

The Joy Fuck Club: Prolegomenon to an Asian American Porno Practice

Getting Off

The students enrolled in "Theoretical Perspectives in Asian American Studies" at the University of California, Davis, were taken aback one class meeting when I posed the question of whether their collective sexual imaginary was indeed dominated by non-Yellow people. Without prurient intent on my part, I had them contemplate and discuss the content of their sexual fantasy life in trying to demonstrate how even the most intimate of thoughts are linked materially to social relations. What types of faces and bodies were conjured when trying to "get off"? Which media personalities made them "hard" or "wet" while indulging in fantasy? How comfortable did they feel in their Yellow skin? Why did the tired topics (unbidden by me) of "interracial" dating, "intermarriage," body image, and other *A. Magazine*-type editorial fodder keep working their way into classroom exchanges and written assignments, no matter how hard I tried to lead the students toward a more elevated and sophisticated level of theoretical inquiry?¹

As I had expected, what few responses there were evinced equal measures of defensiveness and evasion. After all, the sexualized semiotic universe of these representative Asian American students is overwhelmingly inhabited by Euroamericans, to the virtual exclusion of all but a select few people of color.² Their subject position is not unlike that of ten-year-old Yoneko Hosoume (Tricia Joe) in the film *Hot Summer Winds* (1991), written and directed by Emiko Omori. The story is told from the perspective of the pensive child Yoneko, who looks at the outside world through the narrow windows of a cardboard playhouse whose walls are decorated with paper dolls and cutouts of White people. She marvels at the looming presence of White America ever in the shack of the itinerant farmhand Marpo (Pepe Serna), whose rude walls are

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graced with pictures of 1930s-vintage Hollywood film stars with marcelled blond hair and a portrait of an Anglo-Saxon Jesus. The disruption in the Japanese American immigrant household caused by the sexual tension between Yoneko's mother Hatsu (Natsuko Ohama) and Marpo is ultimately signaled by a static shot of the toppled playhouse, with the White family of paper dolls strewn on the ground.

The Asian American introjection of oppressively omnipresent White racial imagery is a key theme that is deconstructed in *History and Memory* (Tajiri 1991) through the juxtaposition or sequencing of voiceovers, newspaper articles read aloud, scrolled text, dramatizations, Hollywood glamor pinups, family pictures, World War II battle footage captured from the Japanese enemy, U.S. government photographs and film propaganda, "home movies," film shot surreptitiously from within a U.S. concentration camp, and excerpts from the dominant cinema such as *Bad Day at Black Rock* (Sturges 1954). In the opening sequence, the director and narrator, Rea Tajiri, tells of a voyeuristic "sister" who was wont to photograph surreptitiously a young Asian American man while obsessively shadowing him as he walked.³ This dramatization is intercut with still photos of (White) movie stars in romantic poses and celebrity couples such as President and First Lady John F. and Jacqueline Kennedy during the early days of "Camelot." Moreover, the sister possessed a box of treasured photos whose subjects were exclusively White. That the pictures were bequeathed to her by an aunt suggests a cross-generational fetishization of the White master race by Asian Americans.

As the narrator, Tajiri relates how her fictive sister took to "observing others at a distance," a quirk that she herself had adopted. Like the scopophilic infant born in a state of powerlessness and dependence, the narrator derives pleasure from the mere act of looking. For subordinated racial minorities who historically have been consigned to the margins of the dominant society, what begins at the individual level as scopophilia shades into what I call the "social voyeurism" of the powerless. Within the act of social voyeurism, however, resides an inchoate form of power and mastery over the subject being observed, a covert challenge to an exclusionary regime that keeps people of color at a respectable distance. It is the social voyeurism of the latter, affirmative sort that sustains the oppositional vision that imbues the best in artistic creation.

The constricted, almost exclusively White pictorial world shown by Omori and Tajiri is emblematic of the situation that my students face.⁴ The reticence and general unease with which the students greeted my questions spoke volumes about a fundamental self-alienation that has its material source in a sex/race/power regime so total in scope and depth that it reaches into the unconscious, shaping the stuff of the erotic imagination. It is out of this classroom experience that I began thinking about ways to destabilize the hegemonic system of sex/race/power, wherein the denial of unalloyed sexual desire and carnal pleasure to Yellow people is coextensive with their social subordination.⁵

Cruising Tom

Following the theoretical trail blazed by Sigmund Freud, Wilhelm Reich (1897–1957) first made explicit the connection between society and sexuality. More specifically, as

a Marxist attempting to integrate psychoanalytic insights into the critique of capitalism, Reich devoted his energy to "filling in the theory of alienation as it applies to the sexual realm" (Reich 1972, xiv–xv). At the Socialist Society for Sexual Advice and Research, organized in 1929, Reich operated a politically engaged clinical practice for the benefit of working-class Viennese, who were led to understand the social basis of the psychic and behavioral problems they suffered. For his pioneering efforts, Reich bears the dubious distinction of having been expelled from the Communist Party in 1933 and the International Psychoanalytic Association the following year.

Although his reputation as a theorist has diminished somewhat since the "sexual revolution" of the 1960s, Reich and those influenced by him nevertheless must be acknowledged for stressing that the intrapsychic processes of the individual are irreducibly bound together with the social. Further, theorists influenced by Reich, such as Herbert Marcuse and Norman O. Brown, are beholden to him for "first insisting on the link between domination and sexual repression and for arguing for sexual liberation as a foundation of social liberation" (Chodorow 1989, 117). One such legatee of Reich, the lesbian-identified "sex radical" Pat Califia, strenuously defends individual liberty, uncensored expression, human rights, and sexual freedom by politicizing erotic pleasure. "Pleasure returns our sense of wonder about the world," she says. "I can't think of anything that gives people more energy or more heart or more hope when they need to face opposition and get through parts of their lives that are difficult and frightening" (quoted in Cusac 1996, 37).

Reich and other heirs to the Marxian–Freudian legacy who put psychoanalytic knowledge to the service of a liberatory social theory largely restricted themselves to the problem of alienation in class society. The question of race and racial oppression under the regime of capital was not seriously broached until the period of imperial decolonization following World War II. The issue of color came to the fore with the realization by so-called Third World intellectuals that the colonial legacy of psychosocial domination at the individual level needed to be theorized as part of the larger political project of national liberation. The foundational text cited to this day is Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks*. Beyond Fanon, it has by now become a truism that the pervasive "epidermal fetishism" observed in class society is symptomatic of the basal White racism underlying the American republic (Wolfenstein 1993, 336).⁶ That the knotted relationship among sexuality, race, and power is widely acknowledged (if incompletely understood) throughout U.S. society is seen in most of its popular culture, including the cinema. This in itself might present little cause for concern, were it not for the fact that social inequality based on racial identity plays out through the field of sexuality. And sexuality, at bottom, stands as "an especially dense transfer point for relations of power" between people (Foucault 1990, 103).

The transfixing power of White racial imagery as embedded within Asian American sexuality is seen in the short but sensational criminal career of Andrew Phillip Cunanan of San Diego, California. The son of a Filipino American immigrant who once served in the U.S. Navy (he has since returned to the Philippines, having been implicated in an embezzlement scandal), Cunanan is alleged to have murdered five people, including the couturier Gianni Versace. The accused killer's former roommate

Erik Greenman speculated that it was Cunanan's obsession with Tom Cruise that helped set off the killing spree that had people across the nation riveted to news reports. According to Greenman, Cunanan was "passionately" in love with Cruise and told of bondage and Foucauldian power-exchange fantasies that involved the actor. "He had pictures of Tom plastered all over his bedroom," says Greenman. "He'd rent five Cruise videos in a single night and spend the whole evening stopping the films frame by frame, studying Tom's every nuance and gesture."⁷ Cunanan also kept a carrying case full of visual material featuring Cruise, including photos, movie reviews, and articles. While making the rounds of cafes and leather bars at night—a routine he called "Tom Cruising"—Cunanan reportedly would seek out men who bore a physical resemblance to his Top Gun.⁸

The historical relationship between the United States and the Philippines is incarnated in the person of Andrew Cunanan's father, Modesto Cunanan, whose American citizenship is owed to military service in the navy of the colonial power—a pattern not uncommon among families of the approximately 160,000 Filipino Americans who live in San Diego (Espiritu 1995, 14–16). Although he grew up in the suburban community of Rancho Bernardo, whose Filipino American population is large enough for wags to refer to the enclave as "Rancho Filipino," Cunanan had no known ties to co-ethnics, including classmates at the Bishop's School, a private secondary institution located nearby in La Jolla (Guillermo 1997, 5). Instead, his social and erotic life was focused on the male ideal represented by Tom Cruise. Yet Cunanan often voiced the fantasy of dominating, humiliating, and inflicting torturous pain on this global symbol of White masculinity. Cunanan even spoke of killing Cruise's wife, Nicole Kidman, so he could have her husband for himself alone.

