

PETER HO-SUN CHAN'S
He's a Woman,
She's a Man

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1

Comedy and More

“There’s a lot to be said for making people laugh. Did you know that’s all that some people have?” — Preston Sturges’s *Sullivan’s Travels* (1941).

“When you make a movie with a schedule like in Hong Kong, you see the idea, make it and finish it. You don’t always realize what you have made, you just stumble into gold, and that’s exactly what happened [with *He’s a Woman, She’s a Man*].” — Peter Chan.¹

Director Peter Chan’s popular, light-hearted, and delightful gender-bending “romantic comedy” *He’s a Woman, She’s a Man* (*Golden Branch, Jade Leaf*)/*Gam ji yuk yip/Jin zhi yu ye* (1994) satisfied Hong Kong audiences and crossed over internationally.² Screened at the 19th Hong Kong International Film Festival, the film was described in its program by Chan as “a traditional love story with a dash of contemporary romance”; the director also stated “the message we want to get across is that feminine men are not

necessarily gay and masculine women are not necessarily lesbians.” In the film, Leslie Cheung plays homophobic music producer Koo Kah-ming (Sam Koo), tired of the singing star (and girlfriend) Mui Kwai (Rose) (Carina Lau) he has promoted; both he and she fall for an “ordinary person,” Lam Chi-wing (Wing) (Anita Yuen), a fan whom Sam remakes into an androgynous new singing star (actually female but whom the public and both Sam and Rose believe to be male). The plot involves events that could potentially happen in real life, but introduces coincidences and twists that are also improbable. The comedy zeroes in on Hong Kong’s fascination with star celebrities, and while the story is set in the music world, the situation is as much about the film industry as it is about the music industry.³ Gender issues, sexual orientations, identity, image-making, and the selling of images to an audience as commodities are the foci of the movie.

Comedies are not normally given their due and are easily dismissed as escapist entertainment, as American director and writer about film Peter Bogdanovich reminds us: “Comedy is always taken somewhat for granted, even though anyone who’s ever done both will tell you, comedy requires far greater skill and precision than drama. As Tallulah Bankhead put it: ‘An onion can make you cry, but show me the vegetable that can make you laugh!’”⁴ Certainly, the purpose of comedy, first and foremost, is to entertain, and, in some circumstances, to educate or inform, and Chan does both. Comedy is not easy to evaluate, as the more detailed the analysis, the less funny the humor. Early-20th-century philosopher Henri Bergson acknowledged this danger in his ruminations on the comic, describing his approach in an extended essay: “We shall not aim at imprisoning the comic spirit within a definition. We regard it, above all, as a living thing.”⁵ As popular comedian Steve Carell (*The 40 Year Old Virgin*, US television’s *The Office*) remarks, “As soon as you try to deconstruct any sort of comedy, it’s immediately not funny. It’s just not like doing something serious,

where there are these shades of meaning. With comedy, it makes people laugh or it doesn't. It's a Hail Mary in every way."⁶ Comedy hides its artistry, so that the results seem spontaneous and natural. But to truly appreciate a film's craftsmanship, we must break it apart and consider how it comes to be funny, and whether the humor has meaning beyond the effect. As critics we can suck out the air if we over-analyze, and the film cannot breathe. So we will attempt to keep *He's a Woman* alive, first through classifying the film's comic structures, by turning to film historian Gerald Mast, and his eponymous study of the "comic mind" and then looking at how and what they mean.

Chan basically adapts (by picking and choosing) elements from four comic structures Mast identifies. In *He's a Woman*, the first of the four is "the familiar plot of New Comedy — the young lovers wed despite the obstacles (either within themselves or external) to the union. Boy meets girl; boy loses girl; boy gets girl."⁷ Sam meets Wing, loses her, and regains her at the end. Chan adds cross-dressing and identity crisis and borrows from another structure Mast identifies as the *reductio ad absurdum* where "a simple human mistake or social question is magnified, reducing the action to chaos and the social question to absurdity Perfect for revealing the ridiculousness of social or human attitudes, such a plot frequently serves a didactic function. After all, reduction to the absurd is a form of argument."⁸ The logical fallacy of *reductio ad absurdum* contributes to the comedic effect. Chan's film focuses on the mistaken identity of Wing as male and gay, Sam's homophobia and identity crisis, and attitudes of Hong Kong society towards gays. Although Chan's movies are more loosely constructed, they are related to another structure Mast refers to as a "structural principle ... more leisurely, analytical, and discursive than the taut, unidirectional, rhythmically accelerating *reductio ad absurdum*. This structure might be described as an investigation of the workings of a particular society, comparing the responses of one

social group or class with those of another, contrasting people's different responses to the same stimuli and similar responses to different stimuli. Such plots are usually multileveled, containing two, three, or even more parallel lines of action."⁹ Here, not only are gender and sexual preference in Hong Kong society at issue, but class relations and social circles also. The distinction between ordinary people and celebrities are brought out through opportunities, lifestyles, and choices available to them. Lastly, Chan draws on "the story of the central figure who eventually discovers an error he has been committing in the course of his life ... The comic versions of the plot take place in a comic climate which is a function of who makes the discovery, what the discovery is, and what the consequences of the discovery are."¹⁰ Sam's multiple discoveries, from fear of a gay encounter to tolerance of a gay protégé, from feeling a sexual attraction to a supposed gay man to reconsidering his own sexual desires with a resulting identity crisis, from acceptance of various genderings and wonderment that he has mistaken a woman for a man, provide comedy and pathos throughout the story. Chan's proclivity to blend comic structures is not unlike his pioneering development of the genre mix that has come to be known as the "dramedy," in which the comedic dominates but is supported and enhanced by genuine emotional sequences and serious consequences and themes.¹¹

Still, Chan's movie shares proclivities with the Hollywood screwball comedy, with an emphasis on physical characterization, including body shape, facial expression, and gesture, as actors interact with objects of the *mise en scène* (think Wing in Sam's apartment) as well as episodic and wildly chaotic plotting rather than a continuous narrative, leading to social reconciliation and a happy ending; the leads (Sam and Wing) are characterized as opposites who eventually reconcile their differences. Chan borrows from two subgenres of the screwball comedy, identified by film critic Stanley Cavell¹² as the marriage (commitment) comedy and the

remarriage (reaffirmation) comedy, as seen in the original film and its sequel, *Who's the Woman, Who's the Man* (*Golden Branch, Jade Leaf 2*)/*Gam ji yuk yip 2/Jin zhi yu ye 2* (1996), where at the inception, the couple do not recognize they are in love with each other, but eventually find each other, and, in the sequel, are separated and ultimately reunited.¹³

Chan mines humor in the everyday, and while it is a selective process, it appears as if discovered by accident, and the viewer, in Chan's company, experiences these apparently unexpected finds with him, delighting in their good fortune. Similarly, though, there are equally dramatic moments to be found in the everyday, and Chan's films share a wistfulness that is very affecting on an audience. *He's a Woman* could be described as a romantic comedy that follows not only the Hong Kong but Hollywood formula of "boy meets girl, boy gets girl, boy loses girl, boy gets girl, and they live happily ever after," except it adds not only the cross-dressing gender twist but genuine moments of empathy and pathos, making it something more. Hence, Chan delivers an emotional wallop, running the gamut from laughter to tears, by pioneering the "dramedy," a hybrid form that blends comedy with drama and pathos, discovering, as it unreels, the humor and heartbreak of life. The audience laughs with, not at, the characters (and sometimes cries, or at least feels for them) as the dramatic elements are incorporated. The "comedy" is infused with something "dramatic."¹⁴ In fact, Chan draws on the rudiments of drama and plotting long ago described by Aristotle in *The Poetics*. There is complication and conflict, created through the cross-dressing aspects and Sam's characterization, a climax and even catharsis of sorts for some audiences (as the heterosexual romance of Wing and Sam is reified). Overplayed, the sentiment in Chan's films would be maudlin, but with the right touch it is fragile and effervescent. The reviewer known as Kozo, at "Love Hong Kong Film," describes *He's a Woman* as having a "glossy, Golden Age of Hollywood feel, and the story manages to be affecting without being overbearing."¹⁵

Kozo credits the United Filmmakers Organization with its “ability to handle comedy and drama in a light, sophisticated way.”¹⁶ In the tradition of other UFO films generally and Chan films particularly, we find an urban setting, with urban youthful characters, urban problems, and urban perplexities, treated in serio-comic fashion. Chan’s distinctive sensibility grows from his vision of the world — that his stories could take place (and would be understood) in any global city, barring the language barrier. His urban youth, in films ranging from *Tom, Dick and Hairy (Three World-Weary Heroes)/Fung chan saam hap/Feng chen san xia* (1993), *He Ain’t Heavy, He’s My Father (New Two of a Kind)/San naam hing naan dai/Xin nan xiong nan di* (1993), *Comrades, Almost a Love Story/Tim mat mat/Tian mi mi* (1996), and *He’s a Woman* weave stories about growing up and taking on responsibilities, and in all these films, sexual matters play a part. The virtue of Chan’s filmmaking is the evolution of his characters through poignant and sweet stories of love, yearning, and relationships; characters keep missing each other, waiting for each other, and eventually finding each other, with Chan capturing the subtlety of those relationships and feelings, mixing both emotionally deep and over-the-top hilarious scenes.¹⁷ He told film reviewer Betsy Sherman he likes to “maneuver emotions ... to make an audience laugh and cry ... to be thrown up in the air then dumped.”¹⁸ As an avid film-watcher himself, he explained, he likes to experience that thrill as well.

More broadly, Chan’s genre-bending cinema reflects Hong Kong as a hybrid city, blending old and new in an original way.¹⁹ Like Hong Kong making and remaking itself within its architectural, post-colonial, and triadic space, Chan draws upon the Chinese cultural past and Hong Kong’s film past, not only citing history and culture but borrowing from the melodrama popular in Cantonese and Mandarin dialect films of the 1950s.²⁰ One melodramatic stock element, according to Ng Ho, is the pattern of

the changing of roles,²¹ in Chan's movie represented by the gender-bending of the plotting, for starters, and elaborated in a melodramatic tension, torn between comedy and pathos with character foils and contrasting lifestyles. Clowning, exaggerated facial expressions, and body language can be traced to the clowns of Chinese opera, as well as the coincidences that arise. But there are also moments of sadness, and the contrast between the comic and dramatic allows us to make connections, draw parallels, perceive ironies and contradictions, and explore themes raised by the story. This movie is more than simple escapism. The issues of gender, sexual orientation, and commerce Chan explores behind the humor and dramatics are serious in nature and lend themselves to closer examination, as explored in the following chapters. Indeed, Stephen Teo notes, "The genre of comedy relies on the rendering of a paradox on which humor is the mainspring to achieve a significant reading of the 'Other,'"²² in this case a mainstream film in which the "other" is gayness.

