

Helen Hok-Sze Leung

Undercurrents
Queer Culture and Postcolonial
Hong Kong



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In Queer Memory

Leslie Cheung (1956-2003)

Death of an Icon

"2003 was a damn tough year to swallow!" This widely shared sentiment finds dramatic expression in *Golden Chicken 2* (Samson Chiu, 2003), the runaway box office hit that portrays events in that year through the eyes of a quirky and resilient sex worker. Indeed, for a population still reeling from years of economic downturn and living under an inept postcolonial administration that was nonetheless "reelected" in 2002 through an undemocratic political system, 2003 must have felt like an insult added to injury. The unexpected onslaught of SARS had ravaged the city in both health and economic terms, while the government was planning to write into law a highly unpopular piece of anti-sedition legislation – the controversial Article 23 – despite widespread popular dissent. Boiling discontent erupted on the sixth anniversary of the handover when a half-million people took to the streets to protest the proposed legislation and, by implication, life under the (then) current administration.¹ It was during such a tumultuous year and on the most absurdist of dates – 1 April – that actor and singer Leslie Cheung took his own life by jumping from the twenty-fourth floor of the Mandarin Oriental Hotel in Central, Hong Kong's downtown core, against the backdrop of a magnificent sunset over Victoria Harbour. Only forty-six at the time of his death, Cheung was an eclectic and long-established artist at the height of his professional powers, with more than forty best-selling albums and fifty-six films – many internationally acclaimed – to his credit. The suicide was attributed to severe clinical depression, but the public responded with an overwhelming wave of shock and grief, as though channelling the pent-up frustrations and unhappiness from their own lives. Even in the drizzling spring rain and under the grim threat of SARS, thousands came out to mourn Cheung's passing. For weeks the site of his death was awash in a sea of flowers and mementos. Through both print and digital media, eulogies poured in. Cheung's death was repeatedly mourned as the passage of an era. Sociologist Ng Chun-Hung declared that "a generation has officially ended."²

Music scholar Joanna Lee called Cheung's twenty-six-year career "a testament to Hong Kong's transformation" and a marker of the city's "years of glory."³ Writer and artist Mathias Woo described Cheung's passing as "a traumatic blow to a city already so bereaved" and "a death-toll to an era."⁴ Almost as frequently, Cheung was also praised for his sexual courage. An editorial in the *Economic Daily* characterized Cheung's sexual openness as "a challenge to the normative social value of masculinity."⁵ Film critic Lam Pui-Li stated that he regards many of Cheung's film roles as "a gay person's brave coming out journey."⁶ Reporter Wat Wing-Yin lambasted those who expressed contempt for Cheung's homosexuality and voiced her admiration for Cheung's eighteen-year relationship with his male lover.⁷

It was certainly unprecedented in Hong Kong for a public figure's death to prompt such an outpouring of affection while at the same time eliciting so much positive commentary on his sexuality. Perhaps as a response to this unusually affirmative media attention, *tongzhi* organizations also began to publicly acknowledge Cheung as one of their own. The popular website Gay Station floated a banner with Cheung's picture accompanied by the words "Our Pride," while members of its bulletin board spontaneously launched a campaign that called on its members to post pictures of orchids (Cheung's favourite flower) on a thread that recorded over 20,000 hits and, to this day, remains one of the top ten most viewed topics of all time.⁸ Prominent *tongzhi* organizations such as Horizon, Queer Sisters, Rainbow Hong Kong, and Chi Hang Foundation published tributes in major newspapers and followed up with numerous memorial activities. At his death, Cheung had become both a Hong Kong icon and a queer icon. In 2005 cultural critic Natalia Chan published an impassioned article in which she dubbed Cheung an "icon of transgression."⁹ The term Chan uses for "icon" in Chinese is literally "sacred figure" (*shengxiang*), a word choice that nudges the posthumous discourse on Cheung toward a hagiography. While Cheung is without a doubt one of the most iconic figures for the generation in Hong Kong that came of age in the 1980s, a careful look back at his career as well as *tongzhi* communities' response to his public persona reveals that he has not always been considered a figure of "transgression" or the "pride" of the *tongzhi* community. Nor by any stretch of the imagination could his film roles be understood as documentation of "a gay person's brave coming out." Ironically, the well-intentioned rush to memorialize Cheung's life, art, and relation to Hong Kong's *tongzhi* communities in a positive light has instead buried the complexity and ambivalence that in my view contributed *most* to Cheung's iconicity.

It is no accident that so many of those who were moved to write eulogies view Cheung as a symbol of their generation. His life and career reflect the trajectory of a unique historical time-space. From his difficult beginnings in

the 1970s to his gradual, eventual rise to mainstream stardom in the 1980s, his abrupt retirement and immigration to Vancouver in late 1989, and his eventual return to Hong Kong in the mid-1990s, Cheung's career follows the vicissitude experienced by many people who belong to the first generation born and bred in Hong Kong and whose identities, unlike those of their refugee parents, are not tied to the Mainland but to Hong Kong. The economic take-off during the 1970s and the historically unique role of Hong Kong as the (then) only gateway into China, created the "golden era" that many mentioned. Cheung's two stunning "exits" also paralleled the city's significant transitional moments. Cheung's sudden and unexpected retirement from the peak of his career in 1989 mirrored the panic experienced by many after the crackdown in Tiananmen in 1989. It was commonplace then to leave successful careers to migrate to countries like Canada and Australia, despite the knowledge that many would not be able to continue the same careers abroad. Cheung's eventual return was also typical of many immigrants, who, after the requisite years of residency to obtain foreign citizenship, promptly returned to Hong Kong, especially during the economic boom after 1992. Finally, Cheung's very public, very tragic death during the darkest hour of the city uncannily completed the parallel. It was as though Cheung's life had encapsulated the culmination and then termination of all the historical factors that had nurtured and made Hong Kong a success.

If it is easy to see why Cheung was so frequently hailed as a Hong Kong icon, it is a more complicated matter to understand his *queer* iconicity. The many eulogies celebrating Cheung's sexual courage seem to give the impression that he was the first openly gay Chinese superstar. Yet, in actuality, Cheung has never publicly identified as gay or acknowledged his lover except as his "very good friend." He declared his bisexuality *once*, and as I will discuss in some detail later, the gesture caused considerable controversy among *tongzhi* audiences at the time. For years, Cheung stipulated that he would never answer questions about his personal life in interviews, often flaring into a temper when asked.¹⁰ Even when speaking with a trusted interviewer, such as during a famous interview with former girlfriend Teresa Mo in 2001, he would cleverly exploit the ungendered pronoun in Cantonese and always speak of his lover in gender-neutral terms. Yet, at the same time, since reappearing from his retirement in the 1990s, he tackled both implicit and explicit gay and transgender roles in high-profile projects and consistently deployed a recognizably queer visual aesthetic on stage and in music videos. Furthermore, as long as the discussion did not veer toward his personal life, Cheung was perfectly willing to discuss queer issues in relation to cinema and music, often in provocative and very intelligent ways. Unlike out gay celebrities in the West like Ellen Degeneres or Rufus Wainwright, who have publicly declared their sexual identities and often ally themselves

