

The Chinese New World Dream and the Female Itch: Sex Blogging and Lolita Costume Play

Katrien Jacobs

Published in *Porn.com: Making Sense of Online Pornography* (Peter Lang, 2010). Edited by Feona Attwood.

Most research on pornography focuses on Western cultures and is dominated by Western models of media content and consumption. This chapter takes a novel outlook based on a study of web cultures in Hong Kong, Taiwan and Mainland China. In January 2009 it was estimated that there were more than 50 million bloggers in mainland China. (*South China Morning Post*, January 8-2009). Yet the massive population of Chinese Internet users has not yet developed an attachment to Western-style internet pornography with streamlined sites for e-commerce or social networking. In Chinese cultures pornography is, in many cases, illegal and is circulated through blogs, bulletin boards and chatrooms that do not officially distribute or promote pornographic materials. The chapter shows that Chinese web users are internalizing the lure of overseas porn markets and sex activism, yet framing porn discourses as a mixture of nostalgic grandeur and visionary eccentricity. More specifically, it discusses the erotic discourses of female sex bloggers and Lolita Cosplayers against a backdrop of economic expansionism, urban transformation, and government surveillance.

Netporn Politics in Hong Kong, Taiwan and the People's Republic of China

In Hong Kong, China and Taiwan, like in many other countries, online porn, sex products and social networks are tightly controlled by their respective governments. In my interviews I have found that Chinese people tend to denounce the netporn boom as a “Western” or a “Japanese” obsession. They often mention the existence of a Chinese

moral code based on the doctrines of Confucianism to differentiate themselves from overseas cultures. The Confucian doctrines are rarely articulated any further but are used as a basis for formulating disclaimers when openly discussing sexual desires or political changes. All the same, Chinese people have fallen in love with sexually explicit TV programs and movies, such as Ang Lee's *Brokeback Mountain* (2006) and *Lust, Caution* (2007), with the vast gamut of Japanese pornography, and with Western-style online sex and dating sites.

Although the People's Republic of China encourages the use of the internet, it subjects this to heavy censorship and has banned pornography. Online sex work and non-commercial sex practices are strictly monitored by the government and by Internet Service Providers. The government is thought to have a lenient approach towards sex industries, but it carries out random arrests and gives jail sentences to people who have been found to be distributing pornography, whether it is commercial or non-commercial, hard-core or soft-core, and whether it is found on local or overseas web hosts and servers. In 2005, the *EastSouthWestNorth* blog published a report about China's "greatest Internet Crime trial" where eleven defendants were charged and sent to prison for distributing obscenities. Five of these were university students who had been invited by Fujian resident, Wang Rong, to help administer an online bulletin board system called 99bbs.com that started as a general interest forum and subsequently offered pornographic content in a separate section to 75,000 fee-paying members. The website was hosted on an overseas server, but nevertheless fell under Chinese jurisdiction. The students were not paid for their administrative services, using it instead as a social network to share files and for personal communication. They lived in different parts of the country and knew each other mostly through their nicknames on the bulletin board. One of these, Shao Yong, noted in an interview that she used the website to post her writings and journals and "to become immersed in the Internet and to make friends". After Wang Rong fled to the USA, the trial focused on Shao Yong, and she was subsequently sentenced to twelve years in prison (*EastSouthWestNorth*, 2008).

Taiwan and Hong Kong have less severe forms of criminalization, yet both countries are witnessing the growing power of Christian evangelist organizations who have considerable influence on government bureaucracies and media outlets. These groups also spy and report on web users and progressive sex activists, sometimes collaborating with the tabloid media and government agencies to control their activities. The most vulnerable sites are those used by sex workers to advertise their services, but conservative groups have also increasingly targeted non-commercial sex activists and bloggers. In 2007, the Mainland Chinese blogger, Romantic Night, was arrested and subsequently vilified in the media. Typically, no detailed information about his blog or the reasons for his arrest were given and there was no news about other bloggers or sex activists who might have defended him. All that was reported was that Romantic Night had a website for “distributing erotica novels” and that he was “caught” by the driver of a well-known CEO and arrested for “distributing erotic culture in Beijing” (*Beijing Daily*, May 17, 2007).

These are just two examples of the ways in which Chinese governments are trying to exert influence over the use of new media for sexual purposes. Hong Kong’s government-appointed committee, the Obscene Articles Tribunal, is currently swamped and unable to process the number of complaints from citizens about new online sex practices. But Hong Kong also has a tradition of political dissent and laws to protect people who engage in free speech and certain types of political protest. Hong Kong media activist, Oiwan Lam, has been prominent in challenging the workings of the Obscene Articles Tribunal. In an act of civil disobedience, she urged web users to post pornographic hyperlinks on the local indie media server, making her own hyperlink to an artistic photograph of a naked woman on the photography sharing site, *Flickr*. The hyperlink was tracked down by a religious organization who filed a complaint about it to the Obscene Articles Tribunal, and Lam is now facing prosecution for breaking obscenity laws.

