

## **Impersonating and performing queer sexuality in the Cosplay zone**

Katrien Jacobs,  
The Chinese University, Hong Kong

### **Abstract:**

This article highlights the physical and digital costuming activities of the fans of Japanese ACG (Animation, Comics and Games) cultures in Mainland China and Hong Kong and, to a lesser extent, in Taiwan. It focuses on Cosplayers (costumed players) who frequently engage in acts of cross-dressing and fantasized same-sex relations. The article explores what these costuming sessions and performative gestures mean in relation to their sexual identities. Ethnographic testimonies were solicited through interviews, collaborative photography and video documentation. The article postulates that new boundaries of selfhood and sexual pleasure are explored within a 'Cosplay zone', an amalgam of interconnected spaces and augmented realities that allow subjects to morph between fictionalized fantasy worlds, physical gatherings and online appearances. I suggest that this specific performative context makes possible intense sexual relations incorporating 'outcast' personalities, even as Cosplayers utilize public spaces that are heavily regulated by (self) censoring mechanisms and attitudes of homophobia.

As a theory of liminality suggests, the Cosplay zone is a space of fan-driven entertainment and identity transgression that involves strict boundary-policing by authorities and by peer groups themselves. The article will show that to be a sex-positive or openly queer Cosplayer means to be a 'misfit' within the mainstream venues of the Cosplay zone. At the same time, the Cosplay zone offers access to fringe venues, as well as support and tolerance between these 'misfits' and queer activism, which is where the potential for social change is located.

**Keywords:** Animation fandom, Cosplay, Queer Sexuality

### **Queerness and Cosplay**

This article looks into Cosplay and its practices of cross-dressing and gender performativity as aspects of 'queer sexuality', by which I mean people's willingness to belong to a wider

group of sexual minorities or LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered) sexual identities. Queerness is used as an umbrella term for same-sex, transgendered, and alternative sexualities. The term queer allows people to adhere to a wider range of non-normative sexualities, or to be itinerant between categories of identity or preference. Moreover, rather than promoting loyalty to one specific group, queerness includes a measure of difference from or opposition to solidified sexual identity.

For instance, based on her own involvement in transgendered life-styles, Terre Thaemlitz in her essay 'Viva McGlam: Is Transgenderism a Critique of or Capitulation to Opulence-Driven Glamour Models?' has defined the queer person as somebody who should not strive towards a solidified or publicly endorsed sexual identity. In contrast to queers who argue for identity politics or legal rights based on the demands of specific groups, Thaemlitz argues that queerness may be exactly located in its tentative or open-ended status or lack of homogeneous materialization and visibility. She is wary of stable notions of identity for transgendered people and shows that many are perpetually 'transitioning' subjects:

For myself, the power of transgenderism – if any – rests in this vagueness and divisiveness. It is not a power of distinction or difference from other genders, but rather the power of seeing representational systems of distinction or difference between genders collapse. It is not a power of transformation, but rather the power of transition. (Thaemlitz, 2008)

In a more recent critique of the pursuit of solidified queerness through legal rights such as gay marriage and adoption rights, Jack Halberstam proposes a queer 'art of failure' as a way for sexual groups to propose 'aberrant' modes of friendship, kinship and sexual relationships. The art of failure demands resistance to procreation alongside normalization processes within art, culture and education. By suggesting non-conventional ways of expressing vitality and social-economic mobility, attitudes of 'failure', 'oddness' and 'non-cooperation' are positively adopted and reclaimed. (Halberstam, 2011, 71)

In the context of my fieldtrips and interviews in China, Hong Kong and Taiwan, which were undertaken in Mandarin, Cantonese and English, some of my interviewees were used to the English term 'queerness' as the umbrella term for LGBT sexualities. They were also familiar with Chinese equivalent term *tongzhi*, which is originally a slang term that meant 'comrade' in the Chinese Communist context and was adopted to mean same-sex, transgendered and alternative sexualities. The term *tongzhi* itself has connotations of confidence, pride and solidarity in the face of histories of stigmatization. The *tongzhi* communities in greater China are united by a desire to build Chinese-language networks of support and activism across national boundaries. The aim is to present same-sex relationships as positive and suggesting solidarity between LGBT people, while also providing an indigenous term to capture the Chinese experience of same-sex love. (Kam, 2013, 21-23)

In her study of self-identified lesbian or *lala* communities in mainland China, Lucetta Kam explains that *tongzhi* is now used as a new sexual subjectivity that is undergoing 'discursive struggles amongst different actors in the public. (...) Local *tongzhi* communities, the general public, experts, scholars, and the state are all eager to indoctrinate their own definitions of *tongzhi*. The contents of *tongzhi* are yet to be filled up'. (Kam, 2013, 3). The specific materializations of this public identity are also quite different from other cultures, as *tongzhi* individuals and groups are under great pressure to appear normalized and to fit into the ideologies of their post-socialist society. Hence, rather than promoting a self-conscious art of failure, there may be a tendency to hide or only temporarily enact sexual differences. Or, those queers who are out of the closet may have a tendency to favor political correctness and argue for 'sunny' and 'healthy' life-styles that would lead to positive recognition within the family, and by Communist state-authorities. (Kam, 2013, 90)

In what follows, I address Cosplay as it intersects with Chinese aspects of queerness and *tongzhi* communities, or how notions of pleasure and sexual difference are stimulated and policed within Cosplaying scenes. I will consider how queerness is interpreted or rejected, encouraged or downplayed as a result of personal choices, or by the largely homophobic institutions who organize and sponsor Chinese Cosplay conventions. One might think that there is currently little overlap between the social outings of queer groups and those of Cosplayers, but tendencies towards cooperation are actually welcomed by queer and transgendered activists in Beijing and Hong Kong. Yang Yang, a queer activist and film festival curator in Beijing, proposes an open-ended definition of 'queerness' that would pay more attention to Japanese-derived performative subcultures such as Cosplay and Boys' Love. (Personal Interview, February 2013) In the same way, Hong Kong has produced transgendered activists who are supportive of the cross-dressing fads of Cosplay. As Joanne Leung of the Transgender Resource Center explains:

I do believe that this transgendered network should be open. Sometimes people are not sure about their true identity. They may see themselves as cross-dressers, or maybe they just try to be Cosplayers. It may just be easier for them to be a cross-dresser or Cosplayer, because they don't have to make the choice to become adult 'men' or 'women.' (Jacobs, 2011, 90)

