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Xing: The Discourse of Sex in Modern China

Leon Antonio Rocha

We begin with a straightforward question: 'What is the Chinese word for "sex"?' A Chinese speaker will reply, '*xing*'! In Modern Chinese, *xing* is the character most frequently used to denote matters related to sex, gender and sexuality. Compounds associated with *xing* include *xingjiao* (sexual intercourse), *xingbie* (sexual difference), *xingyu* (sexual desire) and *xing quxiang* (sexual orientation). Professor Li Xiaojiang of the Centre of Gender Studies at Dalian University, one of the first institutions of its kind in China, claims:

Everything seems crystal-clear: *xing* (sex) is purely bodily and hence primordial, whereas *xingbie* (gender), as its lexical structure indicates – *xing* + *bie*, meaning 'difference' – refers to social identity produced, so to speak, by the bodily *xing*. Sex is the basis upon which rests gender... it is already physiological and nature-endowed.¹

Li goes on to comment on the sex/gender distinction in the Chinese context. She points out the seeming 'crystal-clearness' of *xing* as a sex that is already endowed by nature. But she overlooks the *historicity* of the character, the convoluted career of *xing*. In Classical Chinese, the character meant 'human nature', and only in the early twentieth century came to signify *both* sex *and* human nature. How did this happen, and what was the significance of this? This article will begin with an etymological investigation, through which it will emerge that, in China in the late 1910s and early 1920s, sex became, to borrow Foucault's words, 'a kind of natural given which power tried to hold in check', and simultaneously 'an obscure domain which knowledge tried gradually to uncover'.²

The intellectuals of the May Fourth New Culture period (c.1915–37), who were responsible for translating and introducing sexological and sex education texts from Europe, America and Japan, reconceptualised sex as *the* index to human character, *the* originary, psychical truth. *Xing* became a new keyword, the point of anchorage for a sexual politics that regarded sex – and by extension human nature – as cruelly repressed by a 'hypocritical', 'feudalist', even 'cannibalistic' sexual morality of the 'Old China'. There was a concomitant intensification of attempts to produce 'real', 'truthful' knowledge on sexuality – a proliferation, explosion of discourse. Sex became a panacea to China's weakness and degeneracy, and a revolution of the relationships between men and women, the reformulation of love and desire, the adoption of eugenics and birth control practices, were perceived as ways to enable the Chinese nation to 'catch up' with the west and to become ready to participate in a global modernity. It is against this backdrop that we should think about sex and gender in this tumultuous

period of Chinese history, as we seek to understand the motivations behind Chinese intellectuals' various inquiries into sex.

Keywords, globalisation and translation

My approach here is modelled on Raymond Williams's classic *Keywords* (1976). Williams's project began life as an appendix to *Culture and Society* (1958) but evolved into a standalone publication which provided generations of scholars with short and concise discussions relating to a range of important terms which had delimited and circumscribed our thinking. Williams's intention is not to fix meanings; *Keywords* 'is not a dictionary or glossary of a particular academic subject', nor is it 'a series of footnotes to dictionary histories or definitions of a number of words'. Williams's book demonstrates that the semantics of a word changes in response to new socio-political situation and needs, and the way historical actors negotiated and struggled with their use of language to express new experiences. It is 'the record of an inquiry into a *vocabulary*: a shared body of words and meanings in our most general discussions, in English, or the practices and institutions which we group as *culture* and *society*'.³

Williams's inquiry is limited to European languages and predominantly British English, as pointed out by Tony Bennett and others in their 'sequel' to *Keywords*.⁴ It is necessary to point out that discussions of culture and society, including sex and gender, have flowed across national boundaries. My investigation of *xing* should absolutely not be regarded as a mere curiosity, appendage or even a supplement to more 'mainstream' work on the history of sexuality in Europe and America. It is not simply contributing to the world history of sexuality by adding the 'Chinese case' to the cauldron. Rather, following Ann Laura Stoler, I propose that it is impossible to appreciate the global nature of modernity, to comprehend the depth and power of empire and colonialism, to understand the *spatialisation* of scientific and medical knowledge, without a thorough consideration of the circulation of ideas and concepts between the 'west' (perceived as 'centre', 'primary', thus prioritised) and the 'east' (presumed 'peripheral', 'marginal', 'minority', 'secondary').⁵

In my thesis, I analyse the tremendous cacophony of scientific, medical, philosophical and literary discourses which Chinese intellectuals in the 1920s creatively appropriated in their political projects.⁶ Many of these cosmopolitan thinkers travelled abroad, studied in prestigious universities around the world, were fluent in a number of languages and brought back to China all sorts of new ideas which they thought would help their troubled, divided, 'backward' motherland. They invited European and American intellectuals to come to China to disseminate their ideas to the Chinese public, to engage in cultural exchange (involving celebrities such as John Dewey, Bertrand Russell, Hans Driesch, Margaret Sanger and Magnus Hirschfeld). What emerges is a complex picture of the *globalisation* of sexual knowledge, one that precedes the story told by Dennis Altman's *Global Sex*.⁷ Globalisation here should not be taken to entail homogenisation; the fact that ideas about sex had travelled from Europe, America and Japan to China by no means meant that everyone ended up believing the same things or acting in the same way.⁸ It resolutely does *not* bring us back to the old trap of 'authenticity' and 'imitation' that has often plagued conventional historiography of colonialism – that people in the Third World merely copied, parroted, were 'interpellated' by or inflicted with the discourse of the colonising Other. Globalisation

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is always already accompanied by localisation and indigenisation; any historian should be obstinately committed to pointing out specificities, the situated character of knowledge, but at once concerned with a *transnational* stratosphere of discourse, the traffic and flow of ideas from one place to another. *Xing* here serves as an excellent example: although the conflation of sex with human nature into one word may be a response to the rhetoric of repression and emancipation found in western sexological texts, *xing* – *qua* both sex and human nature – is a particular Sino-Japanese linguistic innovation, a keyword manufactured and propagated by a network of translators, intellectuals and scientific practitioners in East Asia. To put this another way, a consequence of the global proliferation of a certain ideology of sexuality – sex as fundamental property of humanity – was that the conception of sexuality emerging in early twentieth-century China became quite similar to that found in the human sciences of Europe and America, which Michel Foucault analyses in the first volume of his *History of Sexuality*.⁹

Through the discussion of the history of *xing*, I would like to highlight the question of translation. It will be an extremely fruitful inquiry for historians of sexuality to take up Raymond Williams's *Keywords* project, and incorporate the problematic of translation and transmission, to study how different cultures tackled new terminologies such as 'sexuality' (and 'heterosexuality', 'homosexuality', 'sodomasochism', 'libido'), 'gender', 'science', 'race', 'class', 'revolution', 'movement' and so on.

We should ask: did intellectuals, academics and translators emphasise the alienness of these terms by inventing new characters or using unfamiliar compounds? Did they highlight their untranslatability or incommensurability, by using transliterations or leaving the word in its original form? Did they draw parallels with tradition and precedence, or *deny* the novelty of something, or domesticate a foreign term, by adopting a familiar character and subtly/overtly stretching its semantics? Did they (de)emphasise the processes of negotiation? How did they standardise or claim ownership of new terminologies and neologisms through dictionaries, encyclopaedias and glossaries? How did they recruit other actors to speak using their new vocabularies, adhere to their terms of engagement? What would constitute a 'faithful' translation, and how were translations accepted or resisted? What resources (foreign philosophy, comparative linguistics, classical philology, Latin, Greek, Sanskrit, Classical Chinese) were mobilised? These are all crucial questions addressed in the Chinese context by Lydia Liu and Haun Saussy. For them, translation is one of the privileged sites in understanding colonialism and global modernity, communications, transmissions, interactions and exchange between the Chinese and the non-Chinese in history, and for me, a highly productive way to write multiple, comparative histories of sex and gender that is simultaneously sensitive to local conditions yet never loses sight of the larger picture of transnational movements.¹⁰

***Xing* as human nature**

In English-speaking academia, Frank Dikötter, Judith Farquhar, Zhong Xueping and Deborah Sang have picked up on the strange life on *xing*; they all mention in passing that before the twentieth century *xing* did not mean sex – Zhong and Sang each dedicate a paragraph and two small footnotes, while Dikötter, in his tremendously influential study of sex in modern China, skirts over this issue in a single sentence.¹¹ There is no evidence cited or exploration accompanying these academics' assertions. Farquhar's

treatment of *xing* is the more detailed amongst the four, yet she does not explain the mechanisms through which *xing* came to mean sex and human nature. Many Chinese-speaking scholars who write prolifically on the history of sexuality in China, and who are otherwise extremely sensitive to language, never seem to detect or deem it necessary to unpack the historicity of *xing*.¹² This article should be read as an intervention in two important ways. First, the obvious: by drawing attention to the rich significances embedded in just one Chinese character, I attempt to prevent the story of the usage of *xing* to degenerate into a factoid, endlessly reiterated and assumed in the footnotes of academic monographs but never analysed.

Second, my historicisation of *xing* speaks to Tani Barlow's examination of the discourses of *funü* and *nüxing* in her *Question of Women in Chinese Feminism*.¹³ *Funü* and *nüxing* were two Chinese words, both used in the Chinese feminist movements in the twentieth century. Whereas *funü*, an earlier term, situated women in the network of family and kinship relations – their responsibilities as childbearers and mothers of the nation – *nüxing*, literally 'woman' plus 'sex/human nature' (*nü* plus *xing*) was a neologism for a biologically sexed woman. The neologism came into being also in China in the 1920s. The discourse of *funü* in Chinese feminism pointed to the participation of women in public life and their rights in society, but tended to ignore, suppress, suspend or even sometimes erase the differences between men and women. The discourse of *nüxing*, on the other hand, sought to highlight women's repressed sexuality and sexual difference, and attempted to create a new and revolutionary subjectivity for women, different from that of men. *Nüxing* therefore complicated the discourse of universal liberation and emancipatory politics promoted by the male May Fourth New Culture intellectuals, by introducing the question of sexual difference – since men and women were fundamentally different in sex and nature, therefore the pathways for men's liberation and women's liberation had to be different too. My present analysis of *xing* therefore aims to achieve something more primary than Tani Barlow's analysis. The construction of the discourse of *nüxing* relied fundamentally on *xing* being both sex and human nature in the first place. To put this another way, before it was possible to have a discourse of woman based on her sexual, biological, natural differences (that is, *nüxing*), sex had to first *become* human nature through the creation of the neologism *xing*. If one opens the *New China Character Dictionary* (*Xinhua zidian*, 10th edn, 2004), the most popular reference work in China, one can see an elaborate entry on the character *xing*:

- (i) Natural instincts, inherent tendencies, the heavenly endowment in humans
- (ii) The nature of something (or of someone), its substance, its fundamental character
- (iii) Life – equivalent to the character *sheng* – living, or fate or destiny
- (iv) Disposition, temperament

And further, (v) *xing* as sex, and compounds such as *xingjiao* (intercourse), *xingbie* (sexual difference), and (vi) *xing* in Modern Chinese as a suffix, roughly equivalent to '-ity' or '-ness' in English. For instance, 'possible' is *keneng* and 'possibility' is *kenengxing*, 'permanent' is *yongjiu* and 'permanence' becomes *yongjiuxing*.