to gay-related activism and charities, Cheung opted to oscillate between secrecy and openness while maintaining distance from a public gay identity and *tongzhi* causes. In this respect, Cheung more closely resembles a figure like the late Freddie Mercury. In an article written for *AfterElton*, a site that monitors queer visibility in the popular media, Robert Urban looks back at Mercury's life and offers a characterization that would have worked just as well for Cheung: "Mercury did not ally himself to political 'outness,' or to public GLBT causes ... John Marshall of *Gay Times* wrote in January 1992: 'He was a "scene-queen," not afraid to publicly express his gayness but unwilling to analyze or justify his lifestyle ... It was as if Freddie Mercury was saying to the world, "I am what I am. So what?" And that in itself was a statement.'"¹¹ Coincidentally, Cheung was so fond of the phrase "I am what I am," a line he heard in the film *La Cage Aux Folles*, that he commissioned lyricist Lin Xi to write a song using the phrase as a title. And just as Mercury in his time had incurred the criticism of gay activists, Cheung's deliberate ambivalence has likewise caused rifts within *tongzhi* communities and, as I will show later, provoked both anger and admiration.

By exploring these aspects of his legacy, I want to suggest that Cheung is a queer icon *because* – not in spite – of his ambivalence. Because he was never open or especially proud about gay identity or politics, because of his reluctance to be written into a "coming out" narrative, because of the sustained contradiction between this off-stage reluctance and on-stage/on-screen provocations, Cheung's life and work tell a story that is much less about pride and courage, as the eulogies emphasized, than about negotiation and foreclosure. Thus it is a story that is much more poignantly parallel to the way many queer lives are lived in a cultural space like Hong Kong. More important, it is a story that uncomfortably exposes the limits of the rhetoric of "courage" and "transgression" while challenging the certitude of identity politics. I believe that remembering, rather than forgetting, these contradictions will garner the late, great Leslie Cheung a more enduring and intimate place in our queer memory.

The Uses of Gossip

In "Queering Body and Sexuality: Leslie Cheung's Gender Representation in Hong Kong Popular Music," Natalia Chan proposes to examine "the power and violence of Hong Kong's media" through "Leslie Cheung's lone battle of gender insubordination."¹² Chan charges the media with two forms of attack: their negative coverage of Cheung's suicide and their long-held obsession with exposing Cheung's sexual identity.¹³ It is certainly true that for over a decade the tabloid press had maliciously tried to bait and out Cheung, who, in turn, often expressed his impatience and outrage at such efforts. However, there are some problematic implications of the stark opposition that Chan sets up between Cheung's queer transgression and the hostile

and powerful media. Chan's account overlooks the contradictory nature of Hong Kong's cultural space, which can be simultaneously hostile to and accepting of sexually adventurous expressions. Furthermore, it gives too much power to the media while eliding both the complex ways Cheung negotiated with the media through the arena of gossip and the form of queer agency that such gossip can unwittingly facilitate.

As I suggest in the book's introduction, the inhospitable climate in Hong Kong for queer activism ironically co-exists with a relatively flexible tolerance, at times even overt public acceptance, of queer cultural expressions. Chan's characterization of the hostile media reveals exactly *half* the picture. For every accusatory article on suicide and every homophobic reference to Cheung's sexuality, there is also a respectful eulogy or an overwhelmingly positive tribute. The numerous articles that I quoted earlier represent only the tip of the iceberg of an enormous volume of published expressions of praise and respect for Cheung.¹⁴ These admiring voices belong as much to Hong Kong culture as the negative references that Chan cites, and it is the co-existence of these apparently opposed voices that lends a distinct character to this contradictory cultural space. Furthermore, Chan's account over-emphasizes Cheung's "uniqueness": "The endless varieties of cross-gender performances Cheung pioneered on stage are unprecedented in Hong Kong's performing arts and popular music. While these performances are legendary, they have also broken a major social taboo."¹⁵ I am in complete agreement with Chan's assessment of Cheung's innovations and especially appreciate her detailed analysis of Cheung's visual aesthetics both in this article and elsewhere. However, I am less convinced by her portrayal of Cheung as a "lone" performer engaged an "unprecedented" battle against gender conventions. Cheung's brilliance had in fact been nurtured through a far more widespread cultural tradition of gender experimentation that has both historical precedence and contemporary manifestations. In her book *City on the Edge of Time*, Chan herself links Cheung's cross-gender performance to that of Cantonese opera diva Yam Kim-Fai,¹⁶ whom Cheung openly claimed as an idol and influence.¹⁷ Yam's cross-gender embodiment was completely accepted in the mainstream, as evidenced by her thirty-year reign as the most popular Cantonese opera performer in Hong Kong and abroad.¹⁸ Nor was Yam a lone exception. One of Yam's most famous disciples, Chan Bo-Chu, who did not pursue opera but instead a glittering screen career with legions of female fans, had also cross-dressed on screen to great acclaim.¹⁹ These are arguably not isolated instances but examples of a long-held cultural fascination with cross-gender performances, which Stanley Kwan provocatively claims and documents in his film *Yin ± Yang: Gender in Chinese Cinema*.²⁰ There are also influences from abroad. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s androgynous rock icons like Britain's David Bowie, Freddie Mercury, and Boy George, as well as Japan's Kenji Sawada, were

extremely popular in Hong Kong, thus mainstreaming another form of gender-bending performance that is different from the tradition found in Cantonese opera and Chinese cinema. Furthermore, several of Cheung's musical contemporaries in the Canto-pop scene have experimented with queer aesthetics to great acclaim. Most notably, Roman Tam introduced a visibly camp and highly sexualized aesthetic in the late 1970s and early 1980s, effectively paving the way for Cheung's later elaborations. Cheung's close friend and sometime musical and screen partner Anita Mui was also celebrated for her gender versatility both in cinematic roles and in her stage performances.²¹ Having arrived on the music scene slightly later than Cheung, Anthony Wong is known for his audacious stage performances and an impressive volume of sexually provocative lyrics, both in his work with the group Tat Ming Pair and in his later solo career.²² Fittingly, Wong collaborated with Cheung on what would be the last album to come out during Cheung's lifetime, released with an advertising campaign that blatantly played with a homoerotic undertone and an album cover that paid homage to the gender experimentation underlying both artists' careers.²³ Obviously, Cheung brought his own originality to his performances, but far from waging a "lone battle," his "gender insubordination" was part of a local/global trend whereby artists' gender experimentation on stage could be widely accepted in the mainstream, while their sexual preference off stage remained ambivalent. In fact, many of the figures I mentioned above negotiated their relation to queer identities through a "glass closet" – that is, as open secrets. Yam's relationship with her on- and off-screen partner, Bak Suet-Sin, remains unknown to this day, but the couple has inspired a big queer following.²⁴ Chan Bo-Chu, likewise, has provoked rumours that circulate about an "intimate female friend" but has nervously dismissed them as "gossip."²⁵ The late Roman Tam responded to rumours about his homosexuality by never affirming nor denying them.²⁶ Anthony Wong, who is still frequently baited by the media, insists that he "has no problems with homosexuality" but maintains that he will never answer direct questions about his sexual identity.²⁷