What makes us laugh, as human beings? Philosophers, psychologists, sociologists, and cognitive researchers have all examined this question, from Aristotle to Kant, from Descartes to Freud. Laughter authority John Morreall notes the necessary conditions for laughter generally agreed upon: feelings of superiority; relief, as a release of tension; our perception of an incongruity; and/or the involvement of a sense of play or playfulness.²³ There are no universals, in terms of who laughs at what — "one man's (woman's?) meat is another's poison." According to Mast, in filmmaking, it is "a matter of rhythm and emphasis,"²⁴ an impression understood on the part of a director. Bergson reminds us that "to understand laughter, we must put it back into its natural environment, which is society, and above all must we determine the utility of its function, which is a social one ... It must have a social signification."²⁵ Bergson also notes the disinterested stance required by comedy, an intelligent perspective, at a remove

from emotions. In our examination of the comedic elements, we will keep Bergson and Mast in mind, putting the film in a social context and examining its artistry, but since *He's a Woman* is both comedic and dramatic, we must also consider the audience's emotional response. What makes us empathize? Like pornography, as the US Supreme Court has decided, we know it when we see it. Mast continues, "Laughter is itself a physical-emotional response produced by intellectual recognition. The intellectual basis of comedy's emotional effect (laughter) is precisely what gives it its power as an intellectual tool."²⁶ I would suggest the same case could be made for drama; sometimes we are sickened by an emotional reaction, and thereby forced to confront it. In film dramedy, we know it when we feel it, we cannot deny it, it erupts over us and we respond to it, we cannot suppress it. While comedy dispels fear and offers relief, empathy makes us feel and think. As human beings living in the 21st century, we are bombarded with manufactured images on a scale never before imagined, and thereby are conditioned to read them; the power of filmmaking results not just from those making films or those writing about them, but also from those watching them and playing them in their heads. Film has always been and remains a collaborative and popular art form.

The Chinese proverb, "*Cheng xian qi hou*" translates as "to serve as a link between the past and the future" and refers to the undertaking of studies and enterprises.²⁷ I borrow it here to describe Chan's invoking a rich cinematic history, drawing on Cantonese and Mandarin comedy, particularly films of the 1950s and 60s, including the approximately 600 Cantonese comedies made during this time frame,²⁸ although those films originated in the Shanghai comedies of the 1920s and 30s. Cantonese comedies of the 1950s relied on comic dialogue, including nonsense verse, rhymes, and puns, as well as gags, according to Law Kar.²⁹ Law notes an "eclectic and inconsistent style" in 1950s and 60s Cantonese comedies and a "sensitiv[ity] to changes in society ... free from the bondage of

established codes”; he also recognizes Hong Kong as possessing a “unique” society.³⁰ Released in 1994, *He’s a Woman* capitalized on an international trend towards androgyny in the entertainment industry and popular culture as well as changing mores regarding gendering and sexual orientation, and the movie zeroed in on the local fanzine peculiar to Hong Kong popular culture.

Ng Ho’s preliminary analysis of Cantonese comedy plots identifies many elements from which Chan borrows, including those from social satires and romantic comedies.³¹ From the social satires Chan draws on those in which the “little guys’ [are] trying every possible means to make a living and dreaming of an abundant life,” where people with their own individual problems share a living space (the pattern of *The House of 72 Tenants*), accidental acquisition leading to blunders and a moral lesson (the pattern of the sweepstakes craze), and a character “gain[ing] admittance into another social stratum” (the pattern of the country bumpkin goes to town). From the romantic comedies Chan makes use of the war between a male and female within an interior space (the pattern of the dividing wall), disguised identity, and the changing of roles, specifically, the assumption of roles of the opposite sex, and the house husband (traditional male-female roles are exchanged; this element appears chiefly in the sequel to *He’s a Woman*, *She’s a Man*).³² Born in Hong Kong, Chan’s formative years were spent there; his family did not move to Thailand until Chan was 12, and there he studied in an American high school. While I am not suggesting a direct influence, I am positing Chan’s familiarity with the genre, and an exemplary Cantonese comedy of the tradition Chan follows is Chiang Wai-kwong’s *First Come, First Served/Jie Zu Xian De* (1953).

Briefly, the slim plot follows a woman, Wong Sheung (Leung Mo-sheung) who injures her fiancé and flees to the city where she disguises herself as a male to find work. Helped by a radio host (Law Yim-hing), she becomes a successful singer as well as wins

the heart of a male singer, Cheung Chin-chung. Many similarities between this movie and Chan's arise. The female lead is a girl from the countryside (as Wing is an "ordinary person"); both plots involve money problems of working class people, as distinguished from the wealthy. Both females are given spunky characterizations. Both films include lots of songs as well as comical auditions and unmasking of the female disguised as male. And both movies include female characters who mistake the female-disguised-as-male and pursue them as partners. *First Come, First Served* actually involves a five-sided complexity whereas Chan's film involves a triangle. The radio show host is pursued by Cheung Sing-bun, the buddy of the male singer, and the male singer's former girlfriend, Chow Yuk-lan, returns to pursue her lover. All's well that ends well as the couples sort themselves out (the cross-dressed female with her fiancée; the male singer with his former girlfriend; and the radio host with the male singer's buddy).

Chan's use of Cantonese idiom and slang goes back to the "Broker La" comedies of writer Gao Xiong and director Mo Kangshi, as noted by Law Kar.³³ But, unlike the earlier Cantonese comedies whose "plot structure was loose and episodic," and which lacked "a coherent vision,"³⁴ Chan's plotting is taut and the story structurally unified, dependent on character contrasts and a love triangle, and offering a consistent thematic view. Cheng also describes 1950s–60s Cantonese comedies as "moralistic and conservative and lacking a sense of satire and protest" and Chan's film in these instances is liberal and lightly satirical.³⁵ Interestingly, Cheng observes that the "Cantonese comedies refrained from expounding the prevalent male chauvinist ideology" and notes "their creation of quite a few unbending female characters,"³⁶ far ahead of their 1980s counterparts, citing films such as *A Comet of Laughter Lands on Earth* (1952), *One Queen and Three Kings* (1963), *Secrets of Marriage* (1965), and *Man of the House* (1967), among others. Characters like Wing and Rose in the original film and Anita Mui's

Fan Fan in the sequel follow such prototypes. Both the film's Chinese title and its opening sequence are signposts for a women's world. *Gold Branch Jade Leaf*, the literal Chinese title, is a common term used to describe Chinese female aristocracy of the past,³⁷ used here to refer to the power of the women in the story, namely Rose and Wing, and pointing to Chan's intentions in the film. He expected audiences to identify with Rose, to find Sam self-centered and selfish, and to see Wing as his next conquest — albeit behind the scenes, in a “reign behind the curtain,” it is the female characters who orchestrate the plot developments. (The film's English title comes from a line of dialogue, “he's a woman,” ironically referring in the story to Wing, but in the title referring to Sam's sensitive nature.)

Story and structure come first and foremost, because without a funny script and humorous episodes, no matter how great the cinematography, editing, and acting, it will fail to provoke amusement, and without a narrative arc, emotional impact will be lacking. Casting and delivery on the part of the actors, as well as their comic timing, and contributions made by the editor, musical composer, and filmmaker's vision, all play a significant role in this dramedy, with the humor enlivening as well as problematizing its gendered subjects. Director Ridley Scott, known primarily for his drama and action films, confesses: “As I go on, I'm very attracted to comedy. At the end of the day, because you've been having a good old laugh, you go home laughing — as opposed to dealing with blood all day and you go home and want to cut your wrists.”³⁸ *He's a Woman* offers a good laugh and something more. As one spectator observes, “You don't have to be from a certain country to enjoy a good laugh. The fact that the movie is funny makes it an international film, crossing borders.”

Notes

Chapter 1 Comedy and More

- 1 Personal interviews, 8 October and 18 December 1998. All future Chan quotations are taken from these interviews unless otherwise noted.
- 2 See Chan's basic biographical information at <http://www.hkcinemagic.com/en/people.asp?id=9> or under "People" at the website of Chan's current company, Applause Pictures, at www.applausepictures.com.
- 3 Most audiences are clued in to this fact, especially in Hong Kong, where pop singers also "cross over" into the film industry, becoming actors. Many, like Leslie Cheung, continue working in both industries. But for those unaware, Chan offers a clue later in the film, where Sam is reading the book *Film Music*, whose title is clearly readable in both English and Chinese.
- 4 Peter Bogdanovich, *Peter Bogdanovich's Movie of the Week: 52 Classic Films for One Full Year* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1999), p. 138. Similarly, veteran actor Cary Grant also acknowledged, "Comedy holds the greatest risk for an actor, and the laughter is the reward." Quoted in Geoffrey Wansell, *Cary Grant: Dark Angel* (New York: Arcade, 1996), p. 47.

- 5 Henri Bergson, *Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic*, trans. Cloudesley Brereton and Fred Rothwell (New York: MacMillan Company, 1914), p. 2.
- 6 Logan Hill, "Steve Carell's Smokin'! But He'd Rather Not Fan His Own Flames," *New York*, 31 July–7 August 2006: 68.
- 7 Gerald Mast, *The Comic Mind: Comedy and the Movies*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), p. 4. Note: Mast's text discusses mostly Hollywood comedies pre-1980, but his typology is useful for evaluating comedy.
- 8 *Ibid.*, p. 6.
- 9 *Ibid.*
- 10 *Ibid.*, pp. 8–9.
- 11 Although contemporary Hong Kong films mix distinctive elements of various genres in the same film (this to satisfy all audiences' tastes, not unlike Shakespeare's theater), in some respects to assign genres is not as good a fit as in other cinemas, but movies generally are identified by film-goer by known genres — i.e., John Woo's action cinema, Jackie Chan's action comedy, etc. Most of Chan's films have been "dramedies," with comedy dominant; *Comrades, Almost a Love Story/Tim mat mat/Tian mi mi* (1996) is just the opposite — drama with some comedic elements.
- 12 Screwball's origins vary. Basically "one or both of the leads is a 'screwball,' an 'oddball whose unconventional nature is responsible for the equally unconventional situations in which the characters find themselves," Bernard F. Dick, *Anatomy of Film* (Boston: Bedford Books, 2005), pp. 145–54, and so named because of "the wild, out of control baseball pitch." Maria Pramaggiore and Tom Wallis, *Film: A Critical Introduction* (Boston: Pearson Education, 2006), pp. 359–60.
- 13 Stanley Cavell, *Pursuits of Happiness: The Hollywood Comedy of Remarriage* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981). Cavell cites Howard Hawks's *Bringing Up Baby* (1938) as an example of the first, and George Cukor's *Philadelphia Story* (1940) as an example of the second. Chan's first film, described as a "fantasy," and the sequel as "reality," echo Cavell's description.
- 14 To wit, Chan's combination of comedy and drama is delicately balanced, having the best of both worlds. Consider this male spectator's

response, a reaction to the story's dramatic elements and theme: "The movie to me seemed very sad most of the way through. You have a pathetic 20-something year-old kid idealizing these two superstars that lead cover lives to keep their image. Deeper into the story I started to see the message that love has no boundaries, including gender. That a homophobic man such as Cheung's character can fall in love with what he believes is a man is the true definition of love in my eyes, a feeling from one person to another with no prejudice. This is why I think it is a good love story, maybe not the most romantic but still a really good love story." Further audience responses throughout include, but are not limited to, students from Seminole Community College, Sanford, Florida, US, in World Cinema and Art of Film classes, in which the movie was watched, 2005–2008, with students ranging in age from 18–70. Other responses come from various classes taught over the last ten years, as well as international students from the Pacific Islands, various Latin American countries, and the Caribbean (including Mexico, Venezuela, Peru, Colombia, Argentina, Nicaragua, Cuba, and Puerto Rico), Canada, Japan, and South Korea, as well as non-student Hong Kongers outside the film industry, American Koreans and Chinese, and anonymous sources from various Internet communities. Sexual orientation varies but is primarily heterosexual.