The first four definitions are accompanied by sources in Classical Chinese. For the first usage of *xing*, 'natural instincts', the cited source is the Confucian text *Mencius*, in

the chapter titled ‘Gaozi’ in which the eponymous philosopher engages in a protracted argument with Mencius on human nature. Gaozi states that the appetite for food and sex forms part of human nature, summed up in the famous phrase *shi se xing ye*. Here, sex is not represented by the character *xing*, but by *se*. Mencius rejoins that human nature (*xing*), which is heavenly endowed, consists of men’s capabilities to act morally, rather than basic, animalistic needs for nourishment and procreation. Mencius’s view on human nature as innately good became the orthodox definition of *xing* as laid down, for instance, in *Explaining Simple and Analysing Compound Characters* (*Shuowen jiezi*), a second-century dictionary. Deborah Sang astutely points out that *xing* in Classical Chinese had ‘only a tangential, if not *reverse*, relation to sexuality’.¹⁴ Further instances of *xing* as human nature include: ‘What Heaven has conferred is called “Nature”/*xing*’ from *Doctrine of the Mean* (*Zhongyong*); ‘What cannot be learnt, and what requires no application to master, in human beings is called “human nature”/*xing*’ from the philosophical treatise *Xunzi* (third century BCE).

For *xing*’s second definition – the nature of something – the *Xinhua* once again cites *Mencius*, and further points out that *xing* was used to translate the Sanskrit words *svabhāva*, *prakṛti* and *pradhāna*: ‘the nature interpreted as embodied, causative, unchanging; independent or self-independent; fundamental nature manifestation or expression; the Buddha-nature immanent in all beings, the Buddha heart or mind’.¹⁵ *Xing* is contrasted to *xiang*, the superficial appearance of all things. *The Chronicles of Zuo* (*Zuozhuan*, fourth century BCE) contained the primary example of the usage of *xing* for ‘life’: ‘The people enjoy their lives [*xing*], and there are no enemies or thieves’ or ‘New palaces are reared . . . the strength of people is taxed to an exhausting degree . . . the people feel that their lives [*xing*] are not worth preserving’. Finally, the ‘Gaozi’ chapter from *Mencius* supplies the source for *xing* as disposition and temperament: ‘When Heaven is about to give someone a great responsibility, it first makes his mind endure suffering . . . Heaven stimulates his mind, stabilises his temper [*xing*] and develops his weak points’.

Crucially, the definitions of *xing* pertaining to sex, and the use of *xing* as a suffix, are both supplied without a single classical source. Lydia Liu and Federico Masini both assert that the use of *xing* as a suffix was introduced from the Japanese, though they do not comment on whether *xing* as sex came from the Japanese as well.¹⁶ Farquhar consulted Taiwan Academia Sinica’s *Encyclopaedic Dictionary of Chinese Language* (1973) and found that *xing* as sex lacked a classical source.¹⁷ Another standard reference, the *Lin Yutang’s Chinese-English Dictionary of Modern Usage* (1972), does not cite a classical source for the sex definition of *xing*, whilst Luo Zhufeng’s *Hanyu da cidian* (2001) cites a 1989 article on sex education for the etymology. I consulted China Books’ (*Zhonghua shuju*) *Zhonghua dazidian* (edited by Xu Yuangao, Lufei Kui and Ouyang Pucun), published between 1915 and 1923, and sex was nowhere to be found under the eight definitions of the character *xing*. The sex definition was altogether absent in the 1912 *New Dictionary* (*Xin zidian*).

The *Zhonghua dazidian* of Xu et al. was in turn based on the *Kangxi zidian*, commissioned by Qing Emperor Kangxi in 1710 and released in 1716. In the 1887 edition of *Kangxi Dictionary*, published by the Combined Literature Book House (Tongwen shuju), there is no mention of sex under the entry for *xing*. The 1916 Commercial Press’s movable-type edition of *Kangxi* also lacked *xing qua* sex. In all the ancient Chinese dictionaries, such as the aforementioned *Shuowen jiezi* and

Broadening the Refined (Guangya), there was no connection between *xing* and sex. If one takes for granted that dictionaries attempt to record usages of a certain word in common currency, then *xing* until the twentieth century continued to signify what Heaven had decreed; *xing* named an unsexed, ungendered concept of innate human nature or essence.

My thesis is that in the late 1910s and early 1920s, sex was implanted, slipped into, invested into *xing* – to the extent that the meaning of the character, as simultaneously sex and human nature (and thus sex *as* human nature) has by now become familiar, naturalised. A native Chinese speaker in the twenty-first century, upon hearing the utterance of *xing* or seeing it in print would think of sex, the crux of human nature, and would not usually be aware that this *xing*/sex/human-nature complex was a recent product: the process of linguistic engineering has been forgotten, de-emphasised. It is, however, paramount to clarify that the Chinese had had a host of words to denote matters related to sex before *xing* was endowed with a new sexual meaning, and a large number of these terms are still in regular use.

From the obscene to the natural?

Yin was traditionally a character used to qualify sexual behaviours. *Yin* conjures a connotation of excess, an image of flooding, soaking, and is often combined with other characters to represent illicit sexual relations: *yinfū* (adulterer), *yinfū* (adulteress or promiscuous woman), *jianyin* (adultery), *shouyin* ('illicit sex with hand' masturbation), *zhengyin* (incest). *Yin* points to the licentious, wanton, salacious, lascivious: *yingui* ('lewd demon', man obsessed with sex), *yincong* ('lewd pest'), *yinnian* (immoral thoughts), *yinnüe* (obscene jokes), *yinshu* (pornographic book), *yinxie* (pornographic), *yinshui* ('waters of lust', genital fluids). *Yin* as excess as in: *yinwei* (despotic power), *yinyi* (debauchery, indulgence, greed), *yinxing* (torture). Committing acts of *yin* is deeply harmful to one's physical and spiritual wellbeing and disrupts the social order, so *yin* always already incorporates a moralistic warning, a normative prescription of what counts as legitimate sexual activity (reproductive, not overly frequent, with the correct partner). Late Qing revolutionary Tan Sitong (1865–1898) complained that *yin* became an overly broad term and expressed the urgent need to reform the Chinese mentality that all sex was necessarily *yin* and thus inherently dirty and evil. From Tan's *Exposition of Benevolence (Renxue, 1897)*:

Sexual intercourse [*nannü*, literally 'man-woman'] is given the term 'lust' [*yin*]. This is how 'lust' is defined. Since the inception of mankind, the name *yin* has, through custom, continually been in use and has remained unchanged over since. Hence we are used to regarding intercourse [*yin*] as evil. If since the inception of human beings, we had been accustomed to *yin* as, say, a rite practised in audiences at court, in imperial feasts, in imperial temples, in cities and towns, and before large crowds – like deep bowing with clasped hands and genuflection in China, or embracing and kissing in the west – and that, the custom had survived until the present, who would think that *yin* as evil? . . . Some may argue that the genitals [*nannü zi ju*, literally 'instruments of man-woman relations'] born concealed, seldom seen by people, they therefore are different from the openly practised rites; *yin* is thus considered to be evil. By this line of reasoning, then rites and *yin* differ only in whether concealed or open, and not in whether they are good or evil. If, since the inception of human beings, their genitals had not been concealed, but appeared on the face, to be easily seen by raising one's eyes, *yin* would then be regarded as no more than a greeting. How could *yin* then be considered evil?¹⁸

Note that Tan never used the term *xing* to denote sex anywhere. Instead, he was attempting to reclaim and rehabilitate *yin*. In 1898, sex had not yet acquired its 'scientific', supposedly 'natural' and 'neutral' name. Tan's passage here demonstrates the importance of language, getting the terms right, an attempt to defamiliarise the character *yin* from its negative image.

Se is another major character to describe sex. Whereas *yin* automatically suggests the obscene and abnormal sexual relations, *se* suggests lust, temptation and seduction, though there are overlaps between *se* and *yin*: *seqing xiaoshuo* (also a pornographic or erotic novel), *segu* (someone obsessed with sex), *haose* (someone who indulges in sex), *se mimi* (observing someone with a lustful look), *jiese* (abstinence), *sexiang* (sex appeal). *Yu* is desire; *yinyu* and *seyu* are carnal desires. *Yuhuo* is 'a flame of desire': a dangerous, all-consuming fire that can 'incinerate' someone's mind and body if not properly controlled. *Rou* is 'meat'/'flesh', often placed in diametric opposition to the spiritual, *ling*. A crucial part of the rhetoric of radical May Fourth intellectuals is the reconciliation of the flesh and the spirit (*lingrou yizhi*). Love between a man and a woman should not simply remain on a spiritual level, and should not be about the sublimation of very real desires into something asexual, 'Platonic'. They argue that this traditional ideal is contrary to *xing*, to human nature. The modern, perfect relationship must incorporate physical intimacy, sexual attraction and a deep level of emotional connection. Love and marriage are thus subsumed under *xing*, and are sexualised, eroticised.¹⁹

The Classical Chinese term for sex between a married couple was *dunlun*, from the *Book of Rites (Liji)*. Sex was also 'business in the bedchamber': *fangshi*, *xingfang*, *dongfang*. The 'Art of the Bedchamber' is *fangzhong shu*. The characters *ru* and *tong*, quite simply 'enter' and 'go through', might also be used, as well as *nannü*, literally 'man and woman'. Sex was also described as the act of uniting, transferring, combining, bringing something together: thus *jiaohe* and *jiaogou*. More poetic expressions included: *yunyu* ('clouds and rain'), a reference to a fairy maiden in the Szechuan gorges who commanded clouds and rain; *yuanyang xishui* ('pair of mandarin ducks playing in water'); *daofeng dianluan* ('topple the male and female phoenixes'); *tiandi ronghe*, describing the coming together and harmonisation of Heaven (designated *yang*, male) and Earth (*yin*, female). Meanwhile, the older terms for different elements of the sexual script like oral sex were: *pinxiao*, 'savouring' or 'tasting with discrimination' a Chinese flute (fellatio), or *pinyu*, 'savouring jade' (cunnilingus). These came from the seventeenth-century novel *Plum in the Golden Vase (Jin Ping Mei)*.

