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he word ‘muckraking’ does not appear once in Down and Out in Late Meiji Japan. This is somewhat surprising, given that James Huffman’s earlier books focused on the press in Japan and the time period defined in the book title aligns exactly with the American Progressivism Movement, whereas the inspiration for the title, George Orwell’s Down and Out in London and Paris (Victor Gollancz, 1933) relates events from 1928. Muckraker was a term used (in reference to a character in John Bunyan’s Pilgrim’s Progress) to label journalists devoted to exposing the corruption of politics and the social ills of industrialization. Although in use since the 1870s as a pejorative to the press rather than the agricultural compost in use since the 1870s as a pejorative to the...linamen, it was popularized in a speech by President Theodore Roosevelt in 1910 and taken as a badge of honor by those so designated. It would have been interesting to know if Lincoln Steffens, Ida Tarbell, Upton Sinclair and the ilk influenced the efforts of Yokogama Gennisuke, Suzuki Umeshiro, Matsubara Iwagori and the other journalists Huffman references for insight into the poor, but perhaps that would have been a different book, a shift in focus from ‘nameless’ destitute people to journalists.

Moreover, given that this book is a work of history rather than investigative journalism, Huffman is not a muckraker either. But nevertheless, his goals are not too far from those journalists of the past: expose the underside of a society. In that much the scholarship goes. Huffman’s period focuses on how Japan successfully industrialized, it is not only a fresh perspective, but an important one to fully evaluate just how that industrial success was achieved. Huffman seeks ‘to understand how it felt to live the life of a himin, or poor person’ (p. 2), and explore how modernity impacted their lives. To examine the lives of those made ‘voiceless’ (p. 2) through illiteracy and indifference, Huffman relies heavily on the muckrakers, or as he prefers, ‘poverty journalists’ of late Meiji Japan, heavily supplemented with literary diaries, government papers, social commentaries and academic analyses. The results of Huffman’s explorations have shone light on those underexposed parts of Meiji society. Importantl markets these people did not fit neatly into stereotypes such as victim or criminal, that they were not entirely defined by their poverty but lived in constant ‘tension between visibility and invisibility’ (p. 97). Where he really departs from the views of muckraking journalists is in the way that he seeks not just to document the misery, crime, and disease of poverty but also to show the joy the destitute managed to make even in their difficult circumstances because there were not always powerless victims without agency.

In order to accomplish this, Huffman like the muckrakers, largely focuses on the urban poor, which he suggests made up between 12 and 20 per cent of urban populations. As the author explains, many of these poor are migrants from rural villages. He therefore does not spend too much time paring where they came from and while he acknowledges the presence of buraku (an outcaste class), he does not dwell on these kinds of differences, instead narrating as many individualized stories as possible to emphasize the humanity of subjects that are often squatted with animals. The down and out of Meiji Japan are examined in eight content chapters, of which the first six focus on the city, and the last two on the country. In Chapter 1, the scene is set by describing the pull of the poor to the city and the built environment in which they resided. Chapters 2 and 3 examine the working lives (because even beggars do work or do a sort) of the underclass looking at the labor through the manufacture of, for example, textiles and matches, and those in the building and service professions like carpenters, rickshaw pullers and masseurs. Chapter 4 is on family life, noting that the perception in the Japanese media and among the public of the nuclear family unit as the norm was not born out in the reality because the largest number of migrant workers were men, and divorce and disease were prevalent. Written as a comparison, Huffman’s description of rural poor is admittedly skeletal and sweeping rather than specific, because he is trying to elucidate the urban poor rather than ponder the conditions of the countryside. Huffman argues that the down and out in the countryside alleviated some of the harshest aspects of poverty. The final content chapter concerns the migration of Japanese rural communities by examining the agri-villagers to Hawaii. He notes the similarities between the migration patterns to cities in which, the migration was largely of single men but diverse because the emigrants were able to improve their economic status much more rapidly.