Some of the more experienced Cosplayers featured in this study believe that their time-consuming hobbies have also affected their views on sexuality and romance. They differ from *tongzhi* activists in that they want to belong to fandom groups and creatively explore Cosplay fashions and fantasies rather than develop a particular view of sexual and political identity. As expressed by Cyndie, who is openly lesbian and a Boys' Love fans:

I just sometimes wish that I could have to have a happy life like these characters. These stories give me some hope, It is simply too dark here in Hong Kong and I need some hope. Of course we need a much more positive

climate for sexuality and orientation here in Hong Kong, but when we talk about political issues, it looks sometimes like we are totally doomed or something. This is not what we are looking for of course. The world of *manga* is just a little bit lighter and you can indeed just enjoy it. (Personal Interview, March 2013)

Like Joanne Leung, I would hope that Cosplay's adolescence of adventure and fantasy would lead to an adult embrace of queerness rather than a return to heteronormativity. But I also believe that we need to pay attention to the ways in which fangroups and Cosplayers construct fantasy experiences and fictional characters as a way of expressing a 'lighter' or more playful climate of sexual identity politics.

### **Cosplay stirrings and regulations in Japan, Hong Kong and China**

According to Patrick Galbraith, leading ethnographer of Japan's *otaku* (geek or nerd) culture, Cosplay as the act of dressing up as a favorite character from anime, manga, or video games, has its roots in USA *Star Trek* conventions of the 1960s. It was introduced in Japan in the late 1970s by a famous Japanese sci-fi critic Kotani Mari, who himself attended a sci-fi convention while wearing a costume from Tezuka Osamu's *Triton of the Sea*. Cosplay became a more regular practice and an official term in 1983 and developed very quickly into a corporate-owned play culture in conjunction with ACG trade conventions and competitions in the early nineties. From there, it spread out to various East Asian and Western countries in the late 1990s. Besides gathering in local ACG conventions or in designated public spaces, Cosplayers network as transnational groups on social media sites. The largest Cosplay networking sites are currently curecos.com and deviantart.com whose extensive memberships are often dominated by women and girls in their teens or twenties. (Galbraith, 2009, 52) Cosplayers are those fans who are driven by a unique attachment to the physical appearances of fantasy-characters and some of whom have a special interest in gender fluidity and gender performativity. There is a related subculture of female fans who read and produce fan comics (*dojinshi*) and veer towards sexualized genres such as *yaoi* (stories of same-sex romance between males, also called Boys' Love), who label themselves as *fujoshi* (literally: rotten girls) and who also sometimes cross-dress and Cosplay male same sex relationships.

Both the masculine *otakus* and feminine *fujoshis* have been stereotyped as reclusive, self-absorbed or anti-social individuals. Galbraith reiterates in interviews and media appearances that Japan's ACG fans have only recently recovered from stigmatization by the mass media as they have often been portrayed 'as failures – socially, economically, and sexually'. (Hicks, 2012) But since these pop cultures are also actually growing in popularity and becoming normalized, Galbraith believes that they will morph into a wider range of cultural practices and expressions. He views *otaku* as a slippery term that is undergoing transmutations, rather than referring to a historical phenomenon, hence he encourages scholars and participants to adopt it in different ways. In terms of reclaiming an art of

failure, as suggested by Halberstam, *otakus* and *fujoshis* have sought out subcultural lifestyles and fantasy-experiences to position themselves as 'reluctant insiders'. Galbraith believes that they view themselves as people who are forced to engage with the mainstream and middle-class but who feel alienated by that very inclusion. In this way they engage in an unanticipated uses of media and technology that enables them to become active minorities. (Hicks, 2012)

Hong Kong and Taiwan have historically been important sites for the importation of ACG fandom and *otaku* and *fujoshi* activities. Fung (2005) and Ng (2010) have noted that Hong Kong and Taiwan have been major distributors of commercial Japanese ACG products and subcultures, and have also both have been, for the most part, tolerant towards the edgy, sex-themed genres such as *yaoi*. But nonetheless, there have been strong biases against the ACG cultures themselves by Hong Kong's authorities that have attempted to control its influence, as Ng notes:

While young people are mesmerized by ACG, mass media, government, religious groups, teachers, parents, and the older generation in general have a bias against ACG as a form of entertainment, teaching tool, and means of communication. (Ng, 2010, 471)

ACG products and associated sexually explicit materials are allowed to circulate as commodities in Hong Kong, but have received little attention within higher education, as well as little emphatic public commentary in the mass media or within arts organizations.

In the People's Republic of China the influx of Japanese manga occurred in the 1990s and has been more tightly controlled by the government, and publishers have been instructed to reduce the Japanese influence and produce Chinese-style comics and animation. (Wong, 2006, 35) Major cities in Mainland China such as Beijing and Shanghai are now centers for ACG genres and products, and a large part of their popularity is due to the easy availability of pirated materials. Ng observes that China is particularly important since it is the largest supplier of pirated products. Ironically enough, Hong Kong people consume Japanese ACG not directly from Japan but indirectly through China and Chinese websites that offer localized products in terms of language, genre and content. (Ng, 2010, 474)

Moreover, several municipal governments, together with local IT industries, have started to sponsor official mainstream ACG conventions, for instance, the annual *ChinaJoy* convention intended to stimulate local entertainment consumption and the attendant tourist industries. (Lv, 2010, Shen, 2007) Both Hong Kong and China organize massive bi-annual ACG trade conventions that attract huge amounts of fans and foster the costuming acts of Cosplayers. But as will be shown, these two cultures have different ways of encouraging standards of success and failure for Cosplaying teams. Hong Kong teams are allowed to gather, dress-up and spread out in certain 'backstage' areas surrounding the main commercial ACG trade area. They have to obey various rules of safety and public

assembly, but are not coached to have their social activity lead towards a 'climax', such as public performances on a stage. Most Hong Kong Cosplayers hang out and loiter for hours with no intention of producing an official stage performance. In China on the other hand, teams of Cosplayers are carefully coached from beginning to end to participate in a competition involving a 20-minute drama that is written by the Cosplay team, pre-recorded and vetted by local Communist government officials. The contents of the Cosplay dramas are checked out in advance so that there will be no variations or spontaneous intervention during the drama performances themselves. At the same time, as noted by Teri Silvio, Cosplayers seldom use their live voices in public appearances or on the stage. They generally disconnect body from voice, choosing to be totally silent during elaborate acts of posing or performing in order to 'maintain the dignity of character' or because they do not have any traditional acting skills or voice training. (Silvio, 2006, 211) In either case, the Mainland China authorities have strategically interpreted their dismissal of spoken content by requiring that all potential content be pre-recorded and subject to government inspection.