Even though many LGBT activists would prefer these public figures to be "out and proud," and although some may even regard public outness to be a moral obligation, there are also others who view such celebrity closets more positively. In her analysis of lesbian representations in Hollywood, Clare Whatling suggests that stars' "coming out" may in fact ruin something for queer spectators: "What we lose by the imperative to revelation [of sexual identity] is the sense of the shared secret, the 'in' joke, of having access to a cultural knowledge that most straight-identified subjects are blind to, a function of the closet which I would argue is a condition both of our oppression and of our 'liberation.'"²⁸ For Whatling, the conduit through which such shared knowledge may be transmitted is the overlooked and

devalued site of gossip, which she theorizes as a form of “subcultural communication.”²⁹ John Champagne and Elayne Tobin also suggest that gossip is useful as a communal form of knowledge: “Gossip can function to bind a group around particular moral values, ethics, sites of affective intensity. Gossip binds even those whom it might seem to exclude, since some form of intimacy (not to say love) must be intact in order to make gossip valuable in the first place; we don’t gossip about strangers or intimately relay anecdotes that have no ethical, moral, or aesthetic function.”³⁰ Champagne and Tobin trace the political usefulness of gossip in rendering visible the process of commodification around institutionalized identities in the academy. They understand gossip as a community-based form of self-criticism that may be mobilized for a queer contestation of identity politics. Gavin Butt’s study of the post-Second World War New York art world shows that gossip operates as a mode of communication through which queer meanings are disseminated and should thus be treated as a legitimate form of art history.³¹ Unlike in the academy or in the art world, gossip is not as habitually masked or dismissed in mass culture. Rather, it is so blatantly present that it does not always solicit serious attention. I am interested in the way gossip can function through the mass media as a site for *self-making*, both for the celebrity whom the media is bent on “outing” and for the queer spectators “in the know,” who must read between the lines to wrest queer meanings out of ambivalence.

One of the most interesting ways that Cheung used gossip was through public discussion of his film roles as a response to gossip about his private life. The previously quoted characterization of Cheung’s roles as a “documentation of a gay person’s coming out” is a gross simplification of this process of negotiation. Cheung’s roles were by no means simple reflections of his “real” sexual identity. Rather, they provided a vehicle through which Cheung could freely discourse on queerness without ever outing himself. Such a tactic does not actually quell gossip; in fact, it intensifies and sustains it in a way that definitively coming out would not. At the same time, the proliferation of gossip can open up complex avenues of identification and contestation.

Some of the earliest rumours surrounding Cheung’s sexuality circulated in the early 1990s, when he was still based in Vancouver and had taken the role of Beijing Opera diva Cheng Dieyi in *Farewell My Concubine* (Chen Kaige, 1993). A male-born performer specializing in female roles, whose feminine identification is sustained off-stage and whose primary emotional and sexual attachment is to another man, the character of Cheng Dieyi can be interpreted as gay or transgender in current queer vocabularies without exactly fitting the narratives of either. When Cheung was asked by an interviewer (in a veiled attempt to link the role to Cheung’s own life) how he was able to perform the role with such “authenticity,” Cheung responded in this way:

I did a lot of research of course. At first I thought a cross-dressing *dan* performer only cross-dresses on stage, and is no different from us off-stage. But when I was in Beijing, I encountered many *dan* performers and I talked to them many times. I discovered that they already regard themselves as real women, whether mentally, or in the details of everyday life. They believe themselves to be women one hundred percent, so on stage, they can be so authentic, like reincarnated goddesses! After I did exhaustive research, I also realized they were not necessarily born to identify with, or even truly believe they were women. Many of them joined the troupes as children and after many years of extremely disciplined training, they acquired incredible stage skills, and their mentality had become feminine.³²

Cheung thus deflected the question away from himself and focused squarely on what he had learned from “research” as well as from real-life interactions. He left his response to the question of whether these performers’ transgender identification is born or bred somewhat open but nevertheless expressed admiration for them (they are “reincarnated goddesses!”). Cheung would later claim Cheng Dieyi as his favourite role but would also highlight his disappointment that the queer relationship is treated in the film as merely a subtext.³³ Cheung also took issue with his co-star Zhang Fengyi, whose quoted reaction to Cheung’s femininity betrays a homophobic unease: “Horrible! He’s playing a *dan*, and acts just like a woman. At first I was not accustomed to him touching me, which made my skin crawl ... I prefer Leslie in real life, when he’s wearing men’s clothes!”³⁴ In the press coverage not a single word appeared about either Cheung’s own sexual identity or the personal dynamics between actors on set. Yet Cheung’s detailed, almost scholarly, discussion of his role serves as a dignified rebuff to both the press’s prurient interest and his co-star’s unease. Furthermore, instead of *denying* the rumours that linked his role to his own life (which many actors portraying queer roles often choose to do), he insistently showed (and implicitly demanded) respect for the queer artist that he was portraying. While Cheung chose not to answer the underlying question “Are you, or are you not ...,” he manipulated the site of gossip for an articulation of queer respect. Henceforth, Cheung would become increasingly sophisticated and provocative in his handling of such subtexts.

Made in the same year as *Farewell My Concubine*, Clifton Ko’s *All’s Well That Ends Well* (Clifton Ko, 1992) has remained one of Cheung’s least discussed films, most likely because it is perceived as a mainstream comedy made to capitalize on the holiday market of the Chinese New Year and thus as a film without the artistic merit of most of the other films in Cheung’s oeuvre. Yet the comedy has significant implications for queer audiences that are once again borne out by Cheung’s clever discussion of his role. *All’s Well That Ends Well* tells the story of a family with three sons, each of whom

has an idiosyncratic personality. Cheung plays the youngest son, a bitchy and effeminate man whose rival is his aunt, a cheerful and butch woman roughly the same age as her nephew, played to great comedic effect by Teresa Mo. Eventually, the two rivals become romantically involved, and through a freak accident both become “transformed” into their “opposite” (i.e., socially normative) gender role. Even though the ending “restores” Cheung’s and Mo’s characters to their putatively “proper” gender roles, they perform these gendered traits with such comedic exaggeration that they appear no more “natural” (in fact, quite a lot more grotesque) than their initial cross-gender embodiments. In this way, the film denaturalizes gender roles more critically than did any other Hong Kong films at the time. Cheung’s character in the film embodies a male femininity that is not uncommon among queer men. In interviews, Cheung drew attention to this dimension of his character:

When I took the role, I knew I had to play a sissy. I was not concerned with my image, because after all this is only acting. Chow Yun-Fat’s performance [of a sissy] in *The Eighth Happiness* [*Baxing baoxi*] is more staged and exaggerated, and the director initially asked me to perform in that way. But I feel that in real life sissy men don’t act like this, and I know lots of them! They should convey their femininity in an unconscious way and the director accepted my interpretation. Even though this is a comedy, I tried to make this role very human.³⁵

The cinematic tradition of ridiculing effeminate men has been well documented both in Hollywood and in Chinese cinema.³⁶ Dennis Lin has also written eloquently about anti-sissy ideologies in Taiwan’s gay male culture and about the virtual reclaiming of gay sissiness, in response, online.³⁷ From the above interview, it is clear that Cheung realized he was *expected* to play his character in this shallow, exaggerated, and derogatory fashion. He contrasted this image with his own experiential knowledge of sissy men: he knew “lots of them,” which was also an acknowledgment of his ties to the queer community without directly implicating himself. In the film, Cheung performs his role as a by turns bitchy, charming, funny, and very likable effeminate man, one whom the straight audience had rarely seen on screen but whom a queer audience would have had no trouble recognizing in themselves, their lovers, or their friends.

Cheung’s role in *He’s a Woman She’s a Man* (Peter Chan, 1994) exemplifies his most complex negotiation to that point with the media. He plays, of all things, a homophobic straight man who fears that he may be in love with an effeminate man (who “safely” turns out, in the end, to be a woman). By this time, the gossip surrounding Cheung’s sexual identity had become very intense. Headlines such as “Cheung in Relationship with Mystery Person”³⁸

and “Is Cheung’s Companion a He or a She?”³⁹ appeared frequently, at the same time that the tabloid press was feverishly trying to “expose” Cheung’s partner. Playing this role amid such rumours was like playing with fire: a paradoxical gesture to stay in the closet while flaunting it. Cheung coyly exploited the explosive contradiction of the situation. When asked in an interview at the time whether he accepted homosexuality, Cheung answered: “Absolutely. I have lots of gay friends. (Laughs.)”⁴⁰ When it comes to the film, Cheung is again cleverly provocative. Cheung’s character has a colleague nicknamed Auntie, played by Eric Tsang as a stereotypically effeminate gay man. Asked about the film, Cheung responded in this way: “I don’t really agree with the ending of the film. I feel that the treatment of gay roles in Hong Kong cinema is too comedic, too hideous. I don’t feel it has to be this way. Even though Eric did a great job in the film, he is not suited to the role ... The best thing would be for *me* to play both characters, as identical twins who go to two extremes, with one becoming the shadow of the other.”⁴¹ Cheung’s suggestion would indeed have given the film the critical edge that it lacks. It would also have turned the twin roles into a self-parody of Cheung’s own ambivalent response to the frenzied media rumours by presenting Cheung as both the out gay man and the questioning homophobe fighting to stay in the closet.

By the time Cheung made *Happy Together* (Wong Kar-Wai, 1997), the first Hong Kong film to include an explicit and extended sex scene between men, he had reached the status of queer icon without ever having come out. In Audrey Yue’s critique of the film, where she faults its containment of gay excess, she nonetheless identifies Cheung as the film’s “queer interface.”⁴² For Yue, what is queer about the film lies less in its content (which she argues is constrained by a “straight morality”) than in the extra-diegetic spaces in which Cheung performs a “self-parody” and thus a critical reinvention of the film’s ultimately heteronormative narrative. Compared to his earlier films, Cheung made very few extended commentaries on *Happy Together*, partly because he was on a concert tour and did not participate actively in the film’s promotion. However, his relative silence (and non-intervention into *others’* comments) also enabled the proliferation of gossip. The primary source that Yue uses to illustrate Cheung’s self-parodic performance is the unauthorized journal published by Christopher Doyle, the film’s director of photography. Doyle’s journal includes photographs of Cheung crossing-dressing as a “weekend transvestite,” an example Yue cites as a “hyperbole” that mocks the “sad young gay man” stereotype perpetuated in the film.⁴³ Furthermore, in tabloid-gossip style, Doyle describes Cheung’s bitchy reaction to fellow actor Tony Leung’s anxiety over filming the sex scene⁴⁴ and jokingly claims that a gay-inclined member of the crew offered to help Cheung undo his fly when the actor’s hand was immobilized by a cast he had to wear on set.⁴⁵ Ironically, like Cheung’s comments

on his other films, his *silence* regarding Doyle's gossip behind *Happy Together* also enabled a subtext to run parallel to the film text, one that, as Yue shows, has become far queerer than the film itself.

Bisexuality and the Art of Cultural Repudiation

Notwithstanding his provocative uses of gossip and wilful maintenance of the closet, Cheung explicitly discussed his sexual identity on record *once*, in an article by Richard Corliss that appeared in the English-language publication *Time Asia*: "[Cheung] also knows that it leads audiences to the suspicion or compliment that he is gay, though he has not publicly declared his sexual orientation. 'It's more appropriate to say I'm bisexual,' Cheung notes. 'I've had girlfriends. When I was 22 or so, I asked my girlfriend Teresa Mo (his frequent co-star in TVB serials of the time) to marry me.' As a guest on Mo's cable TV show last month, Cheung bantered, 'If you'd agreed to marry me then, my life might have changed totally.'"⁴⁶ Not surprisingly, the article caused quite a stir within *tongzhi* circles. Right after this issue of the magazine came out, *Gay Station* conducted an Internet poll that asked participants to select one out of four set responses to Cheung's disclosure. The overwhelming response chosen was: "When has Leslie ever liked women?" The poll has long gone offline, but the derisive resentment implicit in this response can still be glimpsed in the exchanges that took place between 8 and 13 May 2000 on *Tongzhi2000*, a listserve for discussion of *tongzhi* issues in Hong Kong, to which many prominent local activists are subscribers.⁴⁷ The discussion begins when a member posts the quotation above on the listserve, with snide annotated comments that indicate surprise at what the poster reads as Cheung's simultaneous frankness and reticence (#1175). The post elicits an immediate response from another member, who cynically objects to Cheung's attempt "to use the [bi] identity as an advantage" and as a way to placate his straight fan base. The author of the post feels this phenomenon is "all too common" in show business (#1181). Another member claims not to believe that Cheung is bisexual (#1183). This ignites a heated discussion over the meaning of bisexuality and over the parameters of sexual identity in general. One member questions why there is a demand for bisexuality to be "quantified" (#1192), while another wonders why "coming out as gay" is considered a morally superior position (#1198). In response, one member lectures others on the responsibility of public figures, concluding with a bitter accusation that there is now a trend to "not put a label on anything" (#1201). So far, the discussion has been conducted in English, then one member confesses that he or she writes better in Chinese, which prompts others to start writing in Chinese. One post suggests that Cheung's "unexpected" admission can become a way to challenge expectations of the either-or choice of gay versus straight while throwing some light on the often unlivable condition of being bisexual (#1208). Finally, a