Same-sex relations were described in Classical Chinese as *duanxiu*, *fentao*/*yutao*, *longyang*.²⁰ *Duanxiu*, 'cutting the sleeve', was a reference to Han Emperor Ai (first century BCE) and his male concubine Dong Xian. When Dong Xian fell asleep on the emperor's sleeve, the emperor ordered his sleeve to be cut so he could leave the bed without waking his beloved. *Fentao*, 'sharing the peach', was recorded in *Hanfeizi* (third century BCE). Duke Ling of Wei had a beautiful boy called Mi Zixia, who once offered a peach, already bitten, to the duke. This would normally be a serious offence, but the duke showed his appreciation, suggesting the intimate bond between the two. Finally, *longyang* is a reference to the eponymous duke from the Warring States period. The duke went fishing with the Wei emperor, and when the emperor caught ten fish, the duke started weeping. The duke explained that the emperor, having caught larger fish, would then discard the smaller ones he previously captured. By analogy,

once the emperor met other beauties, he would abandon the duke. The emperor was deeply touched and declared that, if anybody dared introduce more beauties to him, he would execute that person and eliminate his kin. *Longyang* or *longyang pi* (*pi* meaning 'obsession') thus became terms for same-sex relations between men. For female same-sex relations, two metaphors were used: *mojing* ('polishing/rubbing the mirror') and *duishi* ('facing each other eating'). *Duishi*, implying mutual cunnilingus, referred to the sexual practices between women in the imperial harem. *Mojing* was an allusion to tribadism (mutual masturbation involving a woman rubbing her vulva against that of her partner). In *Classified Collection of Anecdotes on the Qing Dynasty* (*Qingbai leichao*, 1916), Xu Ke describes 'mirror-rubbing' as a common practice among the members of a man-loathing sisterhood in Shanghai in the late nineteenth century.²¹ One could contrast these with the terminologies for homosexuality and lesbianism in circulation in biology and sexology texts from the 1920s: *tongxing lian/ai/lian'ai* – composed of 'same' (*tong*), 'sex' (*xing*) and 'love' (*lian/ai/lian'ai*) – which evacuated the elaborate literary and historical references.²²

This kaleidoscopic, perhaps bewildering, tour of older terms is by no means exhaustive, and cannot do justice to the massive vocabulary available in Chinese to talk about sexual behaviours, seriously or jokingly, approvingly or contemptuously, under different circumstances, at different audiences. In casual conversations today, sex may be simply *shui* ('sleep'), *guanxi* ('relationship'), *zhao'ai* ('make love'), *shangchuang* ('getting in bed'), *gan* ('do'/'fuck') or even *na'ge* ('that thing'). Etymological research is difficult and time-consuming in Chinese and Japanese because of a shortage of reference works that provide genealogies on a character's historical usage; by contrast, in English, the *Oxford English Dictionary* supplies a brief, though not always comprehensive, chronology for most entries. Nor is there a work in Chinese comparable to Julie Coleman's masterly *Love, Sex and Marriage: A Historical Thesaurus* (Amsterdam: Rodolpi, 1999), which allows historians to trace the evolving usage of a term and to locate it within semantic fields. This is without diving into complications arising from regional variations. Cantonese speakers, for instance, have their own baffling set of insults, profanities and colloquial coinages to talk about sex, unintelligible to non-Cantonese speakers. Yet none of these 'non-serious' terms have the symbolic value invested in the 'respectable' *xing* – the standard word in circulation in scientific discussions ever since the 1920s.

To sum up this section, the purpose of discussing *yin*, 'cutting the sleeve' and so forth is to show how the older Chinese lexicon for sex might be classified: first, terms which always already carried a negative, moralistic connotation, suggesting obscenity, excess, dirtiness; second, euphemisms containing rich literary, mythical and historical allusions. The twentieth-century word *xing* and its associated compounds were, for the May Fourth New Culture generation, about 'neutrality'; they referred to biological facts of nature, they were 'modern'. To use *xing* for sex was to 'call a spade a spade': if sex was human nature, there ought not to be any shame in talking about it in a plain, straightforward, honest, unpretentious and immediate language, and there was no need to veil sex underneath thick layers of metaphors. But the point of *xing*-talk is that it is precisely *not* value-neutral at all. The 'sex/human nature' complex embedded in *xing* mobilises a humanistic ideological weapon which Foucault calls the 'Repressive Hypothesis', that links together 'the revelation of truth, the overturning of global laws, the proclamation of a new day to come, and the promise of a certain

felicity'.²³ It is the conviction that the 'Old World' had painstakingly repressed and denied people's sexuality and their fundamental nature, and what was therefore most needed to transform society and nation was the fullest affirmation and liberation of human instincts. For the Chinese iconoclasts and modernisers, 'Confucian propriety' had produced nothing but prudishness, dishonesty, obfuscation surrounding sex which *xing*-talk would defy. A history of sexuality written in the vein of the Repressive Hypothesis would claim that there had *never* been a non-repressive discourse of sex and it would be up to the progressive scientific experts, the serious and rigorous investigators, to uncover/recover the truths of our being, to inaugurate a language of *xing*. The lack of 'neutral' words for sex would then be construed as evidence supporting the claim. This mirrors the May Fourth conception that the history of *China* itself had been nothing but the history of repression, until the intellectuals took on the mission to emancipate (*jiefang*) the human spirit from the 'ironhouse'. I cannot possibly attempt something as ambitious as a complete analysis of the history of Chinese sexuality to address Foucault's 'first doubt': 'Is sexual repression truly an established historical fact?'²⁴ What I can point out is that the repression-liberation narrative, propounded in the 1920s and later deployed to legitimate the rule of the communist regime (the justification of radical social engineering and transcendence of the rule of law to 'liberate the masses'), has been directly attacked through many case studies.²⁵ One should avoid inserting oneself into the 'critical discourse that addresses itself to repression' that may be 'in fact part of the same historical network as the thing it denounces (and doubtlessly misrepresents) by calling it "repression"'.²⁶ While it is doubtless difficult to resist the temptation to see the past as more 'repressed', 'conceited', 'close-minded' and 'hypocritical' than the present, one must stay sober in the discussion of the language of *xing* to avoid reproducing the teleology and rhetoric of progress embraced by our historical actors. For now, let us turn our attention to *xing* again, and track it down in Chinese texts in the early twentieth century.

Tracing *xing*

According to Jai Ben-ray, Ye Dehui's (1864–1927) 'Preface to *The Classic of the Plain Girl*' (1907) contained possibly the earliest use of *xing qua* sex and human nature.²⁷ *The Classic of the Plain Girl* (*Su nü jing*), a sex manual dated from the third to second century BCE, was reconstructed by Ye from the fragments recorded in one of the thirty volumes of *Ishinpō*, the oldest surviving medical work from Japan. Ye Dehui, a local official, book collector and bibliographic scholar, regarded the resurrection of these 'Art of the Bedchamber' texts as 'part of a modernising project to bring sex into public discourse. China's ancient sexual love was firmly connected to the serious issue of ensuring the nation's social fitness through reproductive success'.²⁸ In 1903, Ye published *Plain Girl* and other texts as *The Double Plum Sun and Shadow Anthology* (*Shuang mei jing an congshu*).

Plain Girl was a dialogue between the eponymous maiden and the legendary yellow emperor, who sought wisdom on sexual practices. In this ancient text, sexual activity was described as a pleasurable practice which could contribute greatly to health and longevity, but excessive sex can lead to the depletion of the male essence (*jing*), grave illness and death. Ye Dehui, subsequently castigated as a pornographer spreading

obscenity and superstition, had the same aims as May Fourth New Culture intellectuals, but ended up with a different project: instead of championing western sexology and denigrating older Chinese medical texts, Ye argued that China had always already had solutions to its own problems. He wrote:

Today, western scholars in hygiene [*weisheng*] from afar, investigate and speculate on the subtle and hidden causes behind eating, drinking and sexual relations [*yinshi nannü*], and their works are translated as new books such as *Genitalia* [*Shengzhi qi*], *New Theories on Sexual Intercourse* [*Nannü jiaohe xinlun*], *The Hygiene of Marriage* [*Hunyin weisheng xue*]. The ignorant treated them as treasures, not knowing that the descendants of China's sacred emperors and ancient sages already discussed this learning four thousand years ago. For instance, *The Record of Confucius Closing Off the House* [*Kongzi bifang ji*] mentioned in the apocryphal texts [*weishu*], although it is not passed on through the generations, we know how ancient this study [of sex] is. Or the ancient methods of foetal education [*taijiao*] recorded in the *Abundant Dew on the Spring and Autumn Annals* [*Chunqiu fanlu*] and *Records of Ritual Matters by Dai Senior* [*Da Dai lijì*], it is invariably about the rectification of character [*xingqing*] of the parents, multiplication of descendents and continuation of the progeny of the family [*guangsi xu*], to maximise the function of orderly cultivation [*weiyu*]. The spirit of the study of sex [*xingxue*], how could the pedantic Confucian scholars possibly be able to see its essence?²⁹

Here, the Chinese character *xing* appears twice. The first *xing* from *xingqing* means 'character' or 'temperament'. The second *xing* in *xingxue* directly refers to the study or scholarship of sex – *xingxue* became the standard translation of terms such as sexology, sexual sciences and sex research (*sexologie/Sexuologie*, *Sexualwissenschaft/Sexualforschung*). Ye's argument was that ancient China had an extremely sophisticated discourse on sex, and as such, the current translations of western texts that he encountered – *Genitalia*, *New Theories on Sexual Intercourse* and so on – were 'old news from afar'.³⁰ This would be a source of national pride as China was superior to the west in the innovation of ideas. Another aim of Ye Dehui's rhetoric was to legitimise his own investigations – since sex was what people in the west were talking about, then of course the Chinese had to look into *xing* too.

