11

Disappearing Faces:

Bisexuality and Transvestism in Two Hong Kong Comedies

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Bisexuality and the Conundrum of Gender

I cannot recall, when I first dreamt of you
If you were wearing a neck tie or a dress
I cannot recall if that scent was your fragrance
Or your eyebrow steeped in smiles

I cannot recall, when I dreamt of you again
If you were wearing ear-rings or a moustache
I cannot recall if that bronze ring was your jewelry
Or your feigned nonchalance

You said you cried after reading a poem
I said I don't like writing gray words anymore
Is there even a relation, or are dreams speaking?
You said you love a severe winter
I said I no longer detest the hot sun
Is there even a connection, or are dreams conversing?[1]
— Anson Mak, *Bisexual Desire*

This poem, which appears in the first Chinese-language publication on bisexuality to appear in Hong Kong, articulates bisexual desire by eroticizing the ambivalence of gender difference. The speaker in the

poem invokes clichéd markers of gender (necktie, dress, earrings, moustache), but the neat lineup of binary oppositions is displaced by the speaker's pleasurable refusal to "recall" the difference between each pair of opposed terms. This deconstructive tactic is reminiscent of Hélène Cixous's famous pairings of masculinity and femininity in "Sorties," where Cixous offered one of the earliest feminist attempts to deconstruct gender in Derridean fashion.[2] Yet, the bisexual lover's imperative is not exactly the same as the feminist one's: it is erotic rather than critical. It does not aim so much to undo the hierarchical power structure of gendered signs as to eroticize their interchangeability. In the poem, it remains unclear (and it does not matter) whether the necktie or the dress is worn (or desired) by a female or male body. The erotic resides in the dreamlike atmosphere where it is impossible to tell the difference, and where the possibility of multiple and simultaneous configurations of sexed bodies, gender identification, and desire exists. In effect, Anson Mak's poem issues an erotic challenge to what Judith Butler has theorized as the "heterosexual matrix": that the logic that requires identification and desire be mutually exclusive, and that it presume "if one identifies *as* a given gender, one must desire a different gender."[3] Bisexual eroticism undoes this equation and opens room for a radically different understanding of gender and sexuality.

This notion of bisexuality—not as a political identity, sexual orientation, or descriptive category, but as a deconstructive principle—informs the primary argument in Marjorie Garber's *Vice Versa: Bisexuality and the Eroticism of the Everyday Life*, which documents in approximately five hundred pages the ubiquitous presence of bisexual desire in Western culture. For Garber, the apparently infinitely inexhaustible accounts of bisexuality's presence do not so much define bisexuality as reveal its radical openness:

> If bisexuality is . . . not just another sexual orientation but rather a sexuality that undoes sexual orientation as a category, a sexuality that threatens and challenges the easy binaries of straight and gay, queer and "het," and even, through its biological and physiological meanings, the gender categories of male and female, then the search for the meaning of the word "bisexual" offers a different kind of lesson. . . . The question of whether someone was "really" straight or "really" gay misrecognizes the nature of sexuality, which is fluid, not fixed, a narrative that changes over time rather than a fixed identity, however complex. The erotic discovery of bisexuality is the fact that it reveals sexuality to be a process of growth, transformation, and surprise, not a stable and knowable state of being.[4]

In Garber's study, bisexuality often serves as an interpretive strategy, a way of rereading texts previously understood simply as "gay" texts, or

more often *failed* "gay" texts that recuperate heterosexual closures. As such, the consideration of bisexual desire and eroticism serves as an effective intervention into what Ellis Hanson, in the context of queer cinema, has criticized as the "politics of representation" model of reading. Hanson argued that ideology critiques that are preoccupied with prescribing positive or liberating images presuppose the possibility and desirability of an "authentic" representation while discounting complex mediating factors such as cinematic pleasure, spectatorial positions, and processes of (mis)identification.[5] Thus, films like *Personal Best*, *Henry and June*, or *The Wedding Banquet*, which explore the permeability rather than the absolute incommensurability of gay and straight desires, are often perceived to be not authentically representative of gay experience. Efforts like Garber's to reread them as bisexual rather than as failed gay texts call attention to the fluidity and unpredictability of sexual desire, which are not accounted for in the discourse of fixed "sexual orientation."