- 15 "Love Hong Kong Film," 30 September 2005, http://www.lovehkfilm.com/reviews/hes_a_woman_shes_a_man.htm.
- 16 "Love Hong Kong Film."
- 17 The late star Leslie Cheung described working with Chan and the film as follows: "Cela a été une expérience assez intéressante, de travailler avec Peter Chan ... Le film de Peter Chan pose le problème de l'identité sexuelle. Le film est très drôle, sans être calculé." Michel Ciment and Hubert Niogret, "Entretien Leslie Cheung: Dix-huit ans de travail acharné," *Positif* 455 (January 1999): 99.
- 18 Betsy Sherman, unpublished taped interview with Peter Chan; Sherman's review appeared as "Opening *The Love Letter*," *Boston Globe*, 16 May 1999: N9+.
- 19 See Ackbar Abbas, *Hong Kong: Culture and the Politics of Disappearance* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997)

- on Hong Kong as a city of presence and absence, recognizing but also destroying the past as it moves into the future.
- 20 Recently, Chan paid homage to the Hong Kong musicals popular in the 1960s, with the release of his musical *Perhaps Love/Ruoguo ai/Aiqing* (2005).
- 21 Ng Ho, "A Preliminary Plot Analysis of Cantonese Comedy," in The 9th Hong Kong International Film Festival, *The Traditions of Hong Kong Comedy* (Hong Kong: Urban Council, 1985), p. 24.
- 22 Stephen Teo, "Genre, Authorship, and Articulation," in The 9th Hong Kong International Film Festival, *The Traditions of Hong Kong Comedy* (Hong Kong: Urban Council, 1985), p. 89.
- 23 See John Morreall, *Taking Laughter Seriously* (New York: SUNY University Press, 1983).
- 24 Mast, p. 27.
- 25 Bergson, pp. 7–8.
- 26 Ibid., p. 19.
- 27 Stephen Teo uses this proverb, translated as "to evoke the past so as to inherit its legacy," in his discussion of Allen Fong's *Father and Son/Fuzi Qing* (1981) in relation to its predecessors Ng Wui's *Father and Son/Fuzi Qing* (1954) and Chun Kim's *Parents' Hearts/Fumu Xin* (1955). See Teo, *Hong Kong Cinema: The Extra Dimensions* (London: BFI Publishing, 1997), p. 62. Andrew Grossman borrows from Teo in his discussion of Yim Ho's *Kitchen* (1997), explaining it as "the invocation and subsumption of the past for the good of the future." See Grossman, "The Rise of Homosexuality and the Dawn of Communism in Hong Kong Film: 1993–1998," in Andrew Grossman, ed., *Queer Asian Cinema: Shadows in the Shade* (New York: Harrington Park Press, 2000), pp. 172–74.
- 28 Cheng Yu, "The World According to Everyman," in The 9th Hong Kong International Film Festival, *The Traditions of Hong Kong Comedy* (Hong Kong: Urban Council, 1985), p. 41.
- 29 Law Kar, "A Comparative Analysis of Cantonese and Mandarin Comedies," in The 9th Hong Kong International Film Festival, *The Traditions of Hong Kong Comedy* (Hong Kong: Urban Council, 1985), p. 14.
- 30 Ibid., pp. 15–16.
- 31 Ng, pp. 21–26.

- 32 Ibid., pp. 22–25.
- 33 Law Kar, “Broker La, Gao Xiong and Mo Kangshi,” in The 9th Hong Kong International Film Festival, *The Traditions of Hong Kong Comedy* (Hong Kong: Urban Council, 1985), p. 53.
- 34 Cheng, p. 44.
- 35 Ibid., p. 45.
- 36 Ibid., p. 42.
- 37 The Chinese title was previously used in Hong Kong for the title of two films, the first being the Cantonese title given William Wyler’s *Roman Holiday* (1953), starring Audrey Hepburn and Gregory Peck. (Hepburn plays a spoiled and reluctant princess who takes a holiday from her position; Peck is the reporter on to her truancy. Although she eventually rises to the occasion and returns to her responsibilities, she announces, remembering her “holiday,” she will “cherish the memory as long as I live.”) The other, a 1964 Shaoxing opera film comedy (similar in style to the popular *huangmei* opera) released by Great Wall and starring Miranda Yang (Xia Meng) and an all-female cast, included a “male” character disguising himself as a female in order to test the young woman he admires. (The same opera served as another *huangmei diao* film made in Taiwan in 1974, and starred Ivy Ling Po and Sylvia Chang). The above surely illustrates Chan as the link between past and future, with him drawing on opera and film for his movie. Personal correspondence, Terence Chang and Law Kar, 14 April 2007 and 20 April 2007, respectively.
- 38 “A Good Year,” *Entertainment Weekly* (Fall Movie Preview 2006): 79.6.

Chapter 2 Camera, Sound, and Music

- 1 Quoted from an unpublished Betsy Sherman taped interview with Peter Chan; Sherman’s review drawing on her interview was published as “Opening *The Love Letter*,” *Boston Globe*, 16 May 1999: N9+.
- 2 Ibid.
- 3 Quoted in *I Lived, But...*, a 1983 documentary on Ozu by Kuzuo Inoue and featuring actors Chishu Ryu, Mariko Okada, and Haruko

- Sugimura, director (and former assistant) Shohei Imamura, and film critics Donald Ritchie and Tadao Sato. The documentary is included on the Criterion Collection DVD release of *Tokyo Story*, 2003.
- 4 See, for example, Gilles Neret, *Tamara de Lempicka 1898–1980* (Köln: Benedikt Taschen, 1992), p. 8; Alain Blondel, et al., *Tamara de Lempicka Art Deco Icon* (London: Royal Academy of the Arts, 2004), pp. 33, 55; and numerous references in the biography by Laura Claridge, *Tamara de Lempicka: A Life of Deco and Decadence* (New York: Clarkson Potter, 1999).
 - 5 English subtitles provided by Hong Kong product have improved, but are often inaccurate. Translation provided by former student Jamie Wong Hei-kwan, a former Hong Kong native currently residing in the US.
 - 6 See Chan's revelation from personal experience in Chapter 3, regarding his being mistaken for a woman.
 - 7 Bruce Jay Friedman's 1962 black humor novel *Stern* expresses this idea best: "A kiss is an upper persuasion for a lower invasion."
 - 8 Gerald Mast, *The Comic Mind: Comedy and the Movies*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), pp. 11–12.

Chapter 3 Cross-Dressing, Gender-Bending, and Sexual Orientation

- 1 Gerald Mast, *The Comic Mind: Comedy and the Movies*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), p. 21.
- 2 That such distinctions have entered the mainstream, at least in the US, is evidenced by the recently released *I Now Pronounce You Chuck and Larry* (2007), a Hollywood comedy directed by Dennis Dugan and starring Adam Sandler and Kevin James. The two stars play New York firefighters who pose as a gay couple to insure domestic partner benefits. Television promotionals include a voice-over announcing, "Chuck and Larry are not gay ... but everyone has to think they are" with teasers between the characters like, "I can't be gay for you, Larry. I can be a lesbian, but that's about it," and "We're gay, not transsexuals."

- 3 Homi K. Bhabba, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 1.
- 4 Siu-leung Li, *Cross-Dressing in Chinese Opera* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2003), p. 1.
- 5 *Ibid.*, p. 40.
- 6 *Ibid.*, pp. 19, 40.
- 7 Ng Ho, "A Preliminary Plot Analysis of Cantonese Comedy," in The 9th Hong Kong International Film Festival, *The Traditions of Hong Kong Comedy* (Hong Kong: Urban Council, 1985), p. 21.
- 8 Pang Chai-choi and Lin Li, "Portraits of Ten Comedians," in The 9th Hong Kong International Film Festival, *The Traditions of Hong Kong Comedy* (Hong Kong: Urban Council, 1985), p. 61.
- 9 Mast, p. 4.
- 10 For "the male gaze," see Laura Mulvey's influential *Screen* article (1979) included in *Visual and Other Pleasures* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), pp. 14–26. For the "heterosexual division of the universe," see Judith Mayne, *Women at the Keyhole: Feminism and Women's Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), p. 118.
- 11 In the latter, based on a Ming dynasty folk tale, a male scholar falls for a fellow scholar revealed to be a woman who has disguised herself as male so that she may study; it served as the basis for the Chinese opera *Why Not Return?* (*Hu bugui?*).
- 12 Andrew Grossman, "The Rise of Homosexuality and the Dawn of Communism in Hong Kong Film: 1993–1998," in Andrew Grossman, ed., *Queer Asian Cinema: Shadows in the Shade* (New York: Harrington Park Press, 2000), p. 162. (The other film to which Grossman alludes is Tsui Hark's *The Lovers*).
- 13 Feng Luo, *City on the Edge of Time/Sheng shi bian yuan: Xianggang dian ying de xing bie te ji yu qui zheng zhi* (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 29–42. Similar to Luo's comment regarding art and life performance, one viewer observes, "Cheung was in a sense a private person living a public life" in relation to his sexual orientation.
- 14 Quoted in Kwan's *Yang ± Yin: Gender in Chinese Cinema (Nan sheng nu xiang: Zhongguo dianying zhi xingbie, 1996)*.

- 15 Marjorie Garber, *Vested Interests: Cross-Dressing and Cultural Anxiety* (New York: Harper Collins, 1992), p. 184.
- 16 Rebecca Bell-Metereau, *Hollywood Androgyny*, 2nd ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), p. xix.
- 17 This combination is reinforced in the role reversal of Sam and Wing in the sequel, which delivers the one-two punch of public man–private woman. Sam is the stay-at-home worrier, a bit tetchy, while Wing “brings home the bacon.”
- 18 A representative sampling of typical responses from viewers follows:
 “I don’t think this film is attempting to reinforce stereotypes; it’s making light of them.”
 “Comedic and entertaining, but kind of overplayed.”
 “[Eric Tsang’s portrayal] may be offensive to some people, but funny to most.”
 “There is definitely gay stereotyping in the film, but its effects are harmless and comedic. I responded with admiration to the clever use of it. I thought that the way it was handled is so light that it’s tasteful and artful, especially for such a touchy topic.”
 “[The gay stereotyping was] done very well with a touch of sensitivity and lightheartedness.”
 “There certainly are all sorts of stereotypes here — the flamey Auntie with his hip-swaying walk, the way he talked (inflections of voice), his arm and hand motions; the gay character [Joseph/Josephine (Law Kar-ying)] playing classical piano (Mozart Sonata in C Major) and his unbridled libido, his apparent obsession with penises, etc.; and, Fish teaching Wing how to walk (‘walk, walk, scratch’).”
 “As for the effects of gay stereotyping, well, the usual: Sam becomes intimidated by Wing and avoids being nude, or exposed in front of ‘him,’ while many still avoid other homosexual encounters throughout the film.”
- 19 Tsang would reprise a gay characterization, without the caricature, deeper and more dramatic, in Stanley Kwan’s *Hold You Tight/Yue faai lok yue doh laai/Yu kuai le yu duo luo* (1998).
- 20 See James B. Stiff and Paul A. Mongeau, *Persuasive Communication*, 2nd ed. (New York: Guilford Press, 2003), pp. 286–94. Inoculation theory was defined by William McGuire and the theory came into

wide use in the 1960s. I am also indebted to my colleague Bobbie Bell at Seminole Community College for practical applications of the strategy.