The 1900s and 1910s were a transitional period. Intellectuals wrote about sex with a mixture of old categories – the aforementioned *yin*, *se* and *yu* – along with occasional uses of *xing* constructions. From a sample of articles on the women's movement written between 1842 to 1911, sex was described variously as *rou* ('flesh'), *roujiao* ('transactions of the flesh'), *rouyu* ('carnal desire'), *fayu* ('arousal'), *nannü zhi yu* ('desire between man and woman'), *jiaohe* (exchange, combine, come together).³¹ In 'The Relationship Between the Two Sexes' (*Nannü liangxing de guanxi*), published in the April 1907 issue of *China's New Woman's World Magazine* (*Zhongguo xin nüjie zazhi*), *liangxing* was used to describe the opposite sexes. Another early instance of *xing* in China could be found in the 1900 Chinese translation of a Japanese text, Fukuzawa Yukichi's *On the Interactions Between Men and Women* (*Danjo kōsai ron*, 1886).³² There, the translator, following Fukuzawa, used the character *xing* to mean intercourse, an essential component of a relationship between a man and a woman.³³ Yet, within the same article, sex was also called *tijiao/tipo zhi jiao* ('bodily exchange') – showing that *xing* had not yet displaced the older categories and some authors (for example Lufei Kui) continued to use exclusively *se* and *yin* in 1910.

In his influential article on polygamy in the August 1911 issue of *Eastern Miscellany* (*Dongfang zazhi*), Du Yaquan writes:

The key to the preservation of progeny (*baozhong*)... is to regulate sexual desire (*xingyu*)... if the system (*jiguan*) of sexual desire is overused, then other bodily systems will become atrophied (*weisuo*)... On the other hand, if sexual desire is well regulated, then other systems will prosper (*fada*). To have a healthy body and a refined morality and passing these qualities to the offspring – this is the citizen's (*guomin*) duty to the future generation.³⁴

Du's article contains one of the earliest uses of the phrase *xingyu* for 'sexual desire'/'libido', as opposed to the older *yinyu*. He writes about sex in the language of drives and instincts emerging from the European psychological sciences, which treat sex as one of the many vital and natural systems of the body. *Xingyu* is just as important as *shiyu*, the desire for food and drink. The careful balances of input and expenditure of energy in the bodily economy is key to the development of a healthy, moral human being, and the responsibility of a citizen (*guomin*, also a new 1920s term) in the Chinese nation is to prevent overspending in sex, achieved through the prohibition of polygamy and concubinage. For Du, sex is a perilous drive and its vigilant monitoring is of individual and collective interest, but to deploy the vocabulary of *xing* means that sex is no longer something dirty or taboo – the shift to *xing*-constructions is a symptom of the emerging discourse of sex *qua* natural property of all human beings in the early decades of republican China.

In another article in *Eastern Miscellany*, Gu Shaoyi explored the relationship between the olfactory sense and sexual desire. Gu similarly equated sexual desire to something that was fundamental to all humans, and adopted the phrase *xingyu*, which appeared thirty-three times in the text. *Xing*, as sex and human nature, appeared as a standalone character five times. The older terms *seyu* and *qingyu* still featured, but only employed eight and two times respectively, reflecting that Gu's intended audience, the emerging bourgeoisie in urban China, would be expected to understand the new usage of *xing*.³⁵ By 1919 and 1920, some articles used only *xing* to refer to sex, for instance: two articles in *Morning Light* (*Shuguang*) by Wang Tongzhao and Wang Qirui; and Pan Gongzhan's 1920 review of Maurice Alpheus Bigelow's *Sex Education: Knowledge of Sex in its Relation to Human Life* (1915) in *Education Magazine* (*Jiaoyu zazhi*). If we survey the *Comprehensive Catalogue of Republican Period Books*, the major index of publications between the late Qing period and the communist takeover, the character *xing* (meaning sex) began to appear in book titles from 1920 onwards, and out of the 408 books on sex published, 263 were released in this decade.³⁶

The alien nature of *xing* as a signifier of sex was often emphasised by the use of quotation marks. For instance, in Zhang Jingsheng's advertisement titled 'The Best Pastime for the Winter Vacation – An Announcement Made on Behalf of the "Eugenics Society"', which appeared in the literary supplement of *Capital Daily* (*Jingbao fukan*) in February 1926, quotation marks framed terms including sex (*xing*), sex histories (*xing shi*) and sexual knowledge (*xing zhishi*).³⁷ Another case of the use of quotation marks or a different typeface to highlight the novelty of *xing* is Chen Dongyuan's influential *History of Women's Lives in China* (*Zhongguo funü shenghuo shi*, 1926). When commenting on Margaret Sanger's visit to Peking University, Chen notes, '[Sanger] makes Chinese people become aware that matters related to "*xing*" are actually worth discussing using the Scientific Method!'³⁸

The most suggestive clue to *xing*'s linguistic career could be found through Zhang Dongmin, a writer and translator of popular science who published *The Worship of Sex* (*Xing de congbai*) in June 1927. In his book, which drew extensively from O. A.

Wall's *Sex and Sex Worship* (1919), Zhang Dongmin argued that sex, in an unspecified primitive past, was something that was clean and decent, but became something evil and threatening under China's sexual morality. The underlying purpose of Zhang's book was to contrast sexual practices and attitudes in the past, perceived to be more relaxed and 'closer to nature', against the repression that Zhang saw in today's China. Of particular importance to us is the manner in which Zhang creatively appropriated the first two verses of the *Three Character Classic* (*San zi jing*, ca. thirteenth century), which stated the central tenet of Confucianism as developed by Mencius: *ren zi chu, xing ben shan; xing xiang jin, xi xiang yuan*. The common translation for this would be, 'people at birth, are naturally good; their natures are similar, their habits make them different'. Here, 'naturally' and 'human nature' are represented by *xing*. Zhang Dongmin however interprets *xing* here as sex: 'The ancients had said, "in the beginning, sex was decent". This clearly stated that when human beings were in their primitive, beginning epochs, for them everything concerning sex, were originally regarded as good and decent'.³⁹ Zhou Zuoren, in his review of Zhang Dongmin's book, criticises this reading of *xing* as either a wilfully anachronistic interpretation or a mistake:

Let us not for now go into a discussion on *xing* [as sex] as a new noun from Japan... [Zhang Dongmin] thinks that this *xing* [in the first verse of the *Three Character Classic*] is the *xing* in *xingjiao* [coitus], in fact this is clearly a mistake.⁴⁰

Japanese connections and return graphic loans

Let us ignore Zhou Zuoren's advice, and now go into a discussion on *xing* as a new noun from Japan. We begin with the obligatory point of passage for all inquiries related to Japanese use of Chinese characters – *kanji* in Japanese – Morohashi Tetsuji's (1883–1982) *Dai kanwa jiten*, the definitive work of reference on Japanese and Chinese. In the 1984–86 edition, the entry on the *kanji* contains definitions such as temperament, nature, personality and sex; these correspond to the meanings of *xing* found in any contemporary Chinese dictionary. However, there are *three* possible pronunciations of the character in Japanese, as opposed to just *one* in Chinese. When used to refer to sex, the pronunciation is *sei*. The other two are *shou* and *saga*, used in compounds referring to character and nature. Deborah Sang, who cited the opinion of sexologist Zhang Minyun, stated that the 'importation of German sexology to Japan began in the late Meiji period (1868–1912) and reached its peak in the Taisho era (1912–26)'. This statement is broadly correct, as demonstrated by the work of Sabine Frühstück and Oda Makoto.⁴¹ Sang added that it was during the Meiji when 'Japanese intellectuals began to use *sei* [the character called *xing* in Chinese] to mean sex'. Unfortunately, neither Zhang nor Sang went any further beyond stating the *sex-sei-xing* connection.⁴²

A look at the most widely circulated dictionaries published in Japan in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries would give us some hints on the trajectory of *sei*. In the famous *Sea of Words – Genkai* (1891), edited by lexicographer Otsuki Fumihiko, there was no record of *sei*-sex, as with: Owada Tateki's *Nihon da jiten* (1897); Shozaburo Kanazawa's *Forest of Words – Jirin* (1907); Shigeno Yasutsugu's *Sanseido kanwa da jiten* (1910); Matsui Kanji and Uedo Kazutoshi's *Fuzanbo dainihon kokugo jiten* (1915). The 1920s however were a watershed, as *sei*-sex was institutionalised in Japanese reference works for the first time. In Ochiai Naobumi and Haga Yaichi's

Fountain of Words – *Gensen* (1927), the fourth definition of the character reads, ‘*Sei*. English: *sex*, the differences in the psychological and physical qualities of men and women’. The 1923 *Shokai kanwa daijiten* by Hattori Unokichi and Oyanagi Shigeta also included the *sei*-sex definition. The inclusion of the sex definition was by no means uniform across all dictionaries: the revised edition of the aforementioned *Forest of Words* (1925) and the expanded version of *Sea of Words* (*Gensen*, 1932–37) were two cases where a *sei*-sex entry could not be found. On the other hand, some English–Japanese dictionaries recorded *sei*-sex well before the 1920s. For instance, Shibata Shoukichi and Koyasu Takashi’s *Eiwa jii* (1873) defines sex and sexuality as *sei*, as with: the Japanese translation of *Webster’s Unabridged Dictionary* (1888) by Tanahashi Ichiro and Frank Warrington Eastlake; Kanda Naibu’s *Mohan shin eiwa daijiten* (1911) and *Shuchin konsaisu eiwa jiten* (1922). The pattern that emerges is that, until the twentieth century, the character called *xing* in Chinese was used in Japanese to also signify nature, life and so forth, and since the 1870s to 1880s, the *kanji* was used to signify sex and this new usage became more popular in the 1920s, displacing older words such as *iro* (the Japanese equivalent of the Chinese *se*). This corroborates Furukawa Makoto’s finding that *sei* (as sex) became a fashionable word in the 1920s.⁴³ From the chronology of the dictionaries investigated, combined with Zhou Zuoren’s remark, we could venture the hypothesis that the Japanese used the *kanji* called *xing* in Chinese to translate ‘sex’ and ‘sexuality’ before the Chinese. To explain what is going on here, it is crucial to understand the structure of the Japanese language and its development.⁴⁴

