

queer asia as method

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Queering Knowledge *Production*

Decolonising methodology through Queer Asia as Method

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“The theory I find most useful in my own research was developed by _____, working in _____, in the year _____.”

Why that theory? Why that location? Why that moment?

P A R T I



Why

“Queer Asia as Method”?

The genealogy and the stakes

Petrus Liu

2015

Queer theory & East–West binarisms

THE PARADOX

Anti-universalist claims in queer theory ironically depend on an East–West binary that marginalises non-Western experience — even as those claims gesture towards inclusion.

cf. Liu, P. (2015). *Queer Marxism in two Chinas*. Duke University Press.

Martin, Jackson, McLelland & Yue

Asia Pacific Queer · 2008

The structural problem of legitimation

WESTERN AS UNIVERSAL, ASIAN
AS LOCAL

Western frameworks are positioned as general and universal; local Asian cultures as merely local and particular. The Western researcher mines the raw material of the other culture.

— Martin et al. (2008)

Chen Kuan-hsing

Asia as Method · 2010

After Takeuchi Yoshimi · Toward deimperialisation

THE PROPOSAL

Make Asian societies each other's primary points of reference, rather than routing all comparative analysis through Euro-American theory.

— after Chen (2010); cf. Takeuchi Yoshimi



Song Hwee Lim

Queering Asia, Querying Method · 2025

One man's Asian virtue may well be another person's perpetual prison.

— Lim, 2025

1

Celebratory Asia

discourses of Asian virtue can mask violence against women and queer subjects.

2

Hostility to theory

'method' over 'theory' can smack of bias — at worst, toxic masculinity.

3

No pure precolonial

decolonisation ≠ return to a sealed, untainted Asia (Dirlik 1994).

P A R T I I



Three

methodological moves

After Yue (2017)

queer

...as adjective. ...as verb. ...as methodology.

0 1

A D J E C T I V E

Research queer Asia.

Centre LGBTQ+ subjects, communities and cultural production in the analysis of Asia.

0 2

V E R B

Queer Asia.

Refuse the area-studies impulse to reify culture as a free pass to suspend critique.

0 3

M E T H O D O L O G Y

Queer the method itself.

Change what counts as evidence, who is a knowing subject, what genres are legitimate.

01

queer

as adjective

Queer (German *quer*) — oblique, at right angles, obstructive. To use queer adjectivally is not just to add a topic; it is to derail.

Methodological lesson → *Adding marginalised subjects to existing frameworks is the beginning, not the end, of decolonial work.*

to queer

the very idea of Asia

‘Culture’ pursued in a morally complacent, antitheoretical mode functions as a shield — hiding the positivism, essentialism and nativism that accompany area studies.

Methodological lesson → When you reach for ‘but in this cultural context...’ to close a critical question, ask whether you are doing decolonial work or conceptual irresponsibility.

queering

the methodology itself

Negative affects — envy, rage, burnout, anxiety — are not obstacles to scholarship but constitutive of the method. The precarity of the researcher is part of the data, not interference with it.

Methodological lesson → Decolonising methodology eventually requires changing the form of the work, not just its content.

These three moves do not *always sit comfortably together.*

Adjective and *verb* are sometimes in tension — you cannot simultaneously stabilise queer Asia as a research object and destabilise the categories that make it legible.

The methodological move can come into conflict with the demands of academic publishing, peer review and the PhD examination process.

None of this is resolved. Queer Asia as Method is a working framework, not a finished doctrine.

PART III



Working

through a case

Applied thinking

Imagine a manuscript...

TOPIC	Transnational Boys' Love media consumption among Vietnamese queer youth
AUTHOR	Vietnamese, assigned male at birth, cis-gender gay man
FRAMEWORK	<i>José Esteban Muñoz — disidentification</i>
DEVELOPED IN	US Latinx queer-of-colour critique
DEPLOYED ON	Thai BL dramas, watched by Vietnamese audiences

Composite — not a real submission



Three questions

to put to your own work — and to the work you review.

ADJECTIVAL

Does the work centre Vietnamese queer experience seriously — or use Vietnam as illustrative material for a theoretical argument that already knew where it was going?

VERBAL

Does the work queer the categories — Vietnam, queerness, Thai BL, Confucianism, heteronormativity — that it deploys, or stabilise them as bounded objects?

METHODOLOGICAL

When Muñoz's disidentification travels to Ho Chi Minh City, is it being put into dialogue with Vietnamese intellectual traditions — or applied to Vietnamese material?

These are not questions of disqualification — they are questions of accountability.

C L O S I N G

Ethics, duties,

and the room we're in.

Synthesis and provocation

N o t

Who we are.
How we do things.

B u t

What we do.
Why we do it.

A reorientation from identity to ethics. From location to duty.

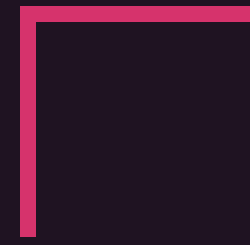
Identity as a matter of duties and ethics, not of being.

Queer Asia as Method

is an ongoing academic project. It will not save anyone.

But it tries to be honest about the conditions of its own production — and to insist that decolonising methodology is not separable from the work of building solidarities *across disciplines, across regions, across the profoundly uneven distributions of academic security.*

Co-organisers and contributors who could not be in the final special issue — because of war, displacement, political crisis — remain part of this method.



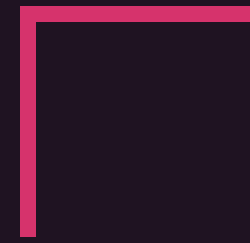
T H E Q U E S T I O N I W A N T T O L E A V E Y O U W I T H

What does your methodology *owe* —

and how would your work look different *if you took those debts seriously?*



Thank you.



R e l a t e d w o r k s

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Thank you.