Clearly and objectively written, the book only falls in being accessible to a general audience through Huffman’s decision to use Japanese terms like hinmin (the poor) or kōshū shakai (underclass) for ideas that can adequately be expressed in English. Huffman clearly has deep empathy for his subjects and clearly partially explained by his accounting of his own impoverished rural childhood in rural Indiana in the introduction. In using an interdisciplinary approach, Huffman has married individuals to a systemic examination so that the stories appear simple on the surface but beneath are contained deep questions about the nature of poverty. It is an indicator of the state of academics that Huffman felt that he had to justify his choice of topic as a ‘middle-class white American’ (p. 25). Some historians are inspired by their personal histories, but most of us write about dead people, who otherwise could tell no tales. The down and out of late Meiji Japan were fortunate in having James Huffman as a spokesperson.

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Queer Comrades

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Reviewed title:
Queer Comrades: Gay Identity and Tongzhi Activism in Postsocialist China

Hongwei Bao. 2018.
Copenhagen: NIAS Press ISBN 9788779602492

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ongwei Bao’s monograph offers an excellent example of an examination of gay identity and activism in contemporary China from a cultural studies perspective. It draws from queer theory, feminism, Marxism, and postcolonial and critical race studies for its theoretical lens. More specifically, driven by a leftist politics, Bao brings queer theory and Marxism into dialogue to provide a nuanced understanding of the complexity and fluidity of non-normative male sexual identities: tongxinglian (同志), gay, tongzi (同志), ku'er (酷儿), tongzi ku'er (同志酷儿). He examines the challenges and potential of a radical gay politics against the backdrop of China’s socioeconomic and political postsocialist reality, which is infused with nascent capitalism, neoliberalism and conservatism.

Inspired by Judith Halberstam’s ‘queer methodology’, which uses various methods to produce knowledge on subjects who have been excluded from traditional studies of human behaviour, Bao brings together medical records, published diaries and films, as well as interviews, ethnographic accounts and personal anecdotes in his analysis. Moreover, he is no detached researcher, but rather a passionate and engaged ethnographer. Bao was born and grew up in China, self-identifies as gay, studied in Australia for his PhD, and has taught at various universities in China and Europe. He is now teaching in the United Kingdom. He was well aware of both the privileges and limitations of his research position as insider and outsider when he was in conversation with queer communities in China, conversation that took place primarily during his field trips to the country over the 2007 and 2009 period. With his distinctive and sometimes witty writing style, Bao illustrates the ‘structure of feelings’ of the kaleidoscopic
The Borderlands of Asia

Queer culture in China today. The book, he says, is a journey into queer China with him as your guide. The book is divided into two parts. The first part (Chapters 2–4) concerns the genealogy of tongzhi identity in contemporary China. Bao delineates the usage of the terms tong and zhi (meaning ‘same’ and ‘other’ respectively) which exist separately in classical Chinese literature, but were first used in combination in 1911 to mean ‘comrade’, for example. He also discusses how conversion therapy (turning gay people straight) can be seen as an affective project, as well as a postsocialist technology of the self that violently rejects homosexual desires, and delineates the way in which the victims of such therapy have suffered as they struggle to become ‘proper’ sexual citizens (Chapter 4).

Part 2 of the book (Chapters 5–7) focuses on the media and cultural queer activism. Bao first discusses China’s leading queer filmmaker and activist, Cui Zi’en, and the way in which he uses digital video films as a form of queer production, he divides his comments into three sections. The first, “Landscapes and Lifeforms” addresses the interaction of human beings with the environment they inhabit, through brief historical and topographical observations. The differences between these four key areas may be great. “It is the nature of the relationship which exist and develop there, each a changing lifeform of its own, which characterise the cultures in general, and the literatures in particular, of the people who partake in these relationships.” Bao’s second section, “Juxtapositions”, presents a comparative look at some of the connections between these poiesis. This analytical approach to cultures which are too frequently passed over in favor of the dominant cultures of the region.