post expresses appreciation for the turn to Chinese and reflects on the fact that *tongzhi* now seems to mean only gay or lesbian, that the original promise of the term to reach out to other sexual minorities seems to have been abandoned, but adds that “there may be discussion in English that I have missed” (#1212). Parts of this online conversation are later documented by the author and bisexual activist Anson Mak in an article she wrote for the *Hong Kong Economic Daily*.⁴⁸ Mak quite rightly observes that the discussion in the end is “both about Leslie Cheung, and *not* about Leslie Cheung,” for it is a moot point whether Cheung is “really” bisexual (the ostensible subject under discussion); instead, the significance of the discussion lies in its reflection of local *tongzhi* communities’ complex attitudes toward a range of issues: what constitutes sexual identity, the morality of coming out, the issue of selling out, the limits of *tongzhi* politics based only on gay and lesbian experience, the unlivable conditions of certain identities, and the issue of language (implicitly also an issue of class) in *tongzhi* communities. Cheung’s provocative or disappointing (depending on one’s view) pronouncement of bisexuality thus revealed far less about Cheung than about the investment that *tongzhi* audiences have in his queer iconicity. In her study of female icons, Anna Camilleri describes the relation between cultural icons and their audiences in this way: “Some say that icons are born, but it is public recognition – a devoted following, an audience, a ‘market’ – that creates them. Born of our imagination, desires, and fears, they are emblematic of our cultural climate on every front – social, political, spiritual, and economic.”⁴⁹ Cheung’s complex public persona is indeed emblematic of *tongzhi* audiences’ many layers of imaginations, desires, and fears. As some of the initial hostile posts imply, Cheung appeared to be not so much declaring a bisexual identity as repudiating a gay identity (while remaining reluctant to repudiate heterosexuality altogether).

What is the relation between sexual identity and repudiation? In Claire Hemmings’s reflections on bisexuality, particularly the subject position of the bisexual femme, she distinguishes between two kinds of repudiation – sexual and cultural – that, in her view, are constitutive of gay and lesbian identities. For Hemmings, gay and lesbian identities are predicated on a repudiation of opposite-sex object choice as well as of heterosexual culture. Some of the derisive responses to Cheung’s bisexual identification – expressed, for instance, in the poll result “when has he ever liked women?” – reveal an unease with Cheung’s reluctance to repudiate women as a sexual-object choice, which for many is the precondition of gay subjectivity. The question that Hemmings asks in her study, which is indeed a question that informs much of bisexual theorizing, is whether “non-heterosexuality [can] be read through something other than same-sex desire.”⁵⁰ In other words, can a cultural repudiation of heterosexuality *not* rely on a sexual repudiation

of opposite-sex object choice? Hemmings uses the example of femme desire for transgendered/transsexual masculinity as an example of a cultural repudiation of heterosexuality that does not depend on sexual-object choice. In fact, for Hemmings, the femme/FTM couple illustrates how “the relationship is not heterosexual *even though* it is between a man and a woman, rather than how this relationship is not heterosexual because it is *not* (in terms of sexed object choice) between a man and a woman.”⁵¹ For bisexual femme/FTM couples, it is precisely their closeness to, rather than difference from, heterosexuality that constitutes their nonheterosexuality. Hemmings elaborates on this insight in a later piece in which she posits a model of queerness that is not predicated either on its difference or on its parodic similarity to heterosexuality: “Rather than denying the often *highly unparodic* closeness to heterosexuality that all gender and sexual performances reproduce, it would seem more generous and indeed politically productive to pay attention to the ironies such closeness produces within sexual and gendered narratives over time.”⁵² Indeed, the negative responses to Cheung’s not quite “coming out” reveal an anxiety about a queer icon who could not be absolutely distinguished from a heterosexual. What seems threatening to some *tongzhi* audiences (and what Cheung often seemed particularly gleeful about), is precisely his *unparodic closeness* to heterosexuality, as seen in his gender-switching performance in *All’s Well That Ends Well*, where he performs normative and queer gender roles equally and indistinguishably well, and in his imaginary scenario for *He’s a Woman She’s a Man*, in which he would play *both* the visibly gay man and the homophobic straight (or closeted) man, thus showing he could inhabit both roles equally convincingly. Such tactics of sustaining a closeness to, rather than categorical difference from, heterosexual culture are consonant with Cheung’s deliberate play of ambivalence throughout his career. It is as though he was saying: “I am, or I am not ... either way you cannot tell.” In Hemmings’s terms, this too can be understood as a cultural repudiation of heterosexuality, the irony of which provides more, not less, ground for queer negotiation. As evidenced by some of the later, more thoughtful responses to the *Time Asia* article, Cheung’s provocations were indeed politically useful in challenging assumptions about how straightness and queerness are understood, the (often arbitrary) criteria on which the demarcation is made, and the seeming stability and certainty of gay and lesbian, as well as heterosexual, identities. Had Cheung actually “come out” in the article as gay, as many seemed to have wished, he would not have provoked any of these debates at all but reinforced the absolute distinction between these two (and *only* these two) sexual categories. In retrospect, it is precisely the maddening ambivalence of Cheung’s declaration, and the myriad questions it raised, that rendered the moment queerly iconic.

Kinship Trouble

Besides Cheung's declaration in the *Time Asia* article, there was an earlier, equally iconic moment at the beginning of 1997, when Cheung publicly delivered what I will call a performance of the closet. In retrospect, the moment seems to foreshadow the public mourning rites for Cheung, where accommodation of queer kinship within the family structure exposed the limits of what is relationally thinkable and representable in its terms.

At the end of the "Across 1997" concert series in Hong Kong, which sold out all twenty-four shows to a total audience of over three hundred thousand, Cheung, with an uncharacteristically nervous expression on his face, declared that he would like to dedicate the last song to the two most important people in his life. The first person Cheung mentioned was his mother, whom he affectionately addressed among the audience. "The second person," Cheung continued, still addressing his mother, "is someone who has stood by me for more than ten years, who selflessly supported me when I was down and out, even lent me several months of his salary so I could survive. Of course you know who it is I'm talking about: it's my very good friend, your 'bond-son' (*qizai*) Mr. Tong." There was a split second of stunned silence, as though the audience members had not quite grasped what they had heard. Then the auditorium exploded in an amalgam of screams, cheers, and applause as Cheung launched into an old-standard love song.⁵³