There are three systems of writings in Japanese: the syllabaries *katakana* and *hiragana*, and the ideogram system *kanji* (‘Han characters’). The characters were appropriated by the Japanese around the fifth to sixth centuries from Buddhist scriptures and Chinese philosophical texts. By the seventh century, the Chinese characters mutated into two separate species in Japan: *jun kanbun* (‘genuine writing’) and *hentai kanbun* (‘deformed writing’). Texts were written with various marks to inform the reader as to the particular arrangement of the *kanji* in each phrase so that a Japanese reading could be possible. The ability to do Japanese readings of Chinese characters was in turn the result of two methods of adaptation – the first was to use the Chinese characters semantically, and then give them Japanese sounds (*kun* reading). The second was to do the opposite: employ characters as phonemes and put together new words in Japanese with little regard for the original meaning of the Chinese symbols (*on*). The Japanese literati were very fond of bringing back neologisms in Chinese back to their home country, and invented idiosyncratic uses of ideograms which often bore no relationship to the characters’ meanings in Chinese. Each Chinese character thus acquired a whole range of pronunciations, some of which were invented by the Japanese, some were possibly Chinese pronunciations which fell out of use in China but survived in Japan.

In Japan, Chinese was the language of the elite. The literati would compose essays and poems in Chinese, officials used it in government documents and the religious hierarchy to maintain manuscripts. By the ninth century, the clerics developed a separate system of diacritical marks placed alongside Chinese characters to clarify the way texts were supposed to be read. The marks were simplified forms or fragments of Chinese characters, and these were called *kana*. By the eleventh century, they were developed into two systems of writing Japanese sounds: *katakana* and *hiragana*. By the thirteenth century, *hiragana* became the syllabary used with *kanji* to form the

backbone of the writing system. The *katakana*, meanwhile, acquired its principal use – the phonetic rendering of new foreign words, particularly heightened as a result of colonial encounters. As a result, modern Japanese writing is a melting pot of Chinese characters, *hiragana* and *katakana*: layer upon layer, permutations and combinations of sounds, images, semantics, annotations.

What is supremely important to us is the process of neologistic construction in Japanese and Chinese. According to Lydia Liu, the influx of calques and other loanwords into Chinese in the late nineteenth to early twentieth century followed a typical pattern: ‘the Japanese used *kanji* (Chinese characters) to translate European terms, and the neologisms were then imported back into the Chinese language’. These borrowings fall under three headings: (1) two character compounds made up of Chinese characters that are found only in pre-modern Japanese and do not appear in Classical Chinese; (2) Classical Chinese expressions used by the Japanese to translate western terms that were then imported back into Chinese with a radical change in meaning, such as *geming* [revolution; in Japanese *kakumei*], *wenhua* [culture; *bunka*], *jingji* [economy; *keizai*], *kexue* [science; *kagaku*]; (3) modern Japanese compounds that have no equivalent in Classical Chinese, such as *zhongzu* [race; in Japanese *shuzoku*], *meishu* [art; *bijutsu*], *meixue* [aesthetics; *bigaku*], *guoji* [international; *kokusai*]. The second of these types of borrowings is called *return graphic loans*. To clarify, the modern meaning of the Chinese compound *wenhua*, ‘culture’, is derived from the Japanese compound, written in exactly the same way but pronounced *bunka*, and it is through the process of borrowing from the Japanese that an equivalence was established between *wenxue* and ‘culture’. In Classical Chinese, *wenhua* denoted ‘the state of refinement or artistic cultivation as opposed to military prowess, carrying none of the ethnographical connotations of “culture” in today’s usage’. *Kexue*, on the other hand, meant ‘studies for the civil examinations’ in Classical Chinese, but after the Japanese appropriation (*kagaku*), *kexue* became ‘science’ in twentieth-century China.⁴⁵

The motivations for the Japanese in using Chinese characters are multiple. Yanabu Akira explains that, in large part, it is due to what he calls the *cassette effect*. A cassette here is a casket for jewels, letters or other precious items, itself made with a valuable material and richly ornamented. Chinese characters were held by the Japanese as valuable repositories and carriers of meaning. Moreover, these ‘cassettes’ drew a reader’s attention to the newness, alien nature of the foreign, imported bits of knowledge. It is an act of linguistic engineering; particularly for Meiji intellectuals who argued that the modernisation of the nation required the appropriation of modern thought and the acknowledgement of the power of language meant that such modern thought had to be expressed with new words, and the older terms had to be superseded. In China this was also the case, as Edward Gunn demonstrated in his work on the ‘rewriting’ of Chinese in the 1920s.⁴⁶ For Yanabu, the cassette effect leads to the blind acceptance of loanwords and neologisms without interrogation of what they ‘really’ mean – the splendour, glamour, elegance of the cassettes dazzled and charmed readers into ignoring their contents. In that sense, a cassette becomes more akin to a Trojan horse, facilitating the ‘smuggling’ of ideas. As the new words become adopted and reiterated, readers ‘feel’ as though they know what they are talking about, or begin to be only capable of thinking about a certain problem *through* these terms, and are thus constrained by a linguistic straitjacket, become ‘spoken’ by a discourse.⁴⁷ Yanabu’s cassettes include ‘society’ (in Chinese *shehui*; in Japanese *shokai*), ‘individual’ (*geren*; *kojin*), ‘love’

(*lian'ai; ren'ai*), 'being' (*cunzai; sonzai*), 'nature' (*ziran; shiran*), 'liberty' (*ziyou; jiyuu*), 'right' (*quanli; kenri*). One should note that *all* of Yanabu's cassettes also ended up as return graphic loans, reintroduced into China around the early twentieth century through Chinese translations of Japanese translations of European and American texts.⁴⁸ These new words were mobilised by May Fourth New Culture intellectuals, circulated in what I call the 'marketplace of ideas' in 1920s China, institutionalised in dictionaries, glossaries and encyclopaedias, and entered public discourse.

Xing is precisely one of these 'return graphic loans'. Though it is difficult to pinpoint exactly who *first* used *sei* to mean sex (probably as a *transliteration*), Oda Makoto credits Mori Ogai (1862–1922) for popularising its use in Japan.⁴⁹ Mori, a Japanese physician and novelist who studied public health in Germany, was one of the most important Meiji writers on sex and hygiene. Around 1902–03, Mori published a series of articles in *Public Health* (*Koushuu iji*) which discussed sex drive, menstruation, contraception, spermatorrhea, hygienes. Mori uses *sei* and its compounds throughout; his argument is that the sex drive is fundamentally a fact of human nature, and its suppression can lead to grave nervous illnesses. In 1909, Mori published *Vita Sexualis* (*Wita sekusuarisu*), a frank semi-autobiographical book in which the narrator describes his psychosexual development. *Vita Sexualis* was a clear expression of Mori's view that the desire for sex cannot be suppressed or silenced, and the open discussion of sex is necessary for the sake of self-improvement and one's mental health.⁵⁰ The return of *sei* back to China was the result of translations of Japanese sexological texts and textbooks by Chinese and Japanese intellectuals, for instance the work of Fukuzawa Yukichi and gynaecologist Habuto Eiji's (?–1929) *New Sex Education*.⁵¹ What these works achieved was to put *sei/xing* and the double meaning of *xing* (sex/human nature) into circulation.

Conclusion

Since sex, through *xing*, became the centre of human life, this necessitated rational, systematic inquiry into its 'true' nature. The aim of a science in sex was not simply descriptive – the classification of behaviours – but always prescriptive and normative. For British sexologist and social reformer Havelock Ellis, widely admired by republican Chinese intellectuals, the point of collecting and displaying all kinds of sexual fauna was to foster tolerance and acceptance. Since what was observed in the world 'out there' in nature was necessarily 'natural', homosexuality for instance ought to be accommodated as part of the diversity of all human beings, ultimately as unremarkable as differences in height or weight.⁵² There were equally men of science who believed that there was one 'true' human nature and one 'true' kind of sexuality, and all other behaviours would be pathological, opposed to 'Nature's Way' and thus had to be eliminated.

The various paradoxes arising from the mobilisation of 'nature' for political ends and to legitimise moral outlooks through 'biologisation' or 'naturalisation' have been analysed by many.⁵³ On the one hand, nature is about spontaneity, something that one has always already 'known', or just there to be found and *appropriately named* because it is 'universal', deeply engrained, an inherent tendency or immutable drive. Something appears to be 'natural' if one is compelled to do it or helpless against it; a person is absolved of moral responsibilities for acting in a certain way because there is

never a conscious choice. On the other hand, the mass of sex manuals which provide detailed descriptions on how to behave ‘naturally’ or ‘scientifically’ can imply: what is ‘natural’ can after all be altered; or there is a possibility that human beings can act contrarily to nature; or that their drives may be corrupted, misaligned by ‘culture’ or ‘society’ and must be corrected, reformed, re-educated, rechanneled. The aim then is to redirect a man’s energies to more useful ends, to restore the natural order of things, to eliminate any restraints which may hold back human beings from realising their true potential, from fulfilling their biological destiny, from playing their rightful roles. This position is absolutely crucial to the rhetoric of 1920s Chinese intellectuals and iconoclasts: the artificial pathological obstacle that had to be dismantled at all costs was ‘Confucianism’. The symptoms of the ‘Sick Man of Asia’, twisted by ‘Confucian ethics’ included: treating sex as a taboo subject, not to be spoken about or only ever through euphemisms; wanton excesses in brothels and polygamous households; the mutilation of the female body through footbinding and chestbinding; the ‘poor’ quality of reproduction which led to a ‘poor’ quality of the population. A healthy, brand new sexual morality, erected on the modern edifice of western science, anchored in the direct, no-nonsense language of *xing*, would be the way to administer and manage people’s lives, to rejuvenate a nation under siege. Effectively, *xing* became a new vessel, a placeholder given different shapes depending on the political project; it was up to intellectuals to fill the content of *xing*, writing sex/human nature into being.