- 21 Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (New York: Routledge, 1990), p. 95.
- 22 Mast, p. 11.
- 23 Regarding this scene, "Do men not live in houses?" asks one spectator.
- 24 Luo, pp. 29–42.
- 25 Although perhaps not, as two queer perspectives have described her cross-dressing as "transgendered," in one instance, and "transvestite" in another.
- 26 Here is a range of audience responses, running the gamut:

"It is Leslie Cheung's portrayal of Sam that holds the most meaning. Both Rose and Wing are set in heterosexual archetypes even if one is more of an androgynous figure. Sam, on the other hand, throughout the movie and even until the end is a confused and overly insecure character. His problem with accepting his sexual preference makes him a character to feel for. Sure, Rose is shunted to the side, but in life any relationship can't work out without compatibility. Sam's gradual 'dropping' of Rose can be seen in the context of the film as not so much a deliberately malevolent gesture, but one out of uncertainty where his path in life truly lies. Also, the one comment of Rose's on being very possessive (she will do anything to keep him) mirrors the obsession Wing has with their relationship. And Wing perhaps is the driving force that helps us to understand Sam's conflict. Although we the audience know Wing is in fact female, the fact that her alternate visage brings up feelings of homosexuality, even at the end when Sam finds out she is a woman, his line 'man or woman, it doesn't matter, all I know is that I love you,' shows that ultimately for Sam, love is not defined by gender but by what lies within the heart. In terms of societal norms, if Wing was in fact a man, we couldn't argue against Sam's feelings and intentions, but if we step out of that context, Sam can be seen as a loving, caring person who craves real love, a true mental, physical, and spiritual connection, not just physical attraction, which in my opinion makes him the true hero and most relatable character in Chan's film."

“Is Peter Chan homosexual? Where can I get a copy of this film?”

“I can see how this very interesting movie could make some people very uncomfortable. It could make some men question their own sexuality, with the male character [Sam] questioning himself like that. I think many people may have caught themselves mixing up gender, especially with little kids. Most parents have had to deal with people calling their girls boys or their boys girls. So, are there really big differences between men and women? Well, the differences are pretty much hormonally and chemically. We produce pheromones that attract the opposite sex and hormones control the menstrual cycle. As for the two female characters having their [sexual] moment and the younger character wanting to touch the other woman’s breasts, I think that is totally normal. People are often curious of something unusual to them and I think it is perfectly normal for men and women to admire people of the same sex and even to be able to pick out an attractive person of the same sex.”

“Does the movie critique Hong Kong society’s reception to gay people? Sam’s shame and torment when he finds himself attracted to Wing, and his thinking that this truth will hurt his image and status in the Hong Kong entertainment industry and then his finally accepting this in the name of ‘true love’ seem to steer in this direction.”

- 27 Numerous Shakespeare scholars have noted that in *Hamlet*, Hamlet returns from sea, saved from death by pirates, a changed man, more stoical and at peace, ready to accept what is to come. See, for example, scholars such as Harold Bloom, James Calderwood, Jan Kott, Stephen Greenblatt, Sidney Homan, and Jan Kott, to mention only a few.
- 28 Grossman, p. 162.
- 29 See Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: Volume 1: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage, 1976, 1990), and George Chauncey, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World 1890–1940* (New York: Basic Books 1994).
- 30 Siu-leung Li, *Cross-Dressing in Chinese Opera* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2003), p. 31. Li cites Robert Hans Van Gulik’s study *Sexual Life in Ancient China: A Preliminary Study of Chinese Sex and Society from ca. 1500 B.C. till 1644 A.D.* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1961).

- 31 Lionel Ovesey, *Homosexuality and Pseudohomosexuality* (New York: Science House, 1969). See also Ethel Spector Person, *The Sexual Century* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1999).
- 32 The Stonewall Riots are so named because of the place where they began, the Stonewall Inn in New York City's Greenwich Village. In the early hours of 28 June 1969, police raided the club, rounding up non-heterosexuals of many persuasions, leading to an outbreak of several days of demonstrations and riots. Stonewall marks the beginning of gays fighting back against persecution and actively organizing, that is, the beginning of Gay Liberation or the Gay Rights movement in the US. For gay film studies, see Richard Dyer, ed., *Gays and Film* (London: BFI, 1977).
- 33 Vito Russo, *The Celluloid Closet: Homosexuality in the Closet* (New York: Harper & Row, 1981).
- 34 Richard Barrios, *Screened Out: Playing Gay in Hollywood From Edison to Stonewall* (New York: Routledge, 2005).
- 35 See *Queer Cinema, The Film Reader*, ed. Harry Benshoff and Sean Griffin (New York: Routledge, 2004). As a part of the "In Focus Routledge Film Readers," the anthology dispels any simplistic notions of gendering and provides a history of queer cinematic representation as well as an overview of the theoretical models used to analyze cinematic representation.
- 36 See Judith Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (New York: New York University Press, 2005); Jay Prosser, *Second Skins: The Body Narratives of Transsexuality* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998); and Diana Fuss, *Identification Papers* (New York: Routledge, 1995).
- 37 See Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990) and *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (New York: Routledge, 1990).
- 38 See Foucault, above, and *The History of Sexuality, Volume I: An Introduction; Volume II: The Use of Pleasure*, and, *Volume III: The Care of the Self*. The first volume was published in French in 1976 and translated into English in 1977. The latter two volumes were both published in French in 1984, and translated into English in 1985 and 1986 respectively.

- 39 Helen Hok-sze Leung, "Queerscapes in Contemporary Hong Kong Cinema," *Positions* 9:2 (Fall 2001): 423–47. See Ingram's essay "Marginality and the Landscapes of Erotic Alien(nations)," in *Queers in Space: Communities, Public Places, Sites of Resistance*, ed. Anne-Marie Bouthillette, Yolanda Retter, and Gordon Brent Ingram (Seattle: Bay Press, 1997), pp. 27–52.
- 40 On the other hand, following the June 3rd–4th 1989 Tiananmen Square crackdown, one million (one in six) Hong Kongers protested and held vigil in solidarity with the Mainland's student pro-democracy movement (known as the June 4th Movement). And surely on the minds of many was the impending return of Hong Kong to the Mainland. Since 1989, thousands of Hong Kongers have gathered on June 4th every year in Victoria Park, holding a candlelight vigil to commemorate the victims of the massacre. See CNN news coverage at <http://www.cnn.com/WORLD/9706/04/tiananmen.hong.kong/#1>. See also Hong Kong novelist Sussy Chakó's/Xu Xi's description of the events following Tiananmen in her short story "Danny's Snake": "And then, he told her about the miles of demonstrators, how beautiful and terrible this outpouring was, previously so repressed. People from all walks of life marched into the streets to confront the inevitable change to the status quo, whatever the change would bring. Was it fear, she asked, and perhaps humiliation at their helplessness, their loss of control? No, he replied, people were angry and outraged, not afraid, more indignant than humiliated. It was a protest, a demand to be heard. It was unlike anything he had ever seen in Hong Kong." Sussy Chakó/Xu Xi, *Daughters of Hui* (Hong Kong: Asia 2000 Limited, 1996), p. 28.

Furthermore, since the return, there have been numerous pro-democracy/anti-dictatorship rallies and demonstrations, ranging from the 50,000-person protest in 2003 against passage of "anti-subversion" laws that would restrict civic freedoms to the 250,000 marchers in December 2005 who remonstrated against a proposal that would delay the introduction of a one man–one vote system. While Hong Kongers may be categorized as apolitical, there are cultural and film industry figures who are politically active, such as actor/producer John Shum Kin-fun, a visible and vocal political activist in Hong Kong's

pro-democracy movement. There are similarities between Hong Kong's pro-democracy groups, which mushroomed following Tiananmen Square in 1989 and continued to expand with the first direct elections to the Legislative Council in 1991 [groups include both actual political parties and lawmakers as well as social activists and civil organizations, among them, the Democratic Party (Martin Lee), People Pile, April Fifth Action (Leung Kwok-hung, known as "Longhair"), The Frontier, Civil Act Up, and queer communities]; both the activists and queer groups agree on the issues but disagree on the ways and means of achieving their goals.

- 41 The pervasiveness of anti-homosexual sentiment in Hong Kong can be seen in remarks made during the discussion that took place during the Hong Kong Legislative Council's meeting regarding the Crimes (Amendment) Bill that effectively decriminalized homosexuality.

Some remarks acknowledged the homophobic taboo as dominant, applauding the Council for what it was about to enact:

Mr. James David McGregor, OBE, ISO, JP: "Hong Kong people seem to regard male homosexuality as an unmentionable aberration from normal social behavior, so much so that many local people have claimed that homosexuality is a western preference and has little to do with Chinese society. Family and parental attitudes in Hong Kong have never been able to accept the changing patterns and recognition of the wide differences in sexuality and sexual preferences which have come to light in modern times. This Council has reached, or will shortly do, a brave decision to disregard what may be in fact the majority view in Hong Kong. We have given relief to many male homosexuals who will no longer have to fear prosecution and persecution against the state that God created them in. Some of the world's most brilliant men were and are homosexuals. God created them too."

Other remarks reinstated homophobia and homophobia as an acceptable societal taboo. Note that the response below contradicts the historically documented conventional practice of homosexuality in parts of China (discussed later in this chapter) and also that the above response accurately describes the position below:

Mr. Kingsley Sit Ho-yin: "Members all know that the public is disposed against decriminalization of homosexuality ... The

legalization, or decriminalization, of homosexuality is contrary to the moral standards of traditional Chinese society.”

See the record through the Hong Kong government’s official website at http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr90-91/english/lc_sitg/hansard/h910710.pdf.

