Making ‘Opposite-sex’ Love: Discourse and Discord in
*Linglong Women’s Pictorial Magazine, 1931-1937*

by

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B.F.A., The University of British Columbia, 2005

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTERS OF ARTS

in

The Faculty of Graduate Studies

(Asian Studies)

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

(Vancouver)

MAY 2010

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is a case study of Linglong Magazine, published in Shanghai from 1931 to 1937. It examines representational conflict in the construction of normative heterosexuality and marriage—a regulatory measure that contained the prospect of female autonomy during a period of flux. The study is a preliminary exercise in Michel Hockx’s formulation of “horizontal reading,” which regards journal issues as collectively authored texts and emphasizes the spatial relation of printed material. Referring to both texts and images in the magazine, I find that heteronormativity is covertly challenged at the same time that same-sex love and the rejection of marriage are stigmatized. Moreover, alternative voices and sensibilities that encompass homoeroticism are hinted at, which I seek to recover. I thus underscore how normative gender constructs are negotiated and challenged in Linglong at the same time that they are reaffirmed.

In reading Linglong horizontally, I show how romanticized heterosexual love is matched by vociferous attacks on men and idealization of female bonds, which are at times valued over relations with men. In my view, what Barbara Mittler identifies in the magazine as cheeky misandrism—a “distaste for men” or “man-hating”—was a playful marketing device that also provided a channel for contributors (many of whom were readers) to covertly express what was becoming increasingly taboo to articulate overtly—namely, support for female autonomy and alternatives to compulsive heterosexuality and marriage. Drawing on Gao Yunxiang’s analysis of Linglong’s promotion of athleticism in the name of national strengthening, I suggest that the new fashion of robust beauty, in conjunction with references to Euro-American art forms that sanction depictions of the human form, legitimized the display of female bodies and expanded notions of femininity in erotically charged ways that include dimensions of homoeroticism. Pleasure and fear are thus engendered simultaneously on the pages of Linglong.
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I owe my deepest gratitude to my supervisor, Catherine Swatek, and co-supervisor, Alison Bailey. Without their guidance, support and patience, I would not have been able to complete this project. Sincere thanks to my third reader, Christopher Rea, whose valuable comments keep me excited and thinking about my topic. I would also like to thank Peter Nosco, who was thoughtful and gracious as the Chair of my defense.

I am grateful to Carol Knicely, Roberta Kremer, Joshua Mostow, Harjot Oberoi, Glen Peterson, and Hsing-yuan Tsao for everything that I learned from them in courses and seminars. I am also grateful to the Fukien Chinese Association and the China-Canada Scholars Exchange Program for awards that made possible a year of language study in Shanghai from 2008 to 2009.

For moral support, I thank my friends Dean and Wendy Ashton, Adam Chu, Lang Foo, Rowena Koh, Zoe Li, Yusuke Suzuki, Heather Joan Tam, Allan Tang and Ingrid Yeung. I am lucky to have made lovely new friends in the program, Marie O’Connor and Liu Yang, whose company made the daunting endeavour of graduate studies a pleasant experience. I extend my deepest appreciation to my mother, father, sister and brother for being a reliable and understanding family.

Special thanks to my mother, Verna Wang, and Liu Yang who were generous with their time when I needed help with translations. Special thanks to Marie as well for being helpful with so many things. I am indebted to my sister, Grace Wang, who tirelessly took care of important familial duties so that I could keep writing.
INTRODUCTION

My project is a case study of Linglong Women’s Pictorial Magazine 紅繡婦女圖畫雑誌, which was published in Shanghai from 1931 to 1937. I examine discursive and representational conflict in the construction of normative heterosexuality and marriage – a regulatory measure that contained the prospect of female autonomy during a period of flux. The study is a preliminary exercise in Michel Hockx’s formulation of horizontal reading, which regards journal issues as collectively authored texts (rather than contexts) and emphasizes the spatial relation and interplay of printed material. I explore how this method and a popular magazine like Linglong might alter assumptions derived from privileged texts by elites and use them to recover repressed voices and sensibilities that are at odds with heterocentric perspectives. Referring to both texts and images in the magazine, I find that heteronormativity is covertly challenged at the same time that same-sex love 同性愛 and the rejection of marriage 不嫁住異 are stigmatized. Moreover, alternative sensibilities that encompass homoeroticism are insinuated in texts and subtexts, which I seek to recover. I thus underscore how normative gender constructs are “negotiated and subverted” in Linglong at the same time that they are “reproduced.”

Linglong was a popular weekly that drew on the cultural capital of the May Fourth Movement 五四運動 to present itself as at the forefront of New Culture 新文化. As a source of entertainment, fashion, new knowledge and lifestyle tips, it was a patchwork of genres and representational forms – from programmes for reform to tabloidesque news reports, and from Hollywood glamour photos to satirical comic illustrations. Particularly notable about the publication is its heavy reliance on contributions from readers, which include commentaries, self-portraits and advice column letters. The magazine was

1 I conducted my research using Columbia University’s collection of Linglong, held at the C.V. Starr East Asian Library and available for free access online via the Columbia University Libraries Digital Collections website.
2 Michel Hockx, Questions of Style: Literary Societies and Literary Journals in Modern China, 1911-1937 (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2003).
nonetheless a mediated space and its polyphonic content oscillates between playful iconoclasm and sober didacticism. In Chapter 1, I give a brief overview of this dynamic in the publication. Emphasizing the contradictions and ambiguities in Linglong, to be developed further in subsequent chapters, I begin in this first chapter by introducing a general sense of the magazine’s content, readership and the editorial mediations that determined what was printed. I argue that these interventions are most pronounced in Linglong with regard to the issue of marriage resistance.

In keeping with May Fourth New Culture calls for freedom of love 自由戀愛, much of Linglong’s content sets out to reform how men and women socialize in the new society. In Chapter 2, I examine how opposite-sex love 異性愛 and marriage are upheld as modern and natural 自然 in contrast to same-sex love, which is pathologized as perverse 變態. A trope of sisterhood in the magazine encourages fellow sisters 姊妹們 to engage boldly in relations with men. However, feelings 情感 between women are at the same time sentimentalized as genuine and enduring in contrast to what can be offered by men, who are criticized as irresolute 見異思遷 and despicable 卑劣, resulting in a representation of sisterhood that I find to be bifurcated – split between heterocentric portrayals and depictions that appeal to women’s self-sufficiency. Besides this bifurcation, there are also internal tensions in the pathologizing discourse against same-sex love that rupture its logic. Same-sex love, for instance, is referred to as an unruly fashion (風氣, 流行) among modern girl students at the same time that it is associated with repressive old customs (reviled as not free and obstructive to healthy intermingling between the sexes). These are the tensions that I highlight as the focal point of my study.

In the latter part of Chapter 2, I show how romanticized heterosexual love is matched in Linglong by vociferous attacks on men and idealization of female bonds, which are at times valued over relations with men. I refer to Barbara Mittler’s analysis of Linglong in my discussion, but take her observations further to suggest that what she identifies in the magazine as cheeky misandrisms (a “distaste for men” or “man-hating”) was a playful marketing device, which also provided a legitimate channel for contributors
(many of whom were readers) to covertly express what was becoming increasingly taboo to articulate overtly – namely, support for female autonomy and alternatives to compulsive heterosexuality and marriage.\(^4\) I argue that these voices hint at alternative sensibilities that offset the valourization of heteronormativity in the magazine. Moreover, while female-female desire is for the most part characterized as deviant, in rare instances it is also more quietly conveyed as curious and even titillating, particularly in visual representations.

In Chapter 3, I shift from a predominantly textual analysis to look primarily at images and consider further how alternative sensibilities are evoked in *Linglong*. I draw on Gao Yunxiang’s analysis of the magazine’s promotion of sports – in particular, her nuanced take on how the foreign-influenced style of robust beauty was advocated in the name of national strengthening but adopted in complex ways by Chinese women as a new fashion.\(^5\) Expanding on Gao’s argument, I highlight erotic undertones in this new fashion. I find that the new style of robust beauty glamorized muscular women and broadened notions of femininity in erotically charged (and potentially subversive) ways that include dimensions of homoeroticism. I suggest that female-female desire is insinuated more playfully in *Linglong* when the increasingly controversial neologism tongxing’ai (same-sex love) is avoided and sublimated in nationalism and aesthetics.

I show in this final chapter of my study how appeals to nationalism, fitness and art legitimized visual representations that are overtly and covertly erotic. Fervent advocacy of strong bodies for a strong nation, in conjunction with references to Euro-American art forms that sanction depictions of the human form, justified the voyeuristic display of female bodies that were printed for the visual pleasure of both male and female readers. While *Linglong* acknowledged a male readership, the magazine was constructed as a female space. Moreover, regardless of how significant a male readership *Linglong* had,


because female audiences have often been elided in studies of the urban culture of early twentieth century
China – particularly in terms of erotic desire – I branch out from more familiar theoretical discussions
about the male gaze to consider these images of women with respect to female spectatorship. With
regard to female-female desire and the pathologizing discourse against it, I argue that pleasure and fear
are engendered simultaneously in Linglong.

I became aware of the team project, “A New Approach to the Popular Press in China: Gender and
Cultural Production, 1904-1937,” during a visit and talk by Joan Judge at the University of British
Columbia in December of 2009, when my study was in its final stages of completion. I have thus not
been able to incorporate the group’s findings and questions into my study, although their focus on gender
and horizontal readings (carried out in tandem with vertical readings) overlap considerably with my
interests and approach to examining Linglong. In light of this group initiative of “A New Approach,” I
conclude my final chapter on an inconclusive note by laying out questions – pertaining to discourses,
representations and interpretations of Linglong in the wider context of urban cultural production – in
recognition that the investigation of gender and the popular press in early-twentieth century China is still
in its early stages.

To summarize my discussion about images of women and female spectatorship and begin to think
about these findings in relation to representations beyond those found in Linglong, I include an addendum
to Chapter 3 on the relationship between print and film. I had planned to address this relationship at the

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6 In his study of eroticism in Republican period pictorials, Yingjin Zhang focuses entirely on “the central position
the female body occupied in the erotic imagination of . . . male readers.” Yingjin Zhang, “The Corporeality of
Erotic Imagination: A Study of Pictorials and Cartoons in Republican China,” Illustrating Asia: Comics, Humour
magazine’s advertised claim that it was especially popular among women on the basis that it contained an
“abundance of images of well-known actresses or courtesans and female school principals,” while the textual
content “comprise a biography of Qiu Jin as well as poems and funny stories associated with the women’s quarters
(gui 闺).” On this basis he concludes that, “despite the claims about large numbers of female readers . . . [the
magazine] was predominantly meant to cater to a male audience” (132). However, I will argue in Chapter 3 that the
diverse femininities to which Hockx refers – entertainers, educators and revolutionary – may very well have
appealed to a female readership.

7 The principal researchers of this collective are Judge, Barbara Mittler and Grace Fong with additional researchers
Julia Andrews, Michel Hockx and Christian Henriot. For an outline of the group’s objectives, see Judge’s summary
online at York University’s Centre for Asian Research website, “York China Studies Project – A New Approach to
the Popular Press in China: Gender and Cultural Production 1904 – 1937.”
start of my project, but had to set it aside. Based on Judge’s summary of the group’s objectives for “A New Approach,” I am especially interested in their emphasis on Gérard Genette’s notion of paratexts, “those liminal devices and conventions, both within and outside the book, that form part of the complex mediation between book, author, publisher, and reader.” The notion of paratexts strikes me as a fruitful way to link print, movies, movie stars, and readers/spectators, since the images of movie stars, who often appear on Linglong’s covers, likely contributed meanings from outside the magazine to representations within (and vice versa). Stars depicted in these images, such as Hu Die 胡蝶, Li Lili 黎莉莉, Wang Renmei 王人美, Yuan Meiyun 袁美雲 and Zhou Xuan 週旋 were not simply free-floating icons of glamour, but were associated with popular songs, performance conventions and film narratives (not to mention gossip among fans, which has yet to be probed in depth). There narratives include themes of sisterhood and female solidarity (Cosmetics Market 腮粉市場, 1933), gender play (Girl in Disguise 化身姑娘, 1936), and homoeroticism (Girl in Disguise; Big Road 大路, 1934).

My interest in the urban popular culture of early twentieth-century China is what first drew me to Linglong as a source for research. I discovered articles about same-sex love in the magazine by chance around the same time that I came upon Tze-lan D. Sang’s book about female-female desire in modern China. Sang’s book provides a groundbreaking female-centred perspective that has been a crucial guide to my study from its inception. Expanding on Sang’s approach, I incorporate a visual analysis into my horizontal reading of Linglong and turn to other pioneering female-centred studies, namely Andrea Weiss’ book on lesbian subjectivities in Euro-American cinema and Jackie Stacey’s book on female spectatorship in relation to Hollywood films of the 1940s and 50s. My horizontal reading of Linglong also benefits greatly from the insights of Barbara Mittler and Gao Yunxiang, whose respective studies of the magazine – on the portrayal of men and women, and the discourses of nationalism and feminism – I both draw from and seek to build on.

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The strictures of gender constructs on men and masculinity have yet to be fully examined. However, female-centred perspectives on the urban culture of early twentieth-century China remain imperative, considering how intellectuals concerned with saving the nation co-opted women’s history and the budding women’s movement in China, thus hindering the prospect of women’s social autonomy. Wang Zheng’s interviews with May Fourth career women who were at their prime in the 1930s offers firsthand accounts that convey the sense of loss these women felt as their achievements were suppressed by state narratives. The interviews also indicate how important women, or “sisters,” were to each other in these achievements; one woman told Wang: “My friends have all passed away. I am now very lonely. I can’t sleep, always thinking about these things [her past involvement in women’s activism]. I won’t be able to die with my eyes closed if I do not tell the stories of those sisters.”

Female perspectives do not simply fill a gap in cultural history; they also impel a holistic reconceptualization of the assumptions derived from heterocentric, often elitist, male views. It was not a coincidence, for example, that female-female love received such unprecedented scrutiny by male intellectuals at a time when women were gaining independence by leaving home for school and work. As referenced by Sang, the historian Chen Dongyuan states the following in his 1935 History of the Lives of

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9 For example, according to Zhiwei Xiao, a film produced in Shanghai in 1935 was banned because of the “type” of its male lead: “The main reason for the ban was that the male protagonist in this film was, in the words of the censors, ‘youtou fennian’ (oily hair and powdery face), a reference to an effeminate male type who is meticulously groomed, covered with makeup, and dandyish. The censors did not think such an image should serve as a model for Chinese youth.” See “Constructing a New National Culture: Film Censorship and the Issues of Cantonese Dialect, Superstition and Sex in the Nanjing Decade,” Cinema and Urban Culture in Shanghai, 1922-1943, ed. Yingjin Zhang (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1999) 197.

10 Arguably, the Maoist adage “women hold up half the sky,” so often cited as the marker of Chinese women’s liberation from “feudal” customs, is heterosexist by implying that the other half of the support is naturally male. Bestowed upon women by a man, the maxim also remains male-centred. On the co-opting of women’s history and experiences by male intellectuals and nationalists as well as rebuttals of male-centred narratives, see: Christina K. Gilmartin, Engendering the Chinese Revolution: Radical Women, Communist Politics, and Mass Movements in the 1920s (Berkeley: U of California P, 1995); Ellen Widmer, “The Rhetoric of Retrospection: May Fourth Literary History and the Ming-Qing Woman Writer,” The Appropriation of Cultural Capital 193-225; Dorothy Ko, Cinerella’s Sisters: A Revisionist History of Footbinding (Berkeley: U of California P, 2005); Lydia Liu, “The Female Body and Nationalist Discourse: The Field of Life and Death Revisited,” Scattered Hegemonies: Postmodernity and Transnational Feminist Practices, ed. Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1994) 37-62.

Women in China 中國婦女生活史: “It is against nature if women refuse to marry because of same-sex love. It is harmful to women’s health. Ever since [women’s] means of livelihood changed in modern times, more and more women past the marriageable age indulge in same-sex love. It is a serious problem.”

Sang notes that while class was implicated in the regulation of female same-sex relationships – same-sex love in schools was scrutinized more closely than same-sex relationships outside of educational settings, for instance – men like Chen Dongyuan and Pan Guangdan (discussed further below) were also intrigued by a highly localized rural practice of marriage resistance and sisterhood/spinsterhood in the county of Shude in Guangdong Province. Chen and Pan superimposed the neologism, tongxing’ai, onto such practices to cast them as “feudal” and backward.

Sisterhood is a central trope in Linglong and it therefore recurs throughout my study. I stress the bifurcated nature of the magazine’s representation of sisterhood, since it both affirmed conventional gender norms (via rhetorics of progressive radicalism) and offered an alternative – female autonomy that encompassed facets of female-female love and desire. This homosociality was rooted in an orthodox Confucian ideology that instilled a gendered social divide between female/domestic and male/public realms. Dorothy Ko emphasizes that in gentry households of the late imperial period, such divisions were not wholly oppressive in practice:

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13 Sang 102. For more on the institutionalized practice of marriage resistance in Shude, Guangdong, see: Marjorie Topely, “Marriage Resistance in Rural Kwangtun,” Women in Chinese Society, ed. Margery Wolf and Roxane Witke (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1975) 67-291; and Maria H.A. Jaschok, “On the Lives of Women Unwed by Choice in Pre-Communist China: Research in Progress,” Republican China (Fall 1984): 42-43. Jaschok concludes that “an interpretation of the phenomenon of marriage resistance as a mere corollary of ‘the feudal oppression of women’ before Liberation is simplistic. This interpretation fails to take into account the human capacity for diverse creative responses to give situations, responses which are expressive of individual preferences and proclivities that can only be accommodated in a wider spectrum of socially acceptable female identities” (54).
14 Sang 52-3.
15 Emily Honig’s study of women in Shanghai’s cotton mills in the early twentieth century highlights the importance of sisterhoods as social relations between working class women. Honig notes how one woman went to watch local opera performances with her sisters from the factory behind her mother-in-law’s back; and how other women gathered after work to chat. Women helped each other out financially when necessary and protected each other from harassment, as recounted in the following: “There would be hoodlums waiting at the factory gate, watching us young girls . . . So we pledged sisters would leave the factory together, and when these guys made trouble, we would try to fight them together.” See Sisters and Strangers: Women in the Shanghai Cotton Mills, 1919-1949 (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1986) 210-1.
Voluntary bonds between women occupied an ambiguous position in the Confucian view of family and society. On the one hand, they are neither an overt element in the official kinship structure nor one of the five cardinal relationships. On the other hand, the official ideologies never explicitly prohibited them as long as they did not interfere with the workings of male-centered structures. In the cracks between the morally laudable and the permissible, literate women quietly created their own expansionary space, a circumscribed world that was nonetheless punctuated by freedom and fulfillment in women’s eyes.16

As I will discuss below, in tandem with major shifts in socioeconomic conditions and gender roles in the early-twentieth century came a new sense of urgency to define clear boundaries in female-female relations – a means of discouraging women’s increasingly feasible interference with male-centred structures.

While it is imperative to incorporate women’s perspectives into the historical record, doing so requires a grasp of nuances, as Joan Judge has emphasized. Judge cautions against “overlook[ing] the more intriguing – and unsettling – paradoxes that arise when women use nationalism as their own authorizing discourse.”17 A central component of my argument concerns this use of national discourses by women to legitimate new subjectivities, about which Judge has this to say:

This appropriation of nationalism does enable women to carve out new subjectivities and act on them in society and politics. While it sanctions the development of such subjectivities, however, it also yokes them to the demands of the larger national project.

The assumption of a new feminine national identity often requires the repudiation of past cultural identities, for example, depriving the ‘new woman’ – and the national culture she helps create – of a potentially vital source of self-knowledge. At the same time, the prioritization of the nation as the most meaningful context for feminine self-definition can result in the rejection of crucial social solidarities.18

My emphasis on bifurcated sisterhood in Linglong addresses this problem. On one hand, women urging women to engage in proper relations with men represented a progressive view that inadvertently fractured traditional homosocial solidarities between women. On the other hand, rejection of normative

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18 Judge 765-6.
heterosexual romance in the name of sisterhood reaffirmed these traditional solidarities, in ways that defended the viability of women’s social independence.

While Sang underlines the significance of sexuality as a category for historical analysis, she and Wang both indicate that the subject is not an easy one to explore. Sang relies on a tactic of reading women’s literature closely for subtexts of the homoerotic, while Wang describes the limits of her approach to oral history. She explains that the issue of sexuality was out of bounds in the interviews she conducted with her elderly contacts:

Sexuality is a topic that educated Chinese are not used to discussing freely. If sexuality is ever discussed, it is usually between friends or relatives of the same generation. It would have been inappropriate for me to probe into a senior woman’s sexual life. As a result, this topic was almost untouched in our conversations.¹⁹

Other methods are needed to gauge the social implications of the construction and regulation of sexuality and in this study I explore what can be learned by looking systematically at a product of popular culture using a horizontal approach.

My focus on the construction of heteronormativity in Linglong is informed by Mary L. Adam’s book on the making of heterosexual dominance in post-war Canada. Following Adams, I regard normative heterosexuality as a restrictive “political institution,” but agree that “heterosexuality has not only been lived as a site of coercion or violence or dependency for women.”²⁰ Rather, “[h]eterosexual relations have also been entered into by women as a site of pleasure and a route to independence from controlling parents and stifling families.” For Adams, to take dominance as a singular achievement leaves little room for…critical understanding of how that dominance was constructed.” In agreement with Adams, I consider heterosexual dominance not as an essentialized category of oppression, but as contingent upon shifting historical and cultural conditions.²¹

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¹⁹ Wang 29.
²¹ Adams 12.
Beginning in the mid-nineteenth century, a series of military defeats and unequal treaties relegated China to semicolonial status as contending world powers made inroads into the country’s coastal regions. These threats to sovereignty triggered urgent reconsiderations of China’s cultural heritage among intellectuals, who turned to modernization as the way forward. A new national consciousness emerged that was premised on Darwinian notions of evolutionary progress. Fundamental to national strengthening efforts was the adoption of modern print technology, which propelled fervent exchanges about national salvation that were largely motivated by “the broadly perceived absence of an effective state in a modern world system.”

On semicolonialism in China, Gail Hershatter writes that, “[t]he very incompleteness of China’s colonization generated particular anxieties, different from those of fully colonized territories.” She explains:

The situation could always get worse, and frequently threatened to do so; conversely perhaps purposive human activity could stave off further political disaster…Most nationalists took as their goal the establishment of a strong, modern nation that could appropriate and adapt the methods of the colonizers to thwart the colonial enterprises. Shu-Mei Shih emphasizes that while semicolonialism was backed by “the cannons of Western imperialism,” it encompassed a parallel “colonization of consciousness” that led to a “masochistic denial” of Chinese heritage. Shih writes that an “inferiority complex” and “principled naïveté” prevented writers and thinkers from critically evaluating the ideological dimensions of Western modernism, which was largely taken as a wholly liberating discourse.

Feminism was readily adopted from the Euro-American West as a central aspect of modernization and national advancement. According to reformers like Liang Qichao (梁啟超, 1873 -

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1929) for example, the foot-bound and ostensibly docile women of China were shamefully backward and perceived as a hindrance to China’s development. For male intellectuals like Liang, debates about the status of women in society became a way to articulate anxieties about their own sense of emasculation in relation to the national predicament. The “woman question” was thus inextricably linked to national identity and progress.

By the 1920s – following the unequal 1919 Treaty of Versailles, which further compromised Chinese sovereignty – iconoclastic May Fourth discourse gained authority owing to the cultural capital and aggressive rhetoric of its proponents. As the first generation of graduates from China’s modern schools, and armed with competence in several foreign languages, May Fourth players cast themselves as arbiters of new knowledge and culture. Their intervention marked a conclusive break from China’s past as they assumed the roles of “teacher, avant-garde, and guide” toward an enlightened future. Their goal was to free women from the shackles of tradition by advocating women’s rights and the liberation of love and sexuality, but their fervent calls for women’s emancipation were accompanied by keen monitoring of female desire that worked unconsciously to contain women’s autonomy. The brand of science propagated by the May Fourth agenda as objective and universal thus concealed male power and reconstituted conventional gender hierarchies in the quest to build a modern Chinese nation.

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25 Rudolf G. Wagner, “The Canonization of May Fourth,” *The appropriation of cultural capital : China’s May Fourth Project*, ed. Milena Dolezelová-Velingerová and Oldřich Král (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2001) 67. Wagner writes that the local “subjective legitimacy” of May Fourth was not derived from mass appeal but “from the internationalist logic of nations struggling for supremacy and the historical role of the educated as remonstrators.”

26 Sang writes: “In a world dominated by men, the female body liberated from tradition had to be reconstituted and reinscribed into marriage and the family. The . . . theory of women’s inherent need for men if they were to attain emotional and sexual fulfilment was the logical tool that male intellectuals found” (23). On the unconsciousness of historical constructions, Roger Chartier’s approach to cultural history is devised as, “the comprehension of . . . representations of the social sphere . . . that give unconscious expression to the positions and interests of social agents as they interact, and that serve to describe society as those social agents thought it was or wished it to be.” Roger Chartier, *Cultural History: Between Practices and Representations* (Oxford: Polity P, 1988) 6.

27 Sang 16.
Regulating Desire

In the political and cultural climate of semicolonialism, intellectual endeavours were shaped significantly by imperialist hierarchies of knowledge dominated by science. To awaken and enlighten China’s citizens, Chinese reformers made appeals to “evolutionism, nationalism and scientism,” which marked “an epistemic shift away from Confucian discourse.” According to Frank Dikotter, “[h]uman biology replaced Confucian philosophy as the epistemological foundation for social order,” and reforming sexuality “became a symbol used to identify enemies of progress.” Theories on sex were thus employed “to legitimize an alternative vision of power structures and prestige systems.”

Sang cites an example of how May Fourth elites, self-styled as “the moderns,” disseminated new understandings about homosexuality to signal a new hierarchy of intellectual authority. The leading May Fourth figure, Hu Shi (胡適, 1891-1962), took it upon himself to excuse from blame a nineteenth-century author for his exaltation of male-male love on the basis that, as the writer was not modern, he “did not know that a man’s love of beautiful boys was a bad thing.”

While male homosexuality was classified as a bad thing, Sang shows that female same-sex love in particular was targeted in ways that had no historical precedent, and which largely reflect the interests and unease of male intellectuals during this period of drastic social change. Female-female relations

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30 As Sang notes, “[p]rior to the formation of the category of female same-sex love in the 1910s and 1920s, there had not existed in Chinese a general category of wide currency comparable to nanse (male-male eroticism) demarcating a particular set of female-female relations” (17). She states that, “[m]ale intellectuals’ warnings against women’s same-sex love as damaging to health loomed large as a diffused form of patriarchal control that obscured male power” (16). On the attention paid to desire between men in late imperial China, see Sophie Volpp, “Classifying Lust: The Seventeenth-Century Vogue for Male Love,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 61.1 (2001): 77-117. On the elevation of male-male love in elite literati culture of the Qing dynasty, see: Cuncun Wu, *Homoerotic Sensibilities in Late Imperial China* (London and New York: Routledge Curzon, 2004). See also Bret Hinsch, *Passions of the Cut Sleeve: The Male Homosexual Tradition in China* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1990). One of Wu’s arguments is that, “Male homosexuality was an expression of elite male power and contributed, paradoxically, to the domination of women.” (7). Sang’s pioneering historical investigation of female-female desire in China thus provides an important perspective.
and intimacy had been ignored or trivialized in the past, since women did not have social, economic or political power of any consequence. As Sang writes, desire between women started to become “men’s anxiety and fear” in early twentieth century China because “women were gaining recognition as persons with integrity – as individuated grown-ups, just as men were.” The stigmatization of female same-sex love was thus an implicit reaction to women’s increasing autonomy from men and the patriarchal family. To monitor centuries-old homosocial relations between women and classify the preference for same-sex relations as abnormal, Euro-American psychobiological theories were appropriated through translation to set boundaries of appropriateness on female-female bonds and to steer individuals toward normative heterosexual unions.