Colonizing the Sexual Imaginary

The historical legacy of U.S. imperial conquest, neocolonial occupation, dislocation, exclusion, relocation, and the depredation of global capitalism, have played a material role in shaping the multiform sexuality of Asian American men and women. Restrictive immigration legislation directed specifically against Asians has done much to distort and even prevent family formation. The so-called bachelor society of early Chinese American workers is but one material outcome of political oppression.⁹ White, bourgeois, female moral crusaders, striving to preserve their status as exclusive sex providers to the patriarchal establishment, have instigated campaigns to devise laws to repress those few Asian American women allowed in the country, under the assumption that they were in the United States for illicit purposes.¹⁰ Anti-miscegenation laws were enacted with the intention of maintaining White racial purity by containing Yellow male sexuality. Asian American men on occasion have been the target of sex panics, as seen in the 1929 Watsonville race riot, in which Filipino American men were demonized as a direct threat to White male sexuality. When a *manong* was observed in the company of a White teenager (his fiancée), a combination of "economic rivalry and sexual jealousy exploded in a bloody anti-Filipino race riot" (Takaki 1989, 327).

In the postwar period, the U.S. military presence in Japan, the Philippines, South Korea, South Vietnam, and Thailand is responsible for the large-scale immigration of Asian women to the United States as dependent spouses (Chan 1991b, 140). The documentary *The Women Outside* (1996) by J. T. Takagi and Hye Jung Park, for example, establishes the centrality of "war brides" to the larger pattern of Korean American immigration and community formation during the postwar period. A thriving nationwide network of "Oriental" massage parlors is also the direct product of U.S. military-base operations in South Korea.

Out of the legal, legislative, and moralistic strategies brought to bear in the regulation of Asian American sexuality, a system of psychosocial dominance has evolved that, to varying degrees, has been internalized by the objects of social control. In addition, Asian Americans—along with members of the dominant society—have been immersed in racial supremacist ideology from cradle to grave. The psychosocial domination of Asian Americans, although never complete and always contested, is compatible with the interests of ruling elites who hold political and economic dominion over communities of color, which are constrained to occupy the stratum of super-exploited laborers who create social wealth for capital. At the same time, the White working class maintains its marginal advantage over non-White competitors on the basis of superordinate racial identity within a segmented labor market. With the regulation of erotic desire and expression inextricably linked to a comprehensive system of political-economic and sociocultural control, Asian Americans have grappled with a psychosexual self-alienation that stems from a racialized sexuality shaped and sometimes deformed by hostile social forces.

The deformation of Asian American sexuality is dramatized perceptively in *Eat a Bowl of Tea* (1989), directed by Wayne Wang. The film's premise rests on the failure of a mustered-out Chinese American G.I., Ben Loy Wang (Russell Wong), to produce an heir with his wife, Mei Oi (Cora Miao), due to inhibited sexual arousal once he returns home to the United States with his Chinese-born bride. Before long, a combination of social isolation and sexual frustration similar to that portrayed in *Hot Summer Winds* conspires to deliver the vulnerable Mei Oi into the grasping arms of a sleazy sporting man, Ah Song (Eric Tsang Chi Wai), who is intent on seducing her from the time they first meet. Although their marriage is nearly destroyed by job pressure and conjugal infidelity, Ben Loy and Mei Oi eventually reconcile; the reintegrated Ben Loy regains his sexual potency (with assistance from Chinese herbal medicine); and offspring are produced, much to the satisfaction of the family patriarch, Wah Gay Wang (Victor Wong; Photo 4.1).

The distortion of Asian American sexuality by the system of racial exclusionism is established at the very outset of the film, with the opening sequence set in the New York Chinatown of 1949. A voiceover narrative by Wah Gay Wang movingly recounts how discriminatory laws and legislation targeting Asians prohibited immigration to the United States, denied them citizenship, and separated husbands and wives. During the narrative, Wah Gay himself is seen visiting a local prostitute at her apartment. As he leaves, Wang is met by a long line of similarly situated overseas "bachelors" waiting their turn to be served. But the United States' overriding of select anti-Asian

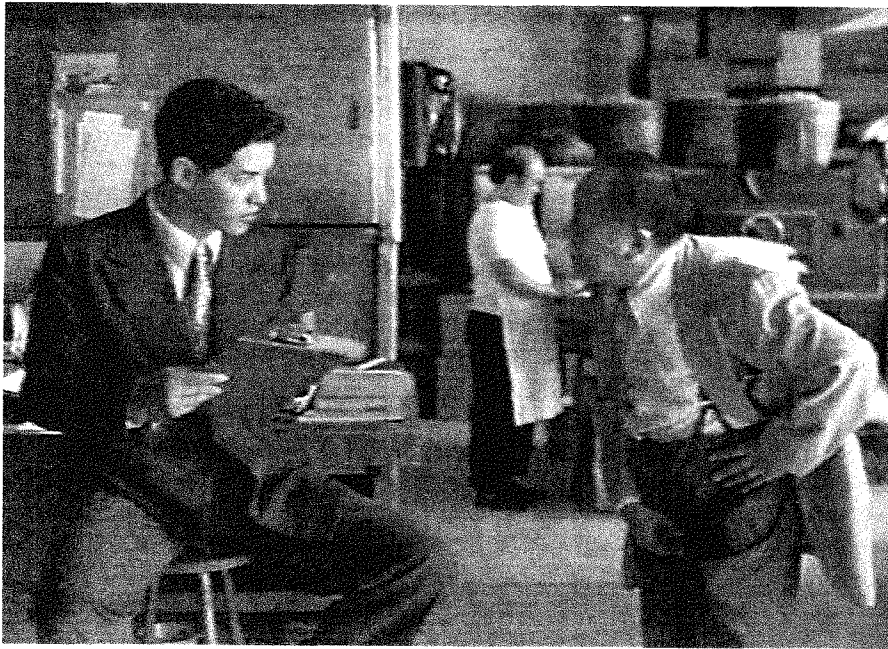


PHOTO 4.1. Wah Gay Wang grabs his crotch for emphasis when quizzing Ben Loy about his failure to produce an heir. All photos in this chapter are from *Eat a Bowl of Tea* (1989), dir. Wayne Wang. All illustrations in this chapter courtesy of Wayne Wang.

immigration laws after World War II, in order to gain support for its foreign policy among its Cold War allies in Asia, breathed new life into Chinatown. Under the amended law, World War II veterans like Ben Loy were permitted to marry Chinese women and bring them to the United States as wives.¹¹

Ben Loy is not quite ready to leave bachelorhood, despite Wah Gay's disapproval of his son's freewheeling life. Ben Loy appears to spend much of his time in the company of a White demimondaine who haunts Chinatown night spots. (Later, after Ben Loy is married, the White, female object of desire suddenly reappears at an ill-timed moment.) At the insistence of Wah Gay, Ben Loy returns to his father's home village to find a suitable wife, with the assistance of a *mui-yan*, or matchmaker. When Ben Loy is reunited with his mother (Hui Fun), who has not seen her husband in twenty years, her loneliness and isolation is palpable. She is anxious for her son to marry well and live contentedly with his family in the United States. But when they later discuss his marriage prospects, Ben Loy puts forth idealized White women as his erotic touchstone.

Mother: If you don't like this girl, you can pick somebody else.

Ben Loy: Right. I pick Rita Hayworth, but I'll settle for Betty Grable.

The extent to which Ben Loy's sexual imaginary is dominated by Whiteness does not surface until this phantasy comes into conflict with the reality of being married to a Yellow woman once the couple returns to the United States as husband and wife. It is only then that he becomes afflicted with social and sexual impotence, able to function effectively neither at the workplace nor in the marital bedchamber.