Even though the CCP government now generally supports Cosplay events some fan communities who produce *yaoi* have been persecuted through Internet censorship and even overt criminalization. Mainland China is experiencing a long-term social transformation regarding the regulation of sexually explicit materials and *tongzhi* minorities, which has also led to major crackdowns on ACG derived subcultures. While sexually explicit materials and queer entertainment are distributed and even hyped on social media, these sites and their administrators are also often persecuted or criticized by the censors. China is generally undergoing a new epoch of sexual emancipation and social justice coinciding with a push towards neo-liberalism, and this results in regular crackdowns on the leaders of sex activism, such as the sex workers' activist Ye Haiyan who is popular as a micro-blogger yet often harassed by the authorities. (Jacobs, 2012, 46-51) Similarly Mainland netizens and Chinese mass media at first were curious and supportive of the Boys' love fad, but then there was a backlash as pro-government commentators began to scrutinize Boys' love's supposedly 'evil' impact on youth framing them as a cultural invasion and a threat to Chinese youth. (Liu, 2008) As evidenced in the following report:

The popularity of these pornographic pocket comics will interrupt their academic study, distract these innocent kids, lower their moral standards, and weaken their legal sense...Comic books peppered with heavy Japanese flavors, values and concepts will bring more damage to students. It is 'cultural hegemony' endangering Chinese kids. (Media report quoted by Liu, 2008)

As for the more recent persecution of *yaoi* fandom in China, Erika Junhui Yi provides an insider's view as a Boys' love fan and a scholar of the genre. She explains that a major crackdown of websites and fan forums, underpinned by homophobic arguments, occurred in 2010, with well-known newspaper columnists and bloggers such as Dou Wentao denouncing the subculture. Wentao is a very popular Xinhua news columnist and TV host

who is known for making critical remarks about pervasive media control of the Chinese Communist Party, but who generally also stays within the boundaries of acceptable public opinion. In 2011 the Zhenzhou police arrested thirty-two slash fiction writers, and this news was widely commented on through statements and cartoons on the social media site Weibo. (Yi, 2013) Many of these commentaries suggested that the subculture was vast and robust enough to be able to resist censorship. In one of the fan comics, an imprisoned girl cannot decide which genre-specific cell to enter. Despite the humorous and supportive tone of these commentaries, Yi describes a chilling effect produced by the 2010 crackdown, showing that many BL fans have resorted to ways of hiding their 'inclinations'.

At the same time, some of the news items surrounding *yaoi* have indeed gone viral and the culture itself has become quite robust. One of the major websites in China for BL fiction (literary versions of erotic manga stories) called Jinjiang was established in 2003 and boasts 5 million registered users and over 300,000 registered writers. (Xu and Ling, 2013) In this sense the fandom groups can no longer be seen as marginalized cultures, but as booming subcultures in dialogue with the sexual values and regulations of mainstream society. Within their public cultures youth are encouraged to seek an outlet within the safe boundaries of ACG commodity culture, but they also develop perverse fantasy-experiences that break the rules of sexual etiquette required by Mainland China's harmonious society.

### **Researching Sexual Identities in the Cosplay Zone**

The remainder of this article is based on ethnographic investigations supported by a Hong Kong General Research Funds Grant for the study of ACG fandom communities, digital networks and sexual subjectivities in greater China. As part of this grant, I travelled and researched subcultures of Cosplay in Hong Kong, Taiwan, Mainland, China and Indonesia between 2008 and 2011. In each of these cultures, I collaborated with local translators and 'fan-hosts', who I had met during initial visits, and who then introduced me to their peers and to Cosplay gatherings. These gatherings consisted of their participation in official conventions and competitions, as well as self-selected public spaces and/or private spaces. I was in close contact with these hosts over a period of time and briefed them about the aims of my research and the overall theme of ACG fandom and sexual subjectivity. Since I was trying to have dialogues with Cosplayers about their performances alongside sexual views and practices (usually carefully hidden from probing outsiders) I relied on hosts to help break the ice and mediate between Cosplayers and the research team. I also published a bi-lingual English/Chinese catalogue with excerpts and photographs of my fieldwork entitled *Wandering Dolls: Cosplay Journey Across East Asia* to more easily share my research as work-in-progress with some of these communities.

For this article, I mostly focus on my Cosplay encounters in China and Hong Kong, where I met with 'mainstream' Cosplayers who were entering competitions as well as 'substream' individuals and groups who felt alienated from these events and sought out alternative spaces to pursue their cross-dressing habits. To clarify this disjuncture between officially staged and fringe Cosplay events, I will make a brief digression concerning Taiwan

in order to describe a group of sex-positive and independent *Kigurumi* Cosplayers who promote sexual pleasure and transgenderism as acts of fetishism.

Since Cosplayers are quite reticent about discussing sexuality and especially in the presence of foreigners, I simply and informally chatted with these different groups while observing them during dressing up sessions. They also extensively photographed their activities and allowed me to do the same. Dressing up and posing with their new costumes turned out to be a more natural way for them to elucidate their talent and social bonds. They were happy to get this type of attention, to pose and make appearances for the odd visitor, who had been invited by one of their peers. As in other instances of participatory ethnography, it was easier to have in-depth dialogues after meeting with Cosplayers over a longer period of time. I also showed an interest in their dressing-up activities and would go along with them when preparing for events, when shopping for fabrics or wigs or accessories. Sometimes I would closely observe how they dress up and interact with their peer-photographers to work on extensive photography collections. Whenever I could support the artistic ambitions of Cosplayers, it was much easier to get their statements about the hidden aspects of their social lives and sexual desires.

As I conducted my fieldwork, the project became a study of 'liminality' as I was able to enter into more complex relationships with small numbers of Cosplayers who are pursuing queer sexual identities. I observed how they move between Cosplay fantasies, queer activism and the often harsh world of societal prejudice and rejection. For instance, my analysis discusses a transgendered individual in Hong Kong, Maggie Leung, who extensively aided my research and who brought me into a wide range of her cross-dressing gatherings, from Cosplaying with friends in the most official ACG trade venues to making cross-dressing appearances as 'Lolitas' or 'fashion dolls' in ordinary public spaces and in the company of other 'trannies'. Through these interactions I became more aware of the fact that some Cosplayers are indeed 'border-crossing' individuals who want to integrate artistic fantasy-lives and physical sex choices. Once Cosplayers want to take their artistic outlets into the realm of sex or sexuality identity, it is harder for them to be supported and accepted by peer Cosplay communities or by the ACG creative industries. My study became focused on those 'fringe' players or groups who experience growth and stigmatization, or even outright censorship, while crossing boundaries between out-of-bounds personalities and bodily desires or public sex choices.