Regarding this process of appropriation and translation, Lydia Liu’s concept of “translingual practice” points to an important aspect of cross cultural exchange, since it highlights “those contingent moments and processes that are reducible neither to foreign impact nor to the self-explanatory logic of indigenous tradition.” Indeed, while global hierarchies, imperialist assumptions and colonial violence largely determined local interests, Chinese translators nonetheless played decisive roles in the selection, interpretation, and use of foreign knowledge – what to translate, how to translate, and for whom or for what purposes. While the neologism same-sex love ultimately became taboo, Sang writes that it nevertheless “created a hypothetical symmetry between female and male homosexualities and, thus, filled in a gap left open by previous Chinese terms bestowing limited significance on female-female intimate relations.” Sang notes, however, that older categories and terms retained their significance in designating newly conceptualized social relationships between women:

31 In this regard, Sang cautions against a postcolonial argument that “idealizes the extent of social tolerance for same-sex relations in traditional China, which is cast as the exact antithesis of the homophobia of modern Chinese societies under the influence of the West” (46). She stresses: “That female-female intimacy was ignored does not mean that women had unlimited liberty. It simply means that it was not perceived as threatening by men” (22).

32 Sang 24.


34 Sang 17. Sang conjectures that the term tongxing ’ai, like many other modern Chinese terms, was adopted from Japanese, dosei ’ai (same-sex love). According to Jennifer Robertson, dosei ’ai was a new term originally adopted into Japanese to specifically designate female-female relations since a prior term did not exist, and only later came...
The new taxonomy of female same-sex love did not simply supplant existing concepts such a friendship or sisterhood. Rather, the neologism merely enriched the symbolic domain and increased the number of systems of meanings available. Unquestionably, some Chinese speakers preferred, and still prefer, to abide by the traditional categories of friendship and sisterhood instead of adopting same-sex love as a lens through which to observe intimate relations between women.\(^35\)

Following the lead of “Dr. Sex” 張競生, Zhang Jingsheng (1888-1970), whose “sexual revolution” of the mid-1920s became a sensation, one of the most prominent figures who perpetuated European sexology in China was the sociologist and eugenicist, Pan Guangdan (潘光旦, 1899 – 1967), who translated and drew on the work of Sigmund Freud and Havelock Ellis.\(^36\) In a study of the impact of traditional Chinese culture on female psychology published in 1927, Pan condemned China’s old society 舊社會 as oppressive to women’s emotional and sexual nature. He asserted that the restrictions of traditional customs suppressed women’s innate desire for men, which led to a pathological mental state that encompassed narcissistic self-love as well as same-sex love.\(^37\) To rescue women from such a fate, Pan called for “sex education, coed schooling, and open social intercourse between men and women.”\(^38\) However, Hai-yan Lee posits that rather than freeing female sexuality from the constraints of tradition,
Pan’s psychoanalytic criticism “inflicts a violence of interpretation that obscures the political and social determinations of oppression,” rooted in patriarchal interests. 39

Among the most influential ideas about female homosexuality that were translated into Chinese were those of the British sexologist Havelock Ellis, who theorized that female homosexuality was a form of sexual inversion, which represented a deviation from normal biologically determined gender. Ellis inferred that “the sexually inverted woman” was anomalous for exhibiting “a certain degree of masculinity,” and in this way he equated female-female desire with alternative gender behaviour. Intimacy between women who are properly feminine was perceived as less problematic. Trivialized as “inconsequential sex play,” Ellis interpreted it as mere preparation for normal heterosexual relations to come later in life. 40

Before the theories of Ellis and Pan took hold however, negative views toward homosexuality were not taken for granted in China. 41 In the late-nineteenth century, the reformer Kang Youwei (康有為, 1858-1927) had envisioned a system of marriage contracts that included unions between two men and two women; and in the first decades of the twentieth century, when the neologism tongxing 'ai (same-sex love) was first imported into China, the urban Chinese public “had no definite opinion on the nature of same-sex love.” 42 Some Chinese translators, for example, objected to the idea that same-sex love is perverse, and writings by Edward Carpenter that idealize homosexual love in advocacy of gay liberation were translated contemporaneously with the theories concerning pathology. 43

39 H. Lee 216. Lee concludes that the desire that New Culturalists sought to “liberate/proliferate” was “eminently yoked to a normative heterosexual paradigm. The modern sexual subject they conjure up is one that locates its personal truth in its heterosexuality and that pursues liberatory politics in the Oedipal family by submitting to the laws of sexual hygiene, reproductive sciences, and bourgeois gender ideology” (216-7).
40 As discussed in Sang 24-5.
41 Sang 122.
42 Jonathan D. Spence, The Search for Modern China (New York and London: W.W. Norton and Company, 1990) 258. Spence notes, however, that “these visionary writings were kept mostly in manuscript, and few people at the time knew of the full range of Kang’s thinking.” Sang 106.
43 For her discussion about the inconclusiveness of Chinese views toward homosexuality in the first two decades of the twentieth century in China, see Sang 118-120.
One of Sang’s major arguments is that creative literature by authors such as Lu Yin (盧隲, 1898-1934), which idealize female bonding and friendships, competed with sexual science to confer meaning on female-female intimacy – through “a discursive phenomenon that might be called the female homoerotic school romance.”44 Sang also reads Lu Yin’s works against the grain to establish the “missing link” between female-female emotions and female-female lust. She suggests that Lu Yin conveys homoerotic longing through metaphors and fantasy in a struggle to depict female-female desire in a more positive light, even while evoking a sense of fear in the process.45 Focusing deliberately on elite literature as a crucial dimension of public discourse, Sang highlights the heterogeneity of the May Fourth legacy and demonstrates Yu Ying-shih’s important reminder – that it was “multidimensional” and “multidirectional,” and remains “many different things to different people.”46

**Reading Linglong Horizontally**

Appearing in the post-May Fourth period of the 1930s, Linglong remained at the crux of these tensions throughout its time in print.47 According to Sang, it was at this time, and into the 1940s, that debates about same-sex love narrowed and negative attitudes took stronger hold through repeated citation. Sang attributes this, in part, to the authority of Pan’s translations of Ellis’s theories as they appeared in book form in 1936, which overshadowed the diversity of views found in earlier debates. Indeed, despite their claims of instigating free dialogue, the often uncompromising if not intolerant May Fourth proponents ultimately stifled a dynamic exchange of ideas that characterized earlier decades. According to Leo Ou-fan Lee, voices that clashed with the May Fourth agenda were often “trashed beyond recognition” in intellectual journals.48

44 Sang 129.
45 Sang 26; 133.
48 L. Lee 57.
Lee’s observation is well taken, but my reading of Linglong also corroborates Yu’s point – that the May Fourth legacy, which influenced so much of the magazine’s content, is not easily pinned down. The pathologizing discourse on same-sex love in Linglong invokes the logic of Pan and Ellis – indeed, Ellis is named via transliteration (譚里斯) in one article that uses his theories to characterize masculine women as deviant and potentially dangerous (Chapter 2).49 Moreover, a speech by the prominent May Fourth author Bing Xin (冰心; also Xie Wangying 謝婉瑩, 1900-1999) is cited, in which she promotes a regimen of self-regulation by shunning same-sex love and her own former entanglements during her school days (Chapter 2).50 Other content in Linglong, however, recalls sentiments found in May Fourth women’s writings such as those by Lu Yin, which idealize life in girl schools and feelings between women (Chapter 2). And in keeping with May Fourth nation-building, muscular women – referred to as masculine 男性 in at least one instance – are presented in images as heroic, alluring and stylish, offering an alternative view to Ellis’s stigmatization of masculinity in females (Chapter 3). Divergent influences, including many facets of the May Fourth legacy, thus collide in Linglong, destabilizing and transforming meanings.

As a commercial publication that based its marketability primarily on entertainment and fashion, Linglong is a valuable source for analysis precisely because it was positioned outside of elite cultural production. By no means autonomous from authoritative notions of prestige, on which it constantly drew to garner a sense of respectability (Chapter 1), the publication was nonetheless motivated by a different set of interests than the intellectual journals and interacted with privileged developments in thought in ways that generated tensions – between high-mindedness, amusement and sensuality. While Sang’s insights have been a crucial guide to my analysis, in light of my investigation of a popular pictorial magazine I diverge from her vertical approach in two ways. Sang deliberately stays within the realm of elite May Fourth and New Culture discourse to contextualize and emphasize its various dimensions. In

50 “Bing Xin Gives a Speech on Same-sex Love,” Linglong no. 246, 1936, 2131-4.
this sense, she focuses for the most part on privileged texts authored by prominent individuals in China’s cultural history, including “Dr. Sex” Zhang Jingsheng, Pan Guangdan and Lu Yin. Adopting a method of close reading to scrutinize medical treatises, public debates and creative literature, her conclusions remain firmly grounded in textual analysis.

In this study, aside from the speech by Bing Xin discussed in Chapter 2, the materials that I examine in Linglong were contributed by individuals about whom nothing is known and these materials are juxtaposed precariously in the magazine. Moreover, the images so prominently featured in this pictorial publication cry out for close scrutiny, because they both complement and contradict the publication’s texts. For these reasons, I adopt Michel Hockx’s approach of horizontal reading to carry out my case study of Linglong. I read the magazine horizontally as an alternative strategy to more contained discourse analysis focused on a particular theme or concept, because I find the latter approach too limiting for a cultural product as multivalent as Linglong. While the merits of vertical approaches are firmly established, the full potential of horizontal methods is yet to be demonstrated. I believe that horizontal reading provides a way “to complicate the picture of one overarching discourse” and have adopted it in recognition that “some discourses can only be seen in relation to each other.”

Seeking to recover traces of subaltern voices, Hershatter states that for some discourses, “it is not only impossible but also undesirable to try to reconcile them and produce a single seamless account. The dissonances between them are arguably where the most interesting mapping could be done.”

“Sundry Records”

In my examination of Linglong, I take as the object of my analysis the dissonances that emerge on the magazine’s pages, taking Hershatter’s argument that these ought to be mapped as my cue. Here I will briefly highlight the Chinese terminology for popular periodicals: zazhi 雜誌, literally “sundry records.”

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52 Hershatter, “Subaltern” 126.  
53 Further consideration of such terminology may be worthwhile. For example, whereas the flagship illustrated publication of the 1920s to 40s, The Young Companion 良友畫報 uses the term huabao or “pictorial,” Linglong uses...
The concept of za in particular (sundry, mixed and heterogeneous) has been stressed by Alexander Des Forges as one that encapsulates the “counterposition” and “multivoicedness” of Shanghai and Shanghai cultural production generally.\textsuperscript{54} For my purposes, I stress the term in reference to Linglong’s composite and miscellaneous quality – its bricolage of divergent rhetorical and representational genres and knowledge categories. Most conspicuous in this regard is the publication’s duality – its association with both the austere revolutionary spirit of May Fourth and the allure of cultural forms that were considered base (Chapter 1); the simultaneous appeals in it to both serious moral purpose and pleasure (Chapter 3).

What E. Perry Link observes in the promotion and production of “new” and “popular” fiction in the 1910s and 20s remains relevant in many ways to Linglong’s run in the 1930s as far as genre and ideology is concerned. As Link shows, Liang Qichao introduced the categories of political novels and new fiction 新小說 as a way to reform society and inspire social consciousness among the masses for the purpose of collective action.\textsuperscript{55} The political role of fiction envisioned by Liang, however, was diffused in practice. As Link explains, Liang had “proclaimed the new fiction a means for serving the highest of purposes,” but he adds that ironically, “the mantle of respectability Liang created was sturdy enough to protect for many years even those types of fiction which he most strenuously opposed [i.e., works aimed at entertainment].”\textsuperscript{56}

During this “period of discovering . . . new things,” diverse groups of writers, editors, businessmen and readers competed with visionaries like Liang over social and cultural meanings. Moreover, “[t]here were no sharp breaks along a spectrum of seriousness” that extended from Liang’s politics at one pole to more frivolous fascinations at the other; the same things could be viewed in very different ways, as were the fashionable automobiles brought to Shanghai by Englishmen, which dazzled


\textsuperscript{56} Link 132-3.
the Chinese public but could also “be part of a solemn approach to new science.” Link traces the intricate continuums between nation-building, idle amusement, and profit seeking and notes how Liang “was painfully aware of . . . [the] misuses of his ideas”; in response to popular fiction magazines and their “most superficial lip service to [his] social ideals,” Liang issued “An Appeal to Novelists” in 1915 to denounce the corruptions of fiction’s role. Link thus points out that while “‘reform’ rubrics continued to be used, even the pretence of believing them was dropped.”

By the May Fourth period, the ideological boundary between the genres of new socially conscious literature and popular works was secured by May Fourth proponents and has been “widely accepted, usually uncritically, right to the present day.” Popular fiction was derided and criticized as commercially oriented and socially unprogressive. It was considered “at best useless and at worst pernicious” for “poison[ing] the minds of youth” and the authors of these works were characterized as “intellectual bats,” “literary prostitutes” and “gold-worshippers.” The various representational forms embraced by popular writers were also considered disturbing, even while they were recognized as necessary conduits for reaching the masses. A comment by Mao Dun (1896-1981) illustrates this ambivalence among May Fourth writers: “It goes without saying that the content of all comic strip fiction is poisonous, yet the strong influence of comics on the general masses and on children is worthy of note. And we cannot deny that the form of comic strip fiction…is worthy of adoption.”

Qu Qiubao (1899-1935) lamented the mass appeal of “reactionary popular literature” in the following terms:

These things, at bookstalls on alley corners, and so on . . . have they a certain, in fact a very great, influence? Of course they have . . . the literate masses read them day by day,
and the illiterate masses often hear them spoken about in casual ways by others . . . and unconsciously absorb the ‘instruction’ of the stuff.\textsuperscript{63}

While Link does not deny that the May Fourth view toward popular fiction reflects some truth, he cautions that it is “quite inadequate to the complexity of the field it surveys.”\textsuperscript{64} He complicates the relationships between new and popular fiction and restores value to wilfully neglected writings on a work by work basis to dispel ideologically based stereotypes. Leo Ou-fan Lee has taken up a similar task, but has turned specifically to popular pictorial magazines.\textsuperscript{65} Lee reads middlebrow publications such as \textit{The Eastern Miscellany} (東方雜誌, 1904-1948) and \textit{The Young Companion} (良友畫報, 1926-1945) with the conviction that, “we must not neglect the ‘surfaces,’ the images and styles that do not necessarily enter into the deepest of thought but nevertheless conjure up a collective imaginary.”\textsuperscript{66} In this way, he seeks to add nuance to the social and cultural understandings derived from the perspective of elitist intellectuals like Liang, who were preoccupied with such concerns as the cultivation of the “intellectual and spiritual ‘essence’ of a people.”\textsuperscript{67} I follow Lee and Link in believing that works historically trivialized and dismissed as “popular” are worthy of in-depth analysis. To map the discursive and representational conflicts in \textit{Linglong}, I scrutinize the confluence of a range of topics it addressed – love, marriage, same-sex love, men, sports, nationalism, beauty. I also pay due attention to the many facets of the magazine’s surfaces.

\textit{Horizontal Reading}

As devised by Michel Hockx, horizontal reading reconceptualises what a text is by regarding full journal issues as products of shared authorship; more specifically, as “hotbeds of ideas, of conflicts, of excitement and of humour, literally stringed [sic] together as works of collective creation in individual . . .
issues." Hori
tizontal reading complements more established approaches to research that target works by
a particular author or material about specific topics and ideas. Taking a more inclusive approach, it
emphasizes that the reception of material in print “is always to some extent determined by what is printed
around it.” Rather than lifting a journal’s contents out of the printed context and examining them as
self-contained entities, horizontal reading is a method that takes into consideration the practice of
publishing by examining individual journal issues in their entirety – in other words, “as [they] confronted
the historical reader at the time of reading.” Methodologically speaking, Hockx’s horizontal approach
confronts the problem of value by looking at as wide a range of materials as possible, regardless of how
they have been categorized historically.

I have adopted this approach because it levels the playing field in terms of what is considered
worthy of attention. Rather than deny historical dynamics of power, the approach allows me to establish
significant imbalances that emerge on the pages of Linglong. In other words, I do not take at face value
the magazine’s advertised claim that it was a completely open forum that gave free rein to its reader’s
views and opinions. I use the horizontal approach firstly to emphasize the processes by which
assumptions and values are constructed – to identify a series of regulatory discourses in the publication
that are reactionary in that they targeted for rectification alternative views regarding gender expectations.
More importantly, while recognizing the power of these discourses, I also use the horizontal approach to
highlight discordant voices and recover alternative sensibilities hinted at obliquely in fragmentary
fashions.

Textual and Visual Analysis

In reading Linglong horizontally to recover alternative sensibilities, I dedicate the final chapter of
my study to an analysis of images, recognizing that visual representations have the power to generate

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68 Hockx 156.
69 Hockx 130.
70 Hockx 156.
71 For more on these claims, see my discussion under “Editors and Readers” in Chapter 1.
ideas in themselves, even if these ideas often remain outside of written discourse.\textsuperscript{72} I heed Michael Wilson’s advice that historical research ought to find ways of challenging logocentric conclusions.\textsuperscript{73} Regarding the use of images in historical research, Wilson argues that visual representations must be inspected for how they might offer a different picture, so to speak, from what is conveyed in words.\textsuperscript{74} Thus, instead of treating images as mere supplements to verbal language, in this final chapter I consider ways in which images disrupt textual constructions and narratives. More specifically, I detect in Linglong’s visuals and the way in which they are juxtaposed a playful exploration of femininities and female sensuality, which included dimensions of homoerotic pleasure left out of written discourse. Such pleasure and playfulness contrasts with the sentimental and melancholic idealization of (platonic) female relations articulated in texts.

\textsuperscript{73} Wilson 29.
\textsuperscript{74} Wilson 30.
CHAPTER 1: LINGLONG MAGAZINE

_Linglong_ was widely distributed and had a long print run, which attests to its popularity. Little is known, however, about the publication beyond its printed material. In this chapter, I carry out an initial reading of the magazine and look at the dynamics of its content and assemble what information I can about its creators and audience. Decidedly middlebrow as a source of entertainment and fashion, it also proclaimed a high-minded mission to save society. Marketability and respectability thus converge in the interest of commercial viability, which set limits on what was printed. At the same time, the desire to be cutting edge encouraged novelty and boldness. The confluence of divergent interests thus create tensions where meanings and insinuations emerge in precarious juxtaposition. However, not all voices were represented equally, and I sense that editorial interventions are most apparent when the issue of marriage resistance is concerned.

**Chinese Print Capitalism**

_Linglong_ belonged to a sphere of cultural production that churned out immensely popular calendar advertisement posters and stayed in tune with developments in the world of movies. A number of posters I have come upon indicate that the magazine was looked to by artists as a source of reference for their commercial work, suggesting that there were common sensibilities between the creators of calendar posters and _Linglong_ (Fig. 1.1). Moreover, _Linglong_ associated itself closely with the cinema.

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75 _Linglong_ was in print for seven years and terminated in 1937 with the outbreak of war. It appears that the magazine was collectable rather than a throw-away read, as might be expected for an inexpensive weekly. Information about back issues, for example, was provided on several occasions for readers who wanted to complete their collections. At one point, old copies of out-of-print issues were sold by the publisher for double the original cover price. A book box that had the name of the magazine engraved on it was marketed about a year into publication. It held up to twenty-five magazine issues and was advertised as elegantly refined, made from quality wood, and sealed with a beautiful foreign varnish. In 1937, demand for the magazine was sufficient for its publisher to produce a collection of past issues as bound volumes, which are described in advertisements as finely embossed with golden letters. I have thus far not carried out any systematic firsthand comparisons of _Linglong_ with other magazines that competed in the same market, or that came before or after it. Thus, how the magazine differentiated itself from its competitors to gain the popularity that it achieved is not entirely clear to me at this point and is a question that I set aside for future consideration.
Half of the magazine functioned as a movie supplement, and a “Message from the Editors” in its debut issue uses a group photo of Hollywood screen celebrities to promote the magazine as on a par with international film culture as far as glamour is concerned (Fig. 1.2):

[T]he gentlepersons who contribute articles are distinguished professionals – every word and every line are by experts in the know. Not a single sentence is the chatter of an amateur. We guarantee that after perusing [an issue], readers will surely have some gain in their taste and ideas and feel that our assembly of distinguished contributors is not at all inferior to that of the movie stars [pictured] above.
Fig. 1.2. A “Message from the Editors” in Linglong’s debut issue. Linglong no. 1, 1931, 34.
As products of mass culture, calendar posters and movies were held in low regard by intellectual elites and arbiters of taste. Lu Xun (魯迅, 1881-1936), for one, had this to say about the former:

“Today…calendar posters are popular with ordinary people in Chinese society…Not only are calendar painters unskilled but the subjects of their paintings are disgusting and depraved.”

According to Zhang Yingjin, when the chair of Fudan University’s Drama Department, Hong Shen (洪深, 1894-1955), accepted movie director Zhang Shichuan’s (張石川, 1890-1954) invitation to assist at the Mingxing Film Company 明星影片公司 in the 1920s, “the act was deplored by his colleagues and students as one that would degrade his professional status or even lead to the ‘prostitution of art.’”

To offset its commercialism, Linglong capitalized on the cultural cachet of the May Fourth legacy and appropriated the authoritative stance of the movement’s key players as teacher and guide toward a supreme future. From 1931 to 1933 page headers for the General Knowledge 常識 section used calligraphy by the prominent May Fourth proponent, Hu Shi (Fig. 1.3). Moreover, language and concepts in the magazine are often derived from liberatory May Fourth rhetoric, as when the old society 舊社會 is ridiculed in the name of new culture, and the liberation of women “from 5,000 years of oppression” 五千年婦女所受壓迫得一幅解放 is a recurrent theme.

Linglong was published in Shanghai’s bustling commercial district. But it subscribed to the “moral economy” that Christopher Reed identifies as a crucial, but often overlooked, aspect of Chinese

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76 “Message from the Editors,” Linglong no. 1, 1931, 34.
79 Wagner 67.
80 “The Present Publication Broadens its Voice,” Linglong no. 181, 1935, 831. Promoting the May Fourth agenda, Hu Shi explained in a 1933 lecture that May Fourth was “a movement of conscious protest against many of the ideas and institutions in the traditional culture, and of conscious emancipation of the individual man and woman from the bondage of forces of tradition.” Cited in Yu 300.
print capitalism, which was centered in the city’s “culture and education” district of Wenhuajie 81
The magazine was a product of Sanhe Publishing House 三和出版社, a division of Sanhe Company of Chinese Merchants 華僑三和公司 located on Nanjing Road 南京路. Nanjing Road was the centre of an unprecedented “commercial revolution” in the early twentieth century. 82 Home to China’s earliest department stores and the undisputed centre of fashion and luxury commodities, Nanjing Road was lined with shops and depots selling fabrics, jewellery, cosmetics, and perfumes – all of which are advertised in Linglong (Fig. 1.4, 1.5). Indeed, Linglong was largely a marketing vehicle for its parent company, which advertised its range of goods including photography supplies, medicinal products, sports paraphernalia, and fashion accessories. 83

83 According to advertisements, Sanhe’s location on Nanjing Road was also the base for a China Society of Photographic Supplies 中國相片供應社, which sold cameras and developed and printed film. Other products distributed by Sanhe include medicinal products and ping pong paraphernalia. One advertisement proclaims, “Sanhe Company – The Nation’s Pioneering Enterprise” 全國首創的三和公司. Linglong no. 186, 1935, 1274.
Fig. 1.4. Advertisements for fabrics and fashions for stores located on Nanjing Road. *Linglong* no. 136, 1934, 681; no. 129, 1934, 236.

Fig. 1.5. Cosmetics and hygiene products advertised in *Linglong*. The advertisement for Odol toothpaste states that it is “a product that is suitable and essential for modern women.” *Linglong* no. 117, 1933, 2041; no. 51, 1932, 13; no. 40, 1931, 1569.
According to Reed, while Wenhuajie was no less profit-oriented, commercialism was largely downplayed by those who identified with the district’s “non-commercial moral ideals,” rooted in the “deeply ingrained service ethic” of the traditional Confucian literati.\(^84\) Located a few blocks south of Nanjing Road on Fuzhou Road 福州路, enterprises in the Wenhuajie district specialized in items such as antiquarian books, stele rubbings, and the ‘four treasures of the scholar’s studio’ 文房四寶: brush, ink, ink stone, and paper.\(^85\) Home to approximately three hundred major and minor publishing firms throughout the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-centuries, Wenhuajie was the hub of a textbook trade that by 1937 produced eighty-six percent of books published in all of China.\(^86\)

Traditional bias against commerce in China shifted drastically in the first decades of the twentieth century as economic development was increasingly seen as crucial to national strengthening.\(^87\) Reed, however, points out that, “so much attention has been paid to commercialization of the late imperial economy that awareness of the older anticommercial Chinese literati service ideal, essential for understanding Shanghai’s booksellers, has nearly been eclipsed.” He stresses that “the moral economy of the Chinese literati counterbalanced commodification of print culture in a historically and intellectually significant way between 1876 and 1937.”\(^88\)

The traditional literati ideal influenced how Linglong defined its purpose; its supply of “dignified entertainment” 高尚娛樂 is framed as a lofty endeavour to save society. In an early issue, the editors state that “because there is no proper entertainment to meet the needs of body and mind,” and “the lack of appropriate entertainment is a major problem that is generally recognized by sociologists,” the editors will

\(^84\) Reed 209; 11; 19.
\(^85\) Reed 17.
\(^86\) Reed 207. Among the publishing companies based in the Wenhuajie district were the influential Commercial Press 商務印書館, Zhonghua Books 中華書局 and World Books 世界書局.
\(^87\) Chan notes that as late as 1896, Liang Qichao saw merchants as “subversive, manipulative and monopolistic,” an attitude that changed drastically in less than a decade; in 1902, Liang praises Chinese merchants for being “industrious, frugal, and entrepreneurial.” According to Chan, “Liang argued that his age was a Darwinian age in which only the fittest would emerge victorious; his aim was to raise support for his compatriot merchants in their ‘commercial warfare’ [商戰] against their Western counterparts.” See Chan 20.
\(^88\) Reed 18, emphasis added.
endeavour to “relieve this common malady of society and confer benefits on the masses” (因無適當之娛樂. 以供其身心健康之需要...缺乏正當娛樂為社會學者所已認為大問題...濟社會之通病. 造福人群). 89

The Magazine

*Linglong* was issued weekly at bookstores, movie theatres, and newsstands in China’s major cities, and reached overseas Chinese in parts of Southeast Asia. 90 Two covers divide the magazine roughly in half, with one segment devoted to the movies (Fig. 1.6). Pocket-sized and low cost, the magazine featured all things new 新, modern 摩登, and contemporary 現代, including the latest

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90 Advertisements indicate that the magazine was available in cities including Shanghai, Beijing, Nanjing, Tianjin, Guangzhou, Suzhou, Hangzhou, Ningbo, Chengdu, Hankou, Quanzhou, Kaifeng, Mei County in Sichuan, Hong Kong, Changsha, Jinan, and Kunming. Issues include reader contributions from parts of Southeast Asia, including Vietnam and Sumatra.
hairstyles (Fig. 1.7), fashions (Fig. 1.8), guides to new forms of etiquette (Fig. 1.9), and home décor and accessories (Fig. 1.10). The magazine also set out to explore the essence of enlightened young women in contemporary society, in an international context.