Lost Erection

The pivotal sequence in *Eat a Bowl of Tea* is nothing less than masterly in the way it dramatizes the romantic bond formed between Ben Loy and Mei Oi at an outdoor screening of the film *Lost Horizon* (Capra 1937). At the same time, the insertion of key scenes from the classic film serves as meta-commentary on the way in which the dominant U.S. cinema defines the meaning of White eroticism for people the world over: Even those living in a remote Chinese village are within the colonizing reach of Hollywood movies, whose potent White stars stand in demiurgic contrast to the alienated sexuality of those either demeaned or excluded for most of Hollywood's institutional history. It should be recalled that in *Lost Horizon*—a colonialist film in the guise of Christian pacifism—the head “Asian” representative of Shangri-La, Chang (H. B. Warner), is played by a White actor in “Yellow face.” It is also worth noting that the founder of the utopian Asian society is a Belgian missionary named Father Perrault (Sam Jaffe). The stated goal of Perrault-turned-High Lama is to let the warring nations of the world destroy themselves so his earthly paradise can thereafter exist in peace. “When the strong have devoured each other,” says the frightfully messianic High Lama, “the Christian ethic may at last be fulfilled, and the weak shall inherit the Earth.”

Not coincidentally, the James Hilton novel *Lost Horizon* (1933) was published when the British colonial empire was being tested both by Chinese nationalist movements and by the threat posed by the triumph of Japanese imperial military forces throughout much of East and Southeast Asia. European colonialist sentiment resides in the person of Robert Conway (Ronald Colman)—“England's ‘Man of the East,’” “soldier, diplomat, public hero”—who arrives at the town of “Baskul” to evacuate its White British subjects before they are “butchered” during a “local revolution,” only to be kidnapped and taken to Shangri-La at the urging of the virginal Sondra (Jane Wyatt). For at age thirty, Sondra is in need of the virile Englishman to help replenish the vanishing White leadership caste, which has been lost amid the peaceable kingdom of Yellow people to whom it has brought Christian civilization. Well before the film adaptation of *Lost Horizon* was produced, the United States had staked a claim in China, along with other nations belonging to the coalition exercising White Western imperial rule throughout most of Asia. It is only fitting that the celebrated director Frank Capra went on to become a key participant in the production of the classic U.S. Army propaganda piece *Know Your Enemy—Japan* (1945) and other films that drew upon the vast reservoir of anti-Asian racist images that Hollywood periodically tapped into (Koppes and Black 1990, 250).¹²

The budding romance between Ben Loy and Mei Oi, and the marriage that soon follows, quite literally is mediated by the dominant cinema and its White actors (Photo 4.2). From the very beginning, the couple's most intimate moments together are superimposed against scenes from *Lost Horizon* as the film is being projected onto a makeshift screen outdoors. While an older villager (Lui Tat) translates the English-language dialogue, the aging matinee idol Colman and his sweetheart Wyatt are seen kissing, raising embarrassed titters among the audience. At that instant, the film is interrupted by an announcement that Ben Loy and Mei Oi have been found compatible for marriage after careful study of their respective horoscopes. The pair slip away and meet behind the translucent screen, reversed images of scenes with Colman and Wyatt from *Lost Horizon* serving as the backdrop for their mounting passion. Ben Loy asks Mei Oi, "How do you feel about me?" Before Mei Oi answers, both of them turn in unison toward the hovering screen image of White superego Ronald Colman as if waiting for his benediction before coming together in mad embrace (Photo 4.3). Mei Oi waits almost fifteen full seconds before rushing to Ben Loy, kissing him, then fleeing in coquettish elation as the ghostly presence of Wyatt in a diaphanous robe crosses the screen in a parallel kinetic gesture (Photo 4.4).

After consummating their marriage without apparent difficulty during their honeymoon, Ben Loy and Mei Oi return to New York. There they are feted at a large banquet, where, in honor of the newlyweds, the president of the North American branch of the Wang Family Association solemnly notes the historic importance of the wedding. He speaks of the "harsh laws" that once governed Chinese immigration to the United States: "A man came here and lived as an outsider in the beautiful country. He could not share it with his wife. He could not watch his children grow." This is a specific reference to Mei Oi's father Bok Fat (Lee Sau Kee), who left Hong Kong before her birth. Only after coming to the United States as the bride of Ben Loy does Mei Oi meet her father. The speaker praises the sacrifices made by Chinese American veterans such as Ben Loy, who have helped to hasten the end of discriminatory treatment in matters of immigration by serving in the military during World War II and proving their loyalty to the United States. In siring children with his wife, Ben Loy is made to accept personal and historical responsibility for reviving what Wah Gay has described in the opening voiceover narrative as a "dying" Chinatown community.

While Ben Loy endures the pressures of his new job as manager of a large restaurant, long-repressed psychosexual dynamics are resurrected at home in bed with his new wife. On the nightstand sits a framed photograph of a smiling Wah Gay (Photo 4.5), which the self-conscious Ben Loy turns face down before directing his amorous attention to Mei Oi. But with the burden of family and history weighing heavily upon his shoulders, Ben Loy is unable to perform sexually (Photo 4.6):

Ben Loy: I don't think I'm gonna be able to do this.

Mei Oi: What's wrong?

Ben Loy: I just feel like everyone's watching us.

Later, at the gambling parlor operated by Wah Gay, his friends are gossiping about Ben Loy's failure to produce an heir. The playful sage Old Lum (Michael Lee) offers



PHOTO 4.2.
The budding relationship between Ben Loy and Mei Oi is mediated by White racial imagery.

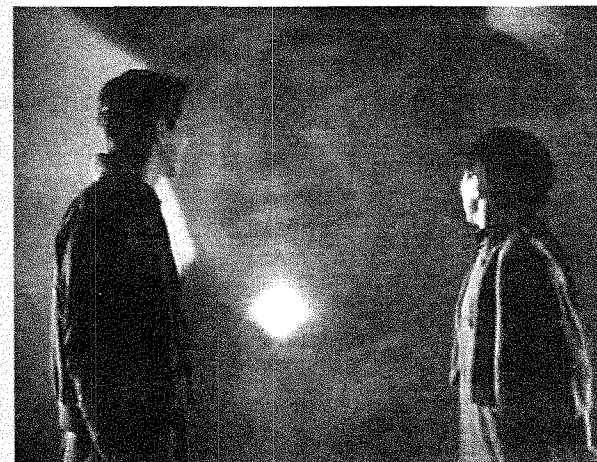


PHOTO 4.3.
The couple await benediction by the White imperial superego.



PHOTO 4.4.
Their union is consecrated at the altar of White visual domination.

Ben Loy feels the weight of family and social history after seeing a portrait of ...



PHOTO 4.6.
... Wah Gay looking on as his son attempts to repopulate Chinese America. Note fertility symbols.

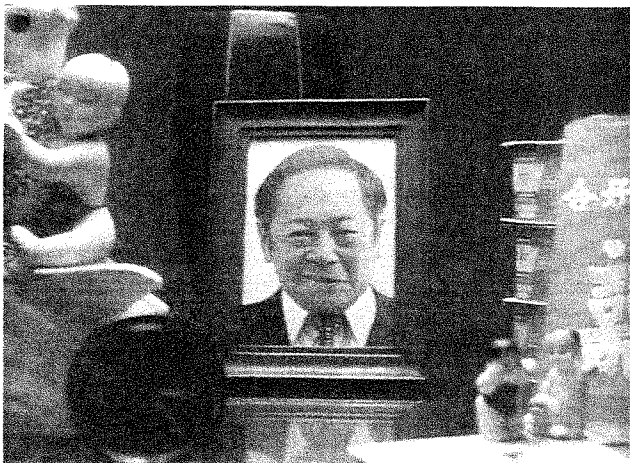


PHOTO 4.7.
The couple become estranged as Ben Loy's psychosexual dysfunction persists.



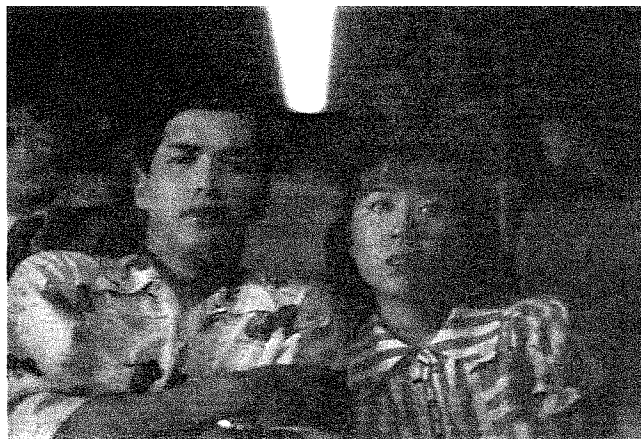
a mocking but insightful comment suggesting that the couple's reproductive failure might lie in the lack of available examples to follow. "Hey, maybe they don't know how to do it. Back home, they watch the pigs, they get ideas," says Old Lum.