In the context of Hong Kong cinema, where the conscious and serious exploration of queer desire in cinema is only a very recent phenomenon—best exemplified by all of Stanley Kwan's films since *Yin +/– yang* (*Nansheng Nuxiang,* 1996) and the works of independent film and video makers such as Raymond Yeung and Yau Ching—the consideration of bisexuality provides a refreshing and useful perspective to interpret the strong undercurrent of homoeroticism in ostensibly "straight" genres such as action films and comedies. In comedies in particular, where irreverent and subversive subject matters are usually couched in humor and inevitably tamed by ideologically conservative endings, the representations of homoeroticism and gay desire often appear to provide nothing more than comic relief before disappearing to make way for heterosexual closures. One of the most popular tropes used to produce this kind of comedy is the transvestite disguise. The momentary misrecognition of a character's gender identity induces what appears to be homosexual desire but which becomes unmasked as "really" heterosexual when the transvestite disguise is removed at the end. While an ideological critique of such films yields many insights into the recuperative power of heterocentrism, it also tends to elide the intimate relation between transvestism and bisexual desire. It is no coincidence that *Vested Interests*, Garber's book on transvestism, is strikingly similar in structure and style to *Vice Versa*. In *Vested Interests*, transvestism—like bisexuality in the later book—was invoked as a deconstructive principle, what Garber called the logic of "the third":

> The "third" is that which questions binary thinking and introduces crisis . . . the "third term" is *not* a *term*. Much less is it a *sex*, certainly not an instantiated "blurred" sex as signified by a term like "androgyne" or "hermaphrodite. . . ." The "third" is a mode of articulation, a way of describing a space of possibility. Three puts

-1—
0—
+1—

> into question the idea of one: of identity, self-sufficiency, self-knowledge.[6]

While bisexuality challenges the logic of "sexual orientation" that fixes, once and for all, the relation between gender identification and sexual desire, transvestism calls into questions the putatively stable relation between sexed bodies and gender identity. The seemingly innocuous use of transvestite disguise in comedies often instigates bisexual pleasures that cannot be easily recontained by heterosexual closures. What I would like to show in the rest of this chapter is the various and complex ways in which transvestism generates bisexual spectatorial pleasure despite seemingly heterosexual resolutions.

The Pleasures of the Fence

Peter Chan's two box-office smash hits, *He's a Woman, She's a Man* (*Jinzhi Yuye*, 1996) and the sequel *Who's the Woman, Who's the Man* (*Jinzhi Yuye II*, 1996), provide a useful point of departure for the discussion of bisexuality and transvestism in Hong Kong cinema. The sexual politics of the first film have been criticized for stereotypical representation of minor gay characters (such as the record producer played by Eric Tsang and the Cantonese opera singer played by Law Kar-Ying) and the film's restoration of heterosexual romance at the end.[7] Perhaps aware of or anticipating such criticism, the director Peter Chan even felt the need to make a disclaimer in the form of a short documentary that appears in the video release of the film. In his disclaimer, Chan states that *He's a Woman* "looks at a changing world purely through the lens of heterosexuality." In this "changing world," Chan and some of the lead actors went on to suggest, there is an increasing awareness in people of the possibility of latent gay desire. ("Everyone, at one time or another of their life, has probably considered the possibility that they may be gay.") Indeed, one of the film's plot lines follows the twists and turns of a man's exploration of this latent possibility. On the surface, then, the film seems to be about gay desire that appears and recedes in people who ultimately heave a sigh of relief at the reassurance that they are, after all, "really" heterosexual. Yet, despite the complete silence on bisexuality in popular discourses around the film, it is precisely bisexuality that structures the fundamental dynamics of desire in both this film and its sequel. Moreover, bisexual desire is instigated by and articulated through the practice of transvestism.

He's a Woman tells the story of Wing (Anita Yuen), a young woman of meager means who idolizes a glamorous show-business couple: the producer and songwriter Sam Koo (Leslie Cheung) and the superdiva Rose (Carina Lau), who rises to stardom under Koo's tutelage. Unknown to adoring fans like Wing, the romance between Koo and Rose is cooling

down. In an attempt to curb his own tendency to fall for the newest female singer under his tutelage, Koo decides to sign an "ordinary young man" instead for his next recording project. Obsessed with meeting her idols, Wing disguises herself as a young man and shows up at the audition. Through chance, Wing actually wins the audition in spite of her mediocre singing talent. She moves in with Koo while being groomed as an upcoming recording star. Sexual attraction between Wing and Koo develops, despite resistance from both: Koo because of his homophobia and Wing because of her reluctance to break up Rose and Koo. Koo struggles with his homoerotic impulses before Wing's disguise is finally unmasked and heterosexual romance wins the day.