While Linglong revels in the allure of modern style, it also shuns such style as frivolous. A pictorial supplement to the magazine featuring images of genteel women is advertised as “not to be missed by fellow sisters who are fond of beauty” and articles admonish readers for being attracted to the very pleasures the magazine provides. Such disparagement is most pronounced in solemn reports on national crises. In a special 1931 issue that commemorates National Day, readers are admonished for being politically aloof and ignorant about pressing matters like the military advance of the Japanese in Northwest China:

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91 The standard sections of the magazine include: Women, Startling News, General Knowledge, Children, and Entertainment. A Literary Arts section was not included in the magazine until requested by readers about a year into publication. Linglong was pocket-sized, measuring only 13 by 19 centimetres. It entered the market at 0.07 yuan a copy, rising to 0.10 yuan by the end of its first year in print and held steady at that price until its final issue in 1937. Its small format surely kept costs low, allowing for greater accessibility and wider distribution, but it was also invoked to trademark the publication as “exquisitely petite” and “extraordinarily elegant”.

92 Linglong no. 56, 1932, 245.
Fig. 1.8. Fashion illustrations in Linglong issues from 1932. Linglong no. 52, 1932 68; no. 42, 1932, 1673; no. 57, 1932, 310; no. 69, 1932, 884.

Fig. 1.9. “Etiquette for Attending a Banquet” in Linglong’s General Knowledge 常識 section. The header for the section features calligraphy by Hu Shi. Linglong no.4, 1931, 127-126.
Fig. 1.10. Contemporary home décor and accessories. Linglong no. 97, 1933, 781; no. 122, 1933, 2344; no. 246, 1936, 2140-1.
Fellow sisters for the most part expend all their energy on dress, socializing, amusement, or home management. As for national affairs, they usually do not pay any attention, preferring to read fiction in bed and most definitely do not read newspapers and journals in detail. As for the violent invasion of the Japanese, the majority of us sisters only know that the situation exists, but do not know about its whys and wherefores. Linglong is a wake-up call for the women’s world. Thus, in this week’s National Day Special issue, we will systematically recount the causes and effects of what the brutal Japanese bandits have done this time, to awaken fellow sisters from befuddlement and rescue [the nation] from its peril.

The two magazine covers that sandwich this solemn article, however, bank on surface appeal. One shows a genteel studio photograph of a woman posing with blossoms, while the other shows a glossy nude (Fig. 1.11). While the cruelties of Japanese military aggression are vehemently condemned (Fig. 1.12), images of Japan are featured admiringly in other issues: glamorous movie stars (Fig. 1.13, 1.14), unique folk customs (Fig. 1.15), and young children at play (Fig. 1.16).

93 “A Bird’s Eye View of the National Crisis,” Linglong no. 30, 1099-1100.
94 The name of actress Natsukawa Shizue (夏川静江, 1909-1999) in Fig. 1.13 is misprinted as Yukawa Shizue 夏川静江.

Fig. 1.13. “The Various Expressions of Japanese Movie Star Natsukawa Shizue.” Linglong no. 16, 1931, 575(h).

Fig. 1.14. “A Japanese Female Movie Star.” Miss Kuwano Michiko “in two different styles of dress.” Linglong no. 217, 1935, 4264-4265.
In spite of the token contempt for modern trivialities, *Linglong* enhanced its surface appeal by actively soliciting contributions from its readers, including candid images of daily life (Fig. 1.17) and studio portraits (Fig. 1.18). In this way, the magazine was a platform for self-presentation, giving readers the opportunity to participate in setting new trends, which was undoubtedly part of the magazine’s exuberance.

Reader images are used in fashion spreads in ways similar to those used for movie stars, 

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95 In a message from editors from 1932, after the first attack on Shanghai by the Japanese, the importance of collaboration with readers was emphasized: “The present magazine, upon resuming publication after the war, is indebted to readers for their steady stream of exceptional contributions, greatly adding to its magnificence. If readers wish the present publication to be ever resplendent and to never cease printing, then we must cooperate with you.” *Linglong* no. 53, 1932, 139.

96 A short story found in *Linglong* suggests how a young woman could be considered “modernized” when her picture appeared in the press, and how controversial this could be. The story, entitled “A Father’s Honour” 父親的尊嚴, portrays a patriarch’s reaction when he discovers his daughter’s image printed in a magazine: “Jingzao was carrying her bag, just arriving home from school. Her father was holding a magazine, and sternly asked, “Your picture... why is it printed in here?” throwing the paper down in front of her. ‘I don’t know.’ At school, her friends had already told her that her beautiful photo had been printed in the journal. ‘It’s your own picture and you
placing readers on a par with the stars as models of style (Fig. 1.20, 1.21). Works by amateur photographers are also showcased – one attributed to a Miss Ting Na depicts a Miss Zhou

Linglong no. 47, 1932; no. 145, 1934, 1236; no. 127, 1934, 66; no. 129, 1934, 223; no. 164, 1934, 2515; no. 108, 1933, 1491; and no. 52, 1932, 71.

Fig. 1.17. Candid photographs from readers. Linglong Issues no. 145, 1934, 1236; no. 127, 1934, 66; no. 129, 1934, 223; no. 164, 1934, 2515; no. 108, 1933, 1491; and no. 52, 1932, 71.

don’t even know who you’ve given it to?’ ‘But, a bunch of us schoolmates . . .’ Her father demanded that she stop speaking, and criticized that she had failed to keep to her family upbringing, acting absolutely outside the home. He immediately prohibited Jingzao from continuing her studies. He felt that his daughter had already become modernized, and thus wanted to teach her a lesson. Jingzao became distressed and cried.”

Linglong no. 47, 1932, 1928 (h).
Fig. 1.18. “Beautiful Image of Readers.” On the left is Miss Dai Linuo, a student at a teacher’s college in Guangdong Province and on the right is Miss Xiao Qiongfen, a middle school student from Chao’an County in Chaozhou. *Linglong* no. 127, 1934, 100.

Fig. 1.19. “Miss Zhou Luxia of Chinese Western Private Girls School.” *Linglong* no. 27, 1931, 988.
Fig. 1.20. “New fashions from the Silverscreen.” Linglong no. 54, 1932, 172-173.

Fig. 1.21. “Spring outings.” A fashion spread featuring images from readers. Linglong no. 182, 1935, 944-945.
Readers and Editors

Information about those behind Linglong is lacking. Names credited in the magazine’s colophons changed frequently, with only two appearing consistently throughout the magazine’s time in print – Lin Zecang 林澤蒼, the man who headed the publication, and Miss Chen Zhenling 陳珍玲女士, the only female name listed on the editorial board. Through the persona of the latter, Linglong declared itself the “only voice of the women’s world” 琳瓊雜誌為婦女界之唯一喉舌, and claimed to be a “completely open” 完全公開 forum for women to express their views freely:

To Fellow Sisters – After leaving school, opportunities to get together with former schoolmates and old friends are few and far between, while news is scattered and sparse. Today, I have taken up a post at the present magazine as editor on the Women’s Board. Wishing to represent the voice of the entire nation’s female compatriots, and to give free reign to the pent up earnestness of women, I hereby invite comrades to energetically submit drafts.

給姐妹們 – 珍自離校後與同學及老友每少聚首之機會,消息久疏,今就任本雜誌婦女部副編輯,願為全國女同胞之喉舌,發揮女子之慷慨,井請同志踴躍賜稿. 97

Editorial mediation and commentaries, however, arbitrated what was printed and how information was framed, which is most evident with regard to the question of modern women and marriage.

Recent studies that refer to Linglong all point out unique viewpoints in the magazine, attributable to its close interaction with readers. 98 Hsiao-pei Yen, for example, turns to Linglong “to reveal the active voice of urban women,” citing such articles as the following, which reject state control of women’s bodies – in this case an official ban on women baring their legs in public:

In Chinese society all new trends are subject to criticism and fault-finding, and those pertaining to women in particular attract people’s malicious attention. Regarding such matters, they always look stern and put on the tinted glasses of Confucian morality. In their eyes, ordinary things can become astounding affronts to morals. If the sight of

97 Linglong no. 1, 1931, 5; no. 42, 1932, 1668.
98 Andrew Field notes that unlike the majority of contemporary publications that ostracized demimondes, Linglong “consistently showed more sympathy for the plights of singing and dancing hostesses, as well as their prostitute cousins.” See “Selling Souls in Sin City: Shanghai Singing and Dancing Hostesses in Print, Film and Politics, 1920-49,” Cinema and Urban Culture 99-127. Barbara Mittler finds in Linglong “an alternative cultural icon” – a “new new woman” – that countered the misogyny in the popular press since the late Qing period. For Gao Yunxiang, the magazine is a “a multi-vocal space” where women appropriated nationalist rhetoric for feminist ends.
female flesh can excite lewd thoughts, then the only way to keep problems from happening is to swath women from head to toe in thick cloth… However, I feel that if men are this oversensitive, wrapping up the body will have no effect. Since they can conjur up lascivious thoughts out of nothing, the best solution is permanently to cover men’s eyes with blindfolds.

Despite this, there is a growing recognition that the liberal arts are not the only solution. The public now understands that the solution to the problem lies not in the education of the sexes, but in the regulation of male behavior. The government has taken steps to enforce regulations that prevent men from骚扰ing women in public places. These measures have proven effective in reducing incidents of harassment.

In addition to these efforts, many women have turned to the legal system to seek redress for their grievances. They have successfully sued men for harassment and have won substantial damages. This has sent a clear message to men that such behavior will not be tolerated.

Despite these successes, women still face many challenges. They must continue to fight for their rights and for the respect that they deserve. The struggle is far from over, but with the support of the community and the government, progress is being made.

References:

3. The article dictates mock rules demanding, for example, that buttons on men’s shirts must be spaced no more and no less than four inches apart from each other. Linglong no. 158, 1934, 2101-2.
4. Yen regards these voices as resistant responses to the New Life Movement initiated by the Nationalist Guomindang (GMD) government in 1934. See Yen 174.
5. On how to be a good wife and mother, “The Responsibilities of Wise Mothers and Good Wives” takes the mother of the Confucian sage Mencius as an example by stating: “As for Mencius becoming a sage, it was not due to his own will but rather owes entirely to his mother’s sacrifices in choosing a suitable neighbourhood for him to grow up in”孟子之成聖, 並不是他自己的志聖, 完全是成功在他母親選擇的苦心。Linglong no. 41, 1931, 1619.
6. “Good Motherly Teachings” concludes that fine motherly teachings allow a child to become “a good model citizen”一個模範的好國民。Linglong Issue no. 31, 1931, 1634. Other articles are devoted to feminism, as in “How Women are to Implement their Liberation,” Linglong no. 198, 1935, 2075-2077. In other instances, information about a woman’s right to initiate divorce meet with assertions that divorce isn’t to be taken lightly.
responsibilities collide with ones that expose the maliciousness of men. And while novel recipes (Fig. 1.22) and tips on household décor and management continue to emphasize women’s domestic roles, new roles for women outside the home are enthusiastically celebrated, such as participating in women’s groups and associations (Fig. 1.23, 1.24), leading political rallies (Fig. 1.25), and contributing to the war effort (Fig. 1.26).

The volatility of the period when Linglong was in print is most pronounced in letters to the advice column. These reveal some of the realities faced by women who were inspired by the feminist ideas

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103 “The Responsibilities of Modern Wives,” Linglong no. 80, 1932, 1397. When One’s Husband Has a Mistress,” provides tips on how women can prevent their spouses from having affairs. Linglong no. 1, 1931, 4. For the maliciousness of men see my discussion on this in Chapter 2.
Fig. 1.23. “Young Women’s Assembly,” showing the first tea party of the League for Women’s Education. *Linglong* no. 184, 1935, 1097.

Fig. 1.24. “Group photo of members of the Shanghai Association for Career Women.” *Linglong* no. 50, 1932, 2036.
Fig. 1.25. Female soldiers (top) and a female representative leading a rally in Beijing against the Japanese invasion in Northwest China. Linglong no. 40, 1931, 1579.
Fig. 1.26. A luncheon for a women’s association (top) and women contributing to the war effort in hospitals. Linglong no. 96, 1933, 712.
advocated in the magazine.¹⁰⁴ In one letter, a sixteen year old student conveys the predicament of her desire to oppose her family, who have arranged a marriage for her against her wishes to continue studying and become self-reliant:

As I am a student who has not completed junior middle school, my studies cannot but be forsaken if I get married… I want to oppose my mother and separate myself from the family. However, the expenses for my schooling are provided entirely by them. If I resist, my studies will be thrown into a state of panic.

While Linglong fervently advocates education and self-reliance for women, I have found no clear articulations of direct support for women’s social independence as represented by the choice to remain unwed – referred to as “the ideology of not marrying” 不嫁主義 or “the ideology of remaining single” 獨身主義. Indeed, rejection of marriage is generally discussed with apprehension in the magazine and denied social validity. One letter to the advice column, for example, asks “is adopting the ideology of not marrying suitable or not?” 抱獨身主義相宜否. In reply, Linglong asserts, “Generally speaking, those who marry are normal, and those who adopt the ideology of not marrying are not normal. There is no

¹⁰⁴ Many advice column letters indicate how strongly influenced their writers were by the discourse of women’s emancipation. A twenty two year old writer, for example, states that she considers herself as having “received new-style education” 我自命是受過新的教育, and tells how she wants to “take the steps of a revolutionary” 實行革命者的步驟. Linglong no.124, 1933, 2452. Another writer laments that as a child, she did not resist her parents when they terminated her studies, but that having now grown up, she realizes the importance for a woman to be independent and how crucial an education is to establishing one’s own career. Linglong no. 123, 1933, 2387. Linglong’s advice column was very popular among readers and an offshoot supplement to the magazine was later produced, which collected letters and responses from the column in book form. Linglong no. 291, 1937, 1868. Letters from the advice column indicate that Linglong’s readership was diverse, ranging from middle school students in their teens to young mothers in their 30s. Their social backgrounds also varied. While some sent images of themselves wearing extravagant fashions for publication, others could barely afford to buy the magazine. The writer of one letter, for example, expresses her appreciation for the magazine, telling that though she was unable to subscribe to the magazine due to financial difficulties at home, she nevertheless went out to buy three or four copies at a time when she managed to save up enough money. Linglong no. 123, 1933, 2387.

¹⁰⁵ The letter states: “Today’s society is in a period of cultural and educational advancement, an age of equal rights between males and females. As a girl who has not yet graduated, when I am ready to seek a livelihood in future I will not meet the qualifications to work. My wish is to go to a few more schools to pursue more knowledge, and to accomplish a level of competence and independence as a means to avoid being subjected to any privations.” Linglong no. 258, 1936, 3189.
such thing as ‘suitable’ or ‘unsuitable’” 大概結婚者為常態, 抱獨身主義者為變態, 無所謂相宜, 無所謂不相宜也。106

There is one article that outlines “The Joys of Not Marrying” 不嫁之樂 – translated from an American paper. But its purpose is to negate these joys with editorial commentary. The article lists the following four points: i.) the freedom of remaining unmarried exempts one from all sorts of privations 不嫁的自由度外, 可見種種困苦; ii.) the possibility of an unsatisfying marriage remains outside one’s concerns 所謂婚姻不圓滿一問題, 可置之度外; iii.) there is no need to be anxious about the possibility of one’s husband losing his job, or uneasy about having too many children 不必憂慮丈夫之失業, 或小孩子太多; and iv.) one can forever be referred to as ‘Miss’ and never grow old 可以永遠稱 ‘小姐’, 永遠不老. The commentary that follows negates the credibility of these arguments and reaffirms the value of marriage:

Not marrying is akin to remaining chaste for one’s entire life. Suppose one makes friends with many members of the opposite sex, and with time comes cohabitation. This would be to ‘Live in Sin,’ and the hardships will be even greater than if one marries.

不嫁, 即一世貞貞之意, 惟多交異性之友, 隨時與之同居, 則是‘度罪惡生活’ (Live in Sin) 矣, 其苦比嫁更甚。107

On the other hand, an earlier article on “The Ideology of Not Marrying” 不嫁主意 in Linglong’s debut issue is ambiguous, and even rare in the magazine for not censuring the subject. Indeed, covert insinuation is often the means by which alternative views find quiet representation in Linglong. The article introduces the idea of rejecting marriage in an objective, almost ethnographic way – as a curiosity that the female author, Miss Yang Yizu, has heard about from a friend, Miss C, who speaks of another friend, Miss D. According to Miss C, who has learned this from Miss D, men are fickle 容易變心 and their love is insipid 無味, and as for women who have already wed, “they all say that to get married is to

be dragged into vexation and suffering.” Miss C therefore prefers to continue studying before establishing a place for herself in society (我希望在社會上謀—立足地), and “most definitely will not marry” (108) The author adds no further comment. While the article does not endorse the rejection of marriage per se, its neutrality insinuates viability.

The ways in which articles try to make sense of women who do not marry reveal such scrutiny to be reactionary. “Women Who Follow the Ideology of Remaining Single” (108) ostracizes women who remain unwed by attempting to rationalize why they do so: “Why is it that some women want to embrace the ideology of remaining single? Do they actually enjoy going through life in such a lonely way? This is a conundrum” According to this article, women choose not to marry because they experienced heartbreak and have become bitter (過了失戀的痛苦…因而抱消極態度), or they have simply passed marriageable age and must therefore settle for “propping up the signpost of the ideology of remaining single” (過了婚配年齡…因此做女的也只好撐起獨身主義的牌子了).

This article, however, is not as straightforward as first appears. The third and final reason given for why women remain unmarried creates a rift in the general tenor of the article, citing the diligent pursuit of higher education as what appears to be a reason not to marry:

There are some women who have aspirations and wish to pursue higher learning. Because getting married often interferes with their personal prospects, they are therefore unwilling to marry.

In addition to this, an introductory phrase that opens the article ascribes the decision to remain unwed to worldliness: “Well-experienced in the ways of the world, [women who choose to remain single] dare not

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wed” 食經世故不敢嫁. The logic of what opens and concludes this article implies that there are sensible reasons for not marrying.

The question remains, furthermore, how individual readers interpreted an article like “The Joys of Not Marrying,” in spite of its drab moralistic commentary. This question is especially pertinent in light of the unruly defiance that is encouraged elsewhere in Linglong, as in the articles that Yen argues resist attempts by the state to control women’s bodies. Corresponding to these articles are images that portray a similar sense of female assertiveness, as one example in which confident and stylish American women of all ages point guns in direct confrontation with the viewer’s gaze (Fig. 1.27). Likewise, a comic

Fig. 1.27. American women learn to use guns. Linglong no. 221, 1936, 192-3.

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This representation is not without ambiguity. The caption provided tries to contain the image’s power by explaining that these are female bank employees in training. Yet the ability of the text to control the meanings of the image is questionable; indeed, the image’s appeal is independent from the text and is arguably rooted in the iconoclastic sense of rebelliousness that is conjured by the defiant expressions and confident postures of the women pictured.
Illustration confronts the scrutiny of women’s behaviour with satiric humour (Fig. 1.28). It speaks directly to the magazine’s trope of sisterhood by depicting two women who mind their own business as three moralists in the background look upon them (and their bare legs) as omens of the nation’s pending doom. The humour of this illustration relies on a sense that such moralising is ridiculous and simply needs to be ignored. The ambiguities between these representations and Linglong’s didacticism permeate the pages of the magazine and I have attributed this to the publication’s aim to be both respectable and cutting edge. I continue to underscore these tensions in the following chapter as I examine tensions in the construction of normative heterosexuality and marriage in the magazine.

Fig. 1.28. “The Sayings of Three Moralists.” Linglong no. 75, 1932, 1163 (d).

111 This comic illustration appears only a few pages from another illustration, “Same-sex Love,” that depicts two women in bed, which I argue in Chapter 3 represents a more titillating than alarming depiction of female-female desire. It is unclear whether the close proximity of these two illustrations of female pairings – one in public, the other in private – was intentional, but the juxtaposition is intriguing.
CHAPTER 2: MAKING ‘OPPOSITE-SEX’ LOVE

As I suggested in the previous chapter, editorial interventions are most pronounced in Linglong when conventional marriage is challenged; refusal to marry is brought into disrepute and direct support for such refusal is not given equal representation. Looking more closely at these mediations in this chapter, I examine how content in Linglong constructs heterosexuality and marriage as normal and compulsory. Yet as I have also shown in the previous chapter, discourses and representations clash in the magazine in ambiguous ways. Thus, while I emphasize the power of discursive regulation, I underscore how it is ruptured by discordant voices and subtexts that hint at alternative sensibilities. In this way, I show how heterosexuality and marriage are contested in Linglong at the same time that they are perpetuated.

Discourse

Deviant Same-sex Love

In a letter to Linglong’s advice column, the writer pen-named Baoyu 資玉 tells of her loveless marriage, an intimate female friend, and her feeling that same-sex unions between women are more resolute than opposite-sex unions. She writes:

I, unfortunate as I am, have never enjoyed a day of peace and happiness. From when I was sixteen, I had to leave home to seek work as I have a loving mother who is dependent on me for subsistence. When I was twenty one, I became acquainted with a man through a friend. Before meeting him, I had a very strong relationship with a female co-worker. The two of us were very close, and she was, moreover, filled with romantic love.

In the fall, however, the man proposed marriage to me. Because I was enduring hardship and experiencing financial difficulties, I accepted and we settled upon the eleventh month for the wedding. Yet, even before the marriage, it was already clear that our emotions clashed. Indeed, conflict arose between us numerous times. I took my reputation

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112 The pen name Baoyu appears to be a reference to the protagonist in the novel The Story of the Stone (also Dream of the Red Chamber). In the novel, Baoyu’s gender identity is ambiguous, and he much prefers spending time in the female quarters of his family’s mansion. One of his most famous lines in the novel is his declaration that he feels dirty around boys, who are filthy like mud, but clean around girls, who are pure like water. See: Xueqin Cao, The Story of the Stone: A Novel in Five Volumes, trans. David Hawkes and John Minford (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1979).
seriously, and for this reason reluctantly endured the situation, hoping that these marital problems could be resolved. Who could have known that after the wedding, our debts would become even heavier than mine had previously been, or that my husband would treat me with utter indifference. This spring, I gave birth to a son, and now my husband cares only for the child. As for me, he answers only in a reluctant tone. Oh goodness! My lifetime of happiness has simply come to an end, just like this!

My relationship with my female friend, however, intensified by the day. We made vows to remain together for a lifetime, and arranged to authenticate our union by living together after two years. The depth of our feelings was unmatched. Now, however, she made vows – sometimes she takes ill. I feel that same-sex unions are more solid and noble than opposite-sex unions. However, the cause of her illness is not solely due to my having gotten married because she originally had two boyfriends of her own.

Last year, Boyfriend No.1 proposed to her but she declined. He was then subjected to humiliating insults from Boyfriend No. 2 with the result that Boyfriend No. 1 became extremely angry, fell ill, and never recovered. Because of this, my female friend came to loathe Boyfriend No. 2 bitterly. Moreover, she often thought about Boyfriend No. 1. Recently, Boyfriend No. 2 made a final and forceful marriage proposal, but she did not consent. Her true feelings are very difficult for me to surmise. Was it because of her feelings for me or her Boyfriend No. 1 that she rejected Boyfriend No.2? Carefully thinking about it from beginning to end, I truly feel that life is so insipid, and for a long time I have considered ending my own life. However, because of my loving mother and the debts we still owe, I cannot escape.

Lately, my friend’s feelings toward me have been alright, but she often bickers with me, which really causes me to lose heart. Moreover, she often speaks of committing suicide. As for this, I am unable to understand it. I have been thinking carefully: her prospects are greater than mine now; if I die, I’m afraid that she will also have no positive outcome. I am currently full of agony over these matters – is it better to just die, or leave for a faraway place? I hope that you, Miss, can help solve my difficult problem.

不幸的我從小到大未曾享受一日安樂。十六歲時就奔走於外，因我尚有一慈母是靠我而生存的，二十一歲由友人介紹，識了一個男友。在未識之前，有個女同事，跟我感情甚佳，雨下投機，且她富於愛情。然而秋天時，對方男友向我提及訂婚。我因爲受不良環境與經濟所迫，故允諾了。預定十一月舉行婚禮，但婚前已頗覺情感不合，並且發生數次衝突。我因面子攸關，故而勉強維持。本望婚後能解決問題，哪知婚後欠債比前更重，對方待我亦非常冷淡，今春育了一個男孩，對方只顧小孩，而我呢是勉強答話，唉！我的一生幸福就此告一段落了。然而我的女友隨後情感日增一日。且訂終身生死之交，約期二年實行同居之合，同時我倆的深情，世界獨一無二。但她時常發生疾病，我覺得同性之結合比異性的堅固而偉大。但她的疾病原因，也不盡是為我結婚之故，因她本有甲乙二男友，前年甲友向她求婚不允，並受乙友侮辱，以致甲友憤而同病不治。她對此常痛恨乙友。並且常常思及甲友，最進乙友向她最後激烈之求婚，結果她不允，所以她的真情令我責難推測。究竟是為我，或為甲友而拒絕乙方，貓熊前後，頗覺人生太無味了。久思自殺，奈因慈母與債務關係，不能脫離，近來她對我情感漸好，不過時常與我吵鬧，令我非常灰心。並且她常常想殺她自殺，而至於此實無從推測。所以
Baoyu conveys distress over whether her female friend’s feelings toward her have changed. Yet she asserts her view that female-female unions are superior to opposite-sex unions with conviction, and speaks without hesitation about her vows to “remain together for a lifetime” with her female friend.

*Linglong*, however, reacted to Baoyu’s letter by printing it under the cautionary heading, “Do Not Forfeit a Lifetime’s Wellbeing” 不要誤了一生幸福. Considered viable by Baoyu, partnerships between women are aggressively denounced in *Linglong*'s reply, which reiterates a pathologizing discourse on same-sex love that first appeared in earlier issues of the magazine:

Regarding the absurdity of same-sex love, we have already discussed it in *Linglong* more than a few times. Because same-sex love is an act of giving oneself up to a dissipated life that completely violates natural laws, the result can only be that it will cause a person to be mentally feeble and spiritually degenerate. Moreover, it very easily gives rise to thoughts of suicide. As for all this, it verifies that same-sex love is irrational, full of harm, and has no advantages.

