

popular debates. This book thus expands available research directions and is an essential reference work for those interested in understanding Hong Kong's contentious politics through comprehensive perspectives.

As for constitutional, institutional, and center–local fronts, this edited volume makes an important attempt in redefining Hong Kong political studies from “democratization” to “undemocratic autonomist.” Existing literature has long placed Hong Kong politics in the field of democratization for examining its undemocratic political systems, such as in terms of the Chief Executive election and Legislative Council election. As pointed out by Fong and Lui in the epilogue,

In post-Umbrella Movement era, there are even signs that the opposition movements in Hong Kong are extending from counter-mobilizations aimed at defending against Beijing intervention into more organized campaigns in pursuit of self-determination and territorial secession. These growing conflicts point to the tensions between an authoritarian central government and the supposedly highly autonomous Special Administration Region. (342)

The most important contribution of this book, then, is to emphasize that Hong Kong's undemocratic political system is only one indicator of the concept of autonomy. To put it differently, given the undemocratic political system, Hong Kong politics should be recalibrated to an understanding of “undemocratic autonomist” henceforth. The actual practice of “One Country, Two Systems” points to a need to extend the scope of study, and for Hong Kong, the term should not only be limited to political reform, but should also encompass decisions of economic development, cultural and education policies, and even rights of self-determination. It is with this understanding that Fong and Lui conclude with this remark: “how to define the HKSAR's autonomy will probably become the most important item on Hong Kong's political agenda in the coming years” (342).

***Boys' Love, Cosplay, and Androgynous Idols: Queer Fan Cultures in Mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan.*** Edited by Jamie Zhao Jing, Yang Ling and Maud Lavin. Hong Kong: HKU Press, 2017. 249 pp. Hardcover. ISBN: 9789888390809.

Reviewed by Chris Chien

Though the field of queer Asian fan studies is steadily growing, much of this existing work appears only as sections within larger queer ethnographies or analyses of specific queer cultural production. This was a sign that queer fan studies methods and research had become

useful for broader studies of media, literature, society and politics, but that fan cultural production and consumption had yet to be realized as rich objects of study in their own right. Further, collections that did focus on queer Asian fandom took only specific genres, such as Boys' Love (BL) manga, as their focus.<sup>1</sup> Into this field, then, this timely anthology *Boys' Love, Cosplay, and Androgynous Idols: Queer Fan Cultures in Mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan* (2017) edited by Jamie Zhao Jing, Yang Ling, and Maud Lavin, offers an important and welcome contribution to the field, not only for bringing together an array of works that cover a diverse set of genres and formats, but also for shining a light on what has been thus far a disparate but active space of cultural analysis in East Asian studies. Responding in particular to what they see as a burgeoning queer "fannish" [sic] movement in mainland China, *Boys' Love* puts forwards two overarching interventions: one is to showcase research on "digitized fan subcultures that combine ethnographic approaches and other critical analyses, to both reflect the changing face of Chinese-speaking popular cultures and further broaden the scope of these existing fields" (xiii); the other is to promote "extensive and multimethodological research" that proffers "both a disruptive force to any simplistic, if not ignorant, understandings of non-Western queer fandom and a significant alternative to the Anglo-American model of fandom studies" (xiv). Both of these are pressing interventions that consider the transformative role of the digital in the subcultural and emphasize the importance of the site specific against the impulse to celebrate the rapid and easy mélange of influences in an age of technologized global capital. The editors also identify the lack of work that takes into account the intersection of East Asian/queer studies, internet and cyberculture, and audience, youth and fan culture studies, and thus fill that gap by providing a collection that integrates these oft-fragmented areas. While some scholars, even those who engage with cultural studies, cast fan studies as frivolous in its objects and concerns, this collection does much to further legitimate the field as rigorous, interdisciplinary, and socially impactful.