- 42 In discussing gay director Edward Lam and his homoerotic piece *Scenes From a Man’s Changing Room*, staged by Zuni Icosahedron a month after Hong Kong decriminalized homosexuality in June 1991, Rozanna Lilley uses an old Cantonese expression, “hek ye ge laigau” or “the customs and traditions that devour people” to describe Lam’s feelings expressed by the play. She quotes an interview in the 1 January 1991 *Sing Pao Daily*, in which Lam states, “I feel I am a marginal man. I find that I do not identify with men under the traditional standard. Those type of men represent ignorance and power worship. However, I can feel the feeling of safety when I am with them. I feel confused. I intend to express my understanding of my sexuality from the perspective of being contradictory in my feeling and thinking.” See Rozanna Lilley, *Staging Hong Kong: Gender and Performance in Transition* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1998), pp. 8–9.
- 43 June Lam, “Leslie Cheung’s ‘98 Declaration: An Interview before the Golden Horse Awards,” *City Entertainment* 491 (5–13 February 1998): 11–16. I had the pleasure of lunching with June Lam during the symposium “The Film Scene: Cinema, the Arts, and Social Change” held by the University of Hong Kong, 21–22 April 2006.
- 44 In contrast, director Stanley Kwan came out onscreen to his mother while filming *Yang ± Yin: Gender in Chinese Cinema (Nan sheng nu xiang: Zhongguo dianying zhi xingbie*, 1996). Previously, Kwan was known as a “women’s director,” coded language for gay, as with other directors like George Cukor.
- 45 Cheung was interviewed just before the gala premiere of *From Ashes to Ashes* (2000), a short film he directed, co-wrote, and co-starred in, and produced for RTHK (Radio Television Hong Kong) and the Hong Kong Council on Smoking and Health to support an anti-smoking campaign. Cheung saw the film, after all his success, as a way of giving back to the people of Hong Kong. But he commented on the difference

between reel and real life at that time, and the observation is eerie considering his suicide on 1 April 2003. “What’s most important,” he says, looking straight into the camera, “is that we can always get second takes in acting, in reel life, but there’s only one take in real life.”

- 46 “Love HK Film,” 20 May 2004, <http://www.brns.com/hkactors/pages/page23.html>.
- 47 By the “Passion Tour,” Cheung had released the album *Big Heat* (2000), which included the song “Me”, aka “I am what I am,” the lyrics penned by popular (and sexually ambiguous) writer Lin Xi. Many gay audiences took the song as Cheung’s “coming out” both with the release (recorded in Cantonese and Mandarin) and in performance. Selective lyrics follow. “I am what I am. I am me, such a special me.../ With my heart, telling the world what courage is.../ What am I? I’m a miracle.../ I’m living as a human being shamelessly/ Telling the world what courage is” (Cantonese version). “I am what I am. I will forever love this ‘me’.../ No need to hide. Living for the kind of life that I like/ No need to paint or decorate. Just stand there in the bright corner/ I am me. The fire light of a different color.../ Living happily in a glass house, telling the world/ What it is to be living in the light, shamelessly” (Mandarin version).
- 48 One spectator, discussing men cross-dressing as women, comments: “I will end by quoting Mae West on female impersonation. ‘What’s wrong? Women have been doing it for years.’”
- 49 Travis S. K. Wong, “Queering Masculinities in Hong Kong Movies,” in *Masculinities and Hong Kong Cinema*, ed. Lai-kwan Pang and Day Wong (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2005), p. 63. See also Jason Ho Ka-hang’s reinterpretation and defense of Stanley Kwan and *The Island Tales* as queer (re)evaluation in Jason Ho Ka-hang, “A Queer (Re)evaluation: Stanley Kwan and *The Island Tales*,” at *Cultural Studies Monthly*, 18 June 2007, http://www.cc.ncu.edu.tw/~csa/journal/64/journal_park476.htm.
- 50 Grossman, p. 162.
- 51 *Ibid.*, p. 163.
- 52 I am freely adapting Freud’s notion of “the uncanny,” as first developed in a paper of the same title, published in 1919. Included in “The Uncanny” in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological*

- Works of Sigmund Freud*. Vol. XVII (1917–1919), trans. James Strachey, et al. (London: Hogarth Press, 1955), pp. 217–52.
- 53 William Empson, *Seven Types of Ambiguity*, 3rd ed. (London: Chatto & Windus, 1963).
- 54 *Ibid.*, p. 155.
- 55 *Ibid.*, p. 192.
- 56 Says Chan, “I’m a very contradictory person when it comes to what we believe in. I do believe that somehow everything is taking a course that is chartered and planned, especially when it comes to relationships. If it’s yours, it’s yours. If it’s not, it’s not.” Note Chan’s explanation of relationships is gender non-specific.
- 57 Grossman, pp. 163–64.
- 58 Bell-Metereau, p. xiii. Leslie Cheung himself presented a sexually ambiguous figure, having publicly stated he was bisexual, but being perceived by many others as gay or idiosyncratic.
- 59 Ed Sikov, *Laughing Hysterically: American Screen Comedy of the 1950s* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), p. 118.
- 60 Kwai-cheung Lo, *Chinese Face/Off: The Transnational Popular Culture of Hong Kong* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2005), p. 118.
- 61 I am grateful to Jason Ho Ka-hang for bringing this reading to my attention; we met at the University of Hong Kong’s symposium “The Film Scene: Cinema, the Arts, and Social Change,” held in Spring 2006. The symposium included an enlightening session entitled “The Queer Scene,” and pun intended, queer presence was visible and vocal, not only with participants and the selection of papers on a variety of films (not just at this session), but also with information shared about the Hong Kong Lesbian & Gay Film and Video Festival, active since 1989, presented by Denise Tang.
- 62 Lilley, p. 213.
- 63 Mary Wong Shuk-han, “The Struggles of Sexual Orientation — On Three Hong Kong Films in 1998 [Xingxiang de jiaoli — lun jiu nian san chu Xianggang dianying de changshi],” in *Contemporary Chinese Cinema: 1998* [*Dangdai Zhongguo dianying: yi jiu jiu ba*], ed. Huang Wulan (Taipei: Shi bao wenhua chuban qiye gufen youxiangongsi, 1999), p. 112. Cited by Jason Ho Ka-hang, “Reinterpreting a Queer

Experience: A Study of Stanley Kwan's Films and Their Reception," unpublished thesis, University of Hong Kong, 2006, p. 9.

- 64 In Mainland China, Criminal Law No. 106 states: "All revolting behaviors should be subjected to arrest and sentence." Homosexuality, although denied as even existing, since there is no reference in the Criminal Code, is paradoxically regarded as one type of revolting behavior. There are provisions for punishment, ranging from public condemnation to police harassment and institutionalization. Cited by Lilley, pp. 219–20.
- 65 Grossman, p. 153.
- 66 "Chinese Checkers: The Great Wall shatters H'wood's hopes for pic blitz," *Variety*, 17–23 July 2006: 50.
- 67 Mast, p. 340.
- 68 *Ibid.*, p. 22.
- 69 *Ibid.*, p. 23.

Chapter 4 Commerce and Globalization

- 1 Nick Browne, "Introduction," in *New Chinese Cinemas: Forms, Identities, Politics*, ed. Nick Browne, et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 7.
- 2 "Film Entertainment Services," 8 July 1997, <http://www.info.gov.hk>.
- 3 Once producing approximately 250 films a year, Hong Kong's "production output has dropped to 50 films annually." Vicki Rothrock, "Gov't mulls how to aid Hong Kong filmmakers," *Variety*, 23–29 April 2007: 9.
- 4 See Sheldon Hsiao-peng Lu, "Historical Introduction," *Transnational Chinese Cinemas: Identity, Nationhood, Gender*, ed. Sheldon Hsiao-peng Lu (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1997), pp. 1–31.
- 5 See Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979). Said examines the discourse of "Orientalism," i.e. the western literary colonization of the east for its own hegemonic advantage — and the "dynamic exchange between individual authors and the large political concerns shaped by the three great empires — British, French, American — in whose intellectual and imaginative territory the writing was

- produced” (14–15). On a positive note, Said concludes: “I do believe ... that enough is being done today in the human sciences to provide the contemporary scholar with insights, methods, and ideas that could dispense with racial, ideological, and imperialist stereotypes of the sort provided during its historical ascendancy by Orientalism” (328). We will try in our enterprise to aspire to Said’s intellectual challenge.
- 6 Rey Chow, “Film and Cultural Identity,” in *The Oxford Guide to Film Studies*, ed. John Hill and Pamela Church Gibson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 174.
 - 7 Mike Featherstone, *Undoing Culture: Globalization, Postmodernism and Identity* (London: Sage Publications, 1995), p. 102.
 - 8 Kwai-cheung Lo, *Chinese Face/Off: The Transnational Popular Culture of Hong Kong* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2005), p. 111.
 - 9 Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” in *Illuminations: Walter Benjamin Essays and Reflections*, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), p. 234.
 - 10 The Four Great Heavenly Kings (or Sky Kings) are Jacky Cheung, Leon Lai, Andy Lau, and Aaron Kwok, although they follow in the footsteps of singers like Sam Hui, Alan Tam, Kenny Bee, George Lam, Roman Tam, Danny Chan, and, of course, Leslie Cheung. The style emerged in the 1970s, with Cantonese-language-based lyrics written by the likes of Joseph Koo, in songs about everyday life set to western melodies and instrumentation. In the film the Kings are glimpsed in the front row of the appropriated footage of the music awards show.
 - 11 The conflict between Rose and Leon Lai fans at the film’s beginning mimics the war that raged between Leslie Cheung and Cantopop star Alan Tam Wing-lun fans in the mid-1980s, providing another in-joke. Cheung himself attributes this feud as part of the reason for his leaving Hong Kong for Vancouver (after taking Canadian citizenship, Cheung remained there for a year before returning to Hong Kong) because “I had much pressure. They liked to compare me to Ah Lun, which I hated.” Cheung in June Lam’s interview “Leslie Cheung’s ’98 Declaration: An Interview before the Golden Horse Awards,” in *City Entertainment* 491 (5–13 February 1998): 16. Peter Chan would later use Leon Lai well in *Comrades* (1996), highlighting his vulnerability

and sweetness, but here he is the butt of several jokes. Known for his personal support of his largely female fan base and with a fan club of 5,000 (he's been dubbed "the Heavenly King of Fan Support"), the Beijing-born Lai is also derogatorily referred to as "Neon Leon," regarding his singing. See Jeff Yang, et al., *Eastern Standard Time: A Guide to Asian Influence on American Culture* (Boston: Mariner Books, 1997), p. 256. Of Lai's singing, "Love Hong Kong Film" reports, "People who can judge music better than I tell me his voice is nothing special." "Love Hong Kong Film," 20 May 2004, <http://www.brns.com/hkactors/pages/page23.html>.