Through *xing*, some of the key developments in science and humanities in 1920s China make a good deal of sense. Why was there, for instance, an explosion of autobiographical writing, an effervescence of confessional novels written in the first person with frank, startling revelations of sexual lives? And why were there so many ‘problem novels’ (*wenti xiaoshuo*) which dealt with sex-related issues of the day such as premarital sex, pregnancy before marriage, same-sex desire? Why did intellectuals encourage the masses to keep diaries, to read up on questions like chastity and divorce, some even going as far as asking the general public to submit personal stories of sexual development and to compile case histories for all to scrutinise? Sex was ‘implanted into bodies, slipped in beneath modes of conduct, made into a principle of classification and intelligibility, established as a – *raison d’être* and a natural order of disorder’.⁵⁴ Sex became the locus of truth and a person’s subjectivity, and so it would be an obligation upon all the Chinese people to speak out, to have one’s voice registered in the world, to share one’s painful sufferings: the public was invited not to feel ashamed or guilty, but to *leave absolutely nothing unsaid* – in short, it was an ‘incitement to speak’, an attempt to construct a ‘machinery for producing true discourses about sex’.⁵⁵ The foundation of human sciences in Chinese universities, the interest in anthropology, sociology and ethnography for the collection and comparison of everyone’s daily lives and sexual customs, dovetail the intellectuals’ project of the ‘Discovery of Man’ (*ren de faxian*) and the liberation of his spirit. The ‘facts of life’ extracted from these inquiries were presumed to help the Chinese to work out rational strategies to transform the political economy of the body: they came up with something as grand as the compulsory sterilisation of the ‘undesirables’ or the control of reproduction of the ‘invalids’ in the Chinese population, or as seemingly trivial as washing one’s genitals with soap and putting on clean underwear before going to bed. Contraceptive technologies, alongside the rules of dating and the virtues of French kissing, were vigorously debated in magazines such as *Ladies’ Journal* (*Fünu zazhi*), *New Women* (*Xin nüxing*), *New Family*

(*Xin jiating*), *New Culture* (*Xin wenhua*), *Sex Magazine* (*Xing zazhi*), *Sex Science* (*Xing kexue*). Key foreign works on sex were translated: Key's *Love and Marriage* in 1923, Stopes's *Married Love and Wise Parenthood* in 1924, Carpenter's *Love Coming-of-Age* in 1922, parts of Ellis's *Studies in the Psychology of Sex* in 1927, and Freud around the mid-1920s. All of these phenomena were connected to the frantic drive to determine, to alter, to fix the content of *xing*, of sex and human nature.

To end, I would like to emphasise again the fruitfulness of studying cross-cultural exchange and the global circulation of the language and keywords of sex. *Xing/sei* and sex/human nature are not just a Sino-Japanese phenomenon. We may equally want to ask how and when, for instance Russians, Turks, Filipinos, Indonesians came to adopt the term *seks* – a transliteration of *sex* – and expelled the older vocabulary? What sort of things did they do to/with their words? In what ways were these stories connected to the global migration and mutation of sexual and biological knowledge – or *biopower* and *governmentality* – under the backdrop of imperialism and colonial modernity? Instead of focusing on how different parts of the sexual spectrum – heterosexuality, gay and lesbianism, transgender – manifest themselves in different parts of the world, as regional histories of sexuality have often tended to do, I propose that we may all start off with a much simpler question, 'What is the word for "sex" in this particular language, and why?'

Glossary

'1920 niandai de lian'ai yu xing xingdaode lunsu – cong Zhang Xichen canyu de sanchi lunzhan tanqi'

Q2

1920 年代的戀愛與新性道德論述

– 從章錫琛參與的三次論戰談起

Ai [Han Emperor Ai / Han Ai Di]

哀 [漢哀帝]

baozhong

保種

Beijing tushuguan

北京圖書館

Chang Yü-fa [Zhang Yufa]

張玉法

Chen Dongyuan

陳東原

Chunqiu fanlu

春秋繁露

cunzai [in Japanese *sonzai*]

存在

Da Dai liji

大戴禮記

Dai kan-wa jiten

大漢和辭典

Danjo kōsai ron

男女交際論

daofeng dianluan

倒鳳顛鸞

Dongfang zazhi

東方雜誌

duanxiu

斷袖

dunlun

敦倫

dongfang

洞房

Dong Xian

董賢

Du Yaquan

杜亞泉

duishi

對食

Eiwa jii

英和字彙

fada

發達

fang

房

fangshi

房事

fangzhong shu	房中術
fayu	發慾
fentao	分桃
Furukawa Makoto	古川 誠
Fukuzawa Yukichi	福澤 諭吉
<i>Funü zazhi</i>	婦女雜誌
<i>Funü: Zui manchang de gemin</i>	婦女 最漫長的革命
<i>Fuzanbo dainihon kokugo jiten</i>	富山房大日本國語辭典
gan	幹
Gao Mingkai	高名凱
Gaozi	告子
<i>geming</i> [in Japanese <i>kakumei</i>]	革命
<i>Gendai shiso</i>	現代思想
<i>Genkai</i>	言海
<i>Gensen nihon daijiten</i>	言泉 日本大辭典
geren [in Japanese <i>kojin</i>]	個人
Gu Shaoyi	顧紹衣
guangsi xu	廣嗣續
guangxi	關係
<i>Guangya</i>	廣雅
guoji [in Japanese <i>kokusai</i>]	國際
guomin	國民
Habuto Eiji	羽太 銳治
Haga Yaichi	芳賀 矢一
<i>Hanfeizi</i>	韓非子
<i>Hanyu da cidian</i>	漢語大辭典
haose	好色
Hattori Unokichi	服部 宇之吉
<i>Honyakugo Seiritsu Jijo</i>	翻譯語成立事情
<i>Hunyin weisheng xue</i>	婚姻衛生學
Hsu Hui-chi [Xu Huiqi]	許慧琦
<i>Ichigo no jiten: sei</i>	一語の辭典 性
iro [in Chinese <i>se</i>]	色
<i>Ishinpō [Yi xin fan]</i>	醫心方
Jai Ben-ray [Zhai Benrui]	翟本瑞
Jiang Xiaoyuan	江曉原
jianyin	姦淫
jiao	交
jiaogou	交媾
jiaohe	交合
jiefang	解放
jiese	戒色
<i>Jiaoyu zazhi</i>	教育雜誌
<i>Jiaoyu zhuanxin zhi jin: ershi shiji shangbenye</i>	教育轉型之鏡 二十世紀中國的性教育思想
<i>zhongguo de xing jiaoyu shixiang yu shijian</i>	與實踐
jiguan	機關
<i>Jin Ping Mei</i>	金瓶梅
<i>Jindai Zhongguo funü shi yanjiu</i>	近代中國婦女史研究
<i>Jindai Zhongguo Nüquan Yundong Shiliao</i>	近代中國女權運動史料
jing	精
<i>Jingbao fukan</i>	京報副刊

1		
2		
3	<i>jingji</i> [in Japanese <i>keizai</i>]	經濟
4	<i>Jirin</i>	辭林
5	<i>juan</i>	卷
6	Kanda Naibu	神田 乃武
7	<i>kanji</i> [in Chinese <i>hanzi</i>]	漢字
8	<i>Kangxi zidian</i>	康熙字典
9	kasette kouka ['cassette effect']	カセット [小さな宝石箱] 効果
10	keneng xing	可能性
11	kexue [in Japanese <i>kagaku</i>]	科學
12	<i>Kindai nihongo no shiso: honyaku buntai</i>	近代日本語の思想: 翻訳文体成立事情
13	<i>seiritsu jijo</i>	
14	<i>Kojirin</i>	廣辭林
15	<i>Kongzi bifang ji</i>	孔子閉房記
16	<i>Koushuu iji</i>	公衆醫事
17	Koyasu Takashi	子安 峻
18	Li Xiao-jian [Li Xiaojiang]	李小江
19	Li Yinhe	李銀河
20	Li Yu-ning [Li Youning]	李又寧
21	lian'ai [in Japanese <i>ren'ai</i>]	戀愛
22	liangxing	兩性
23	<i>Liji</i>	禮記
24	ling	靈
25	lingrou yizhi	靈肉一致
26	Ling [Duke Ling of Wei / Wei Ling Gong]	靈 [衛靈公]
27	Liu Dalin	劉達臨
28	Liu Zhengtan	劉正琰
29	Longyang	龍陽
30	longyang pi	龍陽癖
31	Lufei Kui	陸費逵
32	Lun xuqie	論蓄妾
33	<i>Lunyu</i>	論語
34	Luo Zhufeng	羅竹風
35	Ma Boying	馬伯英
36	Matsui Kanji	松井 簡治
37	meishu [in Japanese <i>bijutsu</i>]	美術
38	meixue [in Japanese <i>bigaku</i>]	美學
39	Mi Zixia	彌子瑕
40	<i>Minguo shiqi zong shumu</i>	民國時期總書目
41	<i>Mohan shin eiwa daijiten</i>	模範新英和大辭典
42	mojing	磨鏡
43	Mori Ogai	森 鷗外
44	Morohashi Tetsuji	諸橋 轍次
45	na'ge	那個
46	nannü	男女
47	<i>Nannü jiaohe xinlun</i>	男女交合新論
48	'Nannü liangxing de guanxi'	男女兩性的關係
	nannü zi ju	男女之具
	nannü zi yu	男女之慾
	<i>Nihon dai jiten</i>	日本大辭典
	Ochiai Naobumi	落合直文
	Oda Makoto	小田亮