The film employs many of the generic conventions that Chris Straayer attributes to "the temporary transvestite film." Films in this genre, Straayer suggests, offer viewers "a momentary vicarious trespassing of society's accepted boundaries for gender and sexual behavior," while allowing viewers to "relax confidently in the orderly demarcations reconstituted by the films' ending."[8] Straayer's discussion of Hollywood films shows that their deployment of transvestite disguise sutures viewers into alternately or simultaneously heterosexual and homosexual subject-positions. This "fence-sitting" pleasure is generated through an unstable oscillation between different levels and elements of the film text. In Hollywood films, such an oscillation is usually stabilized at the end by the powerful reassertion of heterosexual closure. In *He's a Woman* and *Who's the Woman*, this spectatorial fence is constructed in more complex ways, by a multivalent bisexual epistemology that is not so readily recuperable by heterosexual closure.

Although never explicitly acknowledged, it is in fact bisexual desire that motivates Wing's transvestite disguise. In Hollywood films of the same genre, the transvestite disguise is usually purely functional. For example, Dustin Hoffman's character in *Tootsie* is driven by economic necessity to look for work disguised as a woman, while Robin Williams' character in *Mrs. Doubtfire* dresses up as a woman to be close to his children after he has lost a custody battle to his ex-wife. By contrast, Wing's disguise is *erotically* motivated by her idolatry of Rose and Koo as a couple. In a very comical opening scene, Wing weeps with joy in front of the television set as Rose declares her love for Koo on a live broadcast during an awards ceremony. In this scene, Wing is a spectator *par excellence*. The complex dynamics of her relation to the spectacle illustrate what Maria Pramaggiore characterizes as "bisexual spectatorship"— that is, "the spectatorial difficulty of clearly distinguishing between wanting to 'be' a character . . . and wanting to 'have' a character."[9] When Rose pronounces her love for Koo on the television screen, Wing repeats after her, "I love you too." It is ambiguous whether "you" refers to Rose (in which case Wing is desiring Rose through the gaze) or Koo (in which case Wing is identifying with

Rose through the gaze). This conflation between desire and identification is more dramatically realized in a later scene. Rose, certain that Wing is a man but uncertain whether "he" is straight or gay, decides to test Wing's attraction to her. After a romantic dinner together, Rose takes Wing back to her apartment and starts to undress in Wing's presence. Wing looks longingly at Rose's breasts and asks for permission to fondle them, mumbling, "I have never known what it feels like to have such big breasts." Wing is ostensibly experiencing a moment of envy, desiring to be like Rose. However, her narcissistic identification is channeled into a desire for (hence a wish to fondle) Rose's breasts. Besides Wing's conflation of desire and identification vis-à-vis (the spectacle of) Rose, she is also implicated in another common figure for bisexuality: the triangle. As the opening scene clearly suggests, Wing is initially attracted to Rose and Koo as a couple, with herself as an undefined third term rather than a replacement of Rose. In an early scene, Wing declares her wish for Rose and Koo to love each other forever, and for herself to become their "invisible angel." When Wing discovers that she has caused Koo and Rose to break up, her reaction is explicitly depicted as a moment of pain, rather than as pleasure or triumph. The erasure of Rose and the domestication of Wing into part of a heterosexual couple at the end of the film results from the characters' failure to acknowledge and explore the erotic possibilities of bisexuality, even though these possibilities have driven much of their previous action. More important, such an ending marks the film's failure to fully accommodate the complex demands of bisexual spectatorship.