This was the first time Cheung mentioned his rumoured lover, Daffy Tong, in public, after close to a decade's speculation in the tabloid press. Yet Cheung neither proclaimed a sexual identity nor acknowledged a spousal relation with his "very good friend" in this curiously structured statement. Cheung's reference to Tong as "Mr. Tong" actually mimicked the gossip columns, which had been referring to Cheung's "mystery lover" as "Mr. Tong," either as a way of signifying scandal (as in the use of "Mr. X" for thinly veiled references to public figures caught in compromising acts) or because the press was not yet able to completely identify Tong at the time. Cheung's faux formality in this term of address had the curious effect of maintaining the closet (denying intimacy) while parodying tabloid innuendo (thus suggesting that "Mr. Tong" was much more intimately linked to him despite the formal address). Furthermore, Cheung declared his relation to Tong through his *mother*, identifying him as her "bond-son." The Cantonese term *qizai* refers to the tradition of forming "bond-relations" whereby nonkin relations are "adopted" into the family as one of its own. Entering into "bond-relations" is a very common practice in contemporary Hong Kong and does not necessarily carry any queer connotations. However, in the particularly charged context of the discursive history surrounding Cheung, it seems unlikely that he would be unaware of the historical association between the institution of "bond-brotherhood" (*qixiongdi*) and homoerotic relations. The

prevalence of sexual relations between men (especially in southern Chinese culture) throughout recorded history has been well documented.⁵⁴ The institution of “bond-brotherhood” as a means to accommodate homosexual relations within the familial structure in the Fujian areas is particularly well known. The most often quoted account appears in the work of Ming Dynasty author Shen Defu: “The people of Fujian are extremely fond of male beauty. Whether rich or poor, handsome or ugly, they all find a companion of similar status. Between the two, the elder one is called ‘bond-elder brother’ (*qixiong*) and the younger one ‘bond-younger brother’ (*qidi*). When the elder brother goes to the home of the younger, the younger’s parents take care of him like a son-in-law.”⁵⁵ In fact, the term for “bond-younger brother” (*qidi*) is still widely used as a nasty term of insult in macho Triad culture, precisely because of its lingering homosexual connotations. By addressing Tong as his “mother’s bond-son,” Cheung was indirectly acknowledging the younger Tong as his *qidi*. While tortuously indirect, it was still a rather audacious gesture. Not only had Cheung insistently embedded queer kinship within the familial structure, but he had routed the queer relation through his mother while reclaiming injurious and insulting terms (by ironically adopting the tabloid address of “Mr. Tong” and by implicitly acknowledging Tong as his *qidi*).

What may be the significance of Cheung’s rather convoluted way of thanking his lover in public? First, it can be understood as a dramatic deconstruction of the identity politics of “coming out.” In one of her many discussions of queer performativity, Eve Sedgwick calls attention to the notion’s two, related but distinct, theoretical trajectories: the dramatic and the nonreferential.⁵⁶ The first, derived from theatrical discourse, refers to what is staged, acted out, performed. The second, from speech-act theory, calls attention to the linguistic function of an utterance that enacts meanings not through referentiality but through the very voicing of the utterance. It is not difficult to conceptualize the notion of “coming out” as a performative utterance in the linguistic sense: there is after all no magical threshold across which one is suddenly and fully disclosed as one truly is. “Coming out” does not refer to an actual state of emerging from secrecy into the fullness of one’s identity. Rather, one is *out* the moment one *says* one is.⁵⁷ The conundrum of “being out” is that the utterance needs to be reiterated, over and over. No one is “out” once and for all. At the concert, Cheung was theatrically performing the closet through a performative utterance of what amounts to: “I’m in the closet; I’m not out.” The statement, however, functioned as a paradox, much like “I am lying” or “this sentence is false”: the very utterance of “I am in the closet” would appear to belie its meaning. At the same time, the paradox served the critical function of exposing the artificiality of the opposition between being closeted and being out. Cheung

had accomplished the paradoxical feat of coming out *as* a closeted queer. Like his bisexual declaration, Cheung's performance cunningly rendered the inside/outside of the discursive closet utterly indistinguishable.

What is also remarkable about Cheung's statement at the concert is the questions it raised for the two most commonly invoked trajectories for framing queer relations: in the terms of gay marriage and in the terms of an alternative community radically separate from the blood family. While the two trajectories appear to be mutually opposed, they may in fact reflect two sides of the same coin: precisely because queer relationality is thought to be radically separate from the blood family, it becomes imaginable only as an absolutely distinct and parallel structure (of which gay marriage is one version and alternative community another). Cheung's tactic shows ways that queer kinship may be thought of in terms other than that of marriage and spousal relations and may be sustained *through*, rather than forever exiled from, the blood family.

Following the recent legalization of gay marriage in the Netherlands, Belgium, Spain, and Canada, the marriage issue has received intense global attention. The debates have been predominantly framed as either-or positions, assuming an automatic equation between queer interest and support for gay marriage. What has been largely eclipsed in mainstream debates is the complex discussion *within* queer communities, where objections to marriage are rooted in a critique of its normalizing effect and of its nonrecognition of sexual practices and affective alliances that fall outside of the parameters of monogamous spousal relations.⁵⁸ Judith Butler characterizes the new sexual hierarchy emerging in the wake of the gay marriage debates in this way: the stable gay couple who would marry if only they could is "*not yet* legitimate," whereas relations irreducible to marriage become "*the irrecoverable and irreversible past of legitimacy: the never will be, the never was.*"⁵⁹ For Butler, state regulation of social life rarely coincides with existent social arrangements: "Its regulations do not always seek to order what exists, but to figure social life in certain imaginary ways. The incommensurability between state stipulation and existing social life means that this gap must be covered over for the state to continue to exercise its authority and to exemplify the kind of coherence which it is expected to confer on its subjects."⁶⁰ The struggle for gay marriage imposes parameters for figuring queer lives and, as a result, renders what falls outside of these parameters not only illegitimate but also *never* (to be) legitimate. By contrast, Cheung invoked a much older form of relational practice whereby kinship terms within the family are appropriated to accommodate affective and sexual relations not intelligible within the familial and social order. Sociologist Chou Wah-Shan has observed this commonly practised process of familial integration among Hong Kong *tongzhis*:

Coming home can be explicated as a negotiative process of bringing one's sexuality into the family-kin network, not by singling out same-sex eroticism as a site for conceptual discussion but by constructing a same-sex relationship in terms of family-kin categories. The *tongzhi* would establish such a relationship with his/her parents by mundane practices like shopping or playing mahjong together. Dinner has often been quoted as a crucial cultural marker for breaking the insider-outsider distinction. The *tongzhi* may then use quasi-kin categories like half sisters/brothers to integrate her/his partner into the family.⁶¹

The "quasi-kin categories" of nonblood "brothers and sisters" bestow a certain fluidity and openness on the familial structure, whereby queer relations may be accommodated from within rather than reinvented from without as a parallel structure (such as gay marriage). Drawing from recent studies in anthropology, Butler proposes an understanding of kinship as "a set of potentially unpredictable and contested practices of self-definition that are not reducible to a primary and culture-founding heterosexuality" but rather constitute "a kind of doing ... an enacted practice," the repetition of which may transform and displace dominant arrangements.⁶² Understood in this way, Cheung's manoeuvre in the concert should prompt us to ask *not* how gay marriage could render his putatively "closeted" relations legitimate but how such creative kinship arrangements may facilitate aspects of queer lives that are *not* reducible to marriage and spousal relations.