Enter the Heavenly Dragon

Further psychosexual complications arising from Ben Loy's thoroughgoing sexualization by the dominant cinema are artfully dramatized in a downward spiral of marital dysfunction. Upon experiencing further difficulties in the marital bed, Ben and Mei Oi, following a physician's advice, take an automobile trip to Washington, D.C. Free of the oppressively familiar Chinatown ghetto, and rejuvenated by his escape to the seat of U.S. national government, Ben Loy finds renewed sexual vitality. While Mei Oi sits on his lap during love play in their hotel room, she is surprised to find the Jade Stalk stirring in her husband's trousers. Jubilant congress of a sexual nature ensues. But immediately upon their return to New York, the couple is dismayed to discover that the Heavenly Dragon once more is unable to rear its head (Photo 4.7). It happens that only cinema-induced fantasies of the Anglicized actress Rita Hayworth can effect psychogenic arousal in Ben Loy.¹³

Without so much as a transition shot, the next scene, immediately following another of Ben Loy's erectile failures, opens directly into the extra-diegetic space-time of *The Lady from Shanghai* (Welles 1948). (The movie features sinister San Francisco Chinatown stock characters working in cahoots with the devious Elsa Bannister [Rita Hayworth], the "lady from Shanghai" who speaks fluent Cantonese and moves with ease through their noir alien world. Her dual White-Yellow identity makes her doubly treacherous to Michael O'Hara [Orson Welles], a seafaring rogue in pursuit of ill-gotten treasure.) Welles and Hayworth are kissing passionately at their rendezvous at San Francisco's Steinhart Aquarium. Sea creatures monstrously manifested through the glass of Tank #50 dart by in the background as the couple plot their next move, a visual allusion to the sensual dance of two individuals each maneuvering to outsmart the other while caught in the grip of primal sexual attraction.¹⁴

Only then, as the film cuts away from *The Lady from Shanghai*, do we see the beautifully illuminated, upturned faces of Mei Oi and Ben Loy, who are enraptured by what they are voyeuristically viewing on the movie screen. They are visibly excited, watching the White couple surrender themselves to unadulterated lust in so public a manner (Photo 4.8). So thoroughly aroused are Ben Loy and Mei Oi by witnessing this sexually charged exchange between Welles and the platinum blonde Hayworth that they shoot out of their seats without uttering a word and dash home to fuck (Photo 4.9). As they hurriedly disrobe in preparation for the coming together of Cinnabar Grove and Jade Stalk, someone knocks on the door—just as Ben Loy has dropped his trousers. Standing suggestively at the threshold is none other than the White woman with whom he had frequented Chinatown nightclubs during his carefree days as a bachelor. After Ben Loy quickly ushers out his unwanted visitor, Mei Oi becomes angry, not believing him when he lies that the woman had come to the wrong apartment.



White racial imagery is needed to fuel the Yellow couple's sexual desire ...

PHOTO 4.9.
... as they view Orson Welles and Rita Hayworth in a steamy embrace.



PHOTO 4.10.
Ben Loy's White demimondaine keeps him from sexual congress with his Yellow wife.

ment. For Mei Oi, the mood for lovemaking has been broken by the White interloper (Photo 4.10). What the love goddess Rita Hayworth giveth Ben Loy, his former mistress taketh away. It is not long before the predatory Ah Song, sensing marital betrayal between the couple, begins a doomed affair with the sexually unfulfilled Mei Oi. Ben Loy is busy at work. When Mei Oi becomes pregnant, the entire community is elated. In the mind of Ben Loy, however, the question of paternity casts a shadow over the welcome news. But doubts over fatherhood are dispelled when he calculates that his wife's conception coincided with their motor trip to Washington, D.C.

During the closing moments of *Eat a Bowl of Tea*, the underlying themes of American family fragmentation and deformed sexuality are reprised in a coda where a thoroughly demoralized Ben Loy pokes about the darkened apartment his father has abandoned. For Wah Gay has fled to Havana after avenging the cuckold by cutting off Ah Song's ear/penis with a cleaver. Ben Loy looks fondly at sepia-toned photographs of himself as a child with his mother (Photo 4.11). In another picture, he is a proudly uniformed G.I. with his father. A separate portrait of Wah Gay as a young man conveys a sense of confidence and great expectations in the land. Significantly, there is not one photograph of father, mother, and son *en famille*. Ben Loy turns to look directly into a mirror. He sees *himself* as if for the first time unmediated by the social gaze of others (Photo 4.12). Subsequent to this final act of self-recognition, Ben Loy is made whole again and recovers his procreative potential (Photo 4.13). The couple move to San Francisco, where Ben Loy will pursue a career in radio covering sports. With Ben Loy's social voice broadcast beyond the confines of Chinatown, he and Mei Oi become among the first full generation of Chinese Americans who can enjoy a semblance of "normal" family life.

White Porno Supremacy

Just as the "eroticization" of non-White peoples serves to "justify the control of ethnic communities," racism plays a constitutive role in the White masculinity complex (Kang 1996, 63). As it affects Asian Americans in particular, the naked display of the White racist masculinity complex is found at its rawest in video porn, both gay and straight. The video-porn subspecialty featuring Yellow women has become so commercially popular that the actress Asia Carrera has achieved the distinction of becoming the only rookie to be named Female Performer of the Year (1994) by *Adult Video News* this after being credited with nearly a score of feature appearances in her maiden film (Galt 1997). Along with Asia Carrera, Kia, Suzi Suzuki, Mimi Miyagi, Kitty Yu, Mai Lin, Tina Chow, Tricia Yen, Kobe Tai, Leanni Lei, and other up-and-coming low female performers feed the growing appetite for the genre of video porn that the industry classifies as "Oriental." Vivid Video of Van Nuys, California, has become the industry leader in video-porn Oriental genitalia, as seen by its *Tongue Fu* (1994) compilation tape, which happily promises "Four Hours of Fellatio and Asialingus."

Born in Singapore, but currently residing in the United States, Annabel Chong was offered \$10,000 in payment for setting a world record of 251 (forty-nine short of ...

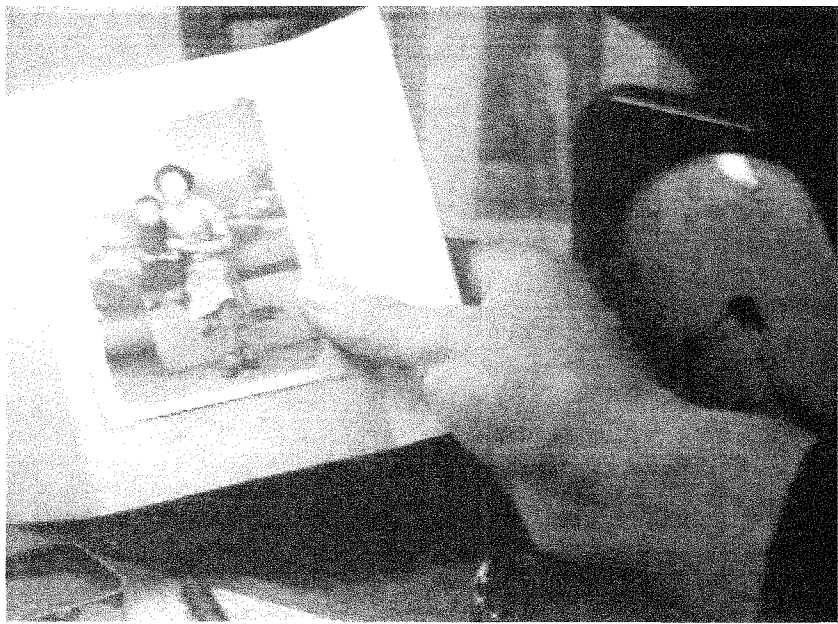


PHOTO 4.11. Ben Loy gazes longingly at photographs of his fragmented family ...



PHOTO 4.12. ... then peers into his self and becomes reintegrated.



PHOTO 4.13. Ben Loy achieves psychosexual healing and at last recovers his virility.