### **Cosplaying and Cross-dressing in Liminal Spaces**

Given the thriving consumerism of ACG products in greater China, it is not surprising to see an increasing amount of scholarly theorization on the subculture's impact on sexual subjectivities and social values. Several scholars have borrowed the theory of 'liminality' or 'rite of passage' from cultural anthropology and performance studies to theorize the tentative and temporary impact of identity transgression within visual fantasy cultures. Shen has emphasized that animation art produces a liminal force that embodies 'the pleasure of evasion and the pleasure of transgression'. (Shen, 2007, 2) Napier, in her extensive reading

of Japanese anime books, stresses that transgression happens in ‘a place that is not a place and a time that is not a time’. (Napier, 2005, 171) These liminal spaces allow people to temporarily observe and become ‘sexual subjects’ like same-sex lovers or hyper-feminine girls although they are rarely actualized into ‘real life’ and actual pursuit of physical love.

Other theorists have emphasized that ACG fantasies represent a state of being that is socially unanchored, free of responsibility and highly self-absorbed—the opposite of matured individuals who have made conscious sexual choices. Or, as Anne Allison has argued, Japanese animation narratives are driven by a unique type of polymorphous perversity that appeals to fans as it visualizes morphing humans, spirits and other strange entities. It also reinforces their urge to check out and consume sexual novelties without getting caught up in them:

... a continual change and the stretching of desire across ever-new zones/ bodies/products ... the foregrounding of technology that animates spirits, creatures and intimacies of various sorts. Resonant with the fluctuation, fragmentation, and speedup facing global youth across the world, such a fantasy also becomes addictive, compelling players to keep changing and expanding their play frontiers through a capitalism of endless innovation, information, and acquisition. (Allison, 2006, 19)

These liminal spaces also produce fantasy experiences with ‘sexual objects’ and ‘augmented realities’ that thoroughly seduce and affect subjects. Tamaki Saito writes that the ACG fantasies and characters themselves can be ‘sexual objects’ that are not necessarily substitutes for physical love and sexual selfhood. He observes that highly pornographic fan productions are eagerly being bought and sold at ACG conventions. Fans confess to him that they are deeply immersed in these fictions and are sometimes sexually stimulated by them. Saito thus wants to positively emphasize the role of media immersion and augmented realities in modern-day sexualities: ‘Some contend that one should investigate sexuality by considering actual sexual activities, but I have always argued that today the real or the actual is something layered, something increasingly void of any firm foundation’. (Saito, 2007, 229)

This type of layered selfhood allows fans to feel and get turned on or off by sexual objects based on their love of fluctuating genres, stories and characters, and these experiences with sexual objects are shared within their peer groups. Indeed, this does not mean that all fans are ready to embrace these objects within the public spaces and discourses of queer sexuality. When asked to comment on their ‘actual’ sexual orientations, *fujoshi* will almost automatically respond that they are ‘straight’ because they do not affiliate with *tongzhi* queerness. But rather, they see themselves as *fujoshis*, or sexual beings who have their own unique characteristics and who are used to experiences with augmented realities within digital media. It is very common for *fujoshis* to emphasize that

they not like 'actual' queers, just as their sexual objects contain elements of queer celebration and queer disavowal. (Akatsuka, 2008, 163)

Yet in contrast to a defense of *fujoshi* femininity and queerness, scholars have pointed out that such categorization may also be damaging to actual queer subjects and minority groups. For instance, Rosi Braidotti has critiqued the popularization of queerness within consumerist youth cultures and their neo-liberal cultural frameworks. She argues that within such frameworks citizens are encouraged to imagine possibilities for otherness as polymorphous perversions, but ones that are divorced from historical developments for social change. Taken from this perspective, forays into otherness through ritualistic role-play can be characterized as shallow, trendy and opportunistic, while also carrying the seeds of a denial of actual marginal subjects. As Braidotti writes:

Advanced capitalism is a difference engine – a multiplier of de-territorialised differences, which are packaged and marketed under the labels of 'new, hybrid and multiple or multicultural identities'. It is important to explore how this logic triggers a vampiric consumption of 'others', in contemporary social and cultural practice. From fusion-cooking to 'world music', the consumption of 'differences' is a dominant cultural practice. (Braidotti, 2005, 2)

The liminal zone of Cosplayers is indeed also a by-product of capitalism which offers a type of gender play that can be easily cast aside and forgotten. As a matter of fact, when asked to comment on issues of sexual politics, Cosplayers are often dismissive or certainly 'lukewarm' in their support of queer sexuality. For instance, two FTM cross-players from Hong Kong, Huen and Yuko, are avid cross-dressers who have also developed an interest in queer sexuality. Huen is interested in history and often plays the Prussian King Frederic the Great, from *Hetalia: Axis Powers*. This manga itself is famous as it personifies different, incongruous countries through a variety of characters, combining all their histories into a single narrative. As Huen explains, she enjoys Cosplaying Hetalia and other stories because they are tolerant towards queer content: 'I think that Cosplay is the only legal way to let us experience a transgendered subjectivity and homosexuality and it accepts them tolerantly'. But Yuko disagrees and says that it has nothing to do with actual sexual orientation or sex, as she wants to come across as 'normal': 'We are just ordinary people ....we are normal in sex orientation'. (Personal Interview, November 2010)

They further explain that their queerness is maybe just a temporary youth fad. Just like Hong Kong's 'tomboys' (TBs), adolescent women who visibly boast masculine subjectivity and have same-sex relations, they eventually may not turn out to be self-identified adult lesbians. In an ethnographic study of Tom Boys in Hong Kong high schools, Carmen Tong writes that they drift in and out of their tomboy identities most of the time in their daily lives. They are just 'normal' schoolgirls who study, play and fall in love as many others do. Sometimes, when problems arise, they have to clarify themselves and identify as a sexual minorities, but they often present this 'problem' as a passing phase. (Tong, 2001) In

this way, tomboys and Cosplayers have found ways to comfortably claim and manifest their youth fashions as temporary and tentative outlets that supposedly can be discarded and do not have to lead to a fully queer adulthood.



**Figure 1:** Cosplayers Huen (upper left) and Yuko (lower right) surrounded by their peers at the Extra/Ordinary Dresscode Event, City University of Hong Kong and Videotage, November 2009.