As an expert on China’s minorities, and a translator from the Nuosu dialect of Yi, Bao is well placed to guide the reader on this most unusual journey. In his long and detailed introduction, he dedicates his comments into three natural place within the environment of the book, as those who are gifted with the power to give voice to the land and its peoples. These individuals charged with a responsibility and a calling, and not as the kind of literary “figures” to whom we are more used in the west. I should declare my own professional interest in this book. I have been translating Mongolian poet, and scholar, Cui Zi’en, and I realised that this omission brings up the necessary question of sinification, as it does elsewhere among the tongues of China. In fact that even the first poems of poems written originally in Chinese feel homogenised, as it does elsewhere among the tongues of China. In fact that even the first poems of poems written originally in Chinese feel homogenised, the book together has clearly been to address breaches of right and a certain justice for the ways in which globalisation produces, and to suggest ways in which this can more effectively be addressed. In the comparison he makes here offer some elegant and productive ideas through which a reader unfamiliar with such poetic practices and politics.

**Simion Wickhamsmith**

The Review

Queer Asian studies scholars have examined the complex discourses of transnational and hybrid identities, which result from the realisation of fleeting queer public spaces for screening, exchange and interaction. Whilst these two chapters (5–6) are important, it is the third section which focuses on the role of new media in the movement and is perhaps the most progressive of the book. Bao has called on himself and fellow translators like myself) will generally find the poems helpful in understanding specific points of culture and linguistic usage, and to gauge the biographical contexts of poets for poets and translators and a set of fourteen photographs at the back of the book give the reader the chance to interact with the poems.

The book is divided into two parts. The first part (Chapters 2–4) concerns the genealogy of tongzhi identity in contemporary China. Bao delineates the usage of the terms tong and zhi (meaning ‘same’ and ‘other’ respectively) which exist separately in classical Chinese literature, but were first used in combination in 1911 to mean ‘comrade’, for example. He also discusses how conversion therapy (turning gay people straight) can be seen as an affective project, as well as a postsocialist technology of the self that violently rejects homosexual desires, and delineates the way in which the victims of such therapy have suffered as they struggle to become ‘proper’ sexual citizens (Chapter 4).

Part 2 of the book (Chapters 5–7) focuses on the media and cultural queer activism. Bao first discusses China’s leading queer filmmaker and activist, Cui Zi’en, and the way in which he uses digital video films as a form of queer activist (what Cui calls ‘digital video activism’) (Chapter 5). Like Bao, who uses queer Marxism to perform his cultural analysis, Cui uses queer Marxism to direct his films. Both men embrace a socialist and Marxist vision and imagine a radical queer politics in contemporary China. In Chapter 6, Bao discusses younger queer filmmakers (e.g. Fan Popo, Shitou, Mingming) and examines the ways in which they organise queer film festivals, travelling from Beijing and Shanghai to Guangzhou and engaging with different local queer communities, for example. In response to government intervention (e.g. sudden forced closures by the police), these organic intellectuals adopt a guerrilla style of festival organisation, with contingent screeners, and with the help of local authorities, who orchestrate the screening of films and the opportunity to make speeches. The book makes two major contributions. The first is to cultural studies. The book is an example of an interdisciplinary work in both theoretical, engaging, weaving textual analysis with ethnographic accounts and field research, as it is both theoretical and empirical and easy to read and digest. The book makes two major contributions. The first is to cultural studies. The book is an example of an interdisciplinary work in both theoretical, engaging, weaving textual analysis with ethnographic accounts and field research, as it is both theoretical and empirical and easy to read and digest. The book makes two major contributions. The first is to cultural studies. The book is an example of an interdisciplinary work in both theoretical, engaging, weaving textual analysis with ethnographic accounts and field research, as it is both theoretical and empirical and easy to read and digest. The book makes two major contributions. The first is to cultural studies. The book is an example of an interdisciplinary work in both theoretical, engaging, weaving textual analysis with ethnographic accounts and field research, as it is both theoretical and empirical and easy to read and digest.