300 she set as her personal goal) successive couplings and assorted stunts during day of ambitious shooting for *The World's Biggest Gang Bang* (Bone 1995).¹⁵ There brief on-camera interview with Chong before attempting the feat she herself had suggested be staged. Her prefatory comments concerning the event do not betray sense of "victimage" that anti-porn feminists have often claimed for women performing "erotic labor."¹⁶ Genuinely impressed by a stage set that is perhaps I described as Roman orgy kitsch, the deceptively ditzy Chong—who attends the University of Southern California as a student—seems more interested in knowing whether she can get one of the really neat commemorative T-shirts that crew members are wearing than in the impending sexual marathon.¹⁷

The director, John T. Bone, speaks through a bullhorn to the quietly expectant participants sitting in the bleachers, outlining gang-bang procedure and protocol as they rapt attention. After raising the possibility of situational impotence among attendees reassuring words are met with nervous laughter. Bone suggests that those so afflicted help themselves to a cup of coffee, have a sandwich, and take a moment to relax before getting back in line. Adding to the carnival of full-frontal absurdity is the former high school teacher and witty porn legend Ron Jeremy, who as master of ceremonies interviews three "fluff girls" whose job it is to inspire the ardor of those in need of a lift.

It is quite telling that Yellow is the only color missing from the otherwise rain-kissed coitus coalition of more than one-hundred pro-am talent and porno-star wannabe

from across the country who were enlisted to participate in *The World's Biggest Gang Bang*. The only Asian American in attendance seems to have been given the job of wiping Chong clean of spent pearl jam. A homophobic White journalist who reported on the follow-up gonzo extravaganza featuring Jasmin St. Clair—*The World's Biggest Gang Bang 2* (Bone 1996)—takes supercilious delight in having recognized from the earlier event an “overweight, faggy-looking Filipino in his early thirties” whose job it was to clean up “any and all spunk sprayed upon” the performers. “Wearing an actual pair of dishwashing gloves and an apron, Homo-Momo (as we’ll call him) is also armed with sponges and towels to mop up the muck from Jasmin’s cunt, ass, back, tummy, whatever. Blechhh! What kind of heterosexual would even *consider* doing this shit? . . . even for money?!” (Petkovich 1997a, 28). For the White reporter, who is made anxious and perhaps even excited by the sight of so many cocks in various states of arousal all at once, it is convenient to “homosexualize” Momo both to allay his own fears of male-to-male attraction and to eliminate the thereby emasculated Yellow man from the ranks of heterosexual competitors.

Although Asian Americans are absent, African Americans and Latinos—two non-White groups that are more commonly associated with janitorial labor—are well represented among the gang-bang participants. For unlike Asian Americans, African Americans and Latinos, within the prevailing sex/race/power regime, are coded as hypersexual threats to the White male monopoly on all women, irrespective of color. “Sharing” women with supposedly preternaturally skilled Blacks and Latinos helps allay the performance anxiety of their White masters, however, because a pathetically large number of them have difficulty attaining, let alone maintaining, the degree of tumescence required to complete the copulatory act. For Momo, and the Yellow man in general, the desexualized function as custodial attendant and “homosexualized” eunuch denies him basic social agency.

Missing in Action

As seen in the “world’s biggest” gang bangs (but on a far less epic scale), Asian American male performers are almost nonexistent in straight video porn, again reflecting their sexuo-erotic subjection within the White supremacist complex. In one of the few porn films to feature an Asian American man, *Once upon Annette* (Haven 1978), a White woman (Tina Orchard) and her mate (James Fong) are shown blithely romping through a meadow, both wearing only animal skins, in Neanderthal fashion.¹⁸ As pseudo-Sinitic music plays in the background, the couple pause to caress each other. Across the way, a similarly clad White caveman (David Blair) spies the couple making out. He sneaks up on the two and, shouting caveman gibberish (the inter-title translation reads, “Eat Chinese—and half-hour later you want more”), runs off the Yellow man with a club before he can deposit Asian genetic material into the White woman. An extreme long shot shows White man and White woman going at it, troglodyte-style, until the dirty deed appears to be done. Thus does White man prevail over Yellow man, from prehistory to present.

The exclusion of the Yellow man from video porn on the basis of his Asian racial identity is simply assumed in the industry, contrary to the denials of at least two prominent insiders. Asia Carrera says, “I’d love it if there was an Asian actor,” after first joking that there are no Yellow men in video porn, “‘cause they all have sm dicks.” The porn director Hal Morton disingenuously contends, “If there was an Asian guy with the right equipment and a desire to be in this business, he’d get work” (Greenfeld 1995, 36). Truth be told, the absence of Asian American men in video porn has nothing to do with having the “right equipment” and the “desire” to be in the business. The reason is found in the obdurate anti-Asian racism of the dominant society, which is reproduced intact by the thematic conventions of U.S. video porn. The multivolume *Tokyo Blue* (various dates) series, imported from Japan and therefore free of the pervasive White-supremacist race/sex/power ideology of U.S. production, supplies ample evidence of the “right equipment” and “desire” among Asian male performers. Regrettably, the poor-quality *Tokyo Blue* tapes, the almost equally disastrous *Ultra Call Girls* (1995), and more recent imports from Taiwan such as *Wonderful Desires* (1996)—complete with unintentionally humorous English-language subtitles—indicative of the limited opportunities Asian Americans have in their power to vie on video with other Yellow people reveling in the joy of their own sexuality, without White intervention.¹⁹

Sum Yung Men

Concerning gay video porn, the filmmaker and theorist Richard Fung has observed that the sole function of the “eroticized Asian” in most commercial productions is to serve White male pleasure (Fung 1991). As evidence of the White racism found in much gay community life, according to one observer, Asian American men in gay video porn until recently have appeared almost exclusively as “feminized bottoms who serve White studs with their asses in bed and as literal servants in the non-sex scenes” (Browning 1994, 196). A study that advances gay video porn as a potent form of political practice, but nevertheless acknowledges that a dominant “sexual-racial discourse” lies within the subgenre that debases Asian American men in specific, reaches a similar conclusion: “Although gay porn may radically rewrite much of history,” the author concluded, “it unfortunately has not radically positivized the situation of gay men of color in this country” (Burger 1995, 57).

Through such work as *Dirty Laundry* (1996)—where the erotic encounter of two young men on a passenger train parallels a larger historical meditation on the homosexual nature of nineteenth-century Chinese immigrant life in the Americas—Fung himself gamely has supplied a needed corrective to the gross disparity in sex/power mediated by race. Yet his experience in producing an educational “safer-sex” video featuring two Asian actors met with contradictory responses from three Chinese Canadian men whom he interviewed.²⁰ While they were not necessarily attracted to the performers (who defy the racial and body conventions of commercial pornography) they still said that it was important that “Asian features and bodies be shown

desirable" (Fung 1993, 365). This only reaffirms Fung's professional interest in eroticizing gay Yellow men by creating imagery that he hopes will rewrite a sexual script that otherwise degrades or excludes them.

John Hayman and Oggi are two directors who have carved out a specialty niche by filming overseas with Thai performers. Yet it is obvious that their work caters to White men who fancy Yellow men, or "rice queens." The review blurbs for such films as *Passage to Spring* (Hayman 1995a), *Room Service* (Oggi 1995b), *Sexual Healing* (Oggi 1995c), and *Thai Take-Out* (Hayman 1995b)—saying, "Great fantasy fodder for daddies with a yen for Asians"; "Appreciation may depend on your attraction to Asian men"; and "Rice queens will O.D."—suggest that it is the White, not the Yellow, male viewer who is being courted (Lawrence 1996, 122, 132, 135).²¹ Rather than as offering an alternative to White-dominant gay video porn, such specialty titles are better understood as an extension of the Asian sex-tourism industry, in which Thailand plays a prominent part within the capitalist world economy.

Recently, however, there are signs that White racial domination as represented in gay porn is being renegotiated ever so slightly, if only at the pre-political level. The otherwise undistinguished Catalina Video production *Pacific Rim* (Dunne 1997) features an exclusively Asian American cast who exist for the pleasure of themselves alone, without the usual dynamics of unequal power stemming from White racial superiority and Yellow subordination. The producer, director, and writers, however, bear Anglo-Saxon surnames. Thus, overall power and control over content remain in the hands of White men.²² This singular failing might account for the mildly Orientalist script and cheesy but admittedly funny opening credits, with "Godzilla" menacing a smog-shrouded Los Angeles. Apart from demonstrating that bad acting in video porn truly cuts across sexual modalities and racial, gender, and class lines, the all-Yellow ensemble in *Pacific Rim* might offer a foretaste of a future Asian American porno practice whereby beauty, desire, pleasure, and orgasmic potency are conjoined with an integrated sense of self that makes its presence felt in the realms of social, cultural, and political power.