On the thematic organization of essays, the editors explain that the collection is "weighted toward an exploration of queer elements of Mainland Chinese fandoms that have been less often written about than more visible, queer-influenced, public cultural aspects in Hong Kong

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<sup>1</sup> Recent Anglophone works that deal wholly or partially with queer Asian fan studies include: Nagaike Kazumi, and Katsuhiko Suganuma, eds. "Transnational Boys' Love Fan Studies." *Transformative Works and Cultures* 12 (March 4, 2013); Chen Kuan-hsing, and Beng Huat Chua, eds. *The Inter-Asia Cultural Studies Reader*. New York: Routledge, 2007; McLelland, Mark, Kazumi Nagaike, Katsuhiko Suganuma, and James Welker, eds. *Boys Love Manga and Beyond: History, Culture, and Community in Japan*. Missouri: University Press of Mississippi, 2016; and Anderson, Crystal, and Doobo Shim. "Filling the Void: Researching the Korean Wave (Hallyu) Fandom." *The Journal of Fandom Studies* 3.1 (March 1, 2015).

and Taiwan” (xiii). Though this assertion may refer strictly to Anglophone studies, as there is already a thriving field of Chinese-language, queer fan studies that centers on mainland China, the editors are right to observe that Hong Kong and Taiwan have traditionally been considered sites more amenable to queer cultural production and thus are overexposed in scholarly work on queer East Asia. In mirroring the growing interest and concern in the Anglophone academic world toward a “rising China,” this collection’s choice to include six essays on mainland China and two essays each focusing on Hong Kong and Taiwan, may reflect the incredible consumer power mainland China’s population holds now that the country is relatively more open to engage with existing queer fan cultures in the region and across the Pacific. In terms of filling a gap in Anglophone scholarship, however, this focus on the increasingly central role of queer fandoms in mainland China is critical.

Though there are only a few chapters in the collection that take Hong Kong as a primary site, Hong Kong Studies scholars, especially those working in queer/fan studies, will still find the other essays useful since the explicit focus on transnational flows of people, capital, and cultural production speak to the wider contextual space of the “Greater China” region that is critical to any study of Hong Kong. The two essays in the collection that do center on Hong Kong explore how queer fan cultures can be pointedly political—and progressive. Maud Lavin argues as such in her wonderful, reparative essay, “Hong Kong-Based Fans of Mainland Idol Li Yuchun: Elective Belonging, Gender Ambiguity, and Rooted Cosmopolitanism,” in which she analyzes the generative power of fandom friendships, especially as Mainland born, Hong Kong-based fans of androgynous Mainland artist Li Yuchun perceive them. These cross-border bonds circumvent localist and nationalist prejudices, particularly anti-Mainland xenophobia, by engaging instead in alternative modes of what Lavin calls “elective belonging.” Her analysis of marginalized ways of belonging and friendship is especially crucial in a contemporary environment where mainstream discourse surrounding the supposed Mainland/Hong Kong Chinese divide grows ever starker by the day. Lavin argues that Li Yuchun functions as a cultural touchstone that allows Mainland “rooted cosmopolitans” to access affective modes of belonging with other fans when they travel to Hong Kong for work or study, a critical strategy used by fans when settling into hostile or uncomfortable environments. Lavin makes a compelling argument not only for the impact of popular artists and celebrity figures on the social realm but also for the importance of fan studies to the understanding of current socio-political phenomena. Further, Lavin’s argument is critical in furthering a queer analysis of what should be a central aspect of Hong Kong studies more generally: the academic study of Mainland émigrés, what they contribute, what their experiences of

discrimination are in the city, and what can be done to resolve these issues empathetically and justly.

In Chapter 7, “Desiring Queer, Negotiating Normal: Denise Ho (HOCC) Fandom before and after the Coming-Out,” Eva Li Cheuk-yin argues that the conflicting sentiments of fans toward queer musician Denise Ho’s non-normative gender and sexual presentation—ranging from full-throated support to normative regulation—reveal the queer community’s grappling with (homo)normativity within Hong Kong’s repressive and heterosexist “strategic alliance of postcolonial administration, Chinese family, and religion” (133).<sup>2</sup> Li’s identification of Hong Kong’s unique hegemonic heteropatriarchal matrix is astute, and provides the necessary social context to understand Ho’s importance, not only for the purposes of bonding within the fandom but also for the deep import the star’s queer and pro-democracy activism can have on broader Hong Kong society (indeed, the two types of activism can hardly be separated, as Ho conceives of them within the framework of liberal rights and enfranchisement). Studies of Li’s kind, then, offer concrete detail to Hong Kong LGBT studies that think about the struggle for civil rights, such as the newly intensified struggle surrounding the recognition of same-sex partnerships, while also gesturing to the ways in which marginalized communities both embody and forward the queer politics of anti-normativity and resistance to hegemonic norms. In taking up the analysis of religion and the heteropatriarchal family, Li cites Denise Tang Tse-shang, who pioneered the queer critique of Hong Kong queer geography and space in her book *Conditional Spaces* (2011), in order to argue that the city’s unique but submerged histories of postcolonial governance, including the all-important housing policy, affect every aspect of the hegemonic sexual and gender regime. Li’s study of Ho’s fandom and its interface with pop cultural queerness offers a critical avenue toward the study of queer ambivalence and normativity in Hong Kong. She notes that while many fans support Ho’s resistant gender and sexual politics, others fall prey to what Li identifies as Hong Kong’s growing “queer normativity,” embodied by the fandom’s impulse to police the musician’s