The value of marriage and family life is affirmed, and Baoyu is advised to reassess her priorities. She is asked to free herself from poisonous same-sex love, which causes delusion:

You are already married, and moreover have a son. Normally, a person in your position as wife and mother should feel very gratified and content. As for your husband treating you with cold indifference, this is your own imagination, that’s all. As it was he who initiated the marriage, it is of course because he adores you that he did so. Moreover, he really loves his son, so clearly he also really loves you. It seems that the ‘cold indifference’ is likely just your own misapprehension. You are a married person, and therefore should not wallow so sentimentally in suicidal same-sex love. Indeed, your feelings of dejection arise because you have not overcome the impetuous capacity for same-sex love.

你已經結了婚, 並且已經有了兒子, 照理應該很幸福很快樂. 你的丈夫對你冷淡, 這是你的心理作用而已, 因為結婚是他的主動, 他當然對你有了愛慕, 才能如此. 祐且他很喜歡自己的孩子, 可知他也很愛你的. ‘冷淡’ 不過是你的敢覺有這一點罷了. 你是結

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According to this logic, same-sex love is intolerable because it obstructs normal heterosexual love, and Baoyu is advised to detach herself from her female friend so that both can flourish in proper relations with men. And while same-sex love is harmful, even fatal, it is claimed that exercising one’s will to change can reverse the damage:

If you say that you want to continue on the path of same-sex love, it can be predicted that your own life and your female friend’s life will be unfortunate and tragic. Naturally, sooner or later there will be no escape from the single route of suicide. However, if you exert some courage and resolve to explain all the various sorts of poisonous dangers in detail to your female friend, and immediately put an end to this kind of frightening relationship by returning to your own happy family, and find enjoyment in being a wife and mother – which you previously overlooked – and moreover, if your female friend also moves toward family life to seek happiness, then in this way you both can find redemption. As for these two very clear paths of opposite-sex love and same-sex love, it is up to you yourself to decide which one to take.

Pathologizing of same-sex love first appears in Linglong with catastrophic news reports involving female lovers – double suicides and a high profile murder case from February 1932, which involved the fatal stabbing of Liu Mengying by her lover Tao Sijin.

114 “Do Not Forfeit” 1356.
115 One report on the double suicide of a young couple gives the following account: “Graduate of Southeast Women’s Middle School, Cai Huifang, felt deeply unsatisfied because she was betrothed as a child to Lu Jinseng, who is from a rich and prosperous family, but obtuse by nature, without a proper vocation. Born into a family where marriage is not free, Cai had no alternative. Recently, as the wedding day approached, Cai, together with a Miss Sun Jingxian – the two of whom had relations of same-sex love – put on funeral garments, threw themselves into the sea and died” (The Suicide of Two Young Women,” Linglong no. 42, 1932, 1667. Another reported case of double suicide involved young female lovers who swallowed liquid sedatives together to escape the woes of their arranged marriages. “Same-sex Love is not Equal to Opposite-sex Love,” Linglong no. 78, 1932, 1377.)
closely in *Linglong* – according to reports, the pair became acquainted at school before they started an intense relationship that turned tragic as third parties became involved. Photographs of the assailant and victim are printed as a follow up to the reports, which further sensationalize the story (Fig. 2.1).

These media spectacles of suicide and violence associate female-female desire with deviance and danger. Editorial commentaries remark on the senselessness of same-sex love, which is described as

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116 As reported in *Linglong*: “At the school of arts, Tao Sijin got to know a schoolmate, Liu Mengying, who was twenty one years old, from Changsha, Hunan. They were very attached to each other and extremely earnest, eating at the same table and sleeping under the same blanket, possessing that which could be called same-sex love... Liu and Tao, the two of them, for the sake of forever maintaining their love, thereupon in secret established a kind of oath [of] absolutely never marrying with the opposite sex. The earnestness of their love can be seen from this. However, their passion was so deep that their suspicion and jealousy became extreme. As a result, calamity befell”...
abnormal 不正常, perverse 變態, repulsive 醜惡, and fruitless 毫無結果. The Liu-Tao murder case in particular is cited repeatedly to denounce desire between women:

Same-sex love, with regard to law, morality, and physiology, is offensive conduct. This repulsive behaviour is generally referred to as a perversion of sex; it is a kind of perverse sexuality that is often harmful. The case of Liu and Tao is indeed a product of such danger.

同性愛在法律上,道德上,和生理上的地位,是犯罪的行爲.這醜惡的行爲,一般叫做‘性的倒錯’,是一種變態的色情,往往帶有危險性的.劉陶案就是在這危險下的產物.\(^{118}\)

With regard to the mental state, although satisfaction is obtained for a moment, in the end same-sex love will surely cause all sorts of unfortunate disasters. The recent case of Tao Sijing is a powerful example of this.

對於精神方面,雖一時得到愉快,然末後後總是弄出種種不幸的慘劇來.像這次陶思瑾的案子,便是一個有力的正明.\(^{119}\)

The Liu-Tao story lingered in public consciousness and continued to be cited in years following its occurrence. Articles in *Linglong* from 1934 and 1936, for example, cite the case as evidence that same-sex love between women is perverse:

As for the case from two years ago that caused a great sensation – Tao Sijing’s crime of passion toward Liu Mengyin, which involved elements of same-sex love – readers can no doubt remember it. Thus, for the sake of preventing the maladies of this sort of vice, girls must be made aware of it early on.

前年轟動一時的陶思瑾情殺劉夢芸一案,也就是同性愛的成分,想讀者當能記憶的.所以,為防患於此種惡習之弊害,須最先讓少女們明白.\(^{120}\)

Same-sex love often gives rise to fierce and brutal actions. The Tao-Liu case from Hangzhou, still on people’s minds up till now, is just such a case in point.

同性愛也常引起兇暴的行爲.至今尚在人們記憶中的發生在杭州的陶劉案件即其一例.\(^{121}\)

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\(^{117}\) Pan Guangdan had this to say about Tao Sijing after she murdered her lover: “I would like to know how society will accommodate her. Do we let her go home, go back to school, or freely access other public facilities? Who can guarantee that she will not be embroiled in homosexual love again and will not be driven by jealousy to kill once more?” Cited in L. Lee 153.

\(^{118}\) “Murder Case” 114.


\(^{120}\) “The Causes and Maladies of Same-sex Love,” *Linglong* no. 163, 1934, 2428.
The theories of Havelock Ellis are cited with respect to the Liu-Tao story to explain how female same-sex love is potentially more dangerous than same-sex love between men:

In opposite-sex love, the agents of fierceness and brutality due to jealousy are more likely to be males. But [Havelock] Ellis would say that in same-sex love, most males assume the female role and thus their behaviour is relatively gentle, such that disappointment in love often leads to suicide. In the case of women, because they assume the male role, [disappointment] often leads to violent behaviour, therefore disappointment in love often leads to fierce and brutal actions.

Implied in this logic is that, whereas effeminate men are feeble and ineffectual, women who act like men are most threatening to the gender hierarchy because they assume positions of power. Indeed, female same-sex love was problematic because it was conflated with the unconventional gender behaviour that was associated with modern women:

After the war, same-sex love has become even more fashionable. The clothing of women is increasingly more like that of men. Women cutting their hair short has become a trend all over the world! Women wearing men’s style coats and men’s trousers are certainly a symptom of the fad of same-sex love.

欲與男耳彌為流行了。婦女的服裝，日益與男子相近，剪短髮已風行全世界了，著男子式的外衣，男子式的長褲，實在是同性愛流行的一種徵象。

Desire between females is therefore targeted specifically in *Linglong*, and the magazine called for vigilance and intervention:

Nonetheless, those who require most attention are girls engaged in same-sex love. Most of them are like this because of neurasthenia and mental perversion. To forfeit a lifetime’s happiness in this complicated sort of love – this pitiable fate truly causes one to lament.

值得注意的還是同性愛的女子。他們大多是神經衰弱，心理變態的結果，把一生的幸福，斷送了在於這在這種錯誤的情愛中。對於這種可憐的命運，是很令人惋惜的。

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121 “Same-sex Love” 3653.
122 “Same-sex Love” 3654.
123 “Same-sex Love” 3654.
124 “Celibacy and Same-sex Love” *Linglong* no. 77, 1932, 1253.
At present, [same-sex love] is very fashionable in co-ed circles. All those charged with the mission of education— with regard to the occurrence and prevention of this strange phenomenon— should promptly work toward corrective measures to thoroughly prevent the growth and spread of this trend.

New Culture and National Character

While female-female desire is linked to unconventional modern women, it is at the same time declared a consequence of China’s repressive old society, which prevented women from fully expressing their natural desires for men:

Same-sex love is a phenomenon of abnormal romantic love, originally not limited to the world of women. However, because of traditional customs, causing the repression of female sexuality to be stricter than that of men, same-sex love has consequently become the vogue among young girls… The more that sexual freedom is strictly barred and the sexes are segregated, the more likely the spurring on of same-sex love… Upon reaching a certain age, young girls’ internal biology becomes active and they come to develop an urge for love. Of course, they cannot easily come into contact with members of the opposite sex, and have nowhere to give vent to their intense desire for love. Consequently, they cannot help but turn their pursuit of love towards members of the same-sex… With time, friendly affection intensifies and becomes an illusion of opposite-sex love. Going one step further, there is determination to fulfil desire for physical contact.

The discourse against same-sex love is couched in the rhetoric of May Fourth New Culture, which reproduced colonial concepts of progress and set out to transform China by forging a new respectable national character. The May Fourth agenda demonized China’s past as ill-adapted to a changing world, and customs like the segregation of the sexes, confinement of women and arranged marriages were singled out by progressives as obstacles to national wellbeing and advancement.

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125 “Suicides” 1667-8.
126 “Causes and Maladies” 2426-7.
May Fourth calls for women’s emancipation and freedom of love are trumpeted in *Linglong*, which asserts that same-sex love has no place in liberated modern society. Parents are admonished to be more lenient toward their children’s love lives so that “cruel tragedies will not result”:

If marriage proceeds from force, then a family will never have happiness to speak of. Those who are parents should thoroughly understand the meaning of this. As for the vital matter of marriage, particularly with regard to the happiness of sons and daughters, their approval must be sought, and parents most definitely cannot take on full authority in making such decisions.

Another commentator asserts that the pervasiveness of same-sex love is peculiar to China, associated as it was with oppressive Chinese customs:

Why is same-sex love so widespread in China and why is it not common in foreign countries? I believe the reason is simply that in Europe and America, socializing is open, and interaction and love between males and females is completely free. Thus, such perverse sexual desires do not emerge.

Anxiety over same-sex love is linked directly to apprehension about the nation and its future. As one commentator cautions:

I still do not understand how same-sex love can go so far as both parties making a pact to absolutely never tie the knot with members of the opposite-sex. If such raucousness continues, after making female comrades over the whole nation the same [as men], then will extinction not follow?

Another commentator asserts that the pervasiveness of same-sex love is peculiar to China, associated as it was with oppressive Chinese customs:

In the name of science and liberty, calls for freedom of love ultimately reaffirm heterosexuality as compulsory: “There needs to be a broadening and freeing of social interaction [between men and women],

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127 “Suicides” 1668.
129 “Is Same-sex Love Saintly” 534.
which conduces to guiding [them] toward the correct path of opposite-sex love.”

Indeed, heterosexual love is presented as a remedy for the maladies of same-sex love:

I once witnessed with my own eyes a female friend who, having experienced a loss of love with someone of the same sex, became disheartened, apathetic and unhappy . . . Afterwards, her family got to the bottom of it and introduced her to a male friend. Only then was her mental anguish gradually alleviated. Even so, the harm done was already considerable.

The regulatory discourse running through Linglong underscores that the fundamental problem with female-female desire is that, “With regard to normal married life, it certainly creates impediments”

Reforming how males and females socialize is thus endorsed as the way to guide young women toward healthy heterosexual unions: “In future, with regard to correcting this kind of harmful behaviour, it would be best first to reform the way men and women interact socially”

Linglong fulfilled this role by romanticizing heterosexual love and introducing new ways for women to socialize with men.

**Romantic Opposite-sex Love**

Articles on love, kissing, and new ways for men and women to intermingle in modern society appear regularly in Linglong, particularly in issues from its first few years in print. Much of Linglong’s content is devoted to normalizing women’s desire for men and informing readers about new forms of social interaction between the sexes. In “My Social Activities” my 交友, for example, a young socialite states that “it isn’t a bad thing for women to step out of the house and engage in social activities”

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130 “Causes and Maladies” 2428.
131 “Causes and Maladies” 2427-8.
132 “Causes and Maladies” 2427.
133 “Is Same-sex Love Saintly” 534.
past who “considered activities such as being around men and interacting directly with people to be shameful” 從前的女子每以爲接近男性和當着衆人之面活動爲差事. “This is a misunderstanding; an old concept of propriety that is harmful” 這是誤解, 這是舊禮教害人. It is natural for young women to long for relations with men: “Truthfully speaking, the reason why女子到社會場中去交際的目的, 老實說就是希望多認識幾個男友. The article goes on to lay out new standards of propriety as a guide for how women can carry themselves in a dignified way when socializing with men in the new society. Accompanying this article is a photograph that shows a group of young women “cultivating friendship over a meal” 聚餐莉以聯絡感情 and its caption suggests: “If it is possible to do so together with male friends, the mood will be even more interesting” 能與男友聯合舉行則興緻更濃 (Fig. 2.2).134

The author of another article shares her excitement upon receiving “Letters from Him” 他的信, expressing the pleasure she feels from being in love with a man: “Letters from Him are different. I look forward to them, waiting in anticipation . . . Reading his words of praise for me . . . I virtually transform into a different person” ‘他的信’ 就大不相同了, 時時刻刻不忘記的就望他…看到他贊美我的話, 我似乎已換了一個人 (Fig. 2.3).135 Indeed, according to “Making Friends with Members of the Opposite Sex” 交異性朋友, having an opposite-sex friend has remarkable benefits for the minds and bodies of young people, while individuals lacking such relations become dejected and envious:

No matter what, males and females upon reaching adolescence will inevitably want to strain every nerve to get close to members of the opposite sex and make an opposite-sex friend. This is so for everyone. Suppose a young person is walking alone, and suddenly coming the other way are a male and female couple walking shoulder to shoulder, conversing and laughing. The young person will surely feel a deep inner grievance, and moreover become envious.

不論男女到了青春的時期總竭力要想去接近異性, 交一個異性的朋友, 這是人人如此

134 “My Social Activities,” Linglong no. 1, 1931, 10.
While having an opposite-sex friend can fulfil one’s natural desires, it is also beneficial in other ways, encompassing moral dimensions of self-improvement and mutual care:

Making an opposite-sex friend can enhance one’s studies and can also amend one’s morals. This is because having an opposite-sex friend can stimulate the mind’s assiduousness, exertion, and ambition, always wishing to vie for honour and win the favour of a significant other. Pushing oneself in this way, one’s studies and morals will naturally improve vastly with each passing day. In other respects, when a youth has an opposite-sex friend, both mind and body benefit. At times when the mind feels sad and vexed, there can be mutual consolation, and when there is a problem that is difficult to solve, you can have someone to talk it over with – the mind and spirit can obtain a comfort that cannot be easily described. As for the body, generally speaking, those who

136 “Making Friends with Members of the Opposite Sex,” Linglong no. 29, 1931, 1065-1066.
have a partner certainly do their utmost to protect their own physical health to avoid worrying each other. From the few points mentioned above, making opposite-sex friends, with regard to youth, is something that is beneficial.

Engaging in proper romantic relations with men is portrayed as a natural part of a girl’s maturation into a healthy, beautiful woman:

A woman’s countenance is most beautiful. As for when the body is at its healthiest, it is during the period when she is in love. Many women’s bodies are thin and weak, and even medicines have no effect. In the end, when a woman is in love with a man, all illness disappears, and she transforms into a beautiful woman with curves and rosy apple cheeks.

This text is printed next to an image of a Hollywood starlet, which implies that the secret to a movie star’s glamorous beauty is the love she shares with a man (Fig. 2.4).

Especially in its first few years of publication, Linglong consistently printed erotically charged images of kissing from European and Hollywood cinema (Fig. 2.5). That virtually none of these images are of Chinese actors indicates the foreignness of this practice, and Linglong exploited the exoticism to entice readers and present itself as cutting edge. While kissing was denounced by some critics as un-Chinese and unhygienic, it is generally represented in Linglong as a bold and passionate display of love. One article notes that in contrast to China, kissing is practiced freely and even publicly in Europe:

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137 “Making Friends” 1066.
139 According to Zhiwei Xiao, kissing was seen by many in China as unhygienic in the early twentieth century. Scenes of kissing in movies, including foreign ones, came under attack by the Central Film Censorship Committee, and were often ordered to be cut. See Xiao 195. Linglong includes arguments against the practice, but generally promotes kissing as a passionate expression of love.
French people, with regard to males and females kissing each other, do not consider it strange. On the street in broad daylight, they embrace and kiss each other, and though there are pedestrians passing by who can see, they are nonetheless indifferent.

Another article urges fellow sisters not to be squeamish about kissing because such behaviour makes women appear meek and hopeless:

Kissing is an extremely intense expression of love. Whether it is from a male to a female, or a female to a male, it has more than a little power and impact. Those fellow sisters

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140 “Interesting Happenings at Christmas Time,” Linglong no. 1931, no. 41, 1648.
among us who generally do not understand this and consider kissing to be a shameful business that they can’t abide – this is extremely mistaken! . . . The way I see it, we should also go about it enthusiastically. If we are blindly stubborn and play dumb by yielding with a show of reluctance, then this will make apparent the uselessness of us girls.

接吻是戀愛中極熱烈的表示之一幕, 不論其為男子對我們女子, 或是女子對男子, 都含有不少力量和價值, 我們一般不明瞭的姊妹們, 以爲這是一種無恥的勾當, 看不得, 那就錯極了. . . 我以爲它應該同性極熱烈的承受, 如果一味假義假儀, 乍推乍就, 這更顯出我們女子的沒用了. 141

A photo layout shows a woman initiating a kiss to demonstrate how women can actively pursue intimacy with men (Fig. 2.6). Bold as these representations may be, they are nevertheless implicated in a
“regimentation of desire” that normalizes heterosexuality and reaffirms conventional unions as compulsory.  

As mentioned earlier, articles in Linglong actively endorse marriage, while deriding the “ideology of not marryng” 不嫁和 the “ideology of remaining single” 獨身. “On Marrying” 出嫁 is a testimonial by a Yuezhen 月貞 who describes her transition from a middle school girl determined never to marry to a happy newly-wed:

> From the time that I graduated from middle school I held a conviction, which was to never marry. Some people say that ‘marriage is the tomb of love,’ but I used to say that ‘marriage is the tomb of freedom.’ To guard my freedom so that it would not be taken away from me, my conviction to remain unwed was unrelenting. Who could have known that in the end, the prodding of my family and my being enraptured by ‘his’ heart would eventually shatter my former view, and that I would in the end get married?

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142 Sang 15.
143 “On Marrying,” Linglong no. 3, 1931, 84.
Yue Zhen expresses how happy married life actually is, and scorns her former resistance to marriage as foolish: “Everything fell into place. As for my mindset, I feel that my former ‘ideology of not marrying’ is really laughable, and that my previous outlook was entirely mistaken!” 一切都有了一個頭緒, 而同時在心理方面, 覺得從前的不嫁主義, 真是好笑, 一切過去的心理都错了! Yuezhen proclaims the joy she feels thus far, having been married all of two months:

I have now been married to ‘Him’ for a couple of months. With regard to life during this time, compared to life at my natal family, I don’t know how many times happier I am, as though the blossoms of life are in bloom again. I am wondering: those fellow sisters who embrace the ‘ideology of not marrying,’ having seen this clumsy writing of mine, do you have any thoughts?

我現在和 ‘他’ 結婚已有兩個月, 此兩月中的生活, 比在娘家的生活, 不知快樂了幾許, 好像重開生命之花. 我想一般抱著不嫁主義的姊妹們, 看到了我這篇拙作, 作什麼感想沒有? Worth noting here is how ideology underlies the Chinese terminology used in the title of Yuezhen’s article (Fig. 2.7). The gender specific chujia 出嫁 – literally “marrying out” – invokes the patriarchal status quo whereby a married woman joins her husband’s clan as an outsider with no official independent standing of her own. Chujia thus reconfigures a male-centred gender hierarchy through heteronormative marriage.

Marriage is again upheld in “In Support of ‘Mrs. Wang Boqun’ – Bao Zhining’s Wedding” 擁護王伯華夫人, 保志甯的婚姻, which celebrates the marriage of Shanghai’s Minister of Communications, Wang Boqun 王伯華, and university graduate, Miss Bao Zhining 保志甯. The article begins: “The purpose of marriage is to pursue happiness” 結婚的目的, 是追求幸福. Miss Bao is commended for her decision to marry, in contrast to the majority of university graduates who reject marriage:

Today, those who graduate from university are actually not that many, yet, according to the statistics of various schools, those who do not marry after graduation make up ninety percent. From this, we can see that girls who graduate from university are supercilious.

144 “On Marrying” 85.
145 “On Marrying” 119.
It is very difficult to settle the issue of marriage with them. As for this issue, I believe that it is cause for great panic in the women’s world . . . Marriage between men and women is fundamental to nature and cannot be governed by one’s intellect. In this regard, we cannot but respect the long-term foresight and judgement of Miss Bao.

The article is reactionary in its alarmism when it criticizes the majority of university graduates who refuse to marry, and in its assertion that education has made women arrogant and unruly.

A stylish image of Miss Bao on her wedding day accompanies the article that exalts her marriage (Fig. 2.8). Other images of fashionable brides likewise glamourize new-style weddings as modern and desirable – part and parcel of an up-to-date lifestyle that encompasses new-style home decor (Fig. 2.9).

Heteronormative desire is thus implicated in concerns with respectability and class. One image of a bride is printed as “a reference for young women” and states that marriage is the highlight of a woman’s life (Fig. 2.10):

As for a young woman when she reaches marriageable age, this must be considered her most dazzling moment. Thus, with regard to the dress that a bride wears, how dignified and beautiful it must be. The style pictured here is just a glimpse of this.

Language like “dignified and beautiful” implies that a woman’s respectability is contingent upon her status as a married person. Furthermore, a cover image for a special feature issue on children directly links heterosexual romance with progeny, indicating that a modern lifestyle comes with conventional gender expectations (Fig. 2.11).

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Fig. 2.9. “The New-style Dress of New-style Brides” and “Contemporary Interior Décor.” Linglong no. 122, 1933, 2337; 2344.

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147 Linglong no. 50, 1932, 2079.
148 Special feature issues on children like this one, in addition to a regular Children’s section, are dedicated to raising and educating the “future masters of China.”
To preserve the sanctity of marriage and family, articles provide tips on how women can ensure that love and marriage will last. “How to Maintain Love after Marriage” provides advice on how to maintain love that is forever harmonious, and states, “a smart wife ought to preserve the charms of her maiden years. Only in this way can a family be forever happy and satisfying.”

“The Responsibilities of Modern Wives” states that in contrast to wives in old-style families, who are cast as mere puppets of their husbands, “modern wives, besides managing the household, have the principle responsibility of creating a happy family.” To do so, modern wives ought to pay attention to household decor, oversee the moral discipline of sons and daughters, and enhance the love between her and her husband.

To persuade independent, career-minded women to find value in marriage, other discursive strategies are used. An article by a Miss Xuefen, for example, sheds light on the pragmatic aspects of having a husband. Trained as an obstetrician, Xuefen explains that she is devoted to her profession and does not like to depend on others. Yet, having a partner is still beneficial:

I am a person who enjoys working on my career most. Moreover, I always act independently, not wanting to rely on others. The result, however, has not been very satisfactory because there are many endeavours of a larger scope that are absolutely not what a person can establish alone. At the very least, one should have an intimate friend with whom one can join forces. As for this so-called intimate friend, he is of course one’s own husband!

150 “Responsibilities” 1397.
Xuefen describes the difficulties she once faced when attempting to establish a medical practice alone, and tells of her decision to marry:

If rent is high and business is slow, the only option is to close shop. I have firsthand experience with this, and know all too well the difficulties of earning a livelihood independently. Therefore, I chose to get married.

Xuefen, however, is quick to emphasize that marriage has not dampened her independent spirit. Rather, she and her husband benefit on equal terms from being together:

However, [the reason I chose to marry] is not because I wanted to rely on someone. My primary motive was to cooperate with my husband. He is also a doctor, and we are now running a practice together . . . Expenses are the same as before, but business is much improved. We are much better able to sustain our livelihoods because our income has more than doubled. Our expenditures, in comparison to running a practice individually, are not that much higher. This is where we have gained an advantage.
Discourse and Power

Aside from its surface appeal, readers turned to *Linglong* for answers during a period of immense volatility, as its advice column in particular attests. Letters frequently include words of gratitude to the publication – for being a “guiding light in a tunnel of darkness”黑暗引路的明灯. The standpoint from which *Linglong* provided guidance, however, was strongly influenced by the mounting authority of May Fourth New Culture discourse, as seen in the response to Baoyu, cited above.

When representing new knowledge that told against same-sex love, *Linglong* cited the prominent May Fourth figure Bing Xin (冰心, also known as Xie Wangying 謝婉莹, 1900-1999), who gave a speech on the subject to an audience of middle school girls. Member of an elite class of May Fourth women, Bing Xin reveals in her speech the complex relationship between conflicting personal and social desires with regard to concerns about respectability. The transcript reads like a confessional – a public cathartic exercise intended to combat former ignorance and reform past woes of involvement in same-sex relations. Indeed, as Tze-lan D. Sang states, “[t]he seemingly liberatory discourse [of ‘freedom of love’] succeeded in inculcating a rejection of same-sex passion as either naïve or base in some of the period’s most radical women.” Bing Xin’s speech is one example of how the obdurate May Fourth stance instilled a regimen of self-regulation among learned women who sought purpose in the May Fourth cause.

The introduction of “Bing Xin Gives a Speech on Same-sex Love”冰心演講同性愛 indicates that the transcript first appeared in the *Shanghai Daily*上海日報. That Bing Xin’s speech was deemed

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152 *Linglong* no. 129, 1934, 207. The writer of another letter tells that she does not have any friends to help her with problems so she is grateful that she can turn to the magazine. *Linglong* no. 49, 1932, 1997.
153 Bing Xin was a contributor, for example, to the Free Forum column of the *Morning Post* newspaper of Beijing, along with those at the forefront of the May Fourth movement, including Chen Duxiu, Li Dazhao, Hu Shi, Lu Xun, Zhou Zuoren, and Cai Yuanpei. L. Lee, “Incomplete Modernity” 55.
154 Sang 26.
worthy to be reprinted in *Linglong* testifies to her status as a cultural figure, which can be attributed to her position as an elite writer with a global profile:

Ms. Xie Bingxin, well known in Chinese literary circles for her adept writings on motherly love, teaches at Yanjing University [now Beijing University], and news has it that she will soon go to America to explore and study. A few days ago, she was swarmed by female students at the University who requested that she give a speech at Muzhen Girl’s School, and Bingxin was unable to refuse. Because the topic of her speech was ‘My Days in Middle School,’ where she talked about same-sex love and her own views on love, it is extremely valuable. Originally, the transcript appeared in the *Shanghai Daily Newspaper*, but is specially reprinted here.