Porno Pop Culture

This brief survey establishes the way in which the massive video porn industry—like its mainstream "Hollywood" counterpart, which is also based in the Greater Los Angeles area—reproduces the assumptions and prerogatives of the White-supremacist complex. Its social sweep and widespread cultural influence is beyond dispute. The "adult video" market is both varied and extensive, reaching into every corner of U.S. society. The 7,852 "hard-core" titles released in 1996 generated sales and rental revenues of \$3.9 billion (Fishbein 1996, 75). And these numbers do not even include mail-order sales. Once stigmatized as servicing the warped needs of an antisocial, deviant subculture, the products and services spawned by contemporary porn businesses have moved to the vital center of U.S. industry. According to a positively glowing cover story that appeared in *US News and World Report*, the porno industry is a

shining example of "free market" principles as extolled during the Reagan-Bush years (Schlosser 1997).

Last year, Americans plunged more than \$8 billion into the "sex industry," an amount that far outgrossed the domestic earnings of Hollywood films and most of the recording industry combined. The sale of pornography has become a lucrative revenue stream for the mainstays of U.S. business, from family-owned video stores to large corporate entities such as the long-distance carrier AT&T and cable-TV companies such as Time Warner. Major hotel chains, including Holiday Inn, Hyatt, and Marriot, "now reportedly earn millions of dollars each year supplying adult films to their guests" (ibid., 44). At home, viewers last year ordered porno via pay-per-view services from Cablevision Systems Corporation; Continental Cablevision; TeleCommunications, Inc.; and Time Warner to the tune of \$150 million. Neither is the consumption of video porn exclusively a male activity. A survey conducted by *Redbook* magazine, a publication that epitomizes middle-American domesticity, "found that almost half of its readers regularly watched pornographic movies in the privacy of their homes" (ibid., 46). Periodicals whose respective editorial focus is decidedly more sexually adventurous than *Redbook's*, such as *Cosmopolitan* and *Mademoiselle*, probably would report an even higher percentage of video porn usage among its readership.

In late 1995, the genteel readers of *The New Yorker* were treated to a lengthy article by the noted author Susan Faludi, who plumbed the lower depths of the porno industry in the San Fernando Valley area of Los Angeles County. There she discovered a curious inversion of male-female power relations in a business in which women command greater respect by benefit of their markedly superior earning power as performers, making about 50 to 100 percent more in fees than do men. "But then she is the object of desire," says Faludi, while the man is "merely her appendage, the object of the object" (Faludi 1996, 65-66). This apparently is a commonly held prejudice among almost all male directors of heterosexual porn, according to "sexpert" Susie Bright. When asked by Bright why "most straight porn looks so uninspired," the director Andrew Blake answered that he considers the male actor to be a mere prop, a "piece of furniture" (quoted in Bright 1995, 85).

Faludi views the stable of top-drawer male porno performers such as Jeff Stryker, T. T. Boy, Nick East, and the late Cal Jammer as emblematic of the wider crisis in masculine identity caused by the disappearance of well-paid occupations that sustained male privilege until a generation ago. With women entering the workforce and competing for economic position, a shift has taken place in historically unequal gender relations that many men find threatening. Michael S. Kimmel makes an almost identical point when he connects the disappearance of meaningful work and community for men with the rapid decline of male domination in society. He also advances the notion that the gain in women's rights has been "accompanied by an increase in pornographic images" (Kimmel 1991, 316).

However questionable this argument may be, Faludi implies that this supposed turnabout in power is symbolized by the tragic story of Cal Jammer. He retired from performing in porno films (he was having difficulty "getting wood" on the movie set), only to have his wife, Jill Kelly, enter the business and begin outearning him. Having

been unmanned in this way, Jammer went to his estranged wife's house one day and shot himself dead outside her door. Consistent with her perspective on male porno stars—they are portrayed as a pathetic lot—Faludi seems to relish the irony that while men might enjoy ejaculatory “money-shot” visual supremacy, female performers reap far greater monetary rewards than their male counterparts.²³ Beyond this, Faludi fails to develop the more profound implications of video porn in the popular culture.

By contrast, although sometimes overstating her case, Laura Kipnis (1996) understands pornographic expression as imbued with a common-sense “political philosophy” whose transgressive values threaten the stability of an inherently repressive social order. The anarchy of the imagination through porno fantasy permits otherwise forbidden exploration into the complex and often conflicting meanings attached to the limitless variety of sexual desire and practice that are formative constituents of human subjectivity. According to Kipnis, with pornographic fantasy a “crucial political space” is created wherein “different possibilities for individual, bodily, and collective fulfillment” can be imagined and perhaps realized in the future (Kipnis 1996, 203). Katha Pollitt, however, chides Kipnis for exaggerating the counter-hegemonic potential of porno by writing, “[O]nly a postmodern academic could seriously propose that a skin magazine offers a serious challenge to ‘state power’” (Pollitt 1997, 9).

As an ardent proponent of a “sex-positive culture” who has fought as a self-described “partisan of desire” on the front lines of the contemporary sex wars, Carol Queen takes issue with certain antiporn activists, including John Stoltenberg, Andrea Dworkin, and Catherine MacKinnon, who have decried the “objectification” of women in sexually explicit erotica and its role in supposedly maintaining male dominance through violence. Queen jokingly argues that the current “absexuality” embraced by many progressive and conservative critics of pornographic literature is itself a kind of “kink” stemming from a compulsive need to impose their own sexual mores upon those whom they self-righteously condemn as benighted reprobates. Doing Kipnis one better by offering insights from a revealingly intimate perspective, Queen writes,

Porn let me come to terms with what I was uncomfortable about. Watching a lot of it introduced me to the best-quality stuff. And an amazing thing happened to my politically correct uptightness—it turned into wet panties and multiple orgasms. I discovered the purpose of porn: to produce and enhance sexual feeling. Deconstructing it makes for interesting mental masturbation, but it can't hold a candle to the old-fashioned kind. [Queen 1997, 142]

Queen considers the use and sharing of porno to be on par with the pursuit of social knowledge through poetry or philosophy. Once she discovered the liberatory aspect of reading and watching porno, Queen went on to record herself on videotape as a performer. “Seeing my sexuality captured on videotape was the kind of leap in sexual development that having my first orgasm or tasting my first pussy had been,” she writes. “It gave me a new sense of myself as a sexually powerful being” (ibid., 143).

In a similar fashion, after Lisa Palac first investigated video porno in search of “political theory instead of a sexual experience,” she became “sexually autonomous”

and in control of her “erotic destiny” by learning “how to use porn and come” (Palac 1995, 245). She credits the VCR with making pornographic sexual imagery more widely available to women and men alike, placing perhaps even a bit too much faith in advanced electronic technology that promises to enhance “erotic communication” both locally and on a global scale (ibid., 251). Like Queen, Palac calls for the self-production of video erotica that can be made cheaply and disseminated widely.

The sex worker Nina Hartley, who appropriately has a featured role in the film *Bogie Nights*, views her career as a self-conscious response to the radical politics of the 1960s and 1970s. Hartley's decision to engage in public sex for a living was motivated by a combination of financial need (she was pursuing a degree in nursing), politics, and the desire to explore sexuality on her own terms against the neo-Victorian absexual orthodoxy of 1980s feminism. Hartley is critical of the “erotophobic log” advanced by her detractors, who view her as a gender traitor of sorts. By contrast, Hartley revels in the affirmative aspects of sex work, including “enhanced self-image, sexual variety, creating a platform for my ideas about sex and society, creative erotic expression, exhibitionism, fantasy fulfillment, and economic gain” (Hartley 1997, 5).

Candida Royalle, the former porn star who founded Femme Productions to reflect her own aesthetic in film erotica, celebrates the values of “sharing” and “egalitarianism” that she believes are central to sexual experience. “The sex in my films shows how everyone deserves to be pleased,” says Royalle, who also takes enormous personal pride in operating her own production company (quoted in Bell 1995, 26). With trenchant sarcasm, Royalle attributes the “new censorship” to the realization in certain quarters that pornography is no longer the exclusive property of dirty old men who visit seedy theaters. As she asserts, “It is being brought into middle class homes to the wives and mothers, the madonnas. Now it is really going to corrupt society. We are going to corrupt women. We are giving women permission to enjoy sex. That is what Femme is doing” (quoted in ibid., 30). Against the possibility that the erotica produced by women will deliquesce into romanticized soft-focus tableaux geared toward “couples,” Sallie Tisdale holds out for a “low-brow, hard-core” porn that necessarily must be “politically incorrect.” She writes, “If it's not outside acceptable conventions of family and culture, it's not porn” (Tisdale 1995, 157).