- 12 Akbar Abbas, in writing about *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, and *In the Mood for Love*, discusses Hong Kong as emblematic of the "generic city," as identified by Peter Hall in *Cities in Civilization* and architect Rem Koolhaas in "The Generic City," in *S, M, L, XL*, ed. Jennifer Sigler. Global cities are currently redesigning images for themselves, divorced from any history or identity, making them "generic" and invisible. See Akbar Abbas, "Cinema, the City, and the Cinematic," in *Global Cities: Cinema, Architecture, and Urbanism in a Digital Age*, ed. Linda Krause and Patrice Petro (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2003), pp. 142–156.
- 13 Akbar Abbas, *Hong Kong: Culture and the Politics of Disappearance* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), p. 69.
- 14 *Ibid.*, p. 81. In 1997 alone, there were ten reclamation projects ongoing, the most famous of which, the Chep Lak Kok Airport, opened in June 1998 with a new town of 200,000 near the airport adjacent to Lantau Island. In mid-2005, Hong Kong's population was 6.94 million, and its land growth through reclamation is now 1104 square kilometers (685.99 square miles). "About Hong Kong," 12 May 2007, <http://www.info.gov.hk/info/hkbrief/eng/eng/ahk.htm>.
- 15 Abbas, *Hong Kong*, p. 1.
- 16 David R. Meyer, "Hong Kong: Global Capital Exchange," in *Global Networks Linked Cities*, ed. Saskia Sassen (New York: Routledge, 2002), pp. 249–71.
- 17 See Peter Dicken, *Global Shift: Reshaping the Global Economic Map of the Twentieth Century*, 4th ed. (New York: Guilford Press, 2003). See also Michael Hoover and Lisa Odham Stokes, "Hong Kong in New York:

- Global Connections, National Identity, and Filmic Representations,” *New Political Science* 25.4 (December 2003): 509–32.
- 18 Meyer, p. 262.
- 19 Roland Robertson, “Comments on the Global Trend and Glocalization,” in *Globalization and Indigenous Cultures*, ed. Nubutaka Inoue (Tokyo: Institute for Japanese Culture and Classics, 1997), pp. 217–25. Robertson, among others, has popularized the term. He traces it to articles in the late-1980s *Harvard Business Review*, penned by Japanese economists.
- 20 Steve Tsang, *A Modern History of Hong Kong* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2006), p. 269.
- 21 Ibid., p. 247.
- 22 Ibid., p. 248.
- 23 Rozanna Lilley, *Staging Hong Kong: Gender and Performance in Transition* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1998), p. 30.
- 24 Ibid., pp. 48–49.
- 25 Lo, p. 20.
- 26 Ibid., p. 118. One viewer’s response included: “The scene in which Wing rattles off information about Sam and Rose reflects the absurdity of idolizing celebrities; digging through trash as if sifting through treasure.”
- 27 An American South Korean female viewer in her 30s notes, “Interestingly, thinking about the film a day or so after watching it, I remembered the names of Sam and Rose, but I couldn’t recall Wing’s name too easily. Why was that? Was it by design? For foreign viewers, Sam and Rose are obviously easier to remember because they have American names (they’ve crossed-over? Claimed a western identity of sorts?), whereas Wing remains Chinese. But also, Sam and Rose remained pretty constant in their onscreen identities. So, maybe it was the play of identities (shifting, appropriating, boundary-crossing) that made Wing’s name less memorable in the mind. I was asking myself what her name was — a boy’s name? a girl’s name? It finally did come to me, but it took awhile. At any rate, she wasn’t etched into my memory as solidly as the other two, and I wonder if it was because her identity was unclear (by the director’s design, or maybe just in my own subconscious). I watched it with a friend, and she

also seemed to remember Sam and Rose, but completely blanked on Wing's name." This spectator, bilingual in Korean and English, addresses Wing's superficial shifting identities in the story, but that she emphasizes the English names and "western identity" underscores Chan's global reach.

- 28 Although Tam is best known for Cantopop ballads, his early releases were sung more traditionally in a style derived from Cantonese opera, and he was known for precise articulation in a rich tenor. He often performed Cantonese opera, and the martial arts theme songs he sang mostly for television are more traditional in style. He continues to appeal to and remain popular with an older generation audience, despite his death in 2002.
- 29 The Beatles' release itself was a cover of an Isley Brothers' tune.
- 30 Interestingly, while directing the DreamWorks production *The Love Letter* (1999), Chan told Betsy Sherman that, although he had expected a big difference and was prepared for the worst, working on a Hollywood movie was "exactly the same" as shooting a Hong Kong movie, except for a bigger budget. The multi-lingual Chan confessed he sometimes forgot he was speaking English on the shoot. To this interviewer, he compared *The Love Letter* to a combination of *He's a Woman, She's a Man* and *Comrades* (1996) and noted differences between pre- and post-production in the two industries, citing the politics and bureaucracy for the difficulties of the former ("the process is so much more tiring because there's so much more bullshit and you have to deal with all these people") and its mixed bag results ("you have so much more time, you can try different versions ... [but] you also have all these people come in and suggest different versions, which is a drag, so you've got to deal with that again").
- 31 Gina Marchetti, *From Tian'anmen to Times Square: Transnational China and the Chinese Diaspora on Global Screens, 1989-1997* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006), pp. 31, 61-62.
- 32 Ibid.
- 33 In fact, in the sequel, Sam wears a Woody Allen mask at the opening costume party, just as both Anitas (Yuen and Mui) wear Whoopi Goldberg masks. The sequel also includes a riff on David O. Selznick's *Gone with the Wind* (1939) (ironically, Cheung also admired the film,

- and took his English name, Leslie, from British actor Leslie Howard, whose role in the Civil War epic as Ashley Wilkes Cheung liked). Chan cites Stanley Donen's *Two for the Road* (1966) as a source that he had in mind for the sequel and Orson Welles's use of "rosebud" in *Citizen Kane* (1941) when he introduced the little rabbit as symbolic of Mui's character's search for her lost innocence. Yuen also fashions a mean Tina Turner when she attempts to sexualize herself to please Cheung's character in one scene in the sequel. With a film within the film in the sequel, Truffaut's *Day for Night* (1973) comes to mind, as well as *Jules and Jim* (1962) because of the love triangle between the three leads.
- 34 For many Western viewers, the film is reminiscent of Blake Edwards's *Victor/Victoria* (1982) but only superficially. Julie Andrews plays a singer who is a woman pretending to be a man pretending to be a woman. Robert Preston is a gay man (and her confidant), and James Gardner appears as the straight man that falls for the supposed female impersonator.
- 35 Director/producer Sydney Pollack describes *Tootsie* as a "story of a man masquerading as a woman who learns to be a better man." This description in some respects echoes the learning curve of Sam's character (but shifting the cross-dressing onto Wing). Furthermore, actor Dustin Hoffman, who played "Tootsie" in the movie, reflecting on that experience, explains that in life, he has learned "there were too many interesting women I never got to know because I was brainwashed. That movie was not a comedy for me." Hoffman alludes to sexist attitudes and condoned images of masculinity here, but by understanding *Tootsie* as drama, he comes close to Chan's conception of dramedy. Both interviewed in "AFI's [American Film Institute] 100 Years 100 Movies, Tenth Anniversary Edition," broadcast on CBS Television, 20 June 2007. *Tootsie* ranked #69.
- 36 Lo, pp. 108–11.
- 37 *Ibid.*, p. 118.
- 38 Ng Ho, "A Preliminary Plot Analysis of Cantonese Comedy," in The 9th Hong Kong International Film Festival, *The Traditions of Hong Kong Comedy* (Hong Kong: Urban Council, 1985), p. 21.
- 39 *Ibid.*, p. 22.

- 40 Cheng Yu, "The World According to Everyman," in The 9th Hong Kong International Film Festival, *The Traditions of Hong Kong Comedy* (Hong Kong: Urban Council, 1985), p. 41.
- 41 Ng, p. 24.
- 42 Anita Yuen's cute factor, innocence, and mugging in the film are reminiscent, for me at least, of the Japanese pop cultural product Hello Kitty, and there are numerous contemporary studies on this phenomenon. See, for example, Brian J. McVeigh, "How Hello Kitty Commodifies the Cute, Cool and Camp: 'Consumutopia' versus 'Control' in Japan." *Journal of Material Culture* 5.2 (2000): 225-45.
- 43 That Wing would win a male singing contest when 1) she is female, and 2) she cannot sing seems to be a matter of chance, and is explained in the film by the conflict between Sam and Rose. French theorist Roland Barthes would query, "But what is chance?" which applies here, in terms of the film action, but also in relation to life beyond the screen. That Wing's dreams come true echoes for Leslie Cheung's musical career; his first release, *Day Dreamin'* (1977), consisted entirely of his covering of American pop songs (including the likes of "Day Dreamer," "I Like Dreamin'," and "You Made Me Believe in Magic"). Sometimes dreams really do come true ...
- 44 Marchetti, p. 62.
- 45 Ironically, the handsome actor suffered permanent facial damage after a serious car accident in Danville, Kentucky while filming Edward Dmytryk's civil war epic *Raintree County* (1956). One side of his face was paralyzed and the actor required extensive reconstructive surgery. Elizabeth Taylor, Clift's co-star and friend, reportedly saved his life by removing two of his teeth that had lodged in his throat.
- 46 Benjamin, p. 231.
- 47 Quoted in Louis Giannetti, *Understanding Movies*, 10th ed. (Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Pearson/Prentice Hall, 2005), p. 300.
- 48 See Chapter 3 for use of the term "crossover" in another way. Cheung himself would release a collaborative album entitled *Crossover* (2002) with singer-songwriter Anthony Wong Yiu-ming (not to be confused with award-winning actor Anthony Wong Chau-sang, who also has several album releases). The Anthony Wong of *Crossover* is similar in his musical performance to Cheung, and known for his flamboyancy.

- 49 “Love HK Film,” 20 May 2004, <http://www.brns.com/hkactors/pages/page23.html>.
- 50 Ibid.
- 51 Ibid.
- 52 Chan told film reviewer Betsy Sherman that he had “no problem” with first-time actors, that in fact, Anita Yuen and Leon Lai both got their starts with him. We should note that Teddy Chen’s *Twenty-Something*, scripted by one of Peter Chan’s partners at UFO, James Yuen, and produced by Peter Chan, was Jordan Chan’s acting debut after his being discovered as a music television and concert dancer. *He’s a Woman* was Jordan Chan’s second film, released three months after *Twenty-Something*.
- 53 “Love Hong Kong Film.”
- 54 Lisa Odham Stokes, “Spending Time with Yu: A Special Interview with Ronny Yu,” *Asian Cult Cinema* 41: 58.
- 55 Pang Chai-choi and Lin Li, “Portraits of Ten Comedians,” in The 9th Hong Kong International Film Festival, *The Traditions of Hong Kong Comedy* (Hong Kong: Urban Council, 1985), p. 62.
- 56 Cheung said, “John Woo a vraiment un cœur, pour tout, même s’il ne le montre pas sur un plateau. John Travolta, Nicolas Cage, l’ont dit. Dès que vous avez travaillé avec lui, vous vous feriez tuer pour lui ... *A Better Tomorrow* est un des films les plus importants de ma carrière. Il a été le premier à m’expliquer plein de choses pour mon métier: où est la caméra, où est la lumière, comment avoir un meilleur angle sur l’écran ... Pendant les répétitions vous devez savoir exactement quel est l’angle de prises de vues, de la lumière. Cela m’a beaucoup aidé plus tard.” Cheung’s interview was translated into French from English, and published by Michel Ciment and Hubert Niogret as “Entretien Leslie Cheung: Dix-huit ans de travail acharné,” in *Positif* 455 (January 1999): 96–99.
- 57 Betsy Sherman, unpublished taped interview with Leslie Cheung; her article based on the interview appeared as “Hong Kong Star Cultivates US Audience,” *Boston Globe*, 18 June 1997: D1+.
- 58 Ibid.
- 59 Yu quoted in Stokes, pp. 58–59. Of his work with Yu on *The Bride with White Hair*, Cheung remarked, “C’est une histoire très intéressante,

très romantique, d'amour et de trahison, traduite de manière très visuelle. C'est très dramatique." Ciment and Niogret, p. 99.