In what may sadly be thought of as the "sequel" to Cheung's address at the concert, the published statements of mourning for Cheung after his death put out by Tong and Cheung's siblings continue this practice of sustaining queer kinship through the blood family, even as the effort confounds the familial order and exposes what is ultimately unrepresentable within its terms. Following the death of a family member, the usual custom is to first publish a statement of mourning, followed by an announcement of the funeral arrangement, including a full list of family members, each slotted in the proper order according to his or her respective relation to the deceased. Funeral rites, and the announcement in particular, are notoriously difficult to negotiate when it comes to relations that do not occupy a "properly" articulated place within the family, including children born outside of marriage, divorced spouses, and unmarried and same-sex lovers. The film *A Queer Story* (Shu Kei, 1998) dramatizes these difficulties in a funeral scene, where the gay lover of the deceased is barred from the funeral rites because he has no status within the family. Even the florist preparing his floral arrangement for the deceased refuses to write the couplet that he chooses because it is deemed appropriate only for a spouse. There was no such melodrama during the funeral preparations for Cheung. Instead, quiet

efforts and care to respect queer kinship within the family were evident. Two statements of mourning were released immediately following Cheung's death, each quoting a famous line from his songs. The first came from Cheung's siblings and the second from Tong, who signed off as the deceased's "truest friend" (*zhiyou*).⁶³ Later, the funeral announcement was put out by Cheung's eldest sister, in the capacity of the closest relation to the deceased in the absence of spouse, parents, or children. The announcement thus opens with, "My brother Mr. Leslie Cheung passed away on April 1, 2003." However, in the place usually reserved for the closest surviving member, who would also have been the one to put out the announcement (in this case, the sister), is Tong's name, in the capacity of the deceased's "beloved" (*zhiai*), followed by all of Cheung's surviving siblings and their children.⁶⁴ "Beloved" is of course not a kinship category. Yet the quasi-kinship term of *qidi*, which Cheung invoked for Tong at the concert, would have placed him *behind* all of the blood siblings on the announcement, as bond-siblings are considered more distant than blood siblings within the family hierarchy. At the same time, the self-invented fictive "kinship" term of "beloved" contradicts that of "brother," which is the sanctioned status used to *initiate* the announcement. The gap between "brother" and "beloved" thus marks the confounding space within the family where queer kinship cannot become entirely intelligible. It also signals, rather movingly, the *care* that was taken to respect and honour a relation that, although unrepresentable, had clearly been lived and embraced, even when taking such care meant publicly straining the parameters of the familial order to a point of incoherence and contradiction.

In her analysis of the ending of the film *The River* (Tsai Ming-liang, 1997), in which a father and son, unbeknown to each other, meet as strangers in a sauna and end up having sex in the dark, Rey Chow approaches the scene not as an instance of "incest" but, more radically, as a rearrangement of affective alliances that have been fragmented or destroyed in a collapsing traditional kinship system. Chow reads the encounter in anthropological language: the sauna is a "transcultural" space between two worlds: on the one hand, an "extinct" culture where the father-son nomenclatures have been eroded and rendered meaningless and, on the other hand, a sexual economy of anonymous cruising where completely different customs, conventions, and relational categories are in operation. What would have been "incest" in the former world becomes an as-yet-unnameable form of relationality in the latter.⁶⁵ A similar, albeit quite a lot less dramatic, metaphor of kinship trouble may be glimpsed in the funeral announcement for Cheung. The "incestuous" conflation between "brother" and "beloved" signals the site where a faltering (although not quite extinct) kinship system is being stretched and strained to accommodate what is not yet thinkable

within its terms. At the same time, the very enactment of this accommodation transforms the parameters of the familial order, thereby enabling new, half-formed, and not-yet-coherent relational categories (like beloved/*zhiai*) to flourish.

I Am What I Am

I would like to end this chapter with some thoughts on Cheung's own exit from the stage: his last concert performance during the "Passion" tour in 2000. Barefoot and dressed in a white bathrobe, Cheung came on stage to sing a surprise encore for his rapt audience. After a simple preface ("The most important thing ... is to love oneself"), Cheung launched into the Mandarin version of "I Am What I Am," a song titled after a line from *La Cage Aux Folles*, which Cheung had commissioned lyricist Lin Xi to write.⁶⁶ Even though Lin considers this commission a "courageous act of disclosure,"⁶⁷ the song as well as Cheung's final performance of it remain consistent with Cheung's habitual staging of ambivalence and paradox:

I am what I am / I will always love myself this way
 Happiness is / There is more than one way to be happy
 Fortunately / Everyone is the creator's glory
 No need to hide / I live the way I want to live
 No need for makeup / I stand under the brightest light
 I am what I am / A differently coloured light
 Free to become the strongest bubble
 I like what I am / Let roses blossom into a kind of consequence
 Naked and blooming in the lonely desert
 Happiness is / Living in a glass house
 Disclosing to the world / What it means to have nothing to hide⁶⁸

The song is replete with metaphors of disclosure ("no need to hide," "no need for makeup," "under the brightest light," "living in a glass house"), transparency ("bubble," "nakedness"), and open space ("the lonely desert"). At the same time, it refrains from naming *what* is being disclosed in the open. All the metaphors in fact end up disclosing "nothing" – that is, what is being disclosed *is* transparency itself. Nothing is being hidden, and thus *nothing* is disclosed. It is also significant that Cheung performed only the Mandarin version of the song. The lyrics of the Cantonese version are thematically similar but include one metaphor linked explicitly to gay politics: "I am what I am / Out of ten there is only one of me."⁶⁹ "One out of ten" echoes the famous Kinsey statistic that one person out of ten is gay, while "Ten Percent" is the name of a prominent *tongzhi* organization in Hong Kong. By choosing to perform the song in Mandarin, Cheung eschewed

this obvious metaphor and at the same time blocked linguistic immediacy between himself and the Cantonese-speaking audience in Hong Kong. Why would Cheung, in performing a song about disclosure, take such care to *foreclose* what the song seems to advocate?