The language of Bing Xin’s speech contrasts with much of what typically appears in *Linglong*, having a more archaic literary style and a self-deprecating pomposity that is reminiscent of the traditional literati. She begins it by setting a tone of humility as she recalls her earlier days as a student:

When I began studying here, I had just come from Eastern Lu [in modern Shandong province], and was full of confidence. At the time, that which I felt greatest distress over was none other than the two subjects of math and mandarin, the national language. At home, I could only rely on self-study, and with luck, advanced smoothly by gaining admittance into the department of Chinese literature in middle school, merely managing to get by. With regard to math, I was completely incompetent and thought to myself, ‘This will not do!’ I tirelessly exerted extra effort in practicing, but my studying could not be compared with those who, as though tilling land or transplanting seedlings, gained understanding upon learning. Whenever I was with schoolmates who were proficient in math, I felt shame and self-resentment. On our first monthly exam, I only reached a score of sixty seven. Though the grade was seven points short of passing, I nevertheless considered this first attempt a consoling achievement. Through great effort and ceaseless vigorous study, after three months, I achieved a score of eighty three, and could be considered on a par with my schoolmates. As for the subject of mandarin, it caused me to feel dire helplessness – no matter how much careful attention I paid to twisting and curling my tongue, my pronunciation would always produce so awkward meanings. Many mischievous sisters took this as a point for laughter, and I could only put up with this with a smile.

余最初至此間求學時，來自東魯，負笈求學。此時所感受之最大痛苦，莫如算學與國語兩門。在家庭中，僅僅售一箇自修成績，傲僕而平地高昇。考入中學國文一科，尚能勉強應付。可是算學一竅不通，‘如之何其可’。難能拚命加工陶煉，究非種田插秧，一學便會者可比。每見同學精通此道者，輒自憤自怒，然第一月考，即獲六十三分，評訂雖短少七分，方能及格，但退一步想，亦足以自慰矣。經過努力不斷新之猛烈練習，三閱月後，即增至八十三分，與其他同學可云並峙。至於國語一層，使余窘絕，無論如何留心
Glossing over the tongue, it is not uncommon meaning. Thus the many jocular jests about our peers. Here, Bing Xin reiterates the logic that female-female desire is a consequence of old-style repression:

At the time, a trend began where all my schoolmates regarded competing to make friends as a fashionable activity. Barred by school regulations and strict supervision, we generally could not transgress the bounds by a single step. We had no other choice but to remain within these constraints, and to abandon the unattainable, thereby giving up on the opposite sex and focusing on the path of same-sex love.

彼時風氣初開, 各同學競以交友為時髦課程之一, 乃右格於校章, 管理嚴密, 平時不能輕越雷池一步, 不得已, 在可能範圍中, 舍遠求近, 淫異性而專攻同性戀愛之路途.

Though speaking against same-sex love as abnormal and irrational, Bing Xin offers intriguing glimpses into relations between female students, and the apparently open practice of acting as “wife and husband,” which appears not to have been strictly platonic:

In the beginning, an older sister and a younger sister became intimate beyond regular friendship. Then, the flames of passion reached feverish heights as the two sank ever deeper into a loathsome sea of despondency. Finally, the norms of reason were surpassed to include a little billing and cooing, and the two became inseparable, like wife and husband, as though stuck together by glue.

Bing Xin assumes a detached and critical position to further denounce female-female desire as absurd:

Those directly involved lack objectivity, while onlookers see most clearly: such relations give rise to hideousness that appears in myriad forms and countless strange things. It was often the case that when a third party came between two sisters, there was jealousy and bickering, or heart wrenching whimpering as though mourning the death of one’s parents; or losing one’s soul.

當局者迷, 旁觀者清, 此中醜惡百出, 怪事不能勝數。常見有第三者參預其中, 居然吃醋拈酸, 打家罵狗, 或則嬉笑禨禨, 搶地呼天無爽考妣, 如失靈魂。

Later in her speech, obscure allusions portray same-sex love as senseless self-destruction: “[To seek illicit outlets that indiscriminately feed the appetites] is enough to harm both body and mind. It is like
honning a blade until it is sharp, only to then slowly [use it] to scrape one’s own bones, thereby ending up at a dead end of deathly sorrow.” 須認識到自己所作所為的不道德。而後慢慢自削其骨肉，結果竟至死亡悲苦之絕路。Bing Xin, however, admits her own past experiences in same-sex relations before asserting that knowledge and rationalism saved her from depravity:

I am not superhuman and was not above such vulgarities, having once been entangled in the demonic web of same-sex love myself. Fortunately, knowledge and reason gained victory over these thoughts so that I was able to ‘rein in the horse at the edge of the cliff,’ and not fall into the dark and filthy pit.

我非超人，未能免俗，亦曾一度為同性親愛之魔絲所纏，幸理智戰勝邪曲之思維，遂能勒馬於懸崖，未墜黑暗穢髒之深谷。

Explaining how she became a writer, Bing Xin marks herself as progressive and modern by mentioning an early interest in science and a former wish to become a doctor:

After I finished school, my thinking also changed. By that time, I felt that the most pressing need, besides regarding love as a given requirement, was to step into society and pursue a career. During my time in middle school, with regard to my future prospects, I was utterly indifferent. At the time, I most enjoyed exploring the various principles of science, so I was filled with the burning hope of becoming a doctor so that I could engage more meaningfully in society. Late one autumn, due to boredom from a minor illness, I took up all kinds of literature that I previously never encountered as a means of whiling away the time, not thinking much of this in the beginning. Never had I dreamed that it would all lure me in to the extent that I developed an intense interest in literature. It fired up within me a burning desire to submit my own writings for publication. One thing led to the next in this way, and I was hastened onto the path of becoming a female writer.

余自學齡終了後，思想也隨之變化。此際本人認為最迫切者者，除戀愛為當然條件之外，更應步入社會，尋求事業，亦屬當前急。在中學時代，對於此種前程，十分淡泊，當然最喜探討理科之各種原則，所以在此時即有滿懷熱望，去作醫生，借此可以多與社會作深切之接觸。切不料在某一個殘秋肺病中，因小疾無聊，拿各種不曾鳥目之故事詩語或論文小說之類來消磨沉悶歲月，更是夢想不到會引誘我發生濃郁趣味。同時又燃起滿腔投搞烈焰，如此，逐漸便趨入文作家之途徑。

Having spoken of same-sex relations between students, Bing Xin goes on to denounce even more severely same-sex relations between students and school authorities. She criticizes teachers and principals harshly for lacking self-respect and self-control when they allow themselves to be trapped in same-sex relations with pupils:
Now I will talk about girl students who take things a step further by carrying out the unsound and inappropriate act of expressing affection and love toward female principals or female teachers. This matter, in comparison to ‘it’ arising between students, is even more disgraceful and hideous. Ordinarily, hindered by various circumstances, a student is either afraid to or prevented from conversing with teachers, or carrying out any other ardent actions to move things forward. The only opportunity comes at Christmas and New Year, which can be taken as a chance to offer respects and greetings. Using the most standard calligraphic script, a student sends an anonymous greeting card that subtly reveals her feelings to a particular teacher that she adores. Because most teachers, when evaluating assignments, have already become familiar with the hand of each student, even though the card is unsigned, the teacher can tell who wrote it. The teacher, if she has self-control, will of course ignore this and feign ignorance. But if it so happens that the teacher is one who lacks self-control, then it will surely follow that in this way, the teacher and student will be ensnared by, and immersed into the pointless sufferings of hell.

The extreme urgency in Bing Xin’s attack appears to be fuelled by a general public indifference toward female-female desire, and singled out as particularly disturbing is that some young women even exalt same-sex romance with teachers. While Bing Xin’s outrage is due in part to the transgression of decorum in the student-teacher hierarchy, the same-sex component of such affairs is the main cause for indignation:

Yet while this may be so, there are actually some girls who think that having a love affair with a teacher is a special honour. It can be said that they are pitiable creatures who have an absurd sense of humanity that violates the codes of propriety. What we need to ask is: with regard to same-sex love, where is the sense in it? What is the purpose of it? How does it provide the delight that life has to offer? Wrong to the utmost degree – especially when desiring it as honourable – it is a sin, it is a sin.
Bing Xin urges school authorities to meet their responsibility as educators, and calls for a programme of intervention. She rejects outright coercion in favour of a more generalized cultivation of student’s moral character, with the purpose of instilling a sense of self-regulation that comes with proper learning and maturity:

Now, for those who run middle schools for girls, with regard to the flaws and great blunders of same-sex love, how can they pay attention to it? As for the behaviour and moral character of girls in school, how can school authorities thoroughly implement a clear program of guidance to ensure that the girls do not enter into a labyrinthine sea of degradation, so as not to compromise their responsibility as educators? In terms of each student, there is no need for instructors to exert redress individually. Guidance should commence on the basis of moral character. Teachers need to understand that love that is unhealthy is most likely to give rise to emotional impulsiveness...[Yet] with age comes maturity. Reason and understanding become stronger so that one is able to awaken from former blunders that are shameful and senseless. Without having to wait for others to rectify them, one is able to change.

Considering Bing Xin’s status as a May Fourth cultural figure and her position as a woman speaking to women, the power of her words cannot be denied. Yet there are voices and representations in *Linglong* that correspond to other dimensions of May Fourth discourse, which Sang and others find in the fiction of authors such as Lu Yin, Ding Ling (丁玲, 1904-1986) and indeed in what Bing Xin has expressed elsewhere. These voices idealize female-female bonds, which are at times valued over

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155 “Bing Xin Gives a Speech” 2131-4. In addition to this speech, “The Harmful Consequences of Same-sex Love” by Ren Peichu is another example of a female voice urging self-regulation among women: “My thinking is very naive... Only since the Hangzhou murder case involving the same-sex love between Tao Sijing and Liu Mengying did I come to realize that there is indeed such a thing as same-sex love... I became very frightened and thought about it for a while. Afterwards, I went to see a friend of mine who is a doctor. My friend said that... same-sex love... is against natural law... Before three years are up, there will be death. I heard this and became very scared and therefore urgently write this down for the sake of telling my female comrades that you most definitely cannot follow in these footsteps, giving up your future prospects and happiness.” *Linglong* no. 56, 1932, 247.

156 In her study of women’s dress in early twentieth century China, Martha Huang notes the way in which women were looking at each other and bonding through fashion by referencing Bing Xin’s memoir of her school days. Bing Xin writes, “Do you think that when women get together, they talk about men... When my friends were together, we usually talked about women, and we often discussed and judged whether a girl was pretty or not.” Huang notes
relations with men, who are criticized as disingenuous. In the remainder of this chapter, I turn to these voices in Linglong, which offset the construction of heteronormativity. Using satire, humour and melancholy, they contest the uplifting claims about heterosexual romance and marriage while obliquely hinting at alternative sensibilities.

Discord

Misandry

In her study of Linglong, Barbara Mittler identifies a streak of misandry in the magazine – satirical articulations of “distaste for men” or “man-hating” that counter the misogyny present in public discourse since the late Qing. Mittler suggests that the misandric figure in Linglong represents an “alternative cultural icon, ” and ponders (albeit sceptically) the extent to which this “emblem of a newly defined cultural sophistication” exemplifies “a fundamental transformation of values” – namely, a shift away from male dominance. 157 I will bring in some of Mittler’s findings that overlap with my own to consider the dynamics of representational conflict in Linglong and focus in particular on how the idealization of heterosexual romance and marriage is deflated by material that challenges such a formulation.

“Returning Home After Marriage” 嫁後歸來, for example, depicts a woman running back to her mother in misery, disillusioned by marriage to a despicable man (Fig. 2.12). In “She Who is Muddled by Love” 迷戀中的她, the writer laments her friend’s blind devotion to a man and avows that men cannot

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that these conversations are about fashion and cites Bing Xin’s recollection of an “unforgettable” girl who was “a combination of charisma and style.” Huang concludes that fashion “allowed for personal idiosyncracies and self-expression” and allowed women – “outside of written discourse” – to “manifest their own tastes and preferences in personal dress.” See “A Woman Has so Many Parts to Her Body, Life is Very Hard Indeed!” China Chic: East Meets West, ed. Valerie Steele and John S. Major (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1999) 139. I will also be considering what can be found outside of written discourse in Chapter 3, where I argue that alternative sensibilities, including homoerotic desire, are insinuated in Linglong through visual representations that sublimate eroticism in nationalism, fitness and art. For Sang’s discussion of May Fourth women’s writings, see her chapter, “Female Same-sex Love in May Fourth Fiction” (127-160).

157 Mittler 210.
be relied upon. Letters from readers offer first person accounts that relate the personal experiences of women who resent the outcomes of their marriages. Baoyu’s letter, above, is a case in point, while another writer explains that her husband treats her poorly, and she is unsure about how to deal with her cold marriage. Yet another writer complains that her demanding, sex-crazed husband is perverse.

Satirical comic illustrations depict men as grotesque and dangerous for women, or completely useless. As Mittler writes, one page of comic illustrations exposes men “as brutal animals, even when it

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158 “She Who is Muddled By Love,” Linglong no. 185, 1935, 1149. This article prompted a response from a male reader, which appears several issues later: “I think that this is a bit mistaken. Even though some men are indeed ‘humans in form but beasts at heart,’ one cannot take all men to be like this.”

159 Linglong no. 120, 1934, 207

160 Linglong no. 222, 1936, 271.
appears that they are devoted admirers, kneeling in front of their beloved”; they are shown to be “deadly cannibals, though dressed in stylish suits.”\textsuperscript{161} Two other illustrations depict “how men would like women to be: caged up like little birds,” and expose men as “carnivorous ‘eater-of-wo-men’!”\textsuperscript{162} An analogy is made between men and dogs in one juxtaposition of comics, and a reprint of an American cartoon shows a fireman “who is no use in saving a woman, but, so taken by her looks and skimpy dress, has to be saved by her in turn” (Fig. 2.13).\textsuperscript{163} Other illustrations depict women in control. One illustration depicts a sleek (and pregnant?) modern woman dangling a puppet-like patriarch and asks, “Who is toying with whom?” 誰玩弄誰, while another (by a male artist?) parodies a “modernized husband” 摩登化的丈夫 in the hands of his modern wife: “a rather hapless and ridiculous-looking husband with baby who does not quite know how to handle it” (Fig. 2.14).\textsuperscript{164} This ridiculing of men was sanctioned by Linglong as a marketing gimmick; exposing the malicious male psyche was a tactic used by the magazine to construct a bold image, as a promotional inserts indicate:

\textit{Linglong} is the voice of women, and specializes in exposing the secrets of men. Therefore, if a man is willing to make a gift of Linglong to his girlfriend, this can prove that he is pure and values honesty. Otherwise, he is certainly harbouring ulterior motives. Sisters wishing to discern ‘his heart’, why not give this a try!

\textquoteleft 琳瓏\textquoteright 乃婦女之喉舌，專揭男子之秘密。故男子如肯以‘琳瓏’饋贈女友者，則可證明其存心純正坦白。否則，彼必別有居心。姊妹欲知‘他的心’盡請一試！\textsuperscript{165}

Through the persona of the female editor, Chen Zhenling, Linglong actively called for contributions from readers about the wickedness of men: “Zhenling finds that the misdeeds of men are too numerous to record. The present publication is the voice of fellow sisters, and welcomes submissions on this topic so

\textsuperscript{161} Mittler 223-4.
\textsuperscript{162} Mittler 222; 218. “Eater-of-wo-men” puns in Chinese as eater of “us” 我們, or “us women.”
\textsuperscript{163} Mittler 220.
\textsuperscript{164} Mittler 228; 217.
\textsuperscript{165} “His Heart,” Linglong no. 43, 1932, 1716.
Fig. 2.13. Misandrism in comic illustrations. Men are depicted as beasts in disguise (top left); as cannibals who devour women (centre); as sadists who cage women up like birds (top right). A juxtaposition of illustrations makes an analogy between men and dogs (bottom right), and a reprint of an American cartoon shows a fireman who is useless in saving a scantily clad woman — he faints and in a reversal of roles has to be carried down the ladder instead. *Linglong* no. 78, 1932, 1306a; no. 53, 1932, 129; no. 54, 1932, 176; no. 71, 1932, 970d; no. 73, 1932, 1066e.
Linglong acknowledged a male readership, and I agree with Mittler that the magazine’s cheeky misandrism was likely appealing for men – considered “titillating and cute” by them; as Mittler writes, “in spite of all its misandriac contents, Linglong may . . . have appealed to men . . . who would feel tickled precisely because of these gestures of audacity.” I suggest, however, that playful misandrism was a gimmick that also provided a channel for covert expressions of what was becoming increasingly difficult to articulate overtly – namely, support for alternatives to compulsory heterosexuality and marriage. I find that misandrism, as a marketable device, was used by some contributors to contest the mounting regulation of female autonomy. I base this claim on my finding that misandrism in Linglong

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166 Linglong no. 42, 1932, 1655.
167 Mittler 230. I touch on Linglong’s acknowledgement of male readers in Chapter 3.
appears to reach a peak at the same time that the romanticization of heterosexual love and marriage and stigmatization of same-sex love was most intense – seven out of the eleven full length articles I found on same-sex love are in issues from 1932, as are the most biting misandric articles, with titles such as “The Unreliability of Men When it Comes to Feelings” 男子用情的不可靠 and “The Unreliability of Men’s Love” 男子用情的不可靠.\textsuperscript{168}

Articles in Linglong teach women how to gain the upper hand when dealing with men, as in “How to Steer Men” 怎样驾驭男子, “How to Deal with Annoying Men” 怎样对付讨厌的男子, and “How to Surmount the Temptations of Men” 怎样克服男子的诱惑.\textsuperscript{169} “The Love of a Man” 男子的爱 by a Miss He Liming 何麗明 女士 states:

As the saying goes: those who blame others fail outright to take responsibility themselves. Stinking men for the most part cannot escape this...We need to guard against the unpredictability of men’s love. At every moment, we need to make use of the same ploys that men do to skirmish with them on the battlegrounds of love. This is the sly trick to being ever victorious.

Other articles, however, go further to argue that men are vile to the core and not worth women’s attention at all. “The Conduct of Men” 男子的行 为 by Liang Shaoxia 梁少霞 attempts to jolt beloved sisters 親愛的姊妹们 into realizing that women are considered nothing but toys by men, who trap women with their deceit:

Regarding the majority of men, there are none who don’t scorn women, while on the surface, they continue to show respect for them as though they are queens. So what exactly lies in men’s hearts? Women are regarded as playthings – that’s what! Men use all sorts of schemes, and their objective is to dupe women. There are many fellow sisters, not yet worldly-wise, who are lured by men’s sweet talk and money and then allow the men to insult them at will and lack even the power to resist.

\textsuperscript{168} Linglong no. 51, 1932, 7; no 44, 1932, 1749; no. 67, 1932, 771-2, all cited in Mittler. The remaining four full length articles I found on same-sex love are dispersed in issues from 1934, 1936, and 1937.
\textsuperscript{169} Linglong no. 29, 1931, 1059; no. 56, 1932, 243-5; no. 89, 1933, 292-3.
\textsuperscript{170} “The Love of a Man,” Linglong no. 42, 1932, 1655.
Perhaps it is because these women don’t have any knowledge that they get tricked by men? No – there are many fellow sisters who have received comparable education, not a few of whom have also been befuddled by men at some time, and mistakenly suffer harm. When men are pursuing love, they make thorough use of all sorts of contemptible tricks, and when women comply, the men go on to humiliate them by every means.

Beloved sisters! The solicitous ardour of men – it is all just because they want to satisfy their sexual desires – that’s all! There simply isn’t any fidelity whatsoever! Especially those sons of the rich – they most enjoy using the power of their money to entice girls. If there were to be a flood or disaster of war somewhere, and you asked them to contribute a little more of their money for aid, I’m afraid that they aren’t very likely to have such benevolence. They’d say: “You bastard! How would I have so much disposable cash to contribute to aid?” Yet, on women, no matter how stingy they are, they will spend their cash freely.

多數男人對女性沒有不藐視的,但面子上還能尊女性為皇后,骨子裡是什麼呢? 玩具罷了! 專用種種手段,以誘騙女性為目標,甚至有許多未經世故的姊妹們,受了他們甜言蜜語和金錢的引誘,便任他們隨意侮辱,連抵抗能力也沒有了。隨落之後,他們還要恫嚇不許她聲張呢。也許因為她沒有智識,所以給姊妹們誘騙嗎? 不,有許多受過相當教育的姊妹們,也有不少一時給他迷惑,誤受其害。在他們求愛的時候,用盡種種卑劣手段,等到女子們依從了時,又要百般的侮辱了。親愛的姊妹們,男子一切殷勤熱愛,都不過想滿足他性的慾罷了! 簡直沒有真心誠摯的啊! 尤其是富家子弟他們最喜利用金錢勢力來誘惑女子的。如果有什麼地方水災啦兵災啦,要他們多拿點錢出來賑濟,怕他們也沒有那麼樂善好施吧,並且口裡還說:‘混帳,我那裡有那麼多閒錢來賑濟’; 但是對於女性,無論怎樣吝嗇的,都能闊綽的拿出來。171

“Irresolute Men” 見異思遷的男子 by Li Ying 李瑛 clarifies that it is not just men in contemporary times who are contemptible – men have been ridiculous since time immemorial, as ancient poems attest. Men are thus inherently despicable, and efforts to deal with them will always be pointless:

At present, many fellow sisters often wonder: “Why don’t men today ever have any fidelity in their love and always are so irresolute?” With regard to this question, I think that it is just a function of [these sisters’] mentality, because men from ancient times to the present have never had steadfast love to offer. Fellow readers, when you read songs by the ancients, don’t you frequently encounter women who must deal with bad husbands, or works where [a woman] resents a man for being callous? From this we can see that

171 Liang’s article concludes by asserting that there is nothing decent about men, and that women do not need men to get by in the world. Indeed, mankind is the foe of womankind: “Commonly, they like to say that women are pretty and dependent little birds. So, does this mean that without men, women can’t live in this world? You girls just think about it clearly – how very sinister the intentions of men are! No matter where, once they see some beautiful girls, they eagerly chase after them. I say that these men are all despicable filthy things that lack any respectable qualities. They are the enemies of all females” 平時他們喜歡說女子是依人的小鳥,難道女子沒有男子,就不能生存於世界上嗎? 你們仔細想他們男人的心腸是多麼的毒辣呀! 無論在什麼地方, 見有些美麗的女子們, 一步步不放鬆地逼著。我說這種男子, 全是下流卑鄙, 沒有一點高尚人格的東西, 是一切女性的仇敵. “The Conduct of Men,” Lingling no. 64, 1932, 633.
being irresolute is a distinctive characteristic of men. This has been so since the beginning of time.

We women have in all respects taken the love of men too seriously, thinking that they are all of the loving kind. We often heedlessly engage them in lover’s prattle, and then give them our all, not realizing that they all have an attitude of simply going along with the occasion and toying with women. When they are happy, they will be affectionate with you. At this time, it is as if you are his master and he is your slave. However, when they become weary, even your very existence is an insult to them. Yet what solution is there? The ones who are humiliated and suffer are us women. They are not only completely unharmed, but they even take you as material for conversation as a way to show the power of their schemes. To deal with these men, the most important point is not to be too serious and fall for men’s love so easily. To handle things with care, this is the best policy for dealing with men.


Li’s article implies that the contemporary rhetoric of women’s equality will do nothing to change the intrinsic constitution of men, and women ought to be cautious in keeping them at arm’s length.

Entertaining as these articles are, they also offset the idealization of heterosexual romance and defend women’s autonomy in significant ways.

Other articles go further to idealize women’s love as authentic. The anonymous “This Precisely is What Love Is” 這樣便是愛 lists five points of pessimism on love with men, warning women who engage in relationships with men to be prepared for heartbreak from the start and stating that, despite the façade of equality between men and women in modern times, women continue to be exchanged like goods in marriage. In conclusion, female love is upheld as supreme – indeed, Love is a woman: “The

172 “Irresolute Men,” Linglong no. 56, 1932, 246.
Deity of Love is a woman. Therefore, affectionate women are many. Men, from their origins, do not know what love is. Therefore, they will never have love” 愛神是女人, 所以女子多情的多, 男子原本是不懂得什麼是愛, 所以他們永遠沒有愛。173

Sisterhood

Images that idealize sisterhood in Linglong emphasize the importance of female bonds and are juxtaposed to images of romanticized heterosexual love (Fig. 2.15, 2.16). The publication actively called on readers for images from their daily lives (Fig. 2.17), and a significant portion of material depicts fellow sisters 姊妹們 as good friends 好友 in candid photos and studio portraits (Fig. 2.18). They are shown enjoying genteel leisurely activities together: playing music and games of chess, enjoying boat rides, and taking pictures and strolls through gardens (Fig. 2.19). Scenic snapshots of female friendship at times rival images of heterosexual romance in intimacy (Fig. 2.20).

Linglong addressed fellow sisters and a universalized women’s world 女界 that transcended class and native place origins. But I find that the trope of sisterhood depicted in the magazine is bifurcated. On one hand, sisters are shown bonding as they anticipate and prepare each other for what was expected of women – getting ready for a wedding, for example, “the happiest time in a young woman’s life” 少女逢

173 The previous four points in this article are as follows: “A virtuous and understanding wife always happens to meet with an insincere husband. Thus, the more virtuous and understanding wives there are, the less there are loving husbands; The high numbers of divorces these days are all initiated by women. From this we can see that women are always being oppressed. Men and women, just as in the past, are not equal; As for a man whose first words upon meeting you are that he has never made friends with women before – this sort of man surely has more girlfriends than usual; Marriages in the past required livestock and textiles as a fundamental basis of exchange. And now, it’s bars of gold, cars... Women are always considered akin to commercial goods for trade. This is most heartbreaking; When you are entering a relationship with a man, you must at the same time anticipate the bitterness of being jilted in the future. Only in this way can you avoid feeling extreme pain” 聊談的妻子簡直是無賴的丈夫, 所以賢淑的妻子越多有情義的丈夫越少; 現在的離婚多是女子主動, 由此可知女子總是被壓迫, 男女依舊不平等; 一個男子在認識你時, 第一句便說他從來沒有接交過女友, 這種男子, 他的女友一定比平常人多; 從前的婚姻是以家富而貴為交換條件, 現在的却以金剛鑄, 汽車... 女子總是被看重如商品貿易, 這是最可痛心一件事; 當你跟一位男子談愛時, 同時便要計及將來失戀的苦味, 因為這樣才不致令人覺得異常難受。 “This Precisely is What Love Is,” Linglong no. 79, 1932, 1350.
Fig. 2.15. A back cover (right) and its flipside, showing a direct juxtaposition of heterosexual romance from Hollywood cinema and a studio portrait of close friends. *Linglong* no. 4, 1931, 143-4.