Other scholars have observed cross-dressing in liminal zones amongst ethnic and sexual minorities in the USA that does leave its mark on physical choices and adult kinship relations. For instance, African-American gay youth of the 'ballroom scene' dress up and transition together, while also becoming part of queer families or 'houses'. (Arnold and Bailey, 2009) While many cross-dress as part of these competitions, some of them also pursue transsexual life-styles and support each other as sexual minority groups outside and beyond this performative context. As seen in Jennie Livingston's well-known documentary movie, *Paris is Burning* (1991), gay men become highly-flamboyant characters in ballroom performances while they are often experiencing dire material circumstances in their everyday lives. The imagined family structure helps this group to stay afloat as marginalized subjects, while support is expressed through group collaborations in making outfits and organizing performances in the ballroom. Arnold and Bailey have closely observed one of these families, called the House of Prestige, in which they analyzed its non-heteronormative kinship structures or 'kinscripts'.

One of the remarkable features of the ballroom community is that it has developed its own gender-sex system, where family members have a queer mother, a practical nurturer who tries to be constantly available for them, and a queer father who gives more abstract advice about life-style choices and ethical dilemmas. The family members learn to adopt a variety of gender roles, including butch queen, femme queen, butch queen up in drags, butch, man and woman. In the interviews with members of the ballroom community, cross-dressers explain that their identities are 'more theatrics than family bonds' but that they also, through these interactions, have started to care for each other on a deeper level. Their fictitious transformations into upper-class celebrities or fashion supermodels help them recast and share their social lives and individual concerns. Again this is a highly specialized and developed social context of 'transitioning' that is segregated from transgendered activism or racial awareness within surrounding urban centers. It is a way for people to creatively reclaim 'failure' and 'otherness', while building towards new practices of sociality and kinship, and to protect each other when performative characters and acts of dressing up spill over into other spaces of privacy or public culture.

In what follows, I will outline a context for understanding the social benefits of cross-dressing in liminal zones. More specifically I want to show that Cosplayers experience the most rewarding social and artistic accomplishments when hanging out together and slowly preparing their appearances, which may or may not lead to stage performances. Just like the African-American ball-room scene, the Cosplay scene allows people to move between public and private moments of social and artistic pursuit. But it is harder for them to these visit communities when these performances start affecting deeper levels of personal growth and queer sexuality.

### **Loitering and Grooming Appearances in the Cosplay Zone (Without Climax)**

The 'Cosplay zone' is organized in tandem with bi-annual commercial trade fairs of novel ACG products, which always draw huge audiences. During these massive conventions

Cosplay activities are relegated to much smaller side-rooms, backstage rooms, or corridors, and are visited by a smaller numbers of ACG fans. Hong Kong Cosplayers are allowed or even encouraged to hang out for hours, to dress up and pose for photographers or for self-photography. There is no impetus to control these activities and make them part of official competitions that also take place within the official ACG trade fair and which are ignored by a large majority of Cosplayers. Most Cosplayers engage in enthusiastic self-photography or photographic collaborations with designated peer photographers. These are amateur photographers who do not belong to fangroups but who are dedicated to making photographs for their personal collections. Sometimes these peer-photographers are simply friends who are most skilled at taking photographs and maintaining galleries on social media. Cosplayers develop special relationships with these photographers, who act as loyal sidekicks whose specific role is to capture the Cosplayers' newest outfits and poses. In short, the Hong Kong Cosplay zone is an amateur performative space where posers/ players and watchers/ photographers symbiotically coexist in order to fondly admire a specific type of variety show. The cross-dressing appearances are produced as temporary personalities that produce a unique 'stage of life' – as private worlds and social lives that are gradually enriched and changed through appearances on social media.



**Fig.2:** Cosplayers hanging out and applying make-up, Beijing Zhongguan Village Shopping mall, May 2010.

In Mainland China the commercial sponsors and local governments will collaborate in organizing stage competitions, so that the Cosplay zone is actually engineered in a way that

leads to a definite 'climax' or performance. Nonetheless, just like the activities in Hong Kong, there is an extensive moment of 'Cosplay prep' that consists of obsessive grooming as well as self-photography and peer-photography. Cosplayers at these events attend to each other's needs by helping out during make-up and hairdo sessions, which can easily take between one and two hours of meticulous and intimate care.

One Cosplay group I spent time with was made up of students at Renmin University, participating in an annual competition called 'China Joy Beijing 2010' held at Zhongguan Village, one of Beijing's suburban shopping malls dedicated to electronic consumer goods and gadgets. An area of the mall was designated for a Cosplay theater stage, while other areas were reserved for Cosplay preparations and rehearsals. In this particular mall, about a hundred players (divided in twenty teams of differing 'families') were hanging out and getting ready to perform a 20-minute lip-synced drama on the event's stage. As I have already explained, these dramas are recorded and vetted by local authorities weeks in advance in order to remove any type of sensitive content.

I observed and informally interviewed the Renmin University team as they were getting ready in the shopping mall, and also received statements from their group leader, Buny Chen. Many of the Cosplayers argue that they do not take the competition seriously but are there to hang out and to make appearances as their favorite Cosplay characters. Rehearsing the on-stage play involves extensive make-up and mirror-sessions, interwoven with posing for digital photography (to be uploaded later on the Internet). It is clear that these 'side performances' in the 'backstage room' are instrumental activities for Cosplayers, producing an atmosphere of anticipation and exhilaration that encourages bonding.

The Renmin Cosplay team planned and enacted a drama based on the ACG stories of *Final Fantasy* - a highly popular ACG media franchise with a constellation of stories and characters. The *Final Fantasy* video games, anime and comic series touch upon issues of human and non-human (sexual) relationships. One of the male leads suffers extensively within his form as a member of the human species, and is redeemed through his relationship with a non-human female lead. The Renmin University team was inspired by the story of *Final Fantasy* but felt free to adapt it into an almost entirely different dramatic script, as the director and leader of this group revealed:

The original story is very dramatic and serious, while ours is much more like a parody. It is our 'total fantasy' of Final Fantasy. Our story takes place in a male sex worker's house or a gigolo den, where women can go to choose an escort for the night. The management are all women, and some of them are sisters and cousins of the sex workers. There are two of those sex worker's houses, but only one of them is a large and a really popular place, while the other one has only inferior sex workers. And one of the inferior sex workers sends a letter to the other house to challenge its management. And the story is primarily a humorous tale about the delivery of this letter and all the personalities who get entangled in it. (Personal Interview, May 2010)

Hence the human suffering in *Final Fantasy* is transformed into that of ‘young male sex workers who try to attract their own species-female clients’. In this way, the drama carries an element of gender reversal which is highly popular amongst Cosplayers, as male characters have to perform traditional female roles and will be judged by female characters. (Silvio, 2006, 210) Chen further explains that these adaptations of Japanese stories are often based on local news stories, and this one in particular is inspired by recent controversies about the emergence of male escort services in Beijing. This means that fangroups are indeed also processing social emancipation and the fact that censored information about sex entertainment and sex workers can be openly and playfully discussed.