60 Lam, p. 16.

61 For an analysis of the Cheung-Wong collaborations, focusing on Leslie Cheung's characterizations as providing a thematic unity for Wong's narratives, see Gary Bettinson, "Reflections on a Screen Narcissist: Leslie Cheung's Star Persona in the Films of Wong Kar-wai," *Asian Cinema* 16: 1 (Spring/Summer 2005): 220–38.

62 In character as Sam, Cheung's lines include: "It's like this. Every business has its own rules. Just because I don't mind doesn't mean other people won't mind. Don't misunderstand me. I don't discriminate on this issue ... But I want to tell you that in the entertainment business, this is a very odd and sensitive issue. If you are [gay], just don't let anyone see it."

63 Siu-leung Li, *Cross-Dressing in Chinese Opera* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2003), p. 34.

64 Ibid.

65 Lam, p. 13.

66 Purported a love song about a couple's conflict, the song lyrics include lines like "It's like in parades and performances,/ your eyesight can only touch one side of my face/ Being obsessed with the flashing expressions/ You actually know only one side of my face/ Do you know me clearly?/ Do you understand me?" It is tempting to relate them to Cheung's personal conflicts, regarding assimilating his image with the real Cheung Kwok-wing. It strikes me as so very sad that someone with so much exuberance and life when he was "on," was evidently in so much pain, and that the obvious signs and proclamations were so blatant they were unseen.

67 Abbas introduces Holbein's image in relation to Hong Kong architecture, specifically the non-descript ski-slope modernist style Hong Kong Cultural Center, which preserved the Hong Kong–Canton Railway clock tower on its site. Abbas claims the tower is too easily seen, therefore brings about the disappearance of history and keeps the viewing subject in its place. I think the technique and Holbein's image in particular fit Cheung's masking/unmasking and Chan's use of the local. See Abbas, *Hong Kong*.

- 68 Conflating gay politics and the celebrity factors of *He's a Woman*, in real life, Cheung and his longtime partner, "Daffy" Tong, were outed by paparazzi. During Cheung's funeral, Tong appeared as and was treated like the grieving widow, and he was obviously in enormous pain.
- 69 Preceding the encore, stylishly dressed in a tuxedo, following his appearing in numerous glittery and form-fitting sequined costumes, as well as the sparkling red high heels (shades of Dorothy in *The Wizard of Oz*), Cheung very intimately and straightforwardly delivered the following: "First of all, I want to thank you, my audience here at the Hong Kong Coliseum. It's thanks to everyone I was brought back to this stage tonight. To be here on this very stage, I am a very, very lucky person, because of your support. Okay. Tonight is an exceptional evening as it is New Year's. [Cheers from the audience.] Okay. Before my encore, I would like to say a few words. Why? Because I haven't been a grateful son. It has been over ten years from the time I started singing. I have performed many concerts. My mother has attended each one to share in my happiness. There hasn't been one time when I have actually sung a song for her. My mummy is here tonight [acknowledges her in audience]. Mummy, how did you give birth to such a cute and gorgeous son? [Cheung smiling, cheers from audience]. Is it because you were extremely happy with Daddy? Extremely high? [Laughter] Mummy, tonight I dedicate this song to you and to another person who is very close to my heart, your godchild. At my lowest point he gave me several months' salary to help me through the rough times. He is my great friend Mr. Tong. Now I would like to dedicate this song to my dearest friend and family. The song I am about to share with everyone here tonight is by Teresa Teng." ["The Moon Represents My Heart" follows]. "Thank you. New Year's is here. First of all, Happy New Year, everyone. I wish you peace and happiness, longevity, and friendship forever." [Then Cheung sings "Chase."]
- 70 Mo appeared, while pregnant, in Cheung's directorial debut, *From Ashes to Ashes* (2000).
- 71 Many Chinese people, in Hong Kong and the diaspora, have commented, with superstition, on Cheung's final film, *Inner Senses/ Yee diy hung gaan/Yidu kongjian* (2002), in which the actor played a psychiatrist trying to help a patient haunted by ghosts when he

himself is haunted by a ghost that, through adolescent guilt, almost convinces him to jump from a building. Cheung was reportedly afraid of heights, and many believe there were bad spirits on the set of the film, leading to Cheung's suicide.

- 72 June Lam, "Leslie Cheung: Behind the Legend," *City Entertainment* 520 (18 March–1 April 1999): 26–30. The translator of this article noted how much of the language included current Hong Kong slang, reflecting the hipness and quickness with which such vernacular changes, similar to Hong Kong as a global site itself.
- 73 Cheung also told Lam, "Last year [1998] was not a good year for me. This year [1999] so far is going well." Ibid.
- 74 Lisa Odham Stokes, "Cheung, Leslie Kwok-wing," in *Historical Dictionary of Hong Kong Cinema* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2007), pp. 76–79.
- 75 Ingrained anti-homosexual beliefs in Hong Kong can be seen in the discussion that took place during the Hong Kong Legislative Council's meeting regarding the Crimes (Amendment) Bill that when passed effectively decriminalized homosexuality. On the one hand, there were adamant homophobes; as in the rhetorical bombast below:

Mr. David Cheung Chi-kong, JP: "Homosexuality is a kind of deviant behavior which cannot be condoned socially. People try to rationalize the act by saying that it is a matter of sexual preference. It is not. Such deviant behavior, whatever its cause behind it, needs to be cured ... Homosexuality has often been defended as a matter of human rights. It is sheer nonsense. Who does not respect basic human rights but how can one condone wrong doings in the name of human rights?"

Mr. Kingsley Sit Ho-yin: "I ... notice that there are many students up in the public gallery. Their purpose in coming here is probably not to learn about the decriminalization of homosexuality but to see how the Legislative Council works. But what the Legislative Council is discussing today is the decriminalization or, in other words, the legalization, of homosexuality. I believe that this will have a huge impact on young people. If it is said that it is not illegal for two male persons to engage in homosexual acts in private, then they will perhaps ask, 'Does this mean that it is legal?' I hope that my young friends in

the public gallery will ignore what some Members say and will not, for the sake of human rights, take the path leading to homosexuality I want to ask Members, if you go home tonight after this meeting and receive a sudden phone call telling you that your son or daughter is homosexual or lesbian, how would you feel, sad or happy?"

Mr. Pang Chun-hoi, MBE: "Today the Crimes (Amendment) Bill 1991 was passed. Is this reasonable? Homosexuality (buggery) is against the Chinese tradition, which is considered evil by Chinese. Now it is a rape of public opinion to allege decriminalization represents the majority view of the people. Is this really what the public wants?"

On the other hand, there were those more liberal and enlightened views that still reflected ingrained prejudices. These speakers were defensive about condoning homosexuality, some explaining they did not approve of the practice, but at least recognizing the reality of the presence of homosexuals in society and the human rights issue involved:

Dr. Leong Che-hung: "Let me from the outset, Sir, stress that I do not condone homosexuality nor do I favor that homosexuality should be glorified. Instead, I would like to extend the views of the medical profession on homosexuality which might perhaps shed light on its decriminalization."

Mr. Martin Lee Chu-ming, QC, JP: "I came in time to hear a rhetorical question posed to this Council by the Honorable David Cheung. He asked, 'Do we want our children to engage in homosexuality?' Well, the answer to that question is clearly no, but I am afraid it does not solve the problem because if our children should be born that way inclined then the question is: Do we want to see them punished with imprisonment or by the imposition of a fine? As for Mr. Kingsley Sit's other rhetorical question that if we are told that our own children in fact are engaged in homosexual acts will we be happy or will we be sad? The answer clearly, Sir, is that we will be sad but the question is: Supposing Mr. Kingsley Sit will be shocked with that news no doubt, he too will be sad, but does he want his children to be punished with imprisonment or fine?"

The secretary for security clarified (reassured?) the voting body by explaining:

Mr. Alistair Peter Asprey, OBE, AE, JP: “The Bill does not advocate or seek to encourage homosexuality. The provisions in the Bill prohibiting the public display of homosexual acts, the corruption of the young persons and homosexual acts committed other than in private will be strictly enforced.”

See the record through the Hong Kong government’s official website at http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr90-91/english/lc_sitg/hansard/h910710.pdf.

On a more optimistic note, director Shu Kei, having directed *A Queer Story (Gay Man at 40/Gei lui 40/Ji lao 40, 1997)*, a drama starring George Lam and Jordan Chan in a generation gap homosexual relationship, describes an experience with a positive future for young people and an ideal world (as contrasted to Sit above): “We held a preview of *A Queer Story* (on 31 December 1996) and I went to the theatre to see the response. Nearly 80% of the audience were people under 25. They had a very open attitude and were not burdened by morals. This made me very happy. I found out that my worries only apply to people of my own age group, and people from the same social class. Young people don’t have our worries and burdens. I want to portray a world without worries. Sometimes it occurs to me that when young people waver between homosexuality and heterosexuality, they are going through a process of exploration, a process of choosing.” Quoted in “*A Queer Story: Shu Kei*,” interviewed by Linda Lai and Kim Choi, in *Hong Kong Panorama 96–97*, The Hong Kong International Film Festival (Hong Kong: Urban Council of Hong Kong, 1997) p. 35.

76 See Lilley, p. 216.

77 What amounted to stalking and harassment of gays was a regular practice by Hong Kong’s Special Investigations Unit (SIU), and officers would enter gay bars demanding names, ages, professions, frequency of visits, and names of friends. Many feared this intelligence gathering would be provided to the Mainland Chinese with the 1997 return. See Lilley, p. 215. This situation is reminiscent of the gay witch hunts undergone by homosexuals and others in urban US areas such as New York, Chicago, and San Francisco in the 1950s and 1960s. In the US, such harassment eventually led to the Stonewall Riots of June 1969 in

- New York City, with days of protests, demonstrations, and violence. (See Note 32 in Chapter 3.) Stonewall births the Gay Liberation movement, and Gay Pride marches began in June 1970 in New York City, San Francisco, Chicago, and Los Angeles, to commemorate the event. Stonewall stands symbolically as the voice for gay rights, and towards the end of June is globally commemorated with gay rights events celebrating the beginning of the movement. Even Walt Disney World in Orlando, Florida celebrates Gay Days, specifically targeting gay guests in June. Cultural and political differences have delayed Hong Kong's reaction to oppression, and the China specter remains, but at the same time Hong Kong's current gay movement replicates what has occurred elsewhere, with gay pride out of the closet and voiced.
- 78 The Basic Law, mandated by the Joint Declaration, consists of 9 Chapters with 160 Articles and 3 Annexes. Chapter III, Fundamental Rights and Duties of Residents, consists of 19 Articles, none of which address the rights of sexual minorities. Article 37 states, "The freedom of marriage of Hong Kong residents and their right to raise a family freely shall be protected by law." Article 38 states, "Hong Kong residents shall enjoy the rights and freedoms safeguarded by the laws of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region." Regarding the rights of sexual minorities, many perceived that the articles were too generalized overall, and the 37th article here certainly reifies heterosexual norms. See http://www.info.gov.hk/basic_law/facts/index.htm.
- 79 Travis S. K. Kong, "Queering Masculinity in Hong Kong Movies," in *Masculinities and Hong Kong Cinema*, ed. Lai-kwan Pang and Day Wong (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2005), pp. 58–80.
- 80 See Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1991).
- 81 *The Warlords* was released on 1000 screens across China, the widest ever release at that time, and it became the sixth biggest earner (over US\$ 12 million) of 2007 in just four days. See Patrick Frater, "Warlords' Slays Box Office in China: Chan's Action Movie Nets \$12.2 Million," *Variety*, 17 December 2007. 12 June 2008. <http://www.variety.com/article/VR1117977856.html>.
- 82 From <http://www.sina.com>.