2		
3	Otsuki Fumihiko	大槻 文彦
4	Ouyang Pucun	歐陽溥存
5	Oyanagi Shigeta	小柳司 氣太
6	Owada Tateki	大和田 建樹
7	Pan Gongzhan	潘公展
8	Pan Suiming	潘綏銘
9	pin	品
10	pinxiao	品蕭
11	pinyu	品玉
12	<i>Qingyibao quanbian</i>	清議報全編
13	qingyu	情慾
14	<i>Qingbai leichao</i>	清稗類抄
15	quanli [in Japanese <i>kenri</i>]	權利
16	<i>Ren'ai to seiyoku no daisan teikoku</i>	戀愛と性欲の第三帝国
17	ren de faxian	人的發現
18	ren zi chu, xing ben shan; xing xiang jin, xi	人之初 性本善 性相近 習相遠
19	xiang yuan	
20	<i>Renxue</i>	仁學
21	rou	肉
22	roujiao	肉交
23	rouyu	肉慾
24	ru	入
25	Ruan Fangfu	阮芳賦
26	Saito, Hikaru	齊藤光
27	<i>Sanseido kanwa daijiten</i>	三省堂漢和大辭典
28	San zi jing	三字經
29	se [in Japanese <i>iro</i>]	色
30	segui	色鬼
31	seqing xiaoshuo	色情小說
32	se mimi	色迷迷
33	sexiang	色相
34	seyu	色慾
35	shangchuang	上牀
36	shehui [in Japanese <i>shakai</i>]	社會
37	Shehui kexue: zonglei bufen	社會科學: 總類部分
38	sheng	生
39	<i>Shengzhi qi</i>	生殖器
40	shi se xing ye	食色性也
41	Shibata Shoukichi	柴田 昌吉
42	Shigeno Yasutsugu	重野 安繹
43	shiyu	食慾
44	<i>Shokai kanwa daijiten</i>	詳解漢和大辭典
45	<i>Shuang mei jing an congshu</i>	雙梅景闇叢書
46	<i>Shuchin konsaisu eiwa jiten</i>	袖珍コンサイス英和辭典
47	<i>Shuguang</i>	曙光
48	<i>Shuowen jiezi</i>	說文解字
	shouyin	手淫
	Shozaburo Kanazawa	金澤 莊三郎
	shui	睡
	<i>Si yu yan</i>	思與言
	<i>Su nü jing</i>	素女經

1		
2		
3	tabako (tobacco, in Chinese <i>yanchao</i>)	煙草
4	taijiao	胎教
5	Tamba Yasuyori	丹波 康賴
6	Tan Sitong	譚嗣同
7	Tanahashi Ichiro	棚橋 一郎
8	tiandi ronghe	天地融合
9	tijiao	體交
10	tipo zhi jiao	體魄之交
11	tong	通
12	Tongwen shuju	同文書局
13	tongxing lian'ai	同性戀愛
14	Ueda Kazutoshi	上田 萬年
15	Wang Tongzhao	王統照
16	Wang Qingni	王晴霓
17	Wang Xuefeng	王雪峰
18	Wang Yi-cha [Wang Yijia]	王溢嘉
19	weisheng	衛生
20	weishu	緯書
21	weisuo	萎縮
22	<i>Weiwlun xingkexue</i>	唯物論性科學
23	weiyu	位育
24	<i>wenhua</i> [in Japanese <i>bunka</i>]	文化
25	wenti xiaoshuo	問題小說
26	<i>Wita sekusuarisu</i> [<i>Vita Sexualis</i>]	キタ・セクスアリス
27	<i>Xiandai hanyu wailai ci yanjiu</i>	現代漢語外來詞研究
28	xiang	相
29	xingfang	行房
30	<i>Xin jiating</i>	新家庭
31	<i>Xin nüxing</i>	新女性
32	<i>Xin wenhua</i>	新文化
33	<i>Xin zidian</i>	新字典
34	xing [in Japanese <i>sei</i>]	性
35	xingbie	性別
36	<i>Xing shi</i>	性史
37	<i>Xing de congbai</i>	性的崇拜
38	<i>Xing de lishi</i>	性的歷史
39	<i>Xing kexue</i>	性科學
40	xingjiao	性交
41	xingqing	性情
42	xing quxiang	性取向
43	<i>Xing, wenming yu huangmiu</i>	性 文明 與 荒謬
44	xingxue	性學
45	xingyu	性慾
46	<i>Xing zazhi</i>	性科學
47	xing zhishi	性知識
48	<i>Xinhua zidian</i>	新華字典
	Xiujue yu xingyu de guanxi	嗅覺與性慾的關係
	Xu Ke	徐珂
	Xu Yuangao	徐元誥
	<i>Xunzi</i>	荀子
	Yanabu Akira	柳父 章

yang	陽
Ye Dehui	葉德輝
yin	陰
yinyang	陰陽
yin	淫
yincong	淫蟲
yingui	淫鬼
yinfū	淫夫
yinfū	淫婦
yinnian	淫念
yinnüe	淫譴
yinshu	淫書
yinshui	淫水
yinwei	淫威
yinxie	淫褻
yinxing	淫邢
yinyi	淫逸
yinyu	淫慾
yinshi nannü	飲食男女
yongjiu xing	永久性
'Youyazi' / Yuashi	憂亞子
yuanyang xishui	鴛鴦戲水
yuhuo	慾火
yunyu	雲雨
<i>Yun yu: xing zhangli xia de Zhongguo ren</i>	雲雨: 性張力下的中國人
yutao	餘桃
Zhang Dongmin	張東民
Zhang Jingsheng	張競生
Zhang Minyun	張敏筠
zhao'ai	造愛
zhengyin	烝淫
Zhongguo	中國
<i>Zhongguo funü shenghuo shi</i>	中國婦女生活史
'Zhongguoren xing guan chutan'	中國人性觀初探
<i>Zhongguo xin nüjie zazhi</i>	中國新女界雜誌
<i>Zhongguo xing xianzhuan</i>	中國性現狀
<i>Zhongguo yixue wenhuashi</i>	中國醫學文化史
<i>Zhonghua dazidian</i>	中華大字典
<i>Zhonghua shuju</i>	中華書局
Zhongyong	中庸
zhongzu [in Japanese <i>shuzoku</i>]	種族
Zhou Zuoren	周作人
<i>Zhou Zuoren shuhua</i>	周作人書話
<i>Zhou Zuoren quanji</i>	周作人全集
ziran [in Japanese <i>shizen</i>]	自然
Ziran kexue: yiyao weisheng	自然科學: 醫藥衛生
ziyou [in Japanese <i>jiyuu</i>]	自由
<i>Zuixin xingyu jiaoyu</i>	最新性慾教育
<i>Zuozhuan</i>	左傳

Notes

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Note on romanisation and East Asian characters: The *pinyin* system of romanisation has been used throughout this paper, except for: first, a few spellings best known outside China in another form, such as Chiang Kai-shek, Sun Yat-sen, Kuomintang, Peking University and Tsinghua University; second, names of Taiwanese persons which are often written with the Wade-Giles system. A glossary of Chinese and Japanese characters is supplied at the end of this article.

1. Li Xiao-Jian, 'Xingbie or Gender', in Nadia Tazi (ed.), *Keywords: Gender* (New York: Other Press, 2004), pp. 87–103, here p. 89. The correct romanisation of the author's name is Li Xiaojian. However in Tazi's edited volume, Li's name is spelt idiosyncratically as Li Xiao-Jian.
2. Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1: *Will to Knowledge*, tr. Robert Hurley (1976; London: Penguin, 1978), p. 105.
3. Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (London: Croom Helm, 1976), p. 13.
4. Tony Bennett, Lawrence Grossberg and Meaghan Morris (eds), *New Keywords: A Revised Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005).
5. Ann Laura Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault's History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995); Ann Laura Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).
6. Leon Antonio Rocha, 'Zhang Jingsheng (1888–1970), Love, Sex, Aesthetics, Eugenics, Utopia' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Cambridge, forthcoming).
7. Dennis Altman, *Global Sex* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).
8. This is precisely Lisa Rofel's worry in her attack of Altman's 'emergence of a western-style politicised homosexuality in Asia', that is, the thesis that 'the ubiquity of western rhetoric means that many Asian gay men describe their realities and their own feelings through this rhetoric'. Rofel fears that this 'universalist' line of reasoning serves to negate differences and the erasure of Chinese voices of gay activism. See Lisa Rofel, *Desiring China: Experiments in Neoliberalism, Sexuality and Public Culture* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), pp. 88–91.
9. A similar argument can be found in Howard H. Chiang, 'Rethinking "Style" for Historians and Philosophers of Science: Converging Lessons from Sexuality, Translation, and East Asian Studies', in *Studies in History and Philosophy of Biological and Biomedical Sciences* 40 (2009), pp. 109–18, esp. pp. 112–15.
10. Lydia H. Liu, *Translingual Practice: Literature, National Culture, and Translated Modernity – China, 1900–1937* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995); Lydia H. Liu (ed.), *Tokens of Exchange: The Problem of Translations in Global Circulations* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999); Haun Saussy, *Great Walls of Discourse and Other Adventures in Cultural China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002).
11. Frank Dikötter, *Sex, Culture and Modernity in China* (London: Hurst, 1995), p. 68; Judith Farquhar, *Appetites: Food and Sex in Post-Socialist China* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), pp. 250–55; Zhong Xueping, *Masculinity Besieged? Issues of Modernity and Male Subjectivity in Chinese Literature of the Late Twentieth Century* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), p. 54; Deborah Tze-lan Sang, 'Translating Homosexuality: The Discourse of *Tongxing'ai* in Republican China (1912–1949)', in Liu (ed.), *Tokens of Exchange*, pp. 276–304, here p. 299.
12. Jiang Xiaoyuan, *Yun yu: Xing zhangli xia de Zhongguo ren* [*Clouds and Rain: The Chinese People Under Sexual Tension*] (Shanghai: Dongfang chuban zhongxin, 2005); Liu Dalin, *Xing de lishi* [*The History of Sexuality*] (Taipei: Commercial Press Taiwan, 2001); Ma Boying, *Zhongguo yixue wenhuashi* [*A History of Medical Culture in China*] (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 1994); Ruan Fangfu, *Sex in China: Studies in Sexology in Chinese Culture* (New York: Plenum Press, 1991); Pan Suiming, *Zhongguo xing xianzhuang* [*The Current State of Sex in China*] (Beijing: Guangming ribao chubanshe, 1995); Li Yinhe, *Funü: Zui manchang de gemin* [*Women: The Longest Revolution*] (Beijing: Zhongguo funü chubanshe, 2007); Wang Yi-cha, *Xing, wenming yu huangmiu* [*Sex, Civilisation and Absurdity*] (Taipei: Ye'e chubanshe, 1994).
13. See Tani E. Barlow, *The Question of Women in Chinese Feminism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), esp. pp. 49–55; Tani E. Barlow, 'Theorising Woman: Funu, Guojia, Jiating', in Angela Zito and