**Fig 3:** Renmin University Cosplayers getting ready for their 20-minute stage enactment of *Final Fantasy*.

Even though Chen denies an interest in feminist or queer content and defends the story as ‘just a juvenile fantasy’, his choice to swap or challenge normative gender roles may not be purely accidental. It is clear that some of the male Cosplayers are enjoying their gender-fluid appearances and are quite ready and willing to appear temporarily on a stage and more permanently on social media sites. While they may not intend to explore these aspects of gender play outside the ACG context, their performances do spill over into other aspects of identity. Despite the Cosplayers’ reluctance about making conclusive statements about their sexual identities, it became clear that some of the Cosplay scene in Beijing was attracting attention because of its queer attitudes and subject matter. As a member of another Beijing Cosplay team later explained in an interview:

In our club, there are many gays and lesbians, and they are very good actors; among the best, I'd say. As for transvestism, Cosplay is a culture where dress speaks for everything. So yes, there is a huge amount of transvestism going on here. It's hard to say what it actually means, as we never count or define the genders ... 'Cos' in the word Cosplay can be transvestism, so we don't really care if one is a man or a woman. (Personal Interview, May 2010)

He goes on to say that these acts of cross-dressing are more common for the gays and lesbians within their group. Even though these Cosplayers are still not open about their sexual identities, he believes that there is a silent understanding and appreciation amongst members. Like Hong Kong activist Joanne Leung, he believed that Cosplayers might be 'strategically confused' and 'unsure' about their sexual identities, while yet gathering in the Cosplay zone to hone their skills amongst attitudes of exuberance and tolerance.

In contrast to the Renmin University group who participated in an official event, I also observed a group of Costume players who were mostly operating independently of these events. This group has factions in both Beijing and Shanghai and openly calls itself the 'NKNL family' (No Theatrics No Life ... No Parody No Life). They see themselves as a 'family' based on their mimicking of fantasy characters. They embody these intimately bonded characters within social media and in self-selected public spaces, as for instance two female Cosplayers would cross-dress together and act as if they are in a sexual relationship. Atom is one of the members of this impromptu family and explains that it encompassed two types of relationships. First of all it refers to a grouping of like-minded Cosplayers who gather together and travel to remote places to make 'visual art' while also developing rotating personalities. As she explains:

I want to say something about my Cosplay family. We come from a league named 'NKNL' (No Theatrics No Life ... No Parody No Life), built over four years, with mainly members from Beijing and Shanghai. We share a belief that Cosplay can be a kind of visual art instead of just expressing the willingness to emulate a fondness of characters. We try to make Cosplay photos that represent scenes and presences in original works. Sometimes we travel to remote and concealed places to find appropriate camera scenes. After the acts of photography we create a series of photos with a text telling a story, and we insert coordinated music to create atmosphere. Maybe it sounds like some multimedia act but we'd like to call this a kind of 'paper-movie'. (Personal Interview, June 2010)

The second type of relationship in Atom's family exists between a smaller group of people within the NKNL family, who provide a deeper level of support, friendship and love. Atom has developed a close love relationship with Sami, who is a talented artist and the designated Cosplay photographer of the family. Both Atom and Sami enjoy Cosplaying

together and taking on masculine roles. They also believe that they physically resemble each other's androgynous types. These Cosplayers are so deeply immersed in their fantasy characters that they can be seen as 'sexual objects'. Indeed, when interviewing Sami, she explains that she cannot distinguish her love and desire for her family members from her love for their characters. She does not see this as a problem but as a specific relationship that she wants to foster. She is also very tolerant towards *tongzhi* queers in general and believes that overall the Cosplay community in Beijing had generated positive support for *tongzhi* activism. Though she hints at her lesbian relationship with Atom, she does not want to further discuss her love for Atom outside the Cosplay context.

The NKNL family itself likes to gather in self-selected public spaces such as the outdoor spaces of the well-known 798 art zone, where I followed them for a day during their various Cosplaying sessions. The group is very experienced in finding suitable locations, such as deserted train tracks and factory buildings, which are hidden away from the public and not monitored by local authorities. Thus, for these Cosplayers to cross-dress in these public spaces acts as a temporary showing of queer fantasies and a kind of reintegration into urban politics, as these 'infractions' are easily dispersed once their activities have been completed.



**Fig. 4:** Cosplayer Phoenix and photographer Sami of the NKNL family during a Cosplay sessions at the 798 factory. Photograph taken by Sami.

This strategy of reclaiming public spaces by means of cross-dressing acts is also made clear when I visited a group of Cosplayers in Taiwan who are, on average, a little older than the other Cosplayers I interviewed. This group consists of biological males who dress up as

female doll-like characters. They call themselves *Kigurumi* – a Japanese term for male Cosplayers who dress up like inanimate dolls as acts of fetishism. They distinguish themselves from all other forms of Cosplay because they openly embrace a love of fetish costumes as a type of alternative sexuality, while validating cross-dressing as an aspect of sexual pleasure. They enjoy dressing up and parading their sexual fashions amongst each other, while occasionally making appearances in outdoor spaces. One of them, King Fabulous, is the artist who has crafted their extraordinary masks and who encourages other members to dress up in specific styles, like schoolgirls in uniforms, to make public appearances. What is not made clear to outside viewers is that they are wearing restrictive skin colored fetish costumes underneath their girlish outfits as a kind of ‘second skin’ so that the process of their transformative subjectivity is experienced on a deeply sensual and sexualized level. These Costume players also constitute a kind of family and meet in a participant's apartment to don their double-layered costume and embody their feminine selves. After they have perfected their characters, they sometimes go out into public spaces and make appearances for the public so that they can be photographed.

They are happy to extensively pose as doll-like characters, but are very adamant about not being photographed as their biological ‘male’ selves. In some of their online photo-albums they contrast their feminine doll-like faces with digitally erased faces to indicate the interplay between hiding and showing selves. But in this way they also express a sharp division between their carefully manufactured female characters and the ordinary male ones that they temporarily wish to leave behind.



