Body*; Lévi, "Body"; and Despeux, *Taoïsme*. In art history, John Hay's explorations of Chinese art and calligraphy demonstrate how western understandings of the body in art—for example traditions of the nude—depended on presuppositions that were not pertinent to the Chinese canon, thereby calling into question a battery of assumptions about the body and representation that western scholars brought with them to their analyses of Chinese art. Hay, "Body Invisible" and "Human Body." In comparative philosophy, Wu Kuang-ming's *On Chinese Body Thinking* proposes a qualitative distinction between western abstract thinking and what Wu styles Chinese "body thinking" in pre-Han Chinese philosophy.
6. See also Sivin, "State, Cosmos, and Body." At the time of this writing, Sivin has also compiled an impressive and ever-expanding web-based archive of general studies of the body: <http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/~nsivin/bib414.html>.
7. Furth, "Blood, Body and Gender"; Furth, "Concepts of Pregnancy"; and Furth, "From Birth to Birth."
8. Wu Yi-Li, "Ghost Fetuses, False Pregnancies."
9. Sakamoto, *The Myth of Nationalism*.
10. This conceptual shift in Chinese body studies over the past decade has reflected a broader series of transformations in conceptualizing bodies in humanities scholarship over recent years. One of the most influential areas of work in this regard has been feminist philosophy. With the impact of Foucault's historicizing approach to modern sexuality, as well as post-structuralism's critique of essentialism more generally, feminist philosophers since

the mid-1980s including Donna Haraway, Judith Butler, Elizabeth Grosz, Moira Gatens and many others have mounted a radical critique of naturalist epistemologies of sex, gender, and the body. See, for example, Haraway, "Manifesto for Cyborgs"; Haraway, *Simians*; Haraway, *Modest Witness*; Butler, *Gender Trouble*; Butler, *Bodies That Matter*; Grosz, *Volatile Bodies*; and Gatens, *Imaginary Bodies*. See also Claudia Springer's study on conceptualizing embodiment in the electronic age in *Electronic Eros*.

11. A Foucauldian approach to the construction of the subject through discourse and social discipline is especially evident in the contributions by Anagnost, "Politicized Body"; and Barlow, "Theorizing Woman." For a collection of recent essays on the history of medicine in modern China and Taiwan informed by similarly historicist, constructionist approaches, see Li Shang-jen, ed., *Medicine, Imperialism and Modernity*.

12. Barlow, "Theorizing Woman," 254.

13. Sang, *Emerging*, 275–276.

14. Foucault, *History of Sexuality Volume 1*.

15. See, for example, Appadurai, *Modernity*; Ong, "Anthropology"; Ong, *Flexible Citizenship*, chap. 1; Nonini and Ong, *Ungrounded Empires*; Rofel, *Other Modernities*; and Gaonkar, *Alternative Modernities*, especially Gaonkar, "On Alternative Modernities." See also Lydia Liu's study of the transcultural invention of the modern idea of "China" through the "clash of empires" between the British Empire and the Qing dynasty in the late nineteenth century. Liu, *The Clash of Empires*.

16. Gaonkar, "On Alternative Modernities," 23.

17. Ong, "Anthropology," 64.

18. See the important strand of work theorising the entanglements between gendered bodies and the project of the modern Chinese nation and Chinese modernity itself, especially as represented in Republican era fiction. For example, Liu, "Female Body"; Yue, "Modern Chinese Fiction"; the essays collected in Barlow, *Gender Politics*; and Zito (this volume).

19. Yeh, "Introduction," 1.

20. Shu-mei Shih, *Lure*, vii–xiii, 377.

21. Note David Der-wei Wang's proposal that latterly repressed, indigenous forms of Chinese nonrealist literary modernity were already emerging by the time significant cultural hybridization with European and Japanese forms got underway in the May Fourth period, and that these "repressed modernities" return in the alternative literary modernisms of late-twentieth-century mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and the Chinese diaspora. Wang, *Splendor*. Contrast also Shu-mei Shih's bracketing-off socialist modernity both with Xiaobing Tang's view of romantic-revolutionary heroism as a *central* aspect of the dialectic of Chinese modernity and with Xiaobin Yang's observation of the Enlightenment-style teleological view of national history that is common to both Republican and Maoist modernities. Note also Yang's observation of the related critiques of such modernist totalitarianism found both in certain examples of May Fourth fiction and again in the "postmodern" avant-garde fiction of the 1980s. Tang, *Chinese Modern*; Yang, *Chinese Postmodern*.

22. Sang's periodization is similar in *Emerging Lesbian*; see note 21 above on Wang's and Yang's linking of early and late-twentieth-century literary modernisms.

23. Chow, *Woman and Chinese Modernity*, 27.

24. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 30–31.

25. Lee, *Shanghai Modern*.

26. Yeh, "Introduction," 5–7; cf. Dirlik and Zhang, "Introduction," 11–15.

27. See also Xiaobing Tang's focus on representations of quotidian culture as central to the dialectic of modernity in *Chinese Modern*.

28. Although Yeh's collection includes Lee's essay "The cultural construction of modernity in urban Shanghai," Yeh still characterizes the subject of *Becoming Chinese* as "middle-class elites" (p. 26); and indeed most of the chapters deal with this class fraction, for example in their collective attention to publishers, advertisers, merchants, entrepreneurs, urban consumers, middle-class urban women's redemptive societies, government and politicians, educators, students, and elite authors and intellectuals.

29. Cf. Anbin Shi, *Comparative Approach*, 1–17.

30. Cf. Rofel, *Other Modernities*, 19–21.

31. Ong, "Anthropology."

32. Tu, "Cultural China."

33. Cf. Hsu's proposal of the centripetal, expansionist, and centrist force of modern transnational Chinese culture in "A Reflection on Marginality."

34. See, for example, Ien Ang, *Not Speaking Chinese*; Chow, "Chineseness"; Chun, "Fuck Chineseness"; Shi, *Comparative Approach*; and Dirlik and Zhang, "Introduction."

35. Tang, *Chinese Modern*, 347.

36. On this point we dissent from Xiaobing Tang's suggestion of a conceptually *unitary* pan-Chinese modernity and modernism based on the Chinese language in *Chinese Modern* (pp. 345–347). Unlike Tang with his dream of an ultimately singular—if also diverse—modern *Zhongwen wenxue* (Chinese literature), the current volume seeks more to pluralize than to unify our understandings of the various Chinese modernities.

37. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 30–31.

38. See, for example, Hinsch, *Passions*; Chou, *Houzhimin tongzhi*.

39. For an excellent critique of this simplistic argument on sexual modernization as passive westernization, see Sang, *Emerging Lesbian*, 99–126.