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<sup>2</sup> Indeed, Li’s essay can be seen as the other side of the same coin as Dorothy Lau’s study “Reframing Celebrities in Post-Handover Hong Kong: Political Advocacy, Social Media, and the Performance of Denise Ho” (2018) in *Hong Kong Studies* 1.1. While Li’s essay focuses on Ho’s fandom and the ways in which queer fans negotiate the ambivalent nature of the singer’s gender performance and sexuality, Lau bypasses analysis of her sexuality and takes up the sociological concept of the “frame” to analyze the way in which Ho resignifies “celebrity” status in a fraught political atmosphere. She argues that Ho augments her celebrity in two ways: by “impressing,” which she did by being arrested during the Occupy Central protests, and also by “expressing,” which she did through the use of “authenticity” during a free concert to make up for a politically motivated-cancellation of a corporate-sponsored one. Li’s essay, then, contributes to the ongoing interest in Ho’s significance to both queer and non-queer realms of political agitation.

performance of queer femininity along “proper” or “respectable” lines. Li provides a much-needed diagnostic of the state of “queer” in Hong Kong, as people struggle both with and against the heteropatriarchal matrix via queer fandom and cultural production, bringing together much of what is exciting in contemporary queer Hong Kong studies. Taken together, Lavin and Li’s glimpses into queer fandom in Hong Kong are dense and complex: localized in their keen analyses of the particulars of Hong Kong social context yet transnational in its consideration of the city’s colonial history and current special status with regards to China; optimistic and reparative yet pragmatic regarding the material difficulties that face the region and its fans. Such deft and rigorous analyses serve as brilliant models for queer study in Hong Kong studies going forward.

Imperialism and colonialism haunt many of the studies in this collection, though liminally. Of the essays that discuss imperialism in East Asia, scholars spend significant time analyzing the impact of Japanese imperial ambitions on the circulation of queer cultural production in former full or partial colonies. Such is the case in Chapter 9, Chang Weijung’s extended study of the impacts of a fraught Japanophilia on *fujoshi* and BL cultural circulation in postcolonial Taiwan. Chang argues that *fujoshi* fans access “Japan” as both foreign and familiar through their fandom and use this fantastic “Japaneseness” to enhance their fannish pleasure. The specter of Japanese imperialism appears as well in Yang Ling’s essay “‘The World of Grand Union’: Engendering Trans/nationalism via Boys’ Love in Online Chinese *Hetalia* Fandom,” which explores the confluence of geopolitics, imperialism, and boys’ love narratives in the Japanese manga and anime series *Hetalia*. Yang documents salient instances of fan ultra-nationalism that inform the Chinese fanfiction surrounding the series, which imagines geopolitics through the lens of the domestic by personifying countries as brothers and sisters. While Chinese fans understandably focus on current tensions in Sino–Japanese relationships, informed by a long history of Japanese imperialist violence, the fanfiction that these same fans produce, which Yang calls “highly nationalistic” (52), are bent on representing China’s current global image as benevolent, cooperative, and gentle. Yang describes how this fanfiction transmutes China’s current neo-imperialist and colonial ambitions into heteropatriarchal familial dramas: China as a suffering mother or patriarchal older brother, hoping for reunification with the “unfortunate but brave child” (Hong Kong), or threatening to batter a younger sister into submission (Taiwan). Although certainly the purpose of academic work is not to simply polemicize against such disturbing and manipulative nationalist narratives, these instances of cultural production do deserve at least more *critical* readings, even when or perhaps especially when they attempt to cloak themselves as

homogenizing discourses of “the beautiful dream of the whole world as a family” (54).