**Fig. 5:** Online photograph of Kigurumi Cosplayer and cross-dressers from Taiwan. Available at <http://sharkgogo.myweb.hinet.net>.

### From Cosplay to the Stage of Life

My last selected case study takes place in Hong Kong, where I followed Maggie Leung, who is a key figure in MTF cross-dressing in various contexts, including Cosplay. My relationship with Maggie has evolved over several years, as she has gradually revealed herself to be a transgendered person (and the adopted daughter of activist Joanne Leung). While she often expresses the desire to become a fully embodied MTF transsexual by means of sexual reassignment surgery, she also has mixed feelings and reservations about this process. She lives a life layered by versions of subjectivity and through belonging to various communities, including those of Cosplay and Lolita costume play. She also admits to being confused about her queer sexual orientation and is sexually interested in both men and women, preferably other transgendered MTF or FTM individuals.



**Fig. 6:** Hong Kong Cosplayer Maggie as Hell Girl and Gothic Lolita

Maggie's life story offers a rare insight into the paradigm of liminal release within ACG fandom in how it is connected to and disconnected from queerness in public spaces. Her biological family refuses to let her cross-dress at home and Hong Kong's extremely expensive real estate also prevents her from owning or renting her own apartment where she would be able to fully indulge her inclinations. Nevertheless, she still manages to be innovative and enact various strategies in order to remain true to her transgendered subjectivity – she regularly meets with different Cosplaying and Lolita groups to participate in their dress-up sessions, or for the *de rigueur* photo shoots. She and several

transgendered friends rent a tiny sub-divided apartment in the outer reaches of Hong Kong (the 'New Territories') where she is also able to store her costumes.



**Fig. 7:** Maggie (in the middle of the photographs) before and after dressing up in her hidden space in the suburb of Tsuen Wan.

Whenever she can afford an outing, she will go to this hidden dressing-up space and change into a female persona, and then return to this space to again become 'normal' before heading back to her family home. Maggie explains that several cross-dressers are renting these types of miniscule sub-divided apartments as it offered them ways to meet, hang-out and support each other while they are preparing for their transgendered appearances. But ultimately, Maggie is still not sure if she could fully reveal her transgendered self as she would not receive any kind of support from her family. As she explains:

In the traditional view of the Chinese family one is required to live with biological parents and with what your parents have given you. It becomes an exhausting inner struggle to try to live like that. (Personal Interview, March 2009)

My meetings with Maggie made me aware that she lives out her appearances and fantasies on an 'expanded stage'. It is a rotating stage with several platforms that includes shifting

subcultural contexts and sceneries. She impersonates fluctuating characters, some of whom are mostly online personalities that do not involve physical contact with the actual environment. For instance she dresses as female fantasy-characters such as 'Gothic Lolita' and posts her photographs on Facebook. At the same time she makes high-fashion appearances and makes outings in public spaces. But when I spent more time with her, I came to realize that she spends most of her time as biological male living a regular life at home with the family, which is a condition she is also willing to accept. She is a border-crossing individual who can manage to fluctuate between gendered personalities, though her peers are not easily accepting of this kind of mobility. Maggie has become a more confident and queer activist-oriented over the years, yet I often overhear negative comments about her from other 'purist' Cosplayers who could not appreciate her highly eclectic or complicated identity. While Maggie now spends a great amount of time organizing educational events around transgendered groups and life-styles, she is still unable or unwilling to become a fully transitioned transsexual. Her story shows that as a 'misfit' within the Cosplay circles, she has developed a uniquely matured queer identity, one that is heavily indebted to creative fantasy projection but also has gone a step beyond these experiences.

## **Conclusion**

Reflecting on my journeys and Chinese case studies, I could see that youth-oriented sexual fashions are in constant interaction with the products of Japanese ACG culture and its sexual objects. This has led me to develop a view of 'queerness' that steers away from solidified sexual identity, and focuses on how subjects oscillate between sexual choices, as well as between physical sex experiences and the lives of fantasy-characters. According to sexologist Tamako Saito it is time to think positively about youth's immersion in sexualized fantasies and social media as a novel type of sexual identity. Rather than emphasizing 'Internet immersion' as potentially a special condition leading to social seclusion, it could perhaps be seen as fostering a kind of mobility through which aspects of sexual desires and sexual otherness can be experienced and objectified. Cosplayers or *fujoshis* often suggest that they view themselves as sexual 'types' who are interested in lighter or playful ways of expressing queer identity. I have observed how Cosplayers are creatively and joyfully involved in collectively dressing up as characters and in carefully documenting their performances. The Cosplay zone is a performative context of artistic pursuit and social cooperation and also a transitional zone between art and private desires. It is a space of art as sexual experiment and is different from other types of queer activism. The queer sexuality of Cosplay can be seen as a unique type of identity based on a love of fictional beings, imaginative worlds and stories of intense sexual conquest, including same-sex love and cross-dressing. Animation fans and Costume players are used to occupying media landscapes as augmented realities, or spaces that morph between material and immaterial worlds. In this capacity, gender and sexuality are very powerfully present in their daily lives, but are also seen as fictional and disembodied objects that can be ignored or reasoned away

whenever necessary. These fantasies are very carefully groomed during public dress up sessions and performances, and they sometimes spill over into personal convictions about sex and romance. Costume play is a stage of life that 'never quite happens' and it is not necessary for participants to showcase their ambitions within the traditional public sphere of art or sexual politics. It is a realm of pleasure all onto itself that also offers a 'lighter' view onto social issues and relationships. One could imagine Costume players having dialogues with their characters and convincing them to remain readily yet discreetly at their disposal.

In order to locate a platform for sexual difference and social change amongst Chinese youth, it would be necessary to stimulate alliances between subcultures and life-styles of Cosplayers and those of *tonghzi* activists. Most of my case-studies were carried out in Chinese cultures where LGBT or *tonghzi* identities are not openly accepted and often downplayed within public culture. Both the Mainland Chinese and Hong Kong governments maintain repressive attitudes towards queer life-styles and the demand for gay rights. In the PRC some of the *fujoshis* have been subject to criminalization due to offending capitalist-inflected Communism. As detailed by Erika Yi, some of the major social media sites were shut down in 2012 and some of the most active uploaders of Boys' Love fictions have received jail sentences. (Yi, 2013) These crackdowns on individuals are consistent with the PRC's strategies of intimidation against youth's supposed sexual promiscuity and Internet addiction. At the same time the Chinese mediascape and social media sites are inundated with ACG products and illegal sex entertainments that are difficult to ignore. For instance, there are massive collections of Boys' Love fictions that are subversive of patriarchal power relations and are distributed freely alongside the highly controlled ACG markets. (Xu and Ling, 2013) Therefore, while most fan activities are part and parcel of the promotional strategies of creative industries, some border-crossing groups and individuals are eager to break the rules of sexual etiquette and are censored as potential sites of moral corruption and dissidence. Under these conditions, many ACG fans favour a pursuit of pleasure and lightness through fantasy-characters. But at the same time, they envision a smooth return to normality when required and would dismiss those individuals who are unable to do so.