However, the scene that actually ends the film is curiously not completely devoid of queer resonance, showing once again a fence-sitting impulse. Bisexuality resurfaces in Koo, who decides that he loves Wing *before* he clearly understands that Wing is "actually" a woman. Wing, wearing a dress in front of Koo for the first time, tells Koo that she is "really a woman." However, much as Dil (Jaye Davidson) in *The Crying Game* looks even less like a man when Ferghus (Stephen Rea) "restores" him/her to masculine attire, Anita Yuen with her cropped hair, waif-like figure, and minimal make-up also looks curiously at odds with her feminine clothing in this scene. Koo, understandably suspicious and unconvinced by Wing's claim, declares his love for Wing *bisexually*: "I love you, whether you're a man or a woman." Although this ending is very much a reinscription of heterosexuality on the narrative level, Koo's bisexual declaration, combined with Wing's androgynous appearance, swings the film at least momentarily back to the queer side of the fence.

The sequel adopts a more radical plot line that explicitly develops the latent bisexual content of the first film. In *Who's the Woman*, Koo and Wing have moved in together as a couple. Koo's portrayal becomes increasingly unsympathetic as he grows weary of Wing's constant demand for his company. As a selfish ploy to distract her, he encourages Wing to revive her

short but promising career masquerading as a male recording star. Wing's androgynous image propels her to stardom. She is soon winning awards and being offered film roles, while her disguised male identity remains intact. Meanwhile, Fong (Anita Mui), a famous actress known for her transvestite roles, has moved into the apartment downstairs. Since early retirement, Fong has been traveling around the world with her assistant, a flamboyant young lesbian called O (Theresa Lee). Fong initially has an anonymous fling with Koo but later becomes very attracted to Wing, who continues to maintain her masculine disguise. Wing, in turn, becomes deeply attached to Fong, who is far more attentive to her than the selfish and arrogant Koo. In a subplot, Wing's best friend Fish Man (Jordan Chan) tries to pursue O, who rejects him repeatedly on the ground that she only desires women. The sexual tension between Fong and Wing culminates when they star together as lovers in a transvestite comedy, in which Fong plays a man and the supposedly male Wing plays a woman. Jealous of the developing attraction between the two women, Koo reveals to Fong that Wing is in fact a woman, assuming that his news will discourage Fong from falling for Wing. To his dismay, the knowledge does not affect Fong's attraction to Wing. An on-screen kiss between the women during a film shoot leads to off-screen sex in the apartment Wing shares with Koo. On the same afternoon, Fish Man dresses up as a woman and successfully seduces O, who is sleeping by the swimming pool and comically mistakes Fish Man to be the sexy actress Christy Chung. The film ends in Fong and O's departure from Hong Kong and the restoration of Wing and Koo's romance.

In this film, the bisexual triangle is more fully realized on the narrative level as Wing, Koo, and Fong have all been lovers with each other, developing the erotic configuration that could have happened between Koo, Wing, and Rose in the first film. More interestingly, some of the conventions of the temporary transvestite film are innovatively explored in scenes rich with self-referential allusions to the film's own queer undertone. For instance, the kiss between Fong and Wing in the film-within-the-film is a complex variation on what Straayer called "the paradoxical bivalent kiss":

> In this generic system the conflict between a character's actual sex and the sex implied by the character's disguise and performance functions to create simultaneously heterosexual and homosexual interactions. Narrative point of view and nonnarrative spectacle collaborate through contradiction to create a double entendre of simultaneous homosexual and heterosexual readings, identifications, and experiences in film viewers—viewers caught within the narrative and nonnarrative interpretations and by identification with a bi-sexed figure.[10]

The "bivalent kiss" plays on viewers' consciousness of the disguised character's real as well as fictive gender, thus instigating both homosexual and heterosexual pleasures. The kiss between Wing and Fong in *Who's the Woman* is an ironic play on this generic convention. The scene operates on three different levels: the narrative of the film depicts it as a lesbian kiss between Fong and Wing; the narrative of the film-within-the-film, which is parodically entitled *Now a Woman, now a Man* (*Hu Nan Hu Nü*), depicts it as a queer kiss between two transvestites; and the nonnarrative spectacle depicts it as a heterosexual kiss between a man and a woman. The film-within-the-film uses transvestite disguise while ensuring heterosexual closure by employing a female and a (supposedly) male actor, each disguised as the opposite sex, to play heterosexual lovers. Unknown to the audience-within-the-film, "actual" lesbian desire is present behind the kiss. Drawing attention to the fact that the cinematic medium is another site of disguise, this sly parody suggests that a film may contain ever-multiplying layers of disguise, provoking multivalent desire and identification in viewers, often without their full consciousness of the underlying dynamics. It also suggests that a seemingly heterosexual filmic resolution (including the film's own) may be ripe with all kinds of unacknowledged queer resonances.