Naomi Wolf (1994) is less effusive than Royalle, Palac, and Queen in her praise of porno, both on ethical grounds and in the belief that those involved with it might be exposed to harm or suffer pain in some unspecified way. Although Wolf does not seem attracted to the utopian possibilities of sexually explicit art, her words are a far cry from the condemnatory rhetoric spewed by Louise Kaplan, who rejects the claim that women can free themselves of “sexual repression” through the “aesthetics of male pornography” (Kaplan 1997, 322).²⁴ Nevertheless, Wolf remains adamantly opposed to the idea of placing restrictions on pornographic work. Rather, in mapping the “dark continent of female fantasy and desire,” women must take responsibility for making “better and more magical erotic material than the images that disturb many of us” (Wolf 1994, 105). Wolf issues a militant call for women to take up the “tools of the master” in rendering the provocative sexual images and erotic art that will help bring down the edifice of male supremacy.²⁵

Within a White-supremacist system of social recognition and power relations, Asian Americans historically have taken it upon themselves to represent their respective communities visually within and against the dominant symbolic order. Whether through the humble family snapshots taken by nameless thousands using mass-produced cameras or through the internationally acclaimed photographic portraits and Manzanar scenes of Toyo Miyatake, the soulfully poignant paintings of Henry Sugimoto, the kinetic line drawings of Miné Okubo, and the minimalist eloquence of the monuments fashioned and erected by Isamu Noguchi, Asian Americans have actively documented both the mundane aspects of community life and its grand occasions.²⁶ This is seen quite vividly in the “home movies” that serve as the basis for *Something Strong Within* (1994), produced and written by Karen Ishizuka and directed by Robert Nakamura.

Recently, the historical and cultural importance of Asian American visual memory was acknowledged when the Library of Congress inducted footage shot by the Topaz internee Dave Tatsuno into the National Film Registry (Yip 1997, 9).²⁷ Using a movie camera smuggled into camp after such items were classified by the U.S. government as contraband, Tatsuno gave little thought to the scenes that he filmed and that later proved to be such a compelling document of life behind barbed wire (Becker 1997). These examples of counterhegemonic visual resistance are by no means unique to Asian Americans: All people of color “recognize that the field of representation (how we see ourselves, how others see us) is a site of ongoing struggle” (hooks 1995, 57). The robust independent Asian American cinema that has developed over the past twenty-five years attests to the oppositional strength of community-based organizations such as the National Asian American Telecommunications Association (NAATA), Asian CineVision (ACV), and Visual Communications (VC), which help support media workers whose diverse visions of a pluralistic U.S. society stand at odds with corporate-controlled communications systems.²⁸

Whereas the dominant media system of White racial supremacist representation alternately hypersexualizes and desexualizes Asian American women and men by controlling and containing their visual presence, an illustrious tradition of Asian erotica simply assumes Yellow people to exist at the center of desire and pleasure.²⁹ Because sexual satisfaction is considered within Asian societies to be one of the keys to health, well-being, and longevity, the art of the bedchamber has been studied and practiced over several centuries.³⁰ For instance, the oldest extant Japanese medical treatise—*Ishimpō* (*The Essence of Medical Prescriptions*)—was compiled in the late tenth century from even older Chinese texts.³¹ The pursuit of bodily gratification for its own sake has been elevated to high art within certain strata of Asian societies, a fact that has been exploited by any number of popular authors who have made careers from writing books that promise to unlock “Oriental” love secrets for a sexually repressed American audience composed of individuals seeking permission to indulge in a life-affirming carnality within a sex-negative society.

While browsing the “sexuality” section at the Elliot Bay Bookstore in Seattle, Washington, during the May 1997 Association for Asian American Studies conference, I

counted well over a dozen titles that owe direct inspiration to classics in Asian erotica.³² Apart from certain high-end, Asian-manufactured devices that sex-toy retailers tout for their exceptional design, high-quality construction, and reliable performance, the books within this literary genre occupy the only domain within the popular culture in which Yellow sexuality is given prominence, and sometimes even conceded superiority.³³ Still, there is an underlying understanding among the White authors of such books that while Yellows can be admitted as gurus in matters of philosophically inflected “Oriental” sex technique, they (men in particular) are not to be taken seriously as practitioners. Yellow expertise in sexuality is strictly for the benefit of White pleasure.

In tandem with sustained efforts in the allied fields of law, politics, and education, a vital cultural politics is a critical force in securing a zone of freedom within an otherwise hegemonic White-supremacist regime of sex/race/power. In the visual arts, literature, theater, music, and film, Asian Americans have attempted to work through the contradictions of their racialized subordinate status within a putatively liberal democracy. It is important to understand that such counterhegemonic expressive cultural forms are crucial to the “formation of alternative social practices” and oppositional political activity (Lowe 1996, 172). Although Asian American feature films such as those that premiered at the 1997 San Francisco International Asian American Film Festival—*Yellow* (Lee 1996), *Shopping for Fangs* (Lee and Lin 1997), *Sunsets* (Idemoto and Nakamura 1997), and *Strawberry Fields* (Tajiri 1997)—hold promise for overcoming the institutional barriers imposed by the dominant U.S. corporate movie industry, the financing and distribution of independent cinema productions are still obstacles that limit their exposure to a wider audience.³⁴

As long as Asian Americans are marginalized within, or excluded outright from, the dominant system of film representation, they will continue to embody an alienated sexuality conditioned by an oppressive system of White racial supremacy. Because independent feature films are prohibitively costly to produce, are difficult to distribute, return scant profit to investors, and often tiptoe around issues concerning sexuality anyway, the most efficacious and crudely direct strategy to assert an immediate visual presence is to take up the camera and turn it inward to capture the pleasures of the flesh as enjoyed by Yellow people: A “Joy Fuck Club.”³⁵ Thousands of visually disfranchised people across the United States have done so already, leading to the proliferation of amateur-style video porn, which reportedly commands about 60 percent of the “adult” market (Mano 1996, 82).

No doubt there will be strident and harsh reactions to a politics of Asian American porno if the views of at least two censorial critics are indicative of a deeper absexuality among ostensibly progressive voices. The poet David Mura advances a set of absurd premises in a rambling essay that has porno stemming from “abuse,” which therefore makes it degrading to the “soul.” In keeping with the twelve-step temper of the times, he declares that the enjoyment of pornography is an “addiction” (Mura 1987, 16).³⁶ In her campaign against so-called assaultive speech, the legal theorist Mari J. Matsuda wrongly conflates sexually explicit expression, racist “hate speech,” homophobic insults, and “Holocaust hoax claims,” fallaciously equating “the batterer” and “the date-raper” with “the pornography addict” (Matsuda 1996, 115). There is cruel irony

in the fact that their specious arguments contravene a constitutional principle that has protected the right of minority peoples to express political and cultural dissent. Matsuda in particular is adamant in her call for the abrogation of First Amendment guarantees as a salve for the wounded feelings of aggrieved individuals.

In revisiting and reclaiming Asian erotic arts traditions developed over centuries, by drawing from a demonstrated history of visual resistance, through the integration of the radical cultural politics of Asian American independent film movement, a Yellow porno practice can help recuperate a sexuality that has been distorted by the internalization of core racist values and beliefs that reach into the depths of individual psychology. Like other expressive forms, pornography is but one manifestation of the irrepressible urge to explore the oceanic possibilities inherent in the sexuality of our species-being. To engage more specifically in an Asian American porno practice is to take self-determined control of an unfixed, variable, malleable, but thoroughly racialized human sexuality, shaped and constrained over time by politically oppressive forces. I harbor no illusions that a self-conscious porno practice alone is sufficient to the task of destabilizing a near-hegemonic system of sex/race/power. But an Asian American cultural politics grounded in a radical *jouissance* that gives rise to the release of libidinal energy will remain an indispensable resource upon which to draw in the greater struggle against individual and group oppression.

Notes

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1. The body self-image of Asian American women, for example, is dissected in Chen (1996). Almost as an afterthought, Chen observes, "Of course, many physical features now deemed beautiful in Asian culture are direct results of Western colonial domination." An advertisement for "eyelid surgery," or blepharoplasty, appears in a piece by Dr. Wes Young (1997).

2. In a breakthrough of sorts, the exclusion of eroticized Asian American men in the dominant media is subverted in the film *Boogie Nights* (Anderson 1997), where porno star Dirk Diggler (Mark Wahlberg) stands in open admiration of Bruce Lee and draws on the iconic image of the late martial-arts superstar to motivate himself before performing sex. Yet the documentary *Miss India Georgia* (Friedman and Grimberg 1997) captures one of the South Asian American beauty pageant contestants (struggling to reconcile ethnic identity with White supremacist norms) against a backdrop of advertisement photos featuring European American male models posted on her bedroom wall.

