Shi-Yan Chao

Queer Representations in Chinese-language Film and the Cultural Landscape

Queer Representations in Chinese-language Film and the Cultural Landscape provides a cultural history of queer representations in Chinese-language film and media, negotiated by locally produced knowledge, local cultural agency, and lived histories. Incorporating a wide range of materials in both English and Chinese, this interdisciplinary project investigates the processes through which Chinese tongzhi/queer imaginaries are articulated, focusing on four main themes: the Chinese familial system, Chinese opera, camp aesthetic, and documentary impulse. Chao’s discursive analysis is rooted in and advances genealogical inquiries: a non-essentialist intervention into the “Chinese” idea of filial piety, a transcultural perspective on the contested genre of film melodrama, a historical investigation of the local articulations of mass camp and gay camp, and a transnational inquiry into the different formats of documentary. This book is a must for anyone exploring the cultural history of Chinese tongzhi/queer through the lens of transcultural media.

“Chao Shi-yan’s book is a jewelry box of delights, sparkling with sharp analysis of Chinese-language queer culture ranging from Maoist melodrama to Taiwanese musicals, lesbian documentaries, and adaptations from queer literary classics. Arranged in three sections on kinship, camp, and documentary, they illuminate a little known and complex landscape.”

- Chris Berry, King's College London