In the sex scene that culminates from the kiss, the camera eschews any direct representation of the 'actual' lesbian sex between Wing and Fong, and focuses instead on the disguised 'lesbian' sex between Fish Man and O, a scene that turns Fish Man into a bi-sexed figure and O into a bisexual figure. This maneuver may be the film's attempt to straddle what Pramaggiore calls the "industrial fence"[11]: on the one hand to fully develop the bisexual plot, and on the other hand to placate homophobic viewers by visually showing sex between a man and a woman rather than between two women. However, the wildly funny sex scene between Fish Man and O, which may be called "bivalent sex" as it works in the same way as the bivalent kiss, is by no means a "straight" representation of heterosex. Fish Man's transvestite disguise is blatantly inadequate, but O, who is either too asleep or too drunk to notice—or perhaps slyly enjoying Fish Man's queer act of seduction—responds passionately to Fish Man *as though* he were a woman. She fondles his fake breasts, savors the smoothness of his shaved thighs and legs and squeezes his buttocks, all the while mumbling "Christy! Christy!" in ecstasy. This bivalent sex serves as a comedic foil to the sex between Fong and Wing in the background, resulting in a layered scene that oscillates wildly between multiple configurations of erotic desire.

The ending of *Who's the Woman*, like that of *He's a Woman*, is obviously a strained attempt at asserting heterosexual closure. It is less obviously also symptomatic of the way bisexuality disappears from the screen. The concluding scene takes place in an aircraft bound for "Africa." (The ridiculously vague reference reveals the film's problematic evocation—one that is disturbingly reminiscent of primitivist discourse—of an undifferentiated

"Africa" as a land of instincts, spontaneity, and inspiration.) Fong has just left Hong Kong again, and Wing, in complete confusion over her life, is going away on her own to where Koo has always claimed to be the place of his dreams. Koo finally catches up with Wing and tries to comfort her while she sobs. As Wing is dressed like a man, a stewardess (played by director Ann Hui in a cameo appearance) stares at the two uncomfortably:

> Koo: What are you looking at? I'm just comforting my wife.
> Stewardess: But, sir, he's a man.
> Koo: (annoyed) So what? Is that forbidden?
> Stewardess: (apologetic) No, no, of course not.

After this exchange, Koo promptly asks Wing to marry him, and the film ends as though heterosexual marriage resolves all of the characters' previous bisexual involvements with each other. The exchange between Koo and the stewardess is the film's feeble attempt to assert, against the heterocentric thrust of the narrative, that there is nothing wrong with gay desire. Yet, this aside brings up the prickly question of why Fong has to leave, at a point in the film when all the emotional and sexual tension has been built to culminate in *her* union with Wing. But then, how can three people make a romantic "couple"? Can bisexuality provide closure, and if so, how? Finding creative answers for these questions will surely chart a new erotic landscape in Hong Kong cinema.

Bisexuality and Disappearance

The abrupt disappearance of Fong from *Who's the Woman* (like the less glaring erasure of Rose in the earlier *He's a Woman*) marks the disappearance of bisexuality. Most of the main characters, including Wing, Fong, O, Koo, Fish Man, and Rose, have displayed a capacity for bisexual eroticism, yet each character is forced to renounce either one of what are constructed as two mutually exclusive *kinds* of desire. Interestingly, as already presented here, the film's own production of spectatorial pleasure depends entirely on its viewers' enjoyment of bisexual eroticism. In other words, the film's use of triangles and transvestite disguise creates *both* homosexual and heterosexual subject-positions or, more properly speaking, bisexual subject-positions that do not exclude an object-choice on the basis of gender, do not distinguish clearly between identification and desire, and do not respond to multiple object-choices in multiple kinds of gendered configurations. The erasure of bisexuality at the end is thus, at the same time, an inability to acknowledge the dynamics of the film's own production of pleasure.