Chapter 5 Audience

- 1 “Lost in America” [Interview by Gavin Smith], *Film Comment* 42.4 (July/August 2006): 28.
- 2 Personal Interview, Ronny Yu, 17 October 1998.
- 3 “Lost in America.”
- 4 Tsui quoted in Craig D. Reid, “Interview with Tsui Hark,” *Film Quarterly* 48 (Spring 1995): 39.
- 5 Holland, in *The Dynamics of Literary Response* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), suggested that creative works are comprised of fantasies that usually would lead to anxiety, but by the “artist” evoking form and meaning, satisfactory experiences result. Holland perceived form and meaning as defense mechanisms that transformed unconscious fantasies into acceptable ideas (subconscious versus conscious). As he continued developing his theory, as in *Poems in Persons* (New York: Norton, 1973; rev. 2000) and *5 Readers Reading* (New Haven: Yale, 1975), Holland suggested we could read the author’s and the readers’ personality in core identity themes; readers’ personalities control their readings. Holland says we all have core themes, as authors (filmmakers) and readers (viewers) that we let play, endlessly varied, in our lives, and when we work/write, we do so in the same style, but change our content as we change.
- 6 Norman Holland, *Journal of the Society of Cinematologists* 3 (1963): 18. Rebecca Bell-Metereau cites this passage from Holland in *Hollywood Androgyny*, 2nd ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), p. 17.
- 7 See Miriam Hansen, “Early Silent Cinema: Whose Public Sphere?,” *New German Critique* 29 (Spring–Summer 1983): 147–84. The study alluded to is German sociologist Altenloh’s doctoral dissertation entitled *Zur Soziologie des Kino* (1914).
- 8 See Metz, *Film Language: A Semiotics of the Cinema* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974).
- 9 Imagine contemporary audience reception as contrasted with today’s audience in a film like LeRoy Prinz’s campy musical comedy *All-American Co-ed* (1941). The movie was advertised as “the season’s gayest musical,” and starred Johnny Downs as Bob Sheppard/Bobbie

De Wolfe. The thinly disguised plot features the Quinceton follies, in which all the frat brothers perform in drag, but the joke gets taken to an extreme when the boys decide Bob will impersonate a Mar Brynn co-ed to gain entry to the all-girls' school. As "Queen of the Flowers," Bobbie falls for a fellow student, and it's only a matter of time (53 minutes, the film's length) before the ruse is discovered and resolved. "Looks like love has crossed us up," he tells the lucky girl. The movie is full of double entendres. "You do have a lot of boyfriends," the girl tells Bobbie, who adds, "just brothers." The female Mar Brynn president says, "There will be no men on campus as long as I'm president," to which her mousy male assistant replies, "I'm a man." "You're safe," she answers. Like *He's a Woman*, this story concludes with the happiness of the heterosexual couple.

- 10 Bell-Metereau, p. xiv.
- 11 Benjamin, p. 234.
- 12 Derrida spoke at the University of Florida when I was a graduate student in the late 1970s–early 1980s. Professor John Levy in the English Department was his current translator at the time. This remark has stuck with me for many years, and I continue to believe it speaks volumes, considering the current world crisis.
- 13 Benjamin, p. 234.
- 14 I am adapting Wolfgang Iser's concept of "reading as a selfish act." See *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978). Referents as far afield as Chance the Gardener's "I like to watch" in Hal Ashby's *Being There* (1969), a wonderful filmic representation of Jerzy Kozinski's novel of the same title (adapted to the screen by the author) and Roland Barthes and Jacques Derrida also come to mind ("the pleasure of the text," "there is nothing outside the text") in thinking about the immense pleasure of involving yourself in a movie.
- 15 Ben Wasserstein, "The Man With 50,000 Friends: How Kevin Smith Accidentally Invented the Future of Movie Marketing," *New York*, 24 July 2006: 64.
- 16 James Harvey, *Romantic Comedy in Hollywood: From Lubitsch to Sturges* (New York: Knopf, 1987), p. 672.

- 17 June Lam, "Leslie Cheung's '98 Declaration: An Interview before the Golden Horse Awards," *City Entertainment* 491 (5–13 February 1998): 16.
- 18 Wilder was extensively informally interviewed in an office space by German director Volker Schlöndorff (*The Tin Drum*), but Wilder was concerned about the bare bones filmmaking style used, and asked that none of the footage be made public until his death. Schlöndorff honored the request, and with Gisela Grischow, finally released the documentary *Billy Wilder Speaks*, Bioskop Film, 2006.
- 19 Stanley Fish, "Interpreting the Variorum," *Critical Inquiry* 2.3 (Spring 1976): 465–85.
- 20 *Ibid.*, p. 474.
- 21 *Ibid.*, p. 485.
- 22 The credits opening the film feature Leslie Cheung first, with Anita Yuen and Carina Lau listed on the same line below him. Considering the gender politics inside and outside the film, this provides another way of thinking about men on top.
- 23 "Love and Bullets Hong Kong DVD Reviews," 30 September 2005, <http://www.loveandbullets.com/hesawoman.htm>.
- 24 "A Better Tomorrow Hong Kong Movies Coming Soon to DVD," 30 September 2005, <http://www.abtdvd.com/reviews/hesawomanshesaman.htm>.
- 25 "Hong Kong Movie Database," 30 September 2005, <http://www.hkmdb.com/db/movies/reviews.mhtml?id=7871&displayset=eng>.
- 26 See Benjamin R. Barber, *Jihad vs. McWorld* (New York: Times Books, 1995).
- 27 Erik Erikson, *Childhood and Society* (New York: Norton, 1950 [1993]), pp. 261–62.
- 28 See Metz, *Film Language: A Semiotics of the Cinema* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974).
- 29 See Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci* (New York: International Publishers, 1980) and Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972–1977*, ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon, 1980).

- 30 Cheng Yu, "The World According to Everyman," in The 9th Hong Kong International Film Festival, *The Traditions of Hong Kong Comedy* (Hong Kong: Urban Council, 1985), p. 41.
- 31 *Ibid.*, p. 42.
- 32 Figures provided by *Hong Kong Film 1994–1995*, a publication of the Hong Kong, Kowloon and New Territories Motion Picture Industry Association, Ltd.
- 33 Making the sequel was part of the deal Chan had made with Golden Harvest to save UFO, after the failure (critically and at the box office) of his heartfelt *The Age of Miracles* (*Ma ma fan fan*, 1996), the film that followed *He's a Woman*. Golden Harvest took over UFO (eventually selling its library to Warner Brothers), but added to the package was Chan's request that he could also make a small film, which became the sleeper success *Comrades, Almost a Love Story* (*Honeysweet*) (*Tim mat mat/Tian mi mi*, 1996).
- 34 An American South Korean 30-something female explains, "Although the sequel is sort of an inversion of the first movie, and the gender relations get doubly complex, it's still the female impersonating the male. Fish's [Yu Lo] dressing up as a woman to get the lesbian girl seemed to be thrown in there to balance this out somehow."
- 35 A recent US comedy *Blades of Glory* (2007), starring Will Ferrell and Jon Heder and directed by Will Speck and Josh Gordon, set in the world of competitive figure skating, provides ample opportunity for comparison and contrast to Chan's two films. In some respect dealing with a similar theme, what I will term "gay anxiety," both challenge the straight/gay binary opposition, and both are set in their respective entertainment worlds, with an insider's look at what goes into making the images for the fans. But *Blades* remains a comedy, not a dramedy, and its physical humor and crotch jokes overwhelm — the gangly Ferrell in a full body stocking and the blonde Prince Charming hairstyle of Heder pretty much says it all; it lacks Chan's light touch and dramedy style. Owen Gleiberman's take on the Hollywood movie is spot on: "*Blades of Glory* is a farce of preening emasculation in spandex. It is also, undeniably, a mild comedy of homosexual panic, though in a place as sexually clenched as America, no one, from either the left or the right, has much to fear from a good, honest gay-anxiety

- joke. Remember the one that popped up in the middle of the Super Bowl — that commercial, with two men nibbling away at different ends of a candy bar, only to end up in a kiss? It tickled you in two directions at once, turning homophobia into a sly *what if?* There are moments in *Blades of Glory* with a similar effect.” Gleiberman’s observation about an uptight US is similar to our noting the ingrained anti-homosexual attitudes prevalent in Hong Kong. Further proving the uptightness of societies in reference to sexual orientation, the commercial to which the film reviewer refers was pulled shortly after the Super Bowl, considered too controversial. Owen Gleiberman, “Icemen Cometh,” *Entertainment Weekly*, 6 April 2007: 55.
- 36 Michael Parenti, *Inventing Reality: The Politics of News Media* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1993). Although Parenti’s study focuses on the news media, his approach is useful when applied to entertainment, both on television and onscreen.
- 37 Figures provided by Ms. Roberta Chin of Golden Harvest via email 17 October 2005.
- 38 Caroline Evans and Lorraine Gamman, in “Reviewing Queer Viewing” criticize Mulvey’s analysis for ignoring spectatorial fluidity, and they turn to Roland Barthes early work on cultural coding to make room for polymorphous identifications and queer viewing (regardless of the sexual orientation of the spectator). See “Reviewing Queer Viewing,” in *Queer Cinema, The Film Reader*, ed. Harry Bennoff and Sean Griffin (New York: Routledge, 2004), pp. 209–24.
- 39 See psychoanalyst Lionel Ovesey on pseudohomosexuality, a behavior whereby heterosexuals exhibit anxieties over their sexual identities and if displaying homosexual behavior are reluctant to be labeled as homosexual. Lionel Ovesey, *Homosexuality and Pseudohomosexuality* (New York: Science House, 1969).
- 40 Nip Miu-fong and Mimi Lam, “Twenty Years of Cantonese Comedy: Five Interviews,” in The 9th Hong Kong International Film Festival, *The Traditions of Hong Kong Comedy* (Hong Kong: Urban Council, 1985), p. 76.
- 41 Mast, p. 17.