To understand Cheung's performance, it is useful to turn to Fran Martin's discussion of a prominent trope in Taiwan's *tongzhi* politics: the mask. Originating from the homophobic discourse that characterizes *tongzhi* lives as duplicitous, the trope of the mask was appropriated by Taiwanese *tongzhi* activists in 1997, when a large contingent of *tongzhis* all put on masks and collectively marched in public. Martin's analysis of the effect of the mask is very similar to my interpretation of many of Cheung's tactics: "The voluntary donning of masks by Taiwan's gay men and lesbians in public seems more than anything else ... to dramatize the very workings of *tongzhi* mask, electrifying the boundary between showing and not showing the secret of the individual's *tongzhi* identity, because the mask, as the sign used to disclose that identity, is at the same time the paradigmatic sign of its continuing concealment."⁷⁰ The ambivalence of such a paradoxical gesture is not, however, without detractors. One of the debates ignited by this tactic revolves around reticence (*hanxu*). In their critique of Chou Wah-Shan's work, which regards the creative but unspoken accommodation of alternative sexual practices within the familial order as a form of "silent tolerance" and an alternative to "coming out," Liu Jenpeng and Ding Naifei align these painstakingly convoluted tactics with the aesthetic-ethical values of an elite classical tradition whereby the "virtue" of reticence produces discipline through shame.⁷¹ Martin's own analysis refrains from siding exclusively with either interpretation; she understands the mask to represent not *merely* an expression of reticence but also a complex and creative response: the mask provides a way to articulate new sexual subjectivities without giving in to the demand that these subjectivities be made immediately transparent and consumable. Reformulating a statement that queer critic Chang Hsiao-Hung borrows from Judith Butler, Martin personifies the challenge of the mask in this way: "Before, you did not know whether 'I' am, but now you do not know what that means."⁷² Akin to the spirit of the mask, Cheung's various performances of the closet – from the uses of gossip, the bisexual declaration, and the appropriation of kinship terms to his final, staged disclosure of "nothing" – also enacted a refusal to be stripped, consumed, and identified as this or that kind of queer subject. At the same time, in his habitually paradoxical fashion, Cheung performed these acts of reticence loudly, flamboyantly, and publicly – in short, with very little reticence indeed. Further reworking Martin's paraphrase, I understand Cheung's tactic to be saying: I am what I am, but you do not know what that means.

Elaborating on the Foucauldian insight that modern power operates not through repression but through the proliferation of sexual knowledge and

the institutional incitement to put such knowledge into discourse, Eve Sedgwick has cautioned against forgoing too readily the category of “ignorance” as something only to be scorned, feared, or fought while appealing to “knowledge” as necessarily a politically redemptive force.⁷³ Cheung’s acts of ambivalence throughout the later part of his life and career incite us to recognize a plethora of ignorances about what we do not or cannot yet know of gender embodiment, sexual identity, queer kinship, and most of all, who and what he was. It thus seems fitting to honour his life’s work not with what we think we know of him but precisely with what he so persistently compelled us to *not* know about him. Only in such “ignorance” would Cheung be remembered most fully, most affectionately, and at his queerest.

- 36 The description of the film in the festival catalogue celebrates Dongfang Bubai's "ease with this newly acquired gender identity as a woman"; see the 2001 Netherlands Transgender Film Festival, http://www.transgenderfilmfestival.com/2001/_GB/article_swordsman.html.
- 37 Jay Prosser, *Second Skins: The Body Narratives of Transsexuality* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 23.
- 38 Ibid., 32.
- 39 Chou Wah-Shan, *Tongzhilun* [On tongzhi] (Hong Kong: Xianggang Tongzhi Yanjiushe, 1995), 300.
- 40 Yau Ching, *Lingqi luzao* [Starting another stove] (Hong Kong: Youth Literary Book Store, 1996), 165.
- 41 Ibid., 166.
- 42 For a discussion of Anzieu's notion of the "self" in the context of the development of psychoanalytic theory, see Barbara Socor, *Conceiving the Self: Presence and Absence in Psychoanalytic Theory* (Madison and Connecticut: International Universities Press, 1997), 253-60.
- 43 Prosser, *Second Skins*, 65.
- 44 Ibid., 77.
- 45 Ibid.
- 46 Ibid., 84.
- 47 Leslie Feinberg, *Stone Butch Blues* (Milford, CT: Firebrand, 1992), 301.
- 48 Judith Halberstam, *Female Masculinity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), 142-73.
- 49 Sek, *Shi Qi yinghua ji*, 39.
- 50 Shelly Kraicer, e-mail correspondence, 28 May 2002.
- 51 David Bordwell, *Planet Hong Kong: Popular Cinema and the Art of Entertainment* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 108-9.
- 52 Jillian Sandel, "A Better Tomorrow: American Masochism and Hong Kong Action Film," *Bright Lights Film Journal* 13 (1994): http://www.brightlightsfilm.com/31/hk_better1.html.
- 53 Mikel J. Koven, "My Brother, My Lover, My Self: Traditional Masculinity in the Hong Kong Action Cinema of John Woo," *Canadian Folklore* 19, 1 (1997): 55-68.
- 54 For an account of the homoerotic tradition in premodern Chinese literature and culture, see Kang Zhengguo, *Zhongshen fengyue jian: Xing yu zhongguo gudian wenxue* [Reviewing the erotic mirror: Sexuality and classical Chinese literature] (Taipei: Ryefield, 1996), 109-66.
- 55 Natalia Chan, *Shengshi bianyuan: Xianggang dianying de xingbie, teji yu jiuqi zhengzhi* [City on the edge of time: Gender, technology and 1997 politics in Hong Kong cinema] (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 2002), 41-42.
- 56 King, "Perceptions of MtF Transgendered Persons."

Chapter 4: In Queer Memory

- 1 For a detailed discussion of the political climate at the time of the protest, see Ray Yep, ed., *Yi Xianggang fangshi jixu ai guo: jiedu ershisan tiao zhengyi ji qiyi da youxing* [Patriotism Hong Kong style: Understanding the controversy of Article 23 and the 1 July 2003 protest] (Hong Kong: Synergy Net, 2003).
- 2 Ng Chun-Hung, "Women de shidai: Du Zhang Guorong" [Our era: In memorium – Leslie Cheung], *Xin bao* [Hong Kong economic journal], 4 July 2003.
- 3 Joanna Lee, "Bianyuan huo zhongxin yinxhao Xiangjiang miaobian" [Reflections of Hong Kong's changes through the margin and the centre], *Yazhou zhoukan* [Asia weekly], April 2003, <http://lesliecheung.cc/memories/asiaweekly/asiaweekly2.htm>.
- 4 Mathias Woo, "Xianggang liuxin wenhua de liliang" [The power of Hong Kong's popular culture], *Yazhou zhoukan* [Asia weekly], April 2003, <http://lesliecheung.cc/memories/asiaweekly/asiaweekly6.htm>.
- 5 "Zhang Guorong de wenhua biaoji: Jieshou yu kangju zhi jian" [Leslie Cheung's cultural legacy: Between acceptance and rejection], *Jingji ribao* [Economic times], 30 April 2003, <http://lesliecheung.cc/memories/economictimes.htm>.
- 6 Lam Pui-Li, "Ta yi tongku tixian zhenqing yanchu" [Painful experiences, authentic roles], *Yazhou zhoukan* [Asia weekly], April 2003, <http://lesliecheung.cc/memories/asiaweekly/asiaweekly1.htm>.

- 7 Wat Wing-Yin, "Tongzhi xin mingci – zhiai" [A new *tongzhi* term – beloved], *Kuai Zhoukan* [Express weekly], April 2003, <http://lesliecheung.cc/memories/watwingyin.htm>.
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Chapter 5: Do It Yourself

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