The problem of intelligibility is, of course, endemic to any discussion of bisexuality. Garber suggests at the beginning of *Vice Versa* that bisexuality

is paradoxically constructed by "common wisdom" as being either everywhere ("Everyone is bisexual") or nowhere ("There is no such thing as bisexuality").[12] Such cavalier declarations of seeming truisms efface bisexuality as a distinct erotic capacity. Similarly, while most of the characters in the two films have the capacity for and, to varying degrees, the experience of bisexual eroticism, they all seem to interpret such capacity and experience as results of misunderstanding, confusion, or deception, hence fundamentally irrelevant to their "real" erotic capacity, which is presumably either gay or straight. Bisexuality here has become an unutterable sign—that which brings existent understanding of sexuality in crisis but remains unarticulated as such. In his review of *Who's the Woman*, the film critic Sek Kei relates this sense of confusion and inarticulation to the general state of Hong Kong during the postcolonial transition:

> Are the three principal characters gay or not gay? It is really not very clear. Perhaps one can only say that this film is about "identity crisis" and "gender complex." Perhaps this desire for everything, accompanied by an uncertainty of what exactly is being desired, is representative of a certain Hong Kong style confusion.[13]

Indeed, the predicament of bisexuality in these comedies—where bisexuality disappears from the screen not because it ceases to exist but because there is no acknowledgement of it as an erotic capacity as such—is closely akin to what Ackbar Abbas theorizes as the predicament of Hong Kong culture itself:

> As for Hong Kong, it was, in a favorite phrase, "a cultural desert." Not that there was nothing going on in cinema, architecture, and writing, it was just not recognized to be culture as such. This refusal to see is an example of reverse hallucination. . . . If hallucination means seeing ghosts and apparitions, that is, something that is not there, reverse hallucination means *not* seeing what *is* there.[14]

This predicament is intensified during the period of postcolonial transition, when not only Hong Kong's culture but also its language, lifestyle, political structure, economic function—in short, everything that has come to define Hong Kong—seem poised on the brink of disappearance, not because they will cease to exist, but because it becomes doubtful if they will continue to be *intelligible* as belonging specifically to Hong Kong. In relation to the new cinema that is emerging precisely during this volatile period of change, Abbas argues that Hong Kong as a subject matter cannot be represented without precipitating a crisis in representation itself: Hong Kong permutates so quickly that it appears to have always already disappeared by the time it is made into an image or narrated as a story. Abbas

argues that the new cinema does not try to develop new content or invent new forms. Instead, it renders the act of viewing itself problematic:

> These . . . films of the new Hong Kong cinema . . . define for us the spatial conditions of viewing and of filmmaking, where the act of looking itself has become problematic: the more you try to make the world hold still in a reflective gaze, the more it moves under you. These films do not so much thematize Hong Kong culture as they give us a critical experience of Hong Kong's cultural space by problematizing the viewing process.[15]

This curious tactic of reproducing the problematic conditions of intelligibility, rather than trying to make something more intelligible, is also at work in these two comedies of bisexual desire. This argument does not mean to suggest that the films intend to use queer sexuality as a metaphor for Hong Kong's postcolonial predicament. On the contrary, sexuality is most likely meant to provide a playful escape from such serious concerns. Yet, the films' attempt to articulate what Peter Chan called a "changing world," where sexual desire no longer conforms to the dominant binary and monosexual discourse of sexual orientation, unwittingly reproduces the conditions of disappearance that structure—and are structured by—the "changing world" of Hong Kong's postcoloniality. The seeming restoration of "order" at the end of both comedies cannot entirely curb the excess of the queer humor, just as the enforced "order" of postcolonial transition has not stopped the debates over Hong Kong's cultural location and political identity.

The lesson of bisexuality's constitutive role and disappearance in these popular comedies may thus have important significance for Hong Kong culture in general. Many of the most insightful and nuanced accounts of Hong Kong culture, by critics such as P. K. Leung (1995), S.L. Li (1997), and Rey Chow (1998),[16] have focused on the *difficulty* of representing Hong Kong, as well as the hybrid, mediated, and layered expressions that writers, songwriters, and filmmakers must deploy to represent a rapidly changing culture, the specificity of which is in danger of being elided in the face of a homogenizing discourse about Chinese nationalism. This struggle for emergence is precisely the struggle of bisexual politics. Mak wove these two predicaments together in this way:

> Speaking of 'bi' or 'bai,'[17] one doesn't even know if one's speaking in English or Chinese. Hong Kong people often use words which can be spoken aloud but have no corresponding written characters.[18] Even if these are Chinese words, they only exist in Cantonese. I don't even know whether to be happy about such hyper localism or anxious about its exclusivity. Speaking of "bi" or "bai"

> is difficult not only because there is a lack of discussion on sexuality and desire in Hong Kong culture and hence a lack of adequate vocabulary, but also because there is no acknowledgement that bisexual desire even exists. . . . [19]

The lack of adequate expressions for bisexuality in Hong Kong, except through a kind of linguistic transvestism (where English words are "dressed" in Cantonese to the effect that one can no longer clearly determine if the word is English or Cantonese Chinese), fosters a cultural and political expression that cannot afford to rely on the certainty of categories and the fixity of identity. In the "changing worlds" of desire and politics, it is perhaps the only kind of expression that will survive and emerge as a new and vibrant form of discourse.

Notes

1. All translations of Chinese texts are mine unless otherwise noted.

2. Helene Cixous, "Sorties," Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtivron, eds., *New French Feminisms* (New York: Schocken, 1980), 90.

3. Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 239.

4. Marjorie Garber, *Vice Versa: Bisexuality and the Eroticism of Everyday Life* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995), 65–66.

5. Ellis Hanson, "Introduction: Out Takes," Ellis Hanson, ed., *Out Takes: Essays on Queer Theory and Film* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), 6–10.

6. Marjorie Garber, *Vested Interests: Cross-dressing and Cultural Anxiety* (New York: HarperCollins, 1992), 11.

7. See Lee Cheuk-To, *Linli Theatre/Linli Yingxiang Guan* (Hong Kong: Subculture, 1996), 121–125 and Chou Wah-Shan, *On Tongzhi/Tongzhi Lun* (Hong Kong: Tongzhi yanjiu she, 1994), 290. Tongzhi, literally meaning "comrade" in Chinese, was coined by Hong Kong playwright Edward Lam when he launched a film festival in Taiwan in 1991, introducing the New Queer Cinema. The term caught on quickly and has since become the most commonly used term in Hong Kong to describe sexual minorities. However, other local and linguistically hybrid terms are also continually being coined and put to use (for example, see note 17).

8. Chris Straayer, *Deviant Eyes, Deviant Bodies: Sexual Re-orientations in Film and Video* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 42–44.

9. Maria Pramaggiore, "Straddling the Screen: Bisexual Spectatorship and Contemporary Narrative Film," Donald Hall and Maria Pramaggiore, eds., *RePresenting Bisexualities: Subjects and Cultures of Fluid Desire* (New York: New York University Press, 1996), 282.

10. Chris Straayer, *Deviant Eyes, Deviant Bodies*, 54.

11. Maria Pramaggiore, "Straddling the Screen," 275.

12. Marjorie Garber, *Vice Versa*, 16.

13. Sek Kei, *Collected Reviews of Sek Kei/Shi Qi Yinghua Ji*, Vol.4 (Hong Kong: Subculture, 1999), 362.

14. Ackbar Abbas, *Hong Kong: Culture and the Politics of Disappearance* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 6.

15. Ibid., 26.

16. See Rey Chow, *Ethics After Idealism: Theory—Culture—Ethnicity—Readin g* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998); P. K Leung, *Hong Kong Culture/ Xianggang Wenhua* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Arts Centre, 1995); and S.L. Li, "The Colonial Historical Imaginary," Wong Wang-chi, ed., *Hong Kong: Unimagined: History, Culture, the Future/Fuoxiang Xianggang: Lishi, Wenhua, Weilai* (Taipei: Rye Field, 1997), 133–264.

17. *Bai* is literally the Chinese term for "defeat." Its Cantonese pronunciation is synonymous with the English term "bi." Transliterating English words in this way is a very common practice in Hong Kong. *Gei* (literally meaning 'foundation' in Cantonese), for instance, is very commonly used as the word for "gay."

18. The modern Chinese script is based on the dialect spoken by the educated class in the Beijing region. There are thus many words used in spoken dialects that cannot be written because they do not exist in the Beijing dialect. The brand of Cantonese spoken in Hong Kong is especially rich in these exclusively oral expressions.

19. Anson Mak, *Bisexual Desire/Shuangxing Qingyu* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Christian Women's Association, 2000), 6.