Fig. 2.16. *Linglong*’s trope of sisterhood, featured on covers of the magazine. *Linglong* no. 120, 1933; no. 137, 1934; no. 121, 1933; no. 194, 1935; no. 65, 1932; no. 179, 1935; no. 116, 1933; no. 197, 1935; no. 45, 1932.
Fig. 2.17. “The Lives of Sisters,” a call to readers for contributions: “The present publication is now soliciting photos of sisters’ daily lives. Ones that show your happy and energetic expressions are especially welcomed. After we print them, you will receive a free issue of the publication in friendly exchange. Linglong no. 111, 1933, 1681.
Fig. 2.18. “Sisters” (top left) and “Good Friends” (left). Lingfong no. 173, 1935, 420; no. 116, 1933, 1943; no. 36, 1931, 1383; no. 36, 1931, 1380; no. 111, 1933, 1672; no. 284, 1936, 1282; no. 7, 1931, 222; no. 234, 1936, 1220; no. 139, 1934, 852; no. 34, 1931, 1340; no. 69, 1932, 865; no. 36, 1931, 1383; no. 36, 1931, 1380.
Fig. 2.19. Sisters and genteel leisurely activities: posing in gardens, playing music and a game of chess, enjoying a boat ride, and taking pictures. Linglong no. 44, 1932, 1765; no. 206, 1935, 3365; no. 182, 1935, 921; no. 26, 1931, 938; no. 52, 1932, 50; no. 52, 1932, 67; no. 21, 1931, 738; no. 213, 1935, 3984.
Fig. 2.20. Scenic snapshots of sisters (left) and rival images of romantic opposite-sex love (right). Linglong Issues no. 37, 1931, 1429; no. 179, 1935, 717; no. 69, 883; no. 202, 1935, 2328-9.
Moreover, articles like those I cited earlier in this chapter provide tips on how fellow sisters can socialize with men.

On the other hand, bonds between women are at times valued over relations with men. In a more light-hearted instance, “The Usefulness of a Parasol” 傘的效用 playfully asserts that in addition to lending a touch of style, the virtues of a parasol are such that it can shield two intimate friends, or soulmates 知心的朋友, from the intrusive gaze of men as the two companions have a leisurely stroll through a garden (Fig. 2.22):

![Fig. 2.21. Preparing for a wedding. *Linglong* no. 51, 1932, 20-1.](image)

We girl students, during times of leisure, enjoy nothing more than to take a stroll through a garden with an intimate friend. Even though the sunshine is not particularly strong, we still must bring a parasol. Firstly, it can be an embellishment. Secondly, it can block men from staring at us. Thirdly, when taking photographs, it can add more than just a touch of beauty.

我們女學生，在空閒的時候，最歡喜約一位知心的朋友，散步園林之中。雖然太陽並不強烈，我們總要帶一把傘。一則可以作爲點綴，二則可以遮蔽男子釘住我們的眼線，三則在攝影的時候可以增加不少的美感。174

Fig. 2.22. “The Usefulness of a Parasol.” Linglong no. 39, 1931, 1528.
Attitudes toward marriage are, moreover, ambivalent with respect to friendships between women, as in a photo spread that depicts good friends 好朋友 (Fig. 2.23). It is captioned:

From these photos you can see that the feelings between women are most certainly not what men can express. They are such that good friends are inseparable. It is a pity that after marrying, these feelings suddenly become desolate.

While this text affirms marriage as inevitable, the melancholy tone implicates compulsory marriage as destructive to bonds between women, and evokes a desire for alternative possibilities.

“Reminiscences of Life in a Girl’s School” 女校生活的回憶 by a Miss Chen Yu’er 陳玉珥女士 likewise implicates marriage as detrimental to important female bonds. Chen makes an emotional plea to

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175 Linglong no. 56, 1932, 263.
fellow sisters that they ought to cherish their life in girls school, and that marriage and childrearing sadly mark the end of important friendships that in hindsight turn out to be the most meaningful in life:

We, during times of happiness, never seem to appreciate the joys at the moment. Only upon gradual recollection afterwards are we able to savour the happiness of former times. This is especially so with regard to school life.

... When I was in school, there were twelve of us from the same native place, all of whom had been schoolmates in the Philippines since we were youngsters. Every day after classes, we'd play ball or have heart-to-heart chats. At the time, we actually often complained that this was too routine a life – too monotonous. Only now do I realize that this view is wrong and too unappreciative.

One thing that we all liked to do was buy snacks. Whenever there was a special occasion, we each chipped in a bit of money and asked the school kitchen to cook up a feast for us, which we wolfed down, tossing bowls and dishes about... We happily gathered together until deep into the night before going to bed – it truly was great fun.

And now? After leaving school, we all went our separate ways. The slightly older ones among us are already married and have children. There will never again be opportunities to gather together leisurely like before, which causes one to be overwhelmed with feelings of nostalgia. Fellow sisters, with regard to the precious days of school life, you must not be so careless as to let them pass you by!

Such melancholic idealization of female-female bonds are at odds with the uplifting claims about relations with men that are expressed elsewhere in Linglong.
“Same-sex Love Surpasses Opposite-sex Love”

The valourization of female bonds and the ridiculing of men come together remarkably in an article that exalts female-female love. “Same-sex Love Surpasses Opposite-sex Love”  同性愛優過異性愛 by a Miss Zhuo Yijing from Beijing 卓意靜女士自平寄 posits that because men are incapable of sincerity, the most genuine form of love is love between women:

Love is something that requires two people to remain resolute and enduring. However, with regard to a man’s love, fidelity is very rare. For the most part, after a man achieves his objective and fulfills his desires, he wants 'out with the old and in with the new,' causing the woman who had been loved to feel extremely distressed, dejected, and disappointed. How painful this is!

Because a woman’s love is for the most part resolute and enduring, if she falls in love with someone, she will certainly be dedicated and love to the end, without being distracted along the way. If she were to use her resolute heart to love an irresolute man, this truly would be disconcerting and unjust. It is better to match a resolute heart with a resolute heart – this certainly can bring about a satisfying outcome.

Zhuo idealizes love between women as tender and unwavering into old age. She maintains that because men are capricious while women are resolute, female same-sex love is nobler than opposite-sex love:

As for remaining devoted long term, even when a couple reaches a doddering state of old age, they will continue to be consoling and affectionate in loving one another. Only this can truly be regarded as pure and inviolable love! As for men who are fickle, it can be said that they have misunderstood the meaning of love, exploiting it to fulfill impulsive sexual desires. Therefore, I say that ‘female same-sex love surpasses opposite-sex love.’

To conclude her article, Zhuo even advises fellow sisters to consider same-sex love as a means of adding more flavour to life. In view of the aggressive pathologizing of same-sex love in Linglong, it is
intriguing that Zhuo’s argument made it into print. Yet the reason that it did seems clear. Firstly, the article steers clear of sexuality – Zhuo is vague about whether or not her notion of same-sex love encompasses physical desire. Secondly, the conventional gender hierarchy is kept intact as Zhuo reassures the reader that love between women need not interfere with a harmonious marriage and family life. Indeed, Zhuo reveals that she is herself married, but that she does not see her interest in female love as intrusive to the welfare of her family:

Even though I am a woman who is already married, with regard to ‘love’, I have not made light of it by simply giving it away to anyone. Moreover, with regard to same-sex love, I have not entirely given up on the possibility. I am still very enthusiastic about pursuing it, because it can make life more interesting, and I can gain a limitless sense of comfort from it. On the issue of my family’s wellbeing, it really won’t be affected in any way. So, isn’t this a very good approach? Sisters, what are your thoughts on this?

Zhuo’s idealization of female same-sex love is nevertheless remarkable as it counters the medical claims that female-female love is unnatural and perverse. This goes to show how there was no longer a need to pathologize same-sex love when female-female desire is contained and conventional marriage left undisturbed.

“Two Women Engaged in Same-sex Love Reject Marriage”

Female-female love is cast as menacing for impeding conventional unions in “Two Women Engaged in Same-sex Love Reject Marriage” 同性愛兩女不嫁, which reports a case about two lovers who ran away together in adamant refusal to marry men:

Judging from this case, same-sex love has clearly occurred between them, which is why they reject marriage. As for the maladies of same-sex love, they have already been discussed many times before, so I will not mention them again here. I simply put forth

177 “Same-sex Love Surpasses Opposite-sex Love,” Linglong no. 47, 1932, 1895.
178 In this regard, Zhuo’s use of the term ‘same-sex love’ rather than ‘good friends’ is significant.
This case with the intent purpose of allowing fellow sisters to take note so as not to fall into this kind of blunder. This is because same-sex love can only be satisfying for a moment, while certainly causing remorse in future.

This commentary appears after the following account about the incident, which turns out to be a fascinating record about how two women – Cao Baozhi 曹寶芝 and Kang Shuyi 康淑儀 – took matters into their own hands to defy gender norms and assert their autonomy:

The Caos from the city of Hangzhou are a family consisting of mother and daughter. The mother is an old woman devoted to Buddhism, and defers to old concepts of propriety; the daughter – Baozhi, twenty years of age and studying at a girl’s school – has a female friend Kang Shuyi, who is employed at a school in Jiaxing. The two women were neighbours, and their affection for each other even exceeded the feelings between kin. After the summer of last year, Kang went to Jiaxing for work. The two exchanged letters frequently, wishing to remain close to each other. As for Kang’s passion for Cao Baozhi – because the two were apart, it grew stronger. Therefore, it was common for her to return to Hangzhou two or three times a month. And when she did, she would always spend the nights with Cao Baozhi, the two of them carrying on endlessly without feeling tired for entire nights. Mother Cao also loved Kang dearly, recognizing her as an adopted daughter.

Last month Mother Cao, considering her daughter the appropriate age, arranged a marriage for her. The daughter was unwilling and informed Kang Shuyi about the situation in a letter. Kang Shuyi wrote a letter in firm protest: “The two of us vowed never to marry, and this oath is still ringing in our ears; how could you forget about our pact?” When Cao Baozhi received this letter, she wasn’t sure what to do. When her mother came to know about all of this, she strongly condemned it and forbade her daughter from remaining close to Kang Shuyi. But Mother Cao still doted on her daughter, without keeping closer watch on her. In the end, the daughter called Kang Shuyi on the phone, urging her to return to Hangzhou. After the two had a meeting, Kang Shuyi persuaded Cao Baozhi to leave home and run away to a faraway place together. After they did this, Cao Baozhi wrote a letter home to her mother. It stated that if Mother Cao could consent to never again arrange a marriage for Cao Baozhi, and furthermore promise to let Cao Baozhi remain single forever without ever expecting her to marry, then Cao Baozhi would naturally return home.  

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While this account is presented objectively, it nevertheless implicates Mother Cao’s ambivalent lack of vigilance as a factor that allowed matters between the two women to get out of hand. Mother Cao, for instance, was not against her daughter’s closeness with Kang Shuyi—even recognizing the latter as an adopted daughter—until the relationship posed a direct challenge to her daughter’s prospects for marriage. Moreover, according to the commentary, her eventual stance against the relationship was not enforced strictly enough. Indeed, ambivalence like Mother Cao’s is partly what the regulatory discourse in Linglong set out to rectify—the discourse itself reveals that for the general Chinese public, same-sex love as a critical social problem was not conclusive but constructed as such to influence public opinion, as the following remark from another article suggests:

My nation’s attitude toward same-sex love has been unduly lax and inattentive. In previous times, tragedy often arose. However, if those who are parents can pay attention as soon as possible, then why wouldn’t it be possible to put an end to this trend?

There is underlying tension, however, between the Cao-Kang story and the commentary that tries to counter it. While the pathologizing discourse against same-sex love in Linglong is couched as modern science for a new culture, the assertiveness of the two women also epitomizes liberatory May Fourth iconoclasm that is likewise trumpeted in the name of new culture—the trope of sisterhood, for example, standing up together against forces of repression, including arranged marriages. A question thus arises:

180 "Same-sex Love" 3654.
to what extent might Cao and Kang have represented something very different from what the commentary intends – models for emulation rather than emblems of folly? Indeed, in spite of *Linglong*’s articulated stance against same-sex love, other attitudes also find limited representation in the magazine.

“A Woman Who Married Another Woman”

The earliest and latest pieces I found in *Linglong* on same-sex love (in issues from 1931 and 1937), which sandwich the pathologizing articles (in issues from 1932 to 1936), present female-female desire in less dire ways – as curious, even titillating, rather than perverse. “Kisses” 吻 from 1931 accompanies two images juxtaposed on facing pages: one of “A Same-sex Kiss” 同性愛之吻, the other of “An Opposite-sex Kiss” 異性愛之吻 (Fig. 2.24). The extended caption for the former informs the reader that the two women pictured, a Miss Liang Lucun 梁祿村 and a Miss Tang Huilian 唐惠廉: “were once extremely intimate with one another, eating at the same table and sleeping in the same bed. Like a pair of devoted geese, they were not unlike a married couple, causing one to both admire and envy them” 删割未遂.食必同案寢必同牀.鴛鴦鴦鴦.不啻一對佳偶.令人羡而且妒.

With a subtle hint of disappointment, the text indicates that the two women have since parted ways with new lovers, presumably men, and cherishes the image as a record of Liang and Tang’s former passion for one another. The text avows that the image is an ideal source for investigating same-sex love. But the questions posed for “research” 研究 are more concerned with pleasure than pathology:

Now, each of these lovers has her own respective lover, so there will no longer be kisses between them like former days. This image that remains [of their relationship] is still so vivid and full of life, and is most sufficient as material for research on same-sex love. So, Liang and Tang, may we ask: between a same-sex kiss and an opposite-sex kiss, which is more delightful and intense? Is there any difference between them?”

“A Woman who Married a Woman” 女人與女人結婚 from 1937 is striking for its ambivalent curiosity and story-like quality, reminiscent of traditional zhiguai 志怪 tales of strange occurrences.\(^{182}\) It conveys female-female love as odd, and therefore rests on a basic assumption that same-sex love is not quite normal – indeed, the logic that female-female love occurs because of sexual repression and inexperience with men is evoked in attempts to rationalize how something so odd might occur. Yet the article refrains from censuring love between women, seeking instead to comprehend this “interesting”有趣 phenomenon, even revelling in its inscrutability.\(^{183}\) The term biantai 變態 – invariably used to

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\(^{183}\) As an aside to the main story about the two English women is the following account: “Indeed, in the world, it just so happens that there really are many strange matters. As for [another known case], a woman who dressed in men’s clothes got together with another woman, and lived with her for altogether twenty years without the latter realizing that she was actually female. Only after she died did the mortician discover that she was a woman. At that time, the widow simply said, ‘I have always seen my husband as a man’” 然而天下偏有許多難奇的事情, 據記者
characterize female-female love as perverse in the pathologizing discourse – does not appear in this article. And unlike the news reports on suicides and murder that are printed in Linglong’s sensationalist Startling News 觸目驚心 section (Fig. 2.1), this piece is featured in the magazine’s section on Women’s Lives 婦女生活, which frames the subject in a different light (Fig. 2.25).

Like the traditional tales that it loosely resembles, the story is shrouded in mystery and premised on foreignness. It tells of two women in England who were married, and who enjoyed a quiet but happy life of over fifty years together, practicing medicine to sustain a livelihood:

A number of years ago, at a certain professional medical school in England, there were two girls who graduated at the same time. Together, they went to a small seaside town, built a house, and practiced medicine there, the two of them working and living together for altogether fifty years, without ever leaving. Their practice was not grand, but was enough to sustain a livelihood. Eventually, one of them died, so the other female doctor finally left the place. Through these long and quiet fifty years, there was never a single argument between them, and they were intimately attached to each other at all times. They did not contend with the world, and had very few friends and relatives. Besides seeing patients, they rarely interacted with the outside world. Because of this, what their lives were really like has been a kind of secret, never having been revealed. There was a reporter who sought out the surviving woman of the couple to interview her. She, who had been the young girl in the story, was by then already an old maid of eighty – slender and small, but very beautiful. She recounted a part of her strange tale [to the reporter].

The story about the two women is told with familiar biases against unconventional female behaviour. One woman of the two who had a preference for dressing in men’s clothing, for example, is referred to as...
Fig. 2.25. “A Woman who Married Another Woman.” Linglong no. 268, 1937, 73-8.
“that fake male” 那個假男人, and as told in the story, there had been attempts to rectify her refusal to
don feminine clothes:

As for [this] pair of same-sex mandarin ducks, there was one who dressed as a man. She
was twenty one years old at the time of their marriage, and was accustomed to dressing in
men’s clothing since childhood . . . . As for the bride, she was only fourteen years old at
the time, studying in middle school. After six weeks of ardent courtship, they finally got
married in an assembly hall.

The situation was like this: the wedding ceremony was planned by the fake male. As for
the witnesses present at the time, they had no reason not to believe that the two were of
opposite sexes, and not of the same-sex . . . [But] after a number of days, the issue came
up. Hence, the relatives of both families met in court. As for whether or not this
wedding complies with the law: if it is unlawful, then should the two wom
en leave each
other? With regard this question, the judge at the time was not able to resolve it. The
mayor of the city declared that the ‘husband’ should change into women’s clothing, but
she refused, and asked that she be given the same rights as any h
usband. In the end, it
was settled like this: it was decided that she should at least procure a woman’s outfit so
that when they went out dancing, the ‘male’ could show her natural visage. Despite all
this, the two remained in love with one another, and the ‘husband’ openly proclaimed
love for her ‘wife’ just like a regular male spouse, without regard for whether or not it
complied with the law. The family of the woman did not wish to make a fuss, and thus
this case was left unsettled.

With regard to the woman’s demand that she be given the same rights as any husband, however, the
article is unclear about whether it is just or imprudent. As for the question of whether or not the law
should determine if the two women may remain together, it is left as a conundrum and not seized upon as
an outright violation of norms.

The relationship between the two women, to be sure, is cast as peculiar and trivialized. It is
assumed, for example, that the marriage could only have happened because of the young bride’s naïveté
and inexperience with “real” men 真的男子. 184 Yet the article is nonetheless remarkable for suspending indignation, setting out to understand the situation without condemning it:

Perhaps there are people who are skeptical: as for the bride not knowing that the groom was of the same-sex before they married, this seems rather comical. However, we can postulate that because the girl was young, her knowledge was underdeveloped so she was unable to discern the sex of her own lover.

也許有人懷疑, 新娘於結婚前而不知道新郎係同性, 這事似乎滑稽. 不過我們可以假設, 媳婦的因年齡幼小, 知識未開, 不能辨別自己愛人的性別.

While its postulations make light of how two women could become so attached as to marry one another, the article is quick to emphasize that these hypotheses are entirely speculative, implying openness to other possibilities (for better or worse) that it simply has not been able to figure out yet:

Perhaps one of them had been brought up by her parents as a boy since childhood, causing her to lose her female instincts. At the same time, they both must have been subjected to the influence of moralistic teachings to such an extent that all sexual impulses were suppressed. This, however, is all just speculation.

也許她們中的一人自幼被父母依照男孩子習慣養育成的, 因而會喪失她女性的本能, 同時她們又受著道德觀念所感染, 以至於不會發生性慾衝動, 不過這點也很是懷疑.

Surprisingly, while earlier articles in Linglong attribute female-female love to oppressive Chinese customs, the marriage between the two English women is here attributed to the strictures of polite European culture, which allegedly bar women from access to the latest in news and knowledge offered by the press. The outcome, however – represented by the fifty year marriage of the two women – is described as youqu 有趣 or “quite something,” a term that encompasses meanings from interesting, fascinating and delightful to amusing.

In the West, girls in respectable households are prohibited from hearing about the tidbits of news and information circulating in society. And yet as a result, it created a situation of this magnitude, which is quite something.

184 The article suggests: “If the adolescent bride were to have fallen in love with a real man, she might have become dejected [about her relationship with the woman], and a dreadfully grave situation would have immediately followed” 如果那‘少妻’ 男戀了另一真的男子, 她也許會心碎極恨, 嚴重的事情立刻就會發生.
Though this piece is chiefly about the English couple, it does not relegate the strangeness of same-sex love to far off England. Tangential to the article is an equal interest in mysterious and seemingly ubiquitous cases domestically:

With regard to the secrets of women, we have never seen any truthful written accounts. For instance, in the papers, is it not often that we see news about those girl students who commit suicide? So what is the background of these reports?

Is it not often the case that we see cases like this: In school, there are two girls, one is enchanting, and exceptionally feminine, beautiful and full of feeling, while the other is, to a greater or lesser extent, quite masculine. If these two girls admire one another, then a love affair will occur. One of them presents flowers to the other as though proposing marriage, or acting as protector . . . At the same time, the feminine one is devoted and full of passion, using love as a string to bind the two together. Following this, the two cohabit. If a man enters the picture and causes unrest between this couple of same-sex ‘mandarin ducks’, the girl whom the man loves gives up her previous relationship and leaves to get engaged to the man. Consequently, it is often the case that the girl who is abandoned commits suicide, using tragedy to end the romance.

Printed with this article, moreover, are images of Chinese women (Fig. 2.25). They are anonymous (the images are not captioned) but appear stylish and jaunty, seen embracing in one of the photos with bright smiles on their faces. In interplay with the article’s text, the women come across as both odd and glamorous. Heterocentric assumptions aside – ones that assume archetypal masculine and feminine roles – the lack of censure in the article is intriguing.

I am inclined to take the overall tenor of this article as more representative of general Chinese attitudes toward female same-sex love in the early twentieth century – trivializing and ambivalent, but
more inquisitive than condemnatory. This contrasts with the pathologizing discourse discussed in the first half of this chapter. While most of the material on same-sex love I found in *Linglong* propagates the pathologizing discourse, I attribute this to the influence of May Fourth new knowledge on editorial mediation. That the more moderate views conveyed in “A Woman who Married a Woman” appear as late as 1937, however, attests that the logic that female-female love was pathological was not a common sense given.

Like “A Woman who Married a Woman,” ambiguous visual representations in *Linglong* are also further suggestive of attitudes toward female same-sex love and are arguably more curious and even titillating than alarmist, hinting at mindsets that run counter to the pathologizing discourse. My feeling is that these sensibilities were explored more playfully in covert ways when the increasingly stigmatized neologism *tongxing’ai* (same-sex love) was avoided, and that their significance in this regard requires consideration of female spectatorship. I turn to an analysis of these visual representations in the following chapter.
CHAPTER 3: INSINUATED DESIRES, ALTERNATIVE SENSIBILITIES

In the previous chapter I highlighted ruptures in discursive texts, which hint at attitudes and sensibilities that offset heteronormative constructs. I consider these alternative sensibilities further in this chapter by incorporating a visually-based analysis into my horizontal reading of *Linglong*. I examine ways in which double-edged images in the magazine invoke divergent meanings that disrupt and provide different perspectives from written discourse. I conclude with a section consisting chiefly of images from the magazine to both summarize my observations and propose different “ways of seeing” these visuals from a perspective of female spectatorship, based on the preliminary arguments I make in this chapter.\(^{186}\) I find in *Linglong*’s visuals a playful exploration of femininities and female sensuality, including dimensions of homoerotic pleasure, and argue that these images contest the stigmatization of female-female desire in the pathologizing discourse. This pleasure and playfulness also contrasts with the melancholic idealization of spiritual bonds between women as articulated in the texts I examined previously.

**Love and Lust**

In the previous chapter I noted that when love between women is idealized in *Linglong*, sexuality is elided. Zhuo Yijing’s argument that same-sex love surpasses opposite-sex love seems to portray

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\(^{186}\) My reference here is to John Berger’s groundbreaking *Ways of Seeing* (London; New York: British Broadcasting Corporation and Penguin Books, 1972), which was a critique of Euro-American conventions of visual representations in art and modern advertising. While Berger launched his critique over three decades ago, his ideas continue to be addressed in the field of art history and visual studies. His most influential argument challenges the euphemistic distinction between the naked and the nude, which he suggests obscures the power of the male gaze in objectifying and subjugating women. Informed by Berger’s views, I nonetheless argue for a different perspective with regard to *Linglong*, which provides clues that it took women as viewing subjects for granted, just as it did men. I thus propose different “ways of seeing” that diverge from Berger’s notion that “men act and women appear” (47). The sheer novelty of images taken and recontextualized in *Linglong* from foreign sources, I argue, involved a process whereby meanings were destabilized. Berger includes in his book full chapters that consist only of images as a strategy for making his case, and I adopt this strategy to conclude this chapter as a way to emphasize my points and to suggest further considerations of the image I discuss. As Berger explains of his visual chapters, “These purely pictorial essays (on ways of seeing women . . .) are intended to raise as many questions as the verbal essays . . . [The] principal aim has been to start a process of questioning” (5).
female-female intimacy as strictly platonic. Likewise, “A Woman who Married Another Woman” falls short of considering the possibility of carnal desire between the two English women and postulates that their relationship must not have been physical. It is in the pathologizing discourse that sensuality between women is most directly acknowledged, but this is done only to censure female-female desire as perverse, as in Bing Xin’s speech for example.

The acknowledgement and condemnation of female-female desire is most directly articulated in one article that targets specifically a firsthand expression of homoerotic passion. “Is Same-sex Love Saintly?” uncovers new information about the Liu-Tao murder case by scrutinizing an excerpt from Tao Sijin’s diary that provides a glimpse into Tao’s erotic feelings for Liu Mengying. This voyeurism brings homoeroticism to the fore, but the validity of such desire is immediately brought into question and classified as disgraceful:

A few days ago, a section from Tao Sijin’s diary was printed in the papers. There was a part that was about [her and Liu Mengying’s] same-sex love, which was written as follows: “I am ecstatic! I will never forget last night... When I undid her lapels, I was already deeply inebriated at her side... We kissed! Kissed until intoxicated, and I embraced her tightly. Heaven! Let us delight in this saintly love!” After reading this, we are able to see how deeply besotted they were in this anomalous form of love. However, we have one question: just how exactly is same-sex love saintly?

The article goes on to condemn same-sex love as “not at all saintly” 豪不神聖 while other “true forms of love” 真正的愛 are upheld – the love between men and women, and between parents and their children:

Only for love that is real can there be saintliness to speak of. Regardless of whether it is the love between males and females, or between parents and their children – if those who bestow love are honourable people with pure intentions, and do not get mixed up in lewd conduct, then only these forms of love can be considered noble and saintly. As for

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187 “Same-sex Love Surpasses” 1895.
188 The article posits: “That these two women practiced an entirely platonic form of spiritual love seems possible” 這兩女間完全實行著柏拉圖式精神上的戀愛, 似乎是可能的. “Woman who Married” 76-7.
whether or not same-sex love adheres to these conditions – can such perverse desires also be regarded as saintly?

The article divests female-female desire of all dignity by explaining its ostensible ills, which in the case of Liu and Tao culminated in murder.189

I also noted in the previous chapter that there are exceptions in Linglong that suggest playful interest in female-female desire, as in the photo layout of Liang Lucun and Tang Huilian that inquires whether a same-sex kiss or an opposite-sex kiss is better (Fig. 2.24). One other visual representation I found in Linglong similarly depicts female-female desire as more titillating than alarming. It is a French comic illustration that shows two women – one cross-dressed, the other scantily clad in

189 "Is Same-sex Love Saintly?" 533.
lingerie – kissing and embracing in bed (Fig. 3.1). While its form as a comic illustration might be seen as caricaturing same-sex love, the sleek rendering of the figures and setting also conjures a sense of voyeuristic delight in sensuality between women. Arguably, Linglong’s reprinting of the illustration without further commentary marks a diversion from its more aggressively articulated regulatory stance. While these more lighthearted representations of same-sex love are rare in the magazine, they nevertheless hint at views that are at odds with the pathologizing discourse. My impression, furthermore, is that these alternative sensibilities are invoked most freely in Linglong in representations that steer clear of the increasingly stigmatized term, same-sex love.