3. Tajiri admits that the voyeuristic "sister" is to a certain degree herself (Tajiri 1995).

4. However, Asian Americans have not passively accepted their exclusion from the dominant visual media and historically have sought other means of bringing to the fore self-validating images and depictions. There is a telling scene in *Picture Bride* (1995), directed by Kayo Hatta, where Japanese immigrant plantation workers in Hawaii enjoy a *chambara*, or sword-

play film, featuring the valorous actions of the "samurai hero" Nakayama Yasubei as narrated by a *benshi* played by Mifune Toshirō in a cameo appearance.

5. The empirical reality of visual White supremacy is verified through cross-cultural comparison with Japanese society, where the so-called *gaijin* (foreigner) complex arose from political, social, and cultural subordination, beginning in the Meiji era (1867–1912) and continuing to the present. The pervasiveness of U.S.-made films and television programs during the postwar period "led to the acceptance of White imagery as *atarimae*"—that is, "natural" (Creighton 1997, 216).

6. The phrase "epidermal fetishism" is given a somewhat narrow, economic twist by Wolfenstein, but it has utility in the discussion of the White supremacist complex.

7. Cetner, Blackmon, and Blosser (1997, 33). See also Orth (1997).

8. Cruise is revered as both a gay and straight icon amid persistent public speculation concerning his sexual orientation.

9. The concept of "bachelor society" invoked in the standard historiography of Chinese Americans precludes consideration of other forms of erotic conjugality and familial organization within all-male sodalities. See Ting (1995). Richard Fung also speculates on the possibility of homosexual relationships within the homosocial communities of nineteenth-century Chinese immigrant workers in *Dirty Laundry* (1996).

10. See Cheng (1984) and Chan (1991a).

11. The amended law was the War Brides Act of 1947.

12. *Know Your Enemy* was withdrawn soon after its release and was not seen widely by the public until it appeared on PBS in *Films of Persuasion* (1977) (McBride 1993, 727).

13. Born in Brooklyn, New York, as Margarita Carmen Cansino, the actress adopted the Anglo "Hayworth" persona at the behest of her husband Edward Judson to boost another wise unpromising movie career (Keller 1997, 77).

14. Thanks to Steve Craig, chairman of the planetarium at the Academy of Sciences in San Francisco, for assisting in detective work concerning the filming of the Steinhart Aquarium scene in *The Lady from Shanghai*.

15. Although known today as "Annabel Chong," the actress introduces herself to Ed Powers in her first professional porno appearance as "Chung," in *More Dirty Debutantes* #37 (1995). She is credited as "Anabelle Chung" in the video.

16. See Chapkis (1997). For the contours of the feminist debate over pornography, see Man (1994, 62–89); Duggan and Hunter (1995); and Strossen (1996).

17. In truth, Chong (Grace Quek) reveals herself to be an intelligent and thoughtful artist who describes her porn-performer role in part as a reaction to the repressive "eighties feminism" of McKinnon and Dworkin (Petkovich 1997b, 32).

18. Also titled *Once upon a Time/Cave Woman* (1978), the film was produced and directed by the former porn star Annette Haven, a White woman who apparently shares in the myths of primordial White male supremacy.

19. Japanese video porn for the domestic market is substantially better by all measures, but its erotic impact is blunted terribly by the state-enforced use of mosaic *bokashi* over genitalia. Like the *shunga* paintings of the *ukiyo-e* masters, even art films such as *In the Realm of the Senses* (1976) by Nagisa Oshima are unavailable for viewing in uncensored form (Oshima 1992).

20. One might also attribute the mixed response of the interviewees to the didactic purpose of the "safer-sex" videos. According to one observer, who laments the "devolution" of homoerotic sexual pleasure and its utopian possibilities during the 1980s in response to the so-called AIDS crisis, gay pornography "became an integral tool in regulating men's sexual activity," at as a consequence "lost much of its status as purveyor of fantasies" (Hoffman 1996).

21. The same issue of the *Adam Gay Video 1997 Directory*, however, reviews *Lovespell* (1995a), Oggi's first U.S. production with established porn stars. The accompanying photo shows a Yellow man, Dustin Tye, being pleased by a White man, Justin Side.
22. The producer of *Pacific Rim* is Josh Elliot; the director is Mitchell Dunne; and the writers are Mitchell Dunne and Danny Davenport.
23. Possibly complicating Faludi's analysis, the politics of "female ejaculation" has been explored by the performance artist Annie Sprinkle and others (Straayer 1996, 244–52). Similarly, multiple orgasms are being claimed for men by Chia and Arava (1997).
24. Kaplan's bizarre misrepresentation of "pornography" begs for more in the way of description: "Pornography is a male invention, a literature of harlotry designed to detoxify and repair the actual female body. Then, with the avowed aims of arousing erotic desire in men and freeing women from the bonds of sexual repression, female bodies are stripped, bent over, spread apart, twisted. Labia are pierced. Breasts are lassoed till they swell to an abnormal size. Nipples are pinched with clothespins. Breasts of pregnant women are shown expressing streams of milk. Buttocks are branded. The genitals of prepubescent girls are licked by dogs. Nymphomaniacs are sated unto death. Lesbians suck one another off. Virgins are subjected to exotic practices that turn them into groveling nymphomaniacs." Kinky indeed (1997, 322).
25. Wolf and others who advance ideas of "sexual agency" are dismissed out of hand as "retrofeminists" in Ebert (1996, 254).
26. See Miyatake (1984). On Sugimoto and Okubo, see Kuramitsu (1995). See also Okubo (1983). Okubo's illustrated narrative was originally published in 1946. Isamu Noguchi helped found the organization Nisei Writers and Artists Mobilization for Democracy in February 1942 and voluntarily entered the Poston, Arizona, concentration camp the following May, but won his release seven months later, in November, after finding conditions intolerable. Noguchi paid tribute to the pioneer generation in the sculpture *To the Issei* (1980–83), located in the Japanese American Cultural and Community Center Plaza in the heart of Little Tokyo. See Maeda (1994) and Ashton (1992).
27. Footage shot by Tatsuno is sampled in Tajiri's *History and Memory* (1991) and *Strawberry Fields* (1997). For other examples of work by interned Japanese American visual artists, see Gesensway and Roseman (1987).
28. See Leong (1991).
29. See, for example, the cultural history of eroticism in Japan by Bornoff (1991).
30. See Chu (1993). Despite its deceptively Orientalist title, the book's first two-thirds contain a well-researched social history of eroticism by an author who was born and educated in China and has translated many of the classic texts himself. More noteworthy is Chu's use of illustrations in the book's final "how-to" section, where Yellow men and Yellow women are shown pleasuring one another.
31. Tamba Yasunori, a Chinese physician living in Japan, was responsible for gathering the sources that composed the text of *Ishimpō*. See Levy and Ishihara (1989).
32. See Aldred (1996); Anand (1989); Chia and Chia (1986); Chia with Winn (1984); Dorra (1996); Douglas and Slinger (1979); Gach (1997); Hooper (1994); and Smith (1996).
33. The Xandria Collection—a large mail-order firm based in San Francisco—dedicates an entire section of its 10 May 1997 "Collector's Gold Edition" catalogue to Japanese-made sex toys. "Now you can experience the ancient traditions of skilled craftsmanship and oriental eroticism in products designed for ultimate female pleasure that are always discreet and reliable," says the section of the catalogue titled "Oriental Delights." Advertising text in a section that is whimsically titled "Erection Collection" brings a crosscultural perspective to bear in assuring

prospective purchasers that "references to Lingham rings abound in ancient Chinese, Japanese and Indian literature."

34. During a question-and-answer session at the 1997 festival, the directors spoke at length about problems associated with the finance, production, and distribution of Asian American feature films.

35. Not surprisingly—given the common practice of attaching parodic, punning labels to often-forgettable productions—a porno video titled *The Joi Fuk Club* (McCallum 1993) is in circulation. Other than wordplay with the title, it bears no resemblance to the mainstream film *The Joy Luck Club* (Wang 1993).

36. Funniest of all for its moralistic high seriousness is a poem (autobiographical?) that tells of a furtive, doobie-smoking wanker who returns home one day armed with skin mags and ready to spank the monkey after having visited the local adult-video arcade. When he hears his wife come home unexpectedly, the narrator hurries to get off in secret rather than invite her to join in the festivities.

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