- Tani E. Barlow (eds), *Body, Subject, and Power in China* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), pp. 253–89.
14. Deborah Tze-lan Sang, *The Emerging Lesbian: Female Same-Sex Desire in Modern China* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), p. 103.
 15. William Edward Soothill and Lewis Hodous, *A Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist Terms, with Sanskrit and English Equivalents and a Sanskrit–Pali Index* (London: Kegan Paul, 1937), p. 258.
 16. Liu, *Translingual Practice*, p. 348; Federico Masini, *The Formation of Modern Chinese Lexicon and its Evolution Toward a National Language: The Period from 1840 to 1898*, *Journal of Chinese Linguistics* monograph 6 (Berkeley: Project on Linguistic Analysis, 1992), p. 140 n. 30; Gao Mingkai and Liu Zhengtan, *Xiandai hanyu wailai ci yanjiu* [*Studies of Loanwords in Modern Chinese*] (Beijing: Wenzi gaige chubanshe, 1958).
 17. Farquhar, *Appetites*, p. 251.
 18. Tan Sitong, *An Exposition of Benevolence: The Jen-hsüeh of T'an Ssu-t'ung*, tr. Chan Sin-wai (1897; Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1984), pp. 81–2. See also Luke S. K. Kwong, *T'an Ssu-t'ung, 1865–1898: Life and Thought of a Reformer* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), p. 158.
 19. See discussions in Lee Haiyan, *Revolution of the Heart: A Genealogy of Love in China, 1900–1950* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), pp. 172–8; Hsu Hui-chi, '1920 niandai de lian'ai yu xing xingdaode lunsu – cong Zhang Xichen canyu de sanchi lunzhan tanqi' ['A Discussion of Love and the New Sexual Morality of the 1920s – via the three debates Zhang Xichen participated in'], in *Jindai Zhongguo funü shi yanjiu* [*Research on Women in Modern Chinese History*] 16 (2008), pp. 29–92.
 20. Wenqing Kang, *Obsession: Male Same-Sex Relations in China, 1900–1950* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2009), pp. 19–40; Bret Hinsch, *Passions of the Cut Sleeve: The Male Homosexual Tradition in China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), pp. 34–54.
 21. Sang, *Emerging Lesbian*, pp. 17, 104, 119.
 22. Sang, *Emerging Lesbian*, pp. 102–6.
 23. Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, vol. 1, p. 7.
 24. Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, vol. 1, p. 10; Hubert Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), p. 126.
 25. I am referring to the growing/glowing body of revisionist scholarship which challenges the historiography of repression. Zhang Yanwen, *The Social Life of Opium in China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Gail Hershatter, *Dangerous Pleasures: Prostitution and Modernity in Twentieth-Century Shanghai* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); Matthew Sommer, *Sex, Law, and Society in Late Imperial China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000); Dorothy Ko, JaHyun Kim Haboush and Joan R. Piggott (eds), *Women and Confucian Cultures in Pre-Modern China, Korea and Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003); Li Chenyang (ed.), *The Sage and the Second Sex: Confucianism, Ethics, and Gender* (Chicago: Open Court, 2000); Charlotte Furth, *A Flourishing Yin: Gender in China's Medical History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999); Dorothy Ko, *Cinderella's Sisters: A Revisionist History of Footbinding* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).
 26. Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, vol. 1, p. 10.
 27. Jai Ben-ray, 'Zhongguoren xing guan chutan' ['A Preliminary Investigation of the Chinese View on Sex'], in *Si yu yan* [*Thought and Language*] 33 (1995), pp. 27–75.
 28. Charlotte Furth, 'Rethinking van Gulik: Sexuality and Reproduction in Traditional Chinese Medicine', in Christina K. Gilmartin, Gail Hershatter, Lisa Rofel and Tyrene White (eds), *Engendering China: Women, Culture, and the State* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), pp. 125–46, here p. 130.
 29. A very truncated and mistranslated version of this passage appeared in Furth, 'Rethinking van Gulik', p. 130.
 30. *Nannü jiaohé xīnlùn* [*New Theories on Sexual Intercourse*] is probably *Sexual Science* (1870) by phrenologist Orson Squire Fowler (1809–1887), translated by 'Youyazi'/Yuashi into Chinese from a Japanese translation.
 31. Here I used the classic Li Yu-ning and Chang Yü-fa (eds), *Jindai Zhongguo Nüquan Yundong Shiliao 1842–1911* [*Historical Materials on the Women's Movement in Modern China 1842–1911*], 2 vols (Taipei: Juanji wenxue she, 1972).
 32. On Fukuzawa, see Carmen Blacker, *Japanese Enlightenment: A Study of the Writings of Fukuzawa Yukichi* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964); Alan Macfarlane, *The Making of the Modern World: Visions from the West and the East* (London: Palgrave, 2002), pp. 139–248.
 33. Fukuzawa Yukichi, *Danjo kōsai ron* (translated into Chinese as *Nannü jiaohé lun*) [*On the Interactions between Men and Women*], in Liang Qichao (ed.), *Qingyibao quanbian* [*Complete Edition of the Journal of Disinterested Criticism*] vol. 5, juan 20 (1886 [1900]; Taipei: Wen Hai Press, 1987), pp. 20–27 [pp. 542–9].

34. Du Yaquan, 'Lun xuqie' ['On Keeping Concubines'], in *Dongfang zazhi* [Eastern Miscellany] 8 (1911), pp. 16–20.
35. Gu Shaoyi, 'Xiu jue yu xing yu de guan xi' ['The Relationship between the Olfactory Sense and Sexual Desire'], *Dongfang zazhi* [Eastern Miscellany] 15 (1918), pp. 33–7.
36. Beijing tushuguan [Beijing Library] (ed.), *Minguo shiqi zong shumu* [Comprehensive Catalogue of Republican Period Books], 20 vols (Beijing: Shumu wenxian, 1991–97), esp. 1995 volumes *Ziran kexue: yiyao weisheng* [Natural Sciences: Medicine and Hygiene] and *Shehui kexue: zonglei bufan* [Social Sciences: General Section].
37. Zhang Jingsheng, *Xingshi* [Sex Histories] (1926; Taipei: Dala, 2005), pp. 24–7.
38. Chen Dongyuan, *Zhongguo funü shenghuo shi* [History of Women's Lives in China] (Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1926), p. 408.
39. Zhang Dongmin, *Xing de cong bai* [The Worship of Sex] (Shanghai: Beixin shuju, 1927), p. 5.
40. Zhou Zuoren, 'Tan xing de cong bai' ['On The Worship of Sex'], in *Zhou Zuoren shuhua* [Zhou Zuoren on Books], *Zhou Zuoren quanji* [The Complete Works of Zhou Zuoren], vol. 1 (1927; Taipei: Landeng wenhua chubai, 1993), pp. 103–5.
41. Sabine Frühstück, *Colonising Sex: Sexology and Social Control in Modern Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), pp. 83–115; Oda Makoto, *Ichigo no jiten: sei* [Dictionary of One Word: Sex] (Tokyo: Sanseido, 1996), pp. 54–67.
42. Sang, *Emerging Lesbian*, p. 299; Zhang Minyun, *Xing kexue* [Sexual Science] (Shanghai: Shanghai wenyi chubanshe, 1988), pp. 50–51.
43. Furukawa Makoto, 'Ren'ai to seiyoku no daisan teikoku' ['The Third Empire of Love and Sex'], *Gendai shiso* [Modern Thought] 21 (1993), pp. 110–45; Saito Hikaru, 'Niju nendai Nihon yuseigaku no ikkyoku-men' ['One Side of Japan's Eugenics during the 1920s'], in *Gendai shiso* [Modern Thought] 21 (1993), pp. 128–58.
44. I rely on Scott L. Montgomery, *Science in Translation: Movements of Knowledge through Centuries and Time* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), pp. 190–99.
45. Liu, *Translingual Practice*, pp. 32–4. Liu points out that the etymological routes of these loans may be even more complicated, involving early/mid-nineteenth-century Protestant missionaries and their Chinese assistants. These might have had limited impact in China at the start, but their Japanese adoption then catalysed its spread in China in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Liu calls this, 'round-trip dissemination of autochthonous neologisms'.
46. Edward Gunn, *Rewriting Chinese: Style and Innovation in Twentieth-Century Chinese Prose* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991).
47. Yanabu Akira, *Honyakugo seiritsu jijo* [The History of Translating Words in Modern Japan] (Tokyo: Nihon Honyakuka Yosei Centre, 1982); Yanabu Akira, *Modelnizierung der Sprache*, tr. Florian Coulmas (Munich, Iudicium, 1991); Yanabu Akira, *Kindai nihongo no shiso: honyaku buntai seiritsu jijo* [Thoughts on Modern Japanese: Circumstances around the Establishment of Translation Styles] (Tokyo: Hosei Daigaku Shuppankyoku, 2004).
48. Liu, *Translingual Practice*, pp. 302–42.
49. Oda, *Ichigo no jiten* [Dictionary of One Word], pp. 39–40.
50. Frühstück, *Colonising Sex*, p. 78.
51. Wang Xuefeng, *Jiaoyu zhuanxin zhi jin: ershi shiji shangbenye zhongguo de xing jiaoyu shixiang yu shijian* [Mirror of the Education Paradigm Shift: Theories and Practices of Sex Education in China in Early Twentieth Century] (Beijing: Social Sciences Academic Press China, 2006), p. 81; Frühstück, *Colonising Sex*, p. 106.
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