Arguing that creative literature competed with sexual science over the meanings of female-female intimacy, Tze-lan D. Sang’s approach to recovering homoerotic sensibilities is to read fiction by female writers such as Lu Yin against the grain to find erotic longings in metaphor and fantasy. She writes that, “[o]nly by a resistant reading strategy can we now locate the missing link between women’s feelings (qing) and their lust (yu) for their own sex in May Fourth New Women’s writing.” In this chapter, I argue that those alternative sensibilities of homoeroticism – the missing link that Sang seeks to locate – are playfully insinuated in Linglong’s visual representations when sublimated in nationalism and aesthetics. Paralleling Sang’s claims about the fiction that she reads, I maintain that with regard to female-female desire, pleasure and fear are both present in Linglong.

The Double-edged Image

Adopted from the Euro-American West for the sake of national strengthening, a new category of tiyu sports was fervently promoted in Linglong, which popularized athleticism and jianmei robust beauty as a new style. In this way, nationalism sanctioned the depiction of “healthy” and “strong and beautiful” female bodies for the visual pleasure of its readers. In my view, while these depictions were implicated in nationalist politics, they were also potentially subversive in that they invoke

\[190\] Sang 26.
\[191\] On jianmei as a new style adopted through sports from the Euro-American West, see Gao 551-3.
alternative constructs of gender. Moreover, in challenging conventional definitions of femininity, these images of muscular, masculine women were portrayed as captivating at the same time that they were described as deviant and threatening.

As previously discussed, the pathologizing discourse on female same-sex desire conflates it with unconventional gender behaviour; Havelock Ellis’ notion of sexual inversion was cited to identify masculine women with the same pathological deviance that was associated with female homosexuality. In this sense, visual representations in Linglong of tough foreign women might confirm the idea that masculinity in females is abnormal, and perhaps barbaric as in one image of Euro-American female wrestlers and boxers (Fig. 3.2). Yet this same image was arguably more exciting and exotic than repulsive for its depiction of a new concept of femaleness.

Linglong’s nationalistic promotion of sports and athleticism championed female vigour, and in an issue of the magazine from 1936 – the same year that Pan Guangdan’s translations of Ellis first appeared in book form – an image portrays a masculine foreign woman as more fascinating than deviant (Fig. 3.3). The muscular body and impressive pose of the Polish athlete pictured – who is referred to in the caption as “male-like” 男性 – seems to appear as an example to emulate or simply as a source for visual appreciation. There are thus conflicts between the translated theories that ostracize masculine women and images that valorize and even fetishize them. These visual references to muscular foreign women first appear in Linglong’s earliest issues, which suggests a longstanding allure of this new style of masculinity in women. One image from 1932 depicts two German women who are admired in the caption for their beautiful strong bodies, to which “most men don’t even measure up” 其體格之美，男子亦多不如 (Fig. 3.4).

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193 On Ellis’ theories, translated by Pan, see my discussion in the introduction.
Fig. 3.2. “Euro-American Women.” Wrestlers (top) and boxers. Linglong no. 86, 1933, 266.

Fig. 3.3. An image of a Polish journalist and athlete, referred to in the caption as nanxing masculine, literally “male-like.” Linglong no. 252, 1936, 2621.

Fig. 3.4. The “body beautiful” of German women, with whom “most men do not even measure up.” Linglong no. 80, 1932, 1416-7.
Self and Nation

As Lydia Liu posits, China’s violent encounter with colonial powers since the mid-nineteenth century “force[d] nationhood upon selfhood, and vice versa.” Yet she emphasizes that “the modern self is never quite reducible to national identity” and that, “it is the incongruities, tensions, and struggles between the two as well as their mutual implication and complicity that give full meaning to the lived experience of Chinese modernity.”

Linglong’s enthusiasm for sports and robust beauty is upheld in the name of nationalism. Yet as Gao Yunxiang suggests, contradictions in the “cult of ‘health’ and ‘beauty’” gave women space to “[fashion] active roles for themselves within a limited space through nuanced and complex negotiations with . . . patriarchal nationalist forces.”

Athleticism and Pleasure

A Darwinian paradigm of survival of the fittest runs through Linglong to advocate sports and the development of strong bodies for a new China. The older feminine ideal of sickly beauty – epitomized by the tubercular heroine Lin Daiyu 林黛玉 in The Story of the Stone (石頭記, also Dream of the Red Chamber, 紅樓夢) – was to be superseded by an ideal of athletic, healthy women. A photo layout of athletes, for example, is printed with the heading, “We Need Strong and Healthy Physiques” 我們需要健康的體格, and a subheading declares, “Down with frail sickly beauty” 打倒弱不禁風的病態美 (Fig. 3.5).

“The Astounding Skills of a Valiant Female Athlete” 女健兒身手驚人 praises the record-breaking abilities of a young champion long jumper named Qian Xingsu 錢行素 before moving on to scrutinize dainty modern girls 摩登之女子 from the cities:

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195 Gao 546.
Turning to the great many female comrades, generally speaking they ride in cars when going out, and lounge about when they are at home. As for sports, they never pay any attention to it, with the result that they are as frail as willows blowing in the wind. At any given moment, there is worry that they will topple over.

Such weakness will not only lead women to dire outcomes, but will also hinder the wellbeing of the nation:

Comedians say that after a certain number of years, the legs and feet of metropolitan women will be on the verge of extinction. This actually isn’t an exaggeration. Looking at girls of today who refer to themselves as modern, their gait is languid, and they are indifferent to long jumping – bound to fall over even before their attempts. Moreover,
observing how they go about on foot, if the distance they need to go is somewhat long, then they will gasp for air and perspire all over, feeling tired without being able to bear it. If they were to run in a race, their blood vessels will certainly burst. As such, the world of women will not only be met with short life, but more importantly, with regard to China’s future, it will bring about major calamity. Reflecting on the underlying implications of this, perhaps women themselves will also suffer elimination in the process of evolution.

Male definitions of femininity are blamed for the ideal of “Lin Daiyu style women” 林黛玉式之女子，which has caused the women of China to become meek and frail:

Examining the reason behind their weakness, the blame cannot but be placed on the blunder of male ideals . . . [which] . . . promote the Lin Daiyu style of woman. Passed down from one generation to the next up to this day, this kind of deep-rooted negative trait has still not been eradicated. As for women of today, they are of course no longer willing to be the playthings of men, and agree to wipe out the dainty and pliant demeanour of women from times past.

Yet while traditional male tastes are criticized in the name of nationalism, patriarchal values persist as women’s designated contribution to the nation continues to be their role as mothers of healthy offspring:

As for one’s sound health, it is urgent to pay strict attention to enhancing this. It will allow everyone to have a strong and healthy physique, and to bear healthy children, leading China on a foundational path from weakness to strength.

The statist undertones in the promotion of sports have been underscored by Andrew Morris, who argues that “the all-embracing ‘body cultivation’ that tiyu offered the Chinese was a key concept in plans to transform the hoary Chinese imperium into a modern and fit nation-state.” According to Morris, “the

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modern physical culture so quickly accepted as *tiyu* was novel for its systematic teleology of the relationship between individual strength, discipline, and health and the military industrial, or diplomatic ‘strength’ of a national body.”¹⁹⁷ Morris’s point is evoked in an image printed in *Linglong* of a women’s basketball team from Beijing – the male coach of the female team members wears a militaristic uniform (Fig. 3.6). In spite of these efforts to condition individual bodies for the nation, I agree with Gao that women “gained an enabling female space,” however circumscribed, “through complex interactions with the nationalist agenda as *jianmei* and *tiyu* became prevalent in fashion and the mass media.”¹⁹⁸

In other words, while women’s participation in sports was not as straightforwardly emancipatory as asserted in nationalist narratives, it also did not render them docile. Images in *Linglong*, many of which were sent in by readers picturing themselves or friends, show that sports and athleticism provided a new premise for shared experiences and bonding between women, as well as new opportunities to gain a personal sense of achievement. These images show women posing with each other on sporting fields (Fig. 3.7; 3.8; 3.9; 3.10) and with the trophies that they have won (Fig. 3.11), and talented athletes are praised for their accomplishments – referred to as heroes 運動將 (lit. “the generals of sports”) (Fig. 3.12).

Athletes were also glamourized when they appeared on the magazine’s covers, which typically feature fashion portraits and movie stars (Fig. 3.13). Athleticism and the film world came together when the most famous Shanghai movie stars of the period, such as Li Lili (黎莉莉, 1915-2005) and Li Minghui (黎明輝, 1909-2003), showed up as spectators at sporting events and posed with athletes for pictures (Fig. 3.14). Moreover, the 1934 film *Queen of Sports* – starring Li Lili, who was famed for her combined style of robust and Modern Girl beauty (Fig. 3.15; Fig. 3.16) – brought the glamour of movies

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¹⁹⁷ Morris 3.
¹⁹⁸ Gao 548.
Fig. 3.6. The male coach of a women’s basketball team wearing a militaristic uniform (top) and the muscular “majestic appearance” of a basketball player (bottom). Linglong no. 127, 1934, 84.
Fig. 3.7. “A Few Most Notable Persons” on the playing fields. *Linglong* no. 094, 1933, 591-2.

Fig. 3.8. “Champions of Shanghai Women’s Tennis Doubles.” The two women, Chen Rongming and Wang Shikun, have masculine names. *Linglong* no. 151, 1934, 1679.

Fig. 3.9. “Female athletes having a rest” (bottom). *Linglong* no. 74, 1932, 1126.
Fig. 3.10. “Young Women Active on Sports Grounds,” (bottom). *Linglong* no. 162, 2384-5; no. 158, cover and 1098.
Fig. 3.11. “Female Heroes.” Athletes and their trophies. Linglong no. 186, 1935, 1238-9.

Fig. 3.12. “The Great Ones of Sports.” Linglong no. 116, 1933, 1944.

Fig. 3.13. Cover image for Linglong no. 208, 1935.
Fig. 3.14. Movie stars Li lili (top left; bottom right) and Li Minghui (bottom left) as spectators at sporting events. *Linglong* no. 94, 1933, 608; no. 148, 1934, 1479.

Fig. 3.15. Li Lili as cover girl for *Linglong*’s movie segment, no. 102, 1933.

Fig. 3.16. Li Lili (top), described in the caption as “strong and beautiful.” *Linglong* no. 59, 1932, 413.
to the vigour of sports and vice versa. Other images of women lounging in pools (Fig. 3.17; 3.18) and on the beach (Fig. 3.19) show that athleticism was not only a mechanism for nationalist agendas, but also became a new lifestyle and form of pleasure shared between friends.

What is most striking about the images of athletic women in Linglong are the confident poses and style-consciousness of their subjects. An image of a basketball player Miss Han Shuqing 袁淑清女士 – printed in juxtaposition to the male basketball coach in militaristic uniform, mentioned above – shows her “majestic appearance” or “heroic posture” after a game 運動後之雄姿, poised and relaxed with muscular arms casually bared and hat tilted to one side (Fig. 3.6). In another image, a wrestler Miss Meng Jianli 孟建麗 stands self-assuredly in uniform with her hair set in permanent waves (Fig. 3.20) – a style more commonly seen on made-up Modern Girls in qipao dresses (Fig. 3.22). Other images similarly show young women standing contrapposto with hands on hips and minute details that complete their looks, such as groomed hair, neck tie, belts and armlets (Fig. 3.5; 3.8; 3.12; 3.23). One image indicates that sports grounds were not simply austere disciplinary sites, but also places where women scrutinized each other’s beauty; it shows three female coaches who are presented as “A Few of the Most Beautiful Persons on the Playing Field” 會場中的幾位最漂亮的人物 (Fig. 3.21).

**Fashion and Femininities**

Athleticism and robust beauty therefore took on divergent meanings, which were adopted by women in various ways that cannot be dismissed as trivial fashion. The diverse representations of female beauty in Linglong indicate that in practice, the advocacy of athleticism and robust beauty broadened...

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199 The Modern Girl, as defined in Linglong, was associated with Lin Daiyu beauty and cosmopolitan fashion including high-heels, permanent waves and foreign cosmetics. Modern Girls were also associated with dance halls, worldly sophistication, unruliness and mystery. On the convergence of movies and sports, see Zhen Zhang, *An Amorous History of the Silver Screen: Shanghai Cinema, 1896-1937* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2005) 77-81. Based on an interview with an elderly Shanghai woman, Zhang’s study reveals that extras for Queen of Sports – including Zhang’s interviewee – were students recruited from a women’s sports college, located near the film studio. Zhang writes, “True to the conception of the film as an intertext between fiction and documentary . . . Li Lili’s fans entered the film to play her partners.” The athlete extras for the film were later “treated to an exclusive screening after the film was finished” (80-1).
Fig. 3.17. “Smiles at the Swimming Pools.” Linglong no. 109, 1933, 1556-7.

Fig. 3.18. Cover image for Linglong no. 197, 1935.

Fig. 3.19. At the beach in Wusong. Linglong no. 66, 1932, 748.
Fig. 3.20. “Miss Meng Jianli of Shanghai, Victor of Women’s National Wrestling.” Linglong no. 208, 1935, 3587.

Fig. 3.21. “A Few of the Most Beautiful Persons on the Playing Fields.” Linglong no. 094, 1933, 594.

Fig. 3.22. Modern Girl images in Linglong no. 95, 1933; no. 160, 1934; no. 164, 1934; no. 125, 1933; no. 78, 1932.
conventional notions of femininity rather than obliterating more delicate feminine styles, as even a cursory look at the magazine’s covers over its years in print attests. While covers from Linglong’s first year of publication in 1931 feature genteel and frail images of feminine beauty almost exclusively (Fig. 3.24), covers from 1932 onward show the general influence of robust beauty on women’s fashion. The willowy delicate styles, however, still had their appeal and continued to be represented alongside images of robust beauty. Indeed, the distinction between the two is often blurred (Fig. 3.25).

When they are contrasted, images of robust beauty appear in much more relaxed juxtaposition with willowy beauty than devised in nationalist discourse. A 1931 special feature issue on sports includes mostly images of athletic women, but uses feminine images on its covers, which paradoxically sandwich articles that call for the eradication of these styles on the basis that they are dainty and superficial – the “The Astounding Skills of a Valiant Female Athlete” appears in this issue, for example (Fig. 3.26).
Fig. 3.24. A selection of Linglong covers from 1931.
Fig. 3.25. A selection of Linglong covers from 1932 to 1937.
Fig. 3.26. The two covers and selected pages from Linglong no.28, 1931.

Fig. 3.27. The two covers and selected pages from Linglong no. 114, 1933.
Another special feature issue on sports from 1933 similarly juxtaposes rugged athleticism with more flirtatious femininity from Hollywood cinema (Fig. 3.27). A cover from 1932 shows the confluence of athleticism and willowy femininity (Fig. 3.28). The image shows a young woman with a delicate frame and genteel pose, both of which recall the older style of sickly beauty, but she is in swimming gear and sits at the edge of a pool. Wearing a swim cap and appearing ready for sport with her feet dipped in the water, she has also accessorized her left arm with an armlet, marking her adoption of athleticism as fashion.

**Female Spectatorship**

I agree with Gao’s argument that sports served nationalist ends at the same time that they were appropriated by women to fashion personal identities. I want to take her insights further, however, to
bring out the erotic dimensions of athleticism and robust beauty, which encouraged public visibility for women and expanded notions of femaleness. Guided by Sang’s readings of May Fourth women’s writings as well as the female-centered studies of classic Hollywood cinema by Andrea Weiss and Jackie Stacey, I set aside more familiar discussions about the male gaze to consider Linglong’s divergent representations of femininities with respect to female spectatorship.200

Andrea Weiss scrutinizes the “double-edged image” in 1930s Hollywood films, which she argues “subverted and confirmed the social order” simultaneously.201 I want to draw attention to similar tensions that, in my view, are intrinsic to images printed in Linglong. I carry this out with another of Weiss’s arguments in mind – that, “[r]ather than moralizing about the dominant construction of sexuality or working toward ‘the destruction of pleasure [for men] as a radical weapon,’” a more productive approach is to “imagine . . . new ways of constructing visual pleasure for women.”202

Linglong acknowledged a male readership. In rare instances, articles address men, as in “How to Satisfy One’s Wife” 和 “Some Principles for Modern Men When Making Friends with Women” 紋查男子結交女子的標準.203 I have also found a few letters by male writers in the magazine.204 One of these letters, however, indicates that the magazine was constructed for and perceived as primarily a feminine space:

Among the many publications, Linglong can perhaps be considered rather exquisite. It definitely has genuine appeal, and moreover has a lot of valuable knowledge to tell us. I – a young chap – am male, but with regard to Linglong (a women’s magazine) I

200 I qualify my decision to set aside the male gaze in my study on the basis that female spectators have largely been elided in studies of urban cultural production in early twentieth century China. See my Introduction, n. 6.
201 Andrea Weiss, Vampires and Violets: Lesbians in the Cinema (London: Jonathan Cape, 1992) 44.
202 Weiss 136. Weiss makes this argument for contemporary independent filmmaking. “[T]he destruction of pleasure [for men] as a radical weapon” is a reference to Laura Mulvey’s groundbreaking critique of the male gaze as oppressive in its objectification and silencing of women as sex objects. Weiss’s point of view also diverges from Berger’s critique of male visual pleasure. See: Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," Screen 16.3 (1975): 6–18.
203 Linglong no. 42, 1932, 1665; no. 4, 1931, 111. The former article lists seven points on “what husbands need to know” about treating their wives well. Aside from these articles, both male and female readers were thanked for their support in recognizing Linglong as “China’s most exquisite publication.” Linglong no. 80, 1931, 1402.
204 One letter from a male writer, for example, inquires about the legalities of his having consummated his relationship with a young woman who was almost, but not quite, of legal age. Linglong no. 79, 1932, 1362. In another letter, the male writer expresses discontent about the misandry expressed in the article, “She Who is Muddled by Love.” See Chapter 2, 29 n. 44.
nonetheless have an undying interest for it. When I am in class or in the study hall at school, it certainly never leaves my hands. There are many schoolmates who laugh at me, saying that I am like a girl, and yet I will never cast [the magazine] aside and stop reading it because of this.

The way that Linglong literally pictured a female-centered reading practice provides the basis upon which I establish a heuristic model of female spectatorship in relation to the magazine. Premised on its trope of sisterhood, women are portrayed sharing moments of intimacy as they flip through publications together (Fig. 3.29; 3.30). In another image, borrowed from Hollywood, a woman is shown as the primary reader of a film supplement while a man looks pryingly over her shoulder (Fig. 3.31). Finally, a photo montage suggests that women’s visual pleasure in looking at women was taken for granted (Fig. 3.32). Intentionally bringing together two otherwise independent images, it presupposes that women, along with men and even a pet dog, find delight in looking at the female form. While this normalizes the objectification and sexualising of women in representations, its assumptions about female viewers – that women do not only appear for the oppressive male gaze, as posited by Berger, but actively engage with representations – warrants serious consideration of spectatorship in relation to Linglong’s female readers.

I would like to expand on these models of female spectatorship provided in Linglong with a reference to writings by Lu Yin, and Tze-lan D. Sang’s reading of them. Sang examines Lu Yin’s works

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205 Linglong, no 214, 1935, 4077. There are other indications that the magazine was directed primarily to female readers. Linglong provides information about the personal daily concerns of women and their bodies. Women themselves also wrote in with questions about menstruation, leucorrhoea, pregnancy and weaning. See for example, Linglong no. 217, 1935, 4232-4233; no. 4228-4230. This appears to be a contrast with the situation a decade earlier. According to Jacqueline Nivard, in March of 1923, an issue of The Ladies’ Journal 婦女雜誌 that included a translation of a description of women’s sexual anatomy very quickly went out of print. Nivard notes that, “when the editors republished it . . . a large number of people protested.” See “Women and the Women’s Press: The Case of The Ladies' Journal (Funü zazhi) 1915–1931,” Republican China 10.1b (1984): 41.
Fig. 3.29. Cover image for Linglong no. 228, 1936.
Fig. 3.30. The trope of sisterhood as reading practice. *Linglong* no. 32, 1931, 1230; 1239.

Fig. 3.31. Female reader and male onlooker. *Linglong* no. 60, 1932, 461.

Fig. 3.32. Photo montage showing man, woman and pet dog as spectators delighting in the female form. *Linglong* no. 148, 1934, 1484.
extensively for their undertones of repressed homoeroticism – their expressions of “carnal desire for women and its predicament.” Of particular interest is Sang’s take on a travelogue account about a visit to a public bathhouse in Japan – foreign and exotic to Lu Yin but a mundane practice in Japanese culture. According to Sang, the cultural displacement of travel allows Lu Yin to sublimate her desire to look at women’s bodies. Lu Yin assumes the position of an ethnographer and “rationalizes her rapture in terms of aesthetics.” Sang cites Lu’s statement that the women:

were lovely and languorous after their bath… I feasted on the sight. I wanted then to sing the praises of the beauty of the human body – the smooth skin, the voluptuous curves, and the round, fat toes – everything displayed the art of nature…I admired their bodies as I put on my socks.

Sang surmises that as a respectable figure at the forefront of May Fourth New Culture, Lu Yin conveys unease about her own desires, when she adds: “I felt embarrassed to be sitting there staring at [the women]. So, picking up my towel and dirty clothes, I left the place where the flesh of women was displayed.” Even so, Sang suggests, “Lu Yin’s carnal lesbian longing” has been “smuggled into action through a seemingly asexual practice legitimated by Japanese culture.”

I find in Linglong a similar possibility for “smuggling” homoerotic desires into action. In promoting athleticism in the name of nationalism, robust beauty was advocated in conjunction with references to European art forms which sanctioned the voyeuristic display of women’s bodies for the visual pleasure of readers. Photos of mostly foreign female nudes have captions that call for strong bodies for a strong nation; the text that accompanies one nude image, for example, declares, “A robust physique is what women of our nation need” 健美的體格是我國需要的 (Fig. 3.33). Together with nationalistic appeals to health and fitness, these overtly erotic nudes are also legitimized by references to the tradition of European high art, as when French paintings are featured (Fig. 3.34). Other European art

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206 Sang notes that while public bathing was common in China, “women usually took their baths in private at home.” Sang 316 n. 39.
207 Sang 146.
209 Sang 146.
forms are also referenced, as in one case where an image of nude dancers is printed together with an image of a nude sculpture to promote the art of movement 舞姿 – described as contemporary 现代 and healthy 健康 (Fig. 3.35). Fitness and art are again appealed to concurrently in a diptych showing the front and back view of a nude figure that is captioned, “The beauty of healthy curves” 健康曲線美 (Fig. 3.36).

I suggest that this foreign and exotic content in Linglong allowed for something akin to what Sang finds in Lu Yin’s voyage writings in Japan – what Sang refers to as “self-discovery in travel.”210 The tradition of female nudes in European painting (inherited by modern advertising) is one that Berger has been highly critical of for its subjugation of women and his critique is an important one.211 He notes, for instance, that the convention in European painting of not painting the hair on a woman’s body minimized women’s sexual agency, since “[h]air is associated with sexual power [and] with passion.” Berger states, “The woman’s sexual passion [is] minimized so that the spectator may feel that he has the monopoly of such passion.”212 Yet contrary to Berger’s notion that “the ‘ideal’ spectator is always assumed to be male and the image of the woman is designed to flatter him,” the images of women printed in Linglong were targeted at both male and female readers, as conveyed by the model of a female-centred reading practice portrayed in the magazine.

The construction of standards for depicting women in art and advertising in the Euro-American context is beyond the scope of my study. Instead, I suggest that the conventions of depicting and seeing that Berger finds problematic in the European tradition engaged in a new dynamics of representation and discourse when recontextualized in a Chinese publication like Linglong. These nudes were divorced from their original context and, in a process that parallels translation, they evoked new meanings and

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210 Sang 279.
211 On the European tradition of painting and its portrayal of women, Berger writes, “In one category of European oil painting women were the principal, ever-recurring subject. That category is the nude. In the nudes of European painting we can discover some of the criteria and conventions by which women have been seen and judged as sights” (47).
212 Berger 55.
Fig. 3.33. “A robustly beautiful physique is what women of our nation need.” *Linglong* no. 38, 1931, 1488.

Fig. 3.35. The display of healthy female bodies in the art of sculpture and dance. *Linglong* no. 47, 1932, 1916.

Fig. 3.34. An example of work from an annual art exhibition in France. *Linglong* no. 23, 1931, 845(h).

Fig. 3.36. “Front and back views of beautiful healthy curves. *Linglong* no. 52, 1932, 74.”
influenced new styles and sensibilities as Chinese audiences decided what and how to see, and for what purposes. I argue that one aspect of this recontextualization of images was the capacity to sublimate erotic desire in the legitimate and respectable appreciation of foreign (and “modern”) athleticism and art, in a similar way to how Lu Yin rationalizes her desire to look at women’s bodies in a Japanese bathhouse.

In addition to the overtly erotic representations of nude bodies in *Linglong*, I believe that Jackie Stacey’s formulation concerning female spectatorship is applicable to *Linglong* and its female readers. In her study of 1940s and 50s Hollywood cinema, Stacey criticizes the “rigid adherence to the binarism of masculinity and femininity” in psychoanalysis, and notes how “feminist film criticism has, on the whole, failed to address the possible homoerotic pleasures for the female spectator.” With regard to the constant changing of roles of actresses on screen, Stacey argues that “identification between femininities contains forms of homoerotic pleasure which have yet to be explored.” Stacey’s point is especially pertinent considering how *Linglong* seems at times deliberately to juxtapose divergent femininities on the same page (Fig. 3.37).

Weiss makes a point similar to Stacey’s – that “[t]he magical qualities of the movies . . . with their insistence on ever-changing theatrical roles, helped legitimize a way of life to which role playing and masquerade were central experiences.” Guided by the insights of Stacey and Weiss, I argue that alternative desires and sensibilities are generated in *Linglong* not only in overtly erotic nudes, but perhaps even more so in the magazine’s presentation of a broadened range of femininities that invited visual enjoyment and identification. Indeed for Weiss, erotic lesbian sensibilities in American cinema, “[are] not attributable to the object of the look” per se – in other words, “the image of woman to signify sexuality, as it would in the dominant cinema or pornography.” Instead, it is “the power and intrigue of looking itself which becomes erotically charged.”

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214 Stacey 29; emphasis added.
215 Weiss 163.
216 Weiss 137.
Fig. 3.37. Femininities juxtaposed on the same page, including actresses, students, athletes and a female soldier. *Linglong* no. 68, 1932, 837; no. 47, 1932; no. 75, 1932, 1173; no. 62, 1932, 549.
The Theatrical Sense of Self

On the role of classic Hollywood films in the formation of lesbian subjectivities, Weiss writes that, “beyond specific images, the rise of the cinema . . . promoted the idea that different roles and styles could be adopted by spectators as well as by actors and actresses, and could signal changeable personalities [and] multiple identities.” These films, starring actresses such as Marlene Dietrich and Greta Garbo – both of whom appear regularly in Linglong – gave rise to a new “twentieth-century theatrical sense of self” that was “invaluable to the formation of lesbian identity.”