In light of the collection’s engagement with Sinophone studies, which takes as central the critique of China-centrism and the Han Chinese history of imperialism and (neo)colonialism, much might be said about the Han Chinese BL fandom’s complicity with a version of what Jasbir Puar calls *homonationalism*: “the dual movement in which certain homosexual constituencies have embraced [US] nationalist agendas and have also been embraced by nationalist agendas” (xxxii). A similar lack of attention to racial and ethnic projects in the three regions of study raise questions about the analysis of gender and sexuality being put forward by the authors in this collection, especially since, as many of the scholars here highlight, East Asian transnational queer cultural production and exchange are very much informed by the act of border-crossing, vociferous nationalisms, and imagined (foreign) cultural spaces. The formations of transnational queerness under consideration here, then, would be much enhanced by a closer analysis of various co-constitutive ethnic and racial projects, beyond the afterlives of Japanese imperialism.

The chapters centering on mainland China focus on the ways in which BL cultures deal with repression, censorship, or an inhospitable public. Chapters 1 (Yang Ling and Xu Yanrui), 5 (Zhou Shuyan) and 6 (Egret Zhou Lulu) all focus on how Mainland fandoms negotiate and evade state regulations through coded language and suggestion, or through distribution on illegal online networks. Chao Shih-chen in Chapter 2 also deals briefly with censorship but focuses primarily on the ways in which “fake girl” cross-play (cross-gender cosplay) by professional male performers enacts ambivalence surrounding both normative masculine and feminine gender performance. It is here that the anthology shines most, as the editors have been purposeful in selecting essays that analyze both the impact of online communities and informal networks on BL cultures and emphasizing the agency of the fandom to create, subvert, or consume queer cultural production. Many of the essays also admirably face the issue of heterogeneity within fandoms head on and theorize the ways in which ideological ambivalence and contradiction act as generative and constitutive parts of these queer Asian communities. In Chapter 4, Jamie Zhao Jing’s essay examines transnational exchange in pop culture fandom through an analysis of mainland China fan speculation about Katherine Moennig, the star of the US television drama series *The L Word*. Taking up a transnational framework alongside Fran Martin’s influential concept of “double foreignness,” Zhao analyzes the ways in which Chinese fans’ negotiations with American queer pop culture always involve both the local and global; indeed, Zhao asserts, the “queer

Occidental” fantasy of Chinese fans is a strategy for surviving the heteropatriarchal strictures of modern Chinese society.<sup>3</sup>

A broad range of scholars will find this collection helpful: for undergraduates, it serves as an accessible introduction to the field of queer Asian fan studies; for graduate students, the wide scope of analysis and extensive research will be invigorating and enabling for similar work both within and without East Asia. Fan and audience studies scholars, of course, will find welcome and much-needed explorations of queer East Asian fan culture, while those interested in queer cultural production and East Asian queer studies will benefit from the rigorous transnational analysis and rich ethnographic work of these essays.

## References

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### ***Preserving Local Documentary Heritage: Conversations with Special Library Managers and Archivists in Hong Kong.***

By Patrick Lo. Hong Kong: City University of Hong Kong Press, 2015. 313 pp. Paperback. ISBN: 9789629372378.

Reviewed by Liz Wan Yuen-yuk

Patrick Lo's *Preserving Local Documentary Heritage: Conversations with Special Library Managers and Archivists in Hong Kong* is a wide-ranging overview of various aspects of archival and librarial work, a salute to the city's unseen but dedicated defenders of democracy, and an advocacy for the archives law. In the Preface, Lo first makes an important distinction between archivists and librarians: while archivists specialize in handling original documents and are more focused on the research and preservation of these irreplaceable primary sources, librarians concentrate more on managing published materials of multiple formats (xix–xx). This difference notwithstanding, both professions play important roles in the conservation of culture and

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<sup>3</sup> Martin's essay, in which she originally developed the notion of “double foreignness,” appears revised and updated as the final chapter in this collection. Martin argues that double foreignness describes Taiwanese BL fans' relationship to Japan: women who fantasize about male homoerotic relations in Japan are able to displace their identification twice, once geographically and once in terms of gender. This double displacement allows for the creation of a fertile “discursive arena” through which Taiwanese women can negotiate their own locally contextualized gender and sexuality.