### **Biographical note:**

Katrien Jacobs works as associate professor in cultural studies at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. Her work investigates the role of digital networks in people's experiences with the body, art, and sexuality. She has lectured and published widely on pornography, censorship and media activism. Her latest book *People's Pornography: Sex and Surveillance on the Chinese Internet* (Intellect Books, 2011) has been widely commented on in the mass media. Her work can be found at [www.libidot.org/blog](http://www.libidot.org/blog).

### **Acknowledgements:**

The research for this article was made possible through a Hong Kong General Research Fund 'Gothic Lolita Unchained: The appropriation of Japanese animation narratives and gender

discourses in Chinese digital media contexts'. (CUHK 144 010) All the Cosplayers who have been quoted in the article kindly gave their consent to be interviewed and/or represented through visuals. I would like to thank my colleague in fashion studies Dr Anne Peirson-Smith at City University of Hong Kong for collaborating on parts of the study, as well as research assistants Yang Jing, Cynthia Lam and Clara Tang; fan/hosts Bonnie Rambatan, Sami and Atom, Sean Hsiao; and photographers Sami, Andrew Guthrie and Kal Ng.

## References:

- Akatsuka, N., 'Uttering the Absurd, Revaluing the Abject: Femininity and Disavowal of Homosexuality in Transnational Boy's Love Manga'. In Antonia Levi, Mark McHarry and Dru Pagliassotti (eds.), *Boys' Love Manga: Essays on the Sexual Ambiguity and Cross-Cultural Fandom of the Genre*. North Carolina, McFarland and Company, 2008, 159-177.
- Allison, A., 'The Japan Fad in Global Youth Culture and Millennial Capitalism'. In Frenchy Lunning (ed.) *Mechademia 1: Emerging Worlds of Anime and Manga*, 2006, 11-21.
- Arnold, E. and Bailey, M. 'Constructing Home and Family: How the Ballroom Community Supports African American GLBTQ Youth in the Face of HIV/ AIDS', *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Social Services*, 2009, 21:2, 171-88
- Braidotti, R., 'A Critical Cartography of Feminist Post-Postmodernism', *Australian Feminist Studies*, 20: 47, 2005, 169-79.
- Fung, Y. H. A., Hong Kong as the Asian and Chinese distributor of Pokémon. *International Journal of Comic Art*, 7:1, 2005, 432-448.
- Galbraith, P. *The Otaku Encyclopedia: An Insider's Guide to the Subculture of Cool Japan*, Tokyo: Kodansha International, 2009.
- Halberstam, J., *The Queer Art of Failure*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011.
- Hicks, J., 'Otaku anthropology; exploring Japan's unique subculture'. *The verge.com*, 9/5/2013.
- Hironobu Sakaguchi, *Final Fantasy Videogames Series*, Square Enix Productions, 1987-2013.
- Jacobs, K., *Wandering Dolls: Cosplay Journey Across East Asia*. Hong Kong: Roundtable Synergy Books, 2011.
- Jacobs, K. *People's Pornography: Sex and Surveillance on the Chinese Internet*. Bristol: Intellect Books, 2012.
- Kam, L., *Shanghai Lalas: Female Tonghzi Communities and Politics in Urban China*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2013.
- Liu, T. 'Conflicting Discourses on Boys' Love and Subcultural Tactics in Mainland China and Hong Kong', In Mark McLelland and Fran Martin (eds.) *Intersections: Gender and Sexuality in Asia and the Pacific* <http://intersections.anu.edu.au/issue20/liu.htm> (accessed 4 June 2013).
- Livingston, Jennie, *Paris is Burning*. [DVD] Off white Miramax. 1991.
- Lv, Y., Cosplay Trends in Universities. *Fang Zhi Fu Zhuang Zhou Kan*(24), 2010.
- Napier, S. J., *Animé from Akira to Princess Mononoke: Experiencing contemporary Japanese animation*. New York, Palgrave, 2005.
- Ng, W.M. 'The Consumption and perception of Japanese ACG (Animation-Comic-Game) among young people in Hong Kong', *International Journal of Comic Art*, 12: 1, 2010, 460-477.
- Saito, T., 'Otaku Sexuality', In Christopher Bolton, Istvan Csicsery-Ronay Jr and Takyuki Tatsumi (eds.) *Robot Ghosts and Wired Dreams. Japanese Science Fictions from Origins to Anime*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007, 222-50.

- Shen, L.F., 'Anime Pleasure as a Playground of Sexual Power and Resistance', International Conference, *Media in Transition: Creativity, Ownership, and Collaboration in the Digital Age*, 2007.
- Silvio, T., 'Informationalized Affect'. In Fran Martin and Larissa Heinrich (eds.), *Embodied Modernities, Corporeality, Representation and Chinese Cultures*, 2006, 195-218.
- Thaemlitz, T., 'Viva McGlam: Is Transgenderism a Critique of or Capitulation to Opulence-Driven Glamour Models?' 2008, <http://www.comatonse.com/writings/vivamcglam.html> (accessed July 10, 2011).
- Tong Ka Man, C., *Being a Tomboy: An Ethnographic Research of Young Schoolgirls in Hong Kong*' Masters Thesis, Hong Kong University, 2001. Available online at <http://hub.hku.hk/bitstream/10722/31377/15/FullText.pdf?accept=1>
- Yi, J. E., 'Reflection on Chinese boys' love fans: An Insider's view'. In Kazumi Nagaike and Kasuhiko Suguma eds. Special Issue of *Journal of Transformative Works and Cultures*, vol. 12, Spring 2013.
- Xu, Y. and Ling Y. 'Forbidden Love: Incest, Generational Conflict, and the Erotics of Power in Chinese BL fiction', In Kazumi Nagaike and Dru Pagliassotti (eds.), *Journal of Graphic Novels and Comics*, Spring 2013.
- Wong, Wendy Siuyi, 'From Transnationalization to Globalization: The Experience of Hong Kong', In Frenchy Lunning (ed.), *Mechademia 3: Limits of the Human*, 2008, 266-268.