A few images that I have found in Linglong indicate that the influence of this twentieth-century sense of self, like the films that ignited it, was international. Moreover, in the case of China it formed a continuum with longstanding theatricalities of self and gender in Chinese vernacular literature and drama (Fig. 3.38, 3.39). Images of performers in all-female theatrical productions hint at creative negotiations of alternative sensibilities through self-fashioning as their subjects appear to be playing with gender constructs in challenging ways. They convey a sense of deliberation, if not mocking satire, as their subjects push normative identities to extremes with excessive use of make-up and by cross-dressing in men’s suits and caps before posing together for photographs as stylish couples or hooligans (Fig. 3.40). The images call to mind the cross-dressing female revolutionary Qiu Jin (秋瑾, 1875-1907), who dressed in men’s clothes and posed for photographs with the intent purpose of making a political statement.

One image is particularly intriguing in its ambiguity. It depicts two women – one seated and wearing a bridal gown, the other standing confidently with one hand in pocket and one arm around the ‘bride’ (Fig. 3.41). Whether these women were playing roles for a theatrical production is unclear, and the caption for the image conveys a sense of confusion about what to make of the photo. Rather than

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217 Weiss 29.
218 See Antonia Finnane, Changing Clothes in China: Fashion, History, Nation (New York: Columbia UP, 2008) 88-91. Finnane writes that Qiu Jin’s adoption of men’s dress “was intimately bound up with the development of a military persona, a persona that she propelled into action on the national stage” (91). Qiu abandoned her husband and children in 1904 to join the revolution against the Qing government and China’s imperial system. She greatly admired women warriors in Chinese history, such as the sixth-century heroine, Hua Mulan, who dressed as a male soldier to take her ailing father’s place in battle for dynastic defense.
labelling the image per se, it takes the form of a question: “Same-sex marriage?” 同性結婚? On one hand, there is a tendency toward stigmatization in terms of how the photo has been cropped – the image has been cut in the shape of an upside down heart, which is a clear reference to Ellis’s theory of sexual inversion. In this regard, the caption might be read, “Is this a same-sex marriage wedding photo?” with the implication that if it is, regulatory intervention is ever more necessary. On the other hand, the caption might be read, “Is same-sex marriage (as seen in this image) to be sanctioned (even if female-female love is an inverted form of affection)?” – a sensibility more in line with “A Woman who Married Another Woman” and the same-sex kiss of Liang Lucun and Tang Huilian cited in the previous chapter, as well as the French comic illustration cited earlier in this chapter.

Even more intriguing are the actions involved in the production of the image and the process through which it made its way into print. There is agency in dressing and posing for a photo in this way,
Fig. 3.40. Gender and theatricality. “Three young women from Hankou play the roles of three hoodlums” (bottom right).
Fig. 3.41. “Same-sex Marriage?” Linglong no. 89, 1933, 305.
and it is also possible that the image was sent in for publication by the pictured women themselves, in response to Linglong’s call to readers for contributions. To what extent then can this photo be seen as a deliberated engagement with public discourse, and more particularly, as a quiet challenge to the censuring of female-female love? As I noted in the previous chapter, both the pathologizing of same-sex love and voices of misandrim reach a peak in Linglong in 1932, the same year that this image was printed in the magazine. Whoever sent the image to the magazine, they appear to have been intent on befuddling the editors; it seems that they gave no information to be printed with the photo, hence the puzzled caption provided by the magazine. Conversely, the question mark might be an indication that those behind Linglong were not altogether certain about how to deal with the issue of same-sex love. The printing of this image may have been an attempt by those involved in the magazine’s production to use this visual representation as a way to question textual discourse.

The following section consists chiefly of images, a strategy I borrow from Berger who used it to critique the male gaze and Euro-American conventions of depicting women. I selected the following pictures from Linglong to summarize my points in this chapter, but also to propose ways of considering them further with respect to female spectatorship, based on the preliminary arguments I have outlined above. I suggested that visual representations in the magazine playfully explore femininities and female sensuality that include dimensions of homoerotic pleasure, and that this contrasts with the melancholic articulations in texts that idealize feelings between women. Like these idealizations, however, they run counter to the discourse that pathologizes female-female intimacy. They also counter the stigmatization of unconventional gender behaviour. Indeed, as interests and influences – including nationalism, New Culture, sports, fashion, and films – converged and spilled into each other on the pages of Linglong, meanings were transformed, resulting in a diverse corpus of images that include more sensual depictions of sisterhood. Images in Linglong thus provide a different picture, so to speak, from texts, and these conflicts between representations and discourses marks Linglong as a space where alternative sensibilities could be negotiated.
Negotiating Alternative Sensibilities

Fig. 3.42. Playful and eroticized sisterhood. Linglong no. 2, 1931, 66, 72; no. 50, 1932, 2098; no. 81, 1933, 4, 29; no. 153, 1934, 1840; no. 25, 1931, 914; no. 27, 1931, 1010, 1015; no. 47, 1932, 1915.
Fig. 3.43. Two starlets asleep in bed, anticipating Christmas. *Linglong* no. 41, 1931, 1632.

Fig. 3.44. “The outdoor lifestyle of stars in summer.” *Linglong* no. 101, 1933, 1057.

Fig. 3.45. Fellow sisters, fashion and recreational sports. *Linglong* no. 134, 1934, 543; 557.
Fig. 3.46. “School life.” Linglong no. 96, 1933, 719.
Fig. 3.47. “Sometimes when men’s clothes are worn by women, they actually look lovelier than when they are worn by men . . . .” *Linglong* no. 53, 1932, 119.

Fig. 3.48. National record breaker in athletics from Guangdong, Kuang Yuzhen (right). *Linglong* no. 91, 1933, 412.

Fig. 3.49. “Female Heroes of Hollywood.” *Linglong* 1933, no. 96, 733.

Fig. 3.50. Representatives of women’s tennis from Guangdong. *Linglong* no. 208, 1935, 3590.
Fig. 3.51. Female and male beauty: the screen style of Katherine Kepburn and Fredric March directly juxtaposed. Linglong no. 258, 1936, 3239-40.

Fig. 3.52. Personal style, Miss Zhai Lianyuan. Linglong no. 244, 1936, 2000.

Fig. 3.53. Personal style, Miss Xu Zhongqi. Linglong no. 104, 1933, 1206.
Fig. 3.54. “When men see women they are like rapacious wolves and tigers.” Linglong no. 64, 1932, 652.

Fig. 3.55. The “near nude” and “natural beauty” of Hollywood starlet’s dance costumes. Linglong no. 136, 1934, 686.

Fig. 3.56. “Dance, dance, dance, dance.” Linglong no. 217, 1935, 4283.
Collective Research and Paratexts: An Addendum In Light of “A New Approach”

“A New Approach to the Popular Press in China: Gender and Cultural Production, 1904-1937” is a recent group initiative led by principal researchers Joan Judge, Barbara Mittler and Grace Fong, and researchers Julia Andrews, Michel Hockx and Christian Henriot. I became aware of this team project when my work was nearing completion and was therefore not able to incorporate the group’s findings into my study. The group’s focus on gender, non-canonical materials and horizontal readings (which the members carry out together with vertical readings) overlaps considerably with my own interests and approach to examining Linglong. According to Judge’s summary of the project, a question the group seeks to probe is, “how readers responded to what was for many the unsettling prospect of ‘free’ marriage touted in polemical articles condemning traditional arranged marriages.” They consider, “how photographs of ‘new-style’ couples featured in a number of women’s journals . . . further nuance the polemics.”

I have benefited significantly from the work of the group’s members through the course of my research and I hope that my study – on the construction and contestation of heteronormativity in Linglong, achieved in part through the advocacy of free marriage – will contribute to this group effort and provide a different perspective.

In light of “A New Approach,” I include this addendum in recognition that research on popular periodicals in China is still in its early stages. I raise questions here about the relationship between Linglong and other cultural products – print and film in particular to highlight problems for future consideration. The group’s emphasis on Gérard Genette’s notion of paratexts is one I find especially useful as a way to link print, movies, stars, and readers/spectators. As defined by Genette, a paratext is a “threshold” of meaning or “convergence of effects” that constitutes “a zone between text and off-text, a zone not only of transition but also of transaction.” With reference to this idea of transaction, I propose that images of movie stars, who often appear on Linglong’s covers (Fig. 3.54), be scrutinized as

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220 Genette 2. Emphasis in original.
paratexts for how they contribute meanings from the wider cultural context to *Linglong*’s representations, and vice versa.

The stars depicted include Yuan Meiyun, Zhou Xuan, Hu Die, Li Lili, and Wang Renmei, and their images were associated with popular songs, performance conventions and film narratives, all of which included themes of sisterhood, gender theatricality and homoeroticism in addition to more mainstream portrayals of heterosexual romance. *Girl in Disguise* from 1936 is noted for its bending of gender, with its star Yuan Meiyun playing a girl, Liying, who disguises herself as a boy (Fig. 3.55). When Liying returns to Shanghai from Singapore with her family to visit their old home, she dons a suit and wears her hair short and slick to appease the unsuspecting family patriarch, who has been fixated on the family’s lack of a male heir. Masquerading as a dandy, the cross-dressed Liying enamours a young girl, played by Zhou Xuan, who unwittingly initiates a same-sex kiss on the cheek with the object of her affections (Fig. 3.56). According to Zhang Zhen, the film was an instant hit, but became the focal point of disputes about the role of movies, which deepened an ideological divide between “soft” films 軟性電影 (so called for their commercialism and ostensibly frivolous themes) and “hard” films 硬性電影 (that engage political and socio-economic issues). The appeal of a cross-dressed Yuan Meiyun and a Zhou Xuan who falls in love with her is nonetheless attested when the two were cast as on-screen lovers again in 1944, as hero and heroine of a film adaptation of *Dream of the Red Chamber* 紅樓夢.

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221 Z. Zhang 284-8.
222 Z. Zhang writes that *Girl in Disguise* exemplified soft films for both sides of the hard-soft debate. The film’s detractors dismissed it as a typically “low-taste” crowd-pleaser and criticized its exploitation of “meaningless games” and “comic gags.” They characterized the film’s gender-bending as “ice-cream for the eyes,” formulated to “anaesthetize” audiences during a time of national crisis. Zhang writes: “The real problem with *Girl in Disguise* was not, as one critic claimed, that ‘it had nothing to do with contemporary life.’ Rather, it had everything to do with the gender question and urban modernity in that period.” She notes, however, that “the film’s provocative premise was ultimately undone by its narrative framing. The edgy sexual politics embedded in the film gets compromised at the end, when a son is promptly delivered to fill in the position of a male heir, disqualifying Liying. The modern girl with dubious gender and social identity has been reformed into a good girl, while same-sex affection has been replaced by heterosexual courting rituals, complete with a matchmaker.” See Z. Zhang 284; 286; 288.
Fig. 3.57. Hu Die featured on a cover of *Linglong* no. 163.

Fig. 3.58. “Yuan Meiyun, the *Girl in Disguise*.” *Linglong* no. 229, 1936, 800.

Fig. 3.59. Yuan Meiyun and Zhou Xuan in *Girl in Disguise*, 1936.
Cosmetics Market from 1933 is notable for its stress on female bonds. Hu Die (Fig. 3.57) plays Li Cuifen 李翠芬, who is from an impoverished family and has to support her ailing mother by working at a department store. Through her job, and the social engagements that she is asked to participate in, her eyes are opened to the corrupt workings of the world. Dejected by her discoveries, she forms a close bond with her neighbour, Miss Yang 楊小姐, an independent and assertive Modern Girl who in one scene pulls open the curtain in her room to literally show Cuifen the light, urging her not to fall for the empty rhetoric of male-female equality (Fig. 3.60). Miss Yang convinces Cuifen to learn the ways of the world so that she can rely on herself. Thus inspired, Cuifen rejects the apology of a male co-worker she had been fond of, but who she now decides is unreliable and fickle, causing him to cry (Fig. 3.61). In the film’s concluding scene, which takes place several years later, Cuifen is single and successful, running her own shop selling knick knacks.

A scene depicting sisterly affection from the 1934 film Big Road has been noted for its arguable homoeroticism. In the scene, the characters Moli and Dingxiang, played by Li Lili and Chen Yanyan
respectively, share a moment of intimacy after Dingxiang accidentally burns herself with a curling iron. They lie together cheek to cheek, gently caressing each other, and Chen’s hand rests casually on Li’s breast before she kisses Li on the cheek (Fig. 3.62). Interpretations of this scene have occasioned some controversy, as is evident in Yingjin Zhang’s rebuttal of Chris Berry’s take on it. For Berry, the affection between the two women is akin to “lesbian scenes in Western pornographic movies,” insofar as female-female intimacy is depicted for the visual pleasure of men.223 Zhang finds this interpretation “extremely problematic,” calling it “an issue of interpretive authority in cross-cultural analysis.”224 He criticizes Berry for “refus[ing] to consider a culture-specific phenomenon in China where a close relationship between two females is regarded as common and normal.”225 Yet Zhang’s insistence on cultural specificity becomes less tenable in light of the new sense of urgency, demonstrated by Chinese intellectuals like Zhang Jingsheng and Pan Guangdan, who pathologize female-female intimacy by adopting the neologism tongxing ‘ai around the time that this film was made.

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224 Z. Zhang 121. Emphasis in the original.
225 Z. Zhang 121.
Fig. 3.62. Li Lili and Chen Yanyan in *Big Road*, 1934.
This is the kind of underlying tension I have called attention to in my reading of *Linglong* – how sisterly love is embraced by the magazine but regulated when it crosses into same-sex desire or threatens heterosexual marriage. I thus find the views of both Berry and Zhang valid but limiting. Berry’s point that the depiction of female-female affection appeals to male voyeurism is corroborated in an earlier scene when the film’s villains cast their menacing gazes on Moli and Dingxiang and take pleasure in scrutinizing the two women, who stick closely together (Fig. 3.63). Despite his somewhat overstated analogy to Western pornography, I do not think that Berry is mistaken in highlighting undertones of eroticism in the affection between the two women, but I find his view heterocentric in that he fails to consider that such portrayals might be pleasurable and meaningful for women as well as men. Berry’s heterocentrism is most apparent when he does consider female viewers with respect to another widely noted scene in the film that depicts male nudity. What is implied in this analysis is that women naturally take interest in men while female-female desire is elided.

Zhang’s rebuttal of Berry on the grounds that homosociality is culturally specific to China and “not entirely explainable by the Western concept of homosexuality,” is apt in the light of the Chinese practice of gender segregation; but he overlooks how Euro-American theories about homosexuality were appropriated through translation and used to set new boundaries on female-female relations in the early twentieth century. His argument therefore runs the risk of reverting to views that trivialize female-female
intimacy as innocent and inconsequential. I have made tensions in Linglong’s bifurcated representation of sisterhood the focal point of my study, and this brief consideration of representations outside the magazine both corroborates my point and reveals the limitations of assertions such as those of Berry and Zhang.

Turning to popular music, the songs and dances of Li Jinhui were performed most famously onstage by Li Lili, Wang Renmei and Zhou Xuan; these performances facilitated their transition from stage into film. In his pioneering book on this popular music in China, Andrew F. Jones examines the cultural and historical factors that stamped it as “yellow,” an ideologically fraught label denoting pornography on one hand and, in the “racialized hierarchies of colonial modernity,” excessive Chineseness (i.e. backwardness) on the other. However, Jones does not address how some of the most popular and controversial “yellow” tunes, such as “Peach Blossom River” and “Little Sister I Love You,” underwent a process of heterosexualization in the mid-1930s, marking a new sensitivity toward female homosociality.

The following is an excerpt from “Little Sister I Love You,” as sung by Li Lili in an early 1930s recording, distributed by Pathé Records:

I love your bright eyes / Bright just like the moon . . . / . . . They shine right into my heart / Oh Little Sister! / Can you see? / Deep in my heart there is only you! / Little Sister! / I love you / I love you / I love you!

我愛你的眼睛明明亮, 好像月亮一樣明明亮 . . . 照見我的心腸. 妹妹呀, 你看呢, 我的心裏就只有你, 妹妹, 我愛你, 我愛你, 我愛你.

Jones renders the song gender neutral when he translates its title “Darling I Love You.” By the mid-1930s, however, gender seems to have become an issue when it was rerecorded to feature Li Lili singing to a male object, “little brother.” Like “Little Sister,” the most famous of Li Jinhui’s “yellow” tunes, “Peach Blossom River,” underwent a similar heterosexualizing process. In a 1931 recording, also

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227 Jones 93.
distributed by Pathé, the song is sung as a duet by Li Lili and Wang Renmei and includes the following exchange:

Li:  As soon as I met you / I found you immediately to my liking / I was gratified / I become enamoured with romantic love / Enamoured with passion.
Wang: Ha ha! I walk along the right / You’re there following on the left / I walk along in front / You follow along behind / It seems indeed you’ve fallen for me / You’ve become enamoured with passion!

Following this exchange, Li goes on to sing the song’s most famous line: “I don’t really know / I didn’t really expect it / But when I look at you / My soul flutters about / My love burns like fire / My entire body melts” 我也不知道, 我也不能料, 我一看見你, 靈魂天上飄, 愛情火樣燒,  全身融化了.228

Such songs were originally sung and danced onstage by Li Lili and Wang Renmei in programs choreographed by Li Jinhui for his Bright Moon Song and Dance Troupe 明月歌舞團, and publicity shots for these performances can be found in Linglong. These depict sisterly affection as the two stars gaze into each other’s eyes (Fig. 3.64, 3.65, 3.66, 3.67). Li Jinhui’s work was immensely influential and spawned many troupes that imitated his choreography (Fig. 3.68, 3.69). My purpose is not to identify these performances as lesbian since they were largely orchestrated by men. Instead, I cite them to illustrate how, in accordance with gendered performance conventions that assigned music composition to males and singing and dancing to females, two girls performing a love song together was not perceived as problematic. Zhang is therefore right to point out that female-female intimacy was considered benign and normal in the Chinese context.

That “Peach Blossom River” was rerecorded in 1934 as a new duet featuring Zhou Xuan and Li Jinhui’s young male protégé, Yan Hua (whom Zhou later married), complicates Zhang’s contention.

228 Yang Linhai, Zhou Jianchao, and Wang Yong comp. and ed, Pop Songs Between 1930s and 1940s in Shanghai (Shanghai: Zhongguo changpian Shanghai gongsi, 2008). The book is accompanied by a set of twenty CDs including the recordings I mention here.
Fig. 3.64. “Wang Renmei and Li Lili.” *Linglong* no. 71, 1932, 984-5.

Fig. 3.65. “Li Lili [left] and Wang Renmei of the Bright Moon Song and Dance Troupe.” *Linglong* no. 80, 1932, 1418.

Fig. 3.66. “Xu Rongying and Gong Qiuxia’s ‘Sailor Dance,’” a Bright Moon Song and Dance performance. *Linglong* no. 57, 1932, 318.
Fig. 3.67. Members of Li Jinhui’s Bright Moon Song and Dance Troupe, Zhou Xuan and Xu Jian, in a performance featured in the film *Sons and Daughters of the Storm* 風妻兒女 from 1934. *Linglong* no. 189, 1935, 1379. *Linglong* no. 216, 1935, 4183.

Fig. 3.68. “Silver Moon Song and Dance Troupe.” *Linglong* no. 183, 1935, 1020
These rerecorded songs suggest that female-female depictions began to acquire new meanings, which cannot be fully unravelled by avowals of cultural specificity. Moreover, Zhang’s rejection of eroticized interpretations of female-female affection is challenged by a tendency I detect in Linglong – to introduce more sexualized female-female representations via erotic images of foreign women, as I have touched on above. One page of images showing female performers from Hollywood is captioned “The World of Flesh” (Fig. 3.70), while another layout shows female performers lounging in a dressing room in their undergarments (Fig. 3.71). These eroticized portrayals brought new meanings to Linglong’s trope of sisterhood, as I argue above, creating slippages in the representations and conventions that governed performances by stars such as Li Lili, Wang Renmei, Hu Die, Yuan Meiyu and Zhou Xuan.

I thus end my study with the question of how images of these stars in Linglong functioned as paratexts as they engaged in transactions (in Genette’s sense) with the magazine’s other representations. In turn, the question of how Linglong’s content influenced meanings in a wider cultural context beyond the pages of the magazine also needs to be explored further. How did these stars’ associations with film narratives, popular songs and performance conventions bring meanings from the outside into Linglong? What are we to make of a photo layout in Linglong that juxtaposes images of Hollywood stars engaging in heterosexual kissing and pictures of the Chinese stars Wang Renmei and Xu Lai, in a candid sisterly image and also featuring Xu cross-dressed in a tuxedo (Fig. 3.72)? Might this juxtaposition have been seen as a contrast between bold women from Hollywood and conservative Chinese stars, or even ‘feudal’ homosociality? Might it have been interpreted as a contesting heteronormativity, with its emphasis on female bonds and gender play? Such ambiguities are even more uncertain considering that the heading for the page featuring the Hollywood stars reads (mockingly?), “Humourous Kissing”. Did Linglong’s sexualized all-female depictions contribute new meanings to female-female affection in Chinese representations outside of the magazine’s pages, like the controversial scene in Big
Fig. 3.69. An uncaptioned image of dancers in Linglong no. 184, 1935, 1060.

Fig. 3.70. “A Fleshy World.” Linglong no. 81, 1933, 29.

Fig. 3.71. Starlets in a dressing room. Linglong no. 136, 1934, 672-3.
Considering the new meanings that relations between women acquired during this period, how is the convention of portraying actresses as sisters to be viewed when they posed for publicity photos to promote the films in which they starred together (Fig. 3.73)? Can Linglong’s sexualisation of sisterhood via representations of foreign women be read into these portrayals of Chinese stars, which circulated widely in publications besides Linglong? In what ways did readers/spectators, both female and male, interpret or relate to the public personas of these stars? Was the sisterly affection they conveyed in these roles perceived as innocent and normal, as Yingjin Zhang argues, or did alternative meanings intrude, including homoeroticism, as Chris Berry suggests? To what extent might an innocent performance effect such as the formation of a heart shape by the pose of two female dancers (Fig. 3.68) invoke less innocent
meanings? These are questions that relate to reception and the interpretive dimensions of historical analysis, which I have touched on in my study, but have not dealt with in depth. I have for the most part been concerned with discourses and representations, but by emphasising the discord in Linglong’s portrayals, my aim has been to highlight ruptures and gaps that open up possibilities for interpretive maneuvering by individual readers, a topic for a separate study.

Fig. 3.73. Chinese movie stars in publicity photos: Li Lili and Wang Renmei (top left), Li Lili and Ruan Lingyu (top right), Xia Peizhen and Hu Die (lower left) and Zhou Xuan and Yuan Meiyun (bottom right).
CONCLUSION

I set out to fulfill two objectives in my case study of Linglong Magazine: to explore the approach of horizontal reading and, using this method, to examine tensions in the construction of heteronormativity in the publication. As formulated by Michel Hockx, horizontal reading complements more established approaches to research by broadening the definition of what a text is. It regards full journal issues as collectively authored texts rather than contexts for works by a single author or material on a specific theme or idea. Taking a more inclusive perspective, horizontal reading emphasizes the practice of publishing and considers representations as they appear in relation to what is printed around it. I have adopted Hockx’s horizontal approach to examine Linglong because it confronts the problem of value in research. I was drawn to the method because, instead of narrowing in on material whose merit for academic attention has already been established, it provided a way to examine the processes by which assumptions and values are constructed. More importantly, I saw in this approach a way to highlight competing voices and attitudes that have been repressed or lost in both historical narratives and academic studies.

I have thus taken discursive and representational conflicts in Linglong as the focus of my analysis – contradictions and ambiguities internal to a discourse, but also between discourses. In the final chapter of my study, I have also underscored tensions between texts and images in the magazine to recognize the role that visual representations can have in generating ideas. In doing so, I rejected the notion that images are mere supplements to verbal language, or that the relationship between images and texts is a simple correlation. As for the continuities between textual discourses and visual representations that I have sought to bring forth, these were established through my emphasis on the disjunctions in both. In other words, the latent and dissonant meanings that I have detected in images filled a gap that was hinted at but missing in the written words.

While horizontal reading sets aside established hierarchies in terms of what is considered worthy of study, it does not deny or deface historical disparities in power. The approach has allowed me to locate
significant imbalances in discourses and representations that emerge on the pages of *Linglong*, rather than taking at face value the magazine’s claims that it was a completely open forum for exchanging ideas and opinions. I began to bring out these imbalances in Chapter 1, where I showed that, while diverse views are included on a range of issues, the rejection of marriage is clearly targeted for regulation in editorial mediations. At the same time, I pointed out some of the tensions in *Linglong* between its didacticism and playfulness, and showed how alternative attitudes are also more quietly suggested in subtexts. I attributed these tensions to the magazine’s aim to be both respectable and fashionably bold for the sake of commercial viability.

Underscoring these tensions more fully in Chapter 2, I examined discourses and dissonances in the construction of normative heterosexuality and marriage. I looked at regulatory texts that pathologize female same-sex love and uphold heteronormative romance and marriage as modern, natural and compulsory. I also looked at images that reaffirm these attitudes – modish new-style brides and exotic depictions of kissing from Euro-American cinema that were implicated in a regimentation of desire linking heterosexuality and marriage to a modern lifestyle in the new society. There are contradictions in these discourses, which I highlighted along with discordant voices that offset the uplifting claims about love between men and women. Some of these dissonant voices use humour and satire to attack men while others idealize female-female bonds with sentimentality and melancholy, like those of Zhuo Yijing and Chen Yu’er.

I also noted how the regulatory discourses are reactionary since they target for rectification behaviour and views that challenge heterocentric perspectives and interests. These include the trend of refusing to marry among the majority of university students, who are characterized as arrogant and unruly, and the opinion expressed in the advice column letter from Baoyu that same-sex unions are superior to opposite-sex unions, which is met with cautionary admonishment. Most remarkable are the defiant actions of the lovers Cao Baozhi and Kang Shuyi, who ran away together and insisted on remaining
unwed forever, which is presented in the magazine as an example of malicious behaviour that is not to be followed.

I ended Chapter 2 by underscoring the divergent attitudes toward female-female intimacy that can be found in *Linglong*. These are invoked in the story about the two English women who married and enjoyed a quiet but happy life together, and the curiosity expressed over the same-sex kisses between Liang Lucun and Tang Hulian. I explored these alternative sensibilities further in Chapter 3, where I shifted to a visually-based analysis. I suggested that alternative sensibilities of female autonomy, which include facets of love and desire between women, are hinted at and explored more playfully than the melancholic idealization of female-female bonding articulated in texts. I argued that with respect to female spectatorship, the juxtaposition of diverse femininities – from willowy Modern Girls to robust athletes – broadened the scope for women’s visual pleasure and identification with representations in erotically charged ways.

As devised by Hockx, horizontal reading is a macro approach that strives to look at as wide a range of materials as possible, regardless of apparent significance or how they have been esteemed or dismissed historically. There are limits, however, that need to be set for a research project to be viable. I thus agree and further emphasize that, as Hockx writes, fruitful and informed readings “will have to be the result of collaborative efforts by groups of scholars, rather than of individual enterprises.” As Hockx characterizes his own cross-genre readings of literary journals, the contribution that I have set out to make with my case study of *Linglong* is “admittedly fragmentary.”

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