Lam’s prosecution was set in motion before her activist call had garnered any positive results. However, it has been met with local and international protest and she is meticulously documenting her court case as part of a challenge to the authoritarian

upswing in Hong Kong sex culture. In her article, “Don’t Turn Hong Kong into a Mono-coloured Ghost City”, she poetically evokes Hong Kong as a gloomy place controlled by an upwardly mobile bourgeoisie and characterized by sex-phobic and xenophobic values. She also argues that over the last decade Hong Kong has lost its identity as a multi-cultural hub, a meeting point between Eastern and Western cultures, and a free-speech zone. (Jacobs, 2008a)

The Taiwanese sex activist, Josephine Ho, has noted that Chinese societies are setting the example for a citizen-driven “complaint culture” against online sexualities, aided by excessive police surveillance and the mass media. As Ho explains (2005), “Instead of state power being weakened, as most global governance theorists argue, state power has been expanding to ever more social spheres and gaining strength in relation to newly-constructed subjects for rule, and in relation to new spheres where the regulation/surveillance of marginalized populations and their activities carry insurmountable weight, where bodies and everyday life serve as prime targets”. Ho’s analysis of internet censorship in Taiwan shows that this is not only the result of monopolizing state control, but of the ways in which state power is being transferred to various supra-state international organizations and local or grass-root citizen groups. The groups who have been most eager to introduce censorship legislation are religious groups and child-protection NGOs who collaborate with the state, resulting in an expansion of state power and the criminalization of sexual minorities.

There has also been a series of new laws and rules in Taiwan which ban sex-related information, contacts and enquiries on the internet. For example, an amendment of an anti-prostitution law to include all internet-related transactions has worked to heighten Taiwan’s sex-phobic atmosphere. The law now states that “those who use advertisement, publication, radio, television, electronic signal and internet, or other media to publish or broadcast messages that induce, broker, imply, or by other means cause one to be involved in sexual transactions shall be punished with imprisonment of no more than five years and alternatively coupled with a fine of no more than one million NT dollars” (Ho,

2005). Thousands of cases have been sent to the Taiwanese court, some targeting web users who were found playing in sexuality chatrooms or on bulletin board systems.

The Chinese New World Dream and its Counter-Publics

These political developments show that the Chinese netporn era can be tumultuous and violent. They point to a sex-phobic Chinese moral code, but are also located within a crude neo-liberal transformation of cultures globally. Chinese communism has been transformed by an entrepreneurial capitalism that criminalizes forms of political dissent. As Lisa Rofel has shown, Chinese citizens are encouraged to free themselves of the constraints of hardship and poverty as long as they do this in ways that avoid the “dangerous passions of politics”. In the same way, sexual desires and practices which can be interpreted as “benign” forms of consumerism are encouraged and have the added attraction of making China appear cosmopolitan” (Rofel, 2007: 121).

Chinese citizens are incited to consume products and make art as part of a “new world civilization dream” which in recent government propaganda is characterized as life in a harmonized “world city.” Brian Holmes (2008) observes how this mythic city is portrayed in terms of endless construction and expansion, “continuous buildings, endless highways, infinite urbanization, a city beyond the limits of the imagination. Huge urban blocks, surging arteries, expanding ring roads, metros, airports, refineries, power plants, bullet trains, a city that devours the countryside, scraping the mountains and the sky”. The process of entering the world city is often described as “jumping in the sea,” as a way of expressing how Chinese people are being forced to leave behind the old securities of communist living and begin to conduct themselves as risk-takers.

In Hong Kong there has been a similar trend of corporate-driven government rhetoric about unbridled urbanization, but there is also a tradition of activism which has produced a critique of the gradual destruction of older neighborhoods and heritage sites. Massive protests erupted around the closure and relocation of the historic Queen's Pier in 2007.

Thousands of protesters gathered to document the destruction of the building. They shared footage and commentaries about their actions on video blogs, making it clear that they were fed up with the corporate destruction of local culture in favor of the global economy.

Hong Kong artists have also challenged the government's rhetoric of smooth urbanization, using subversive poster campaigns to protest against a proposed land transport link between Hong Kong, Mainland China and Macao. One anonymous campaign uses slogans such as "Maximum Development in Harmony with Nature!", "Preserve and Destroy!", "Build and Preserve Again!", "2046: 1 Country, 1000 Different Speeds", and "2012 Full Democracy and Full Speed Ahead". These mock Hong Kong's blind surrender to entrepreneurial capitalism, its political insecurities about the handover to Mainland China, and its idle promises of future democracy.

The campaigners echo the writings of Ackbar Abbas (1997) who has criticized Hong Kong's architecture of "placeless landscapes" as the sign of a new colonialism that denies pleasure, contestation and change. Abbas explores the way Hong Kong's media saturation changes people's experiences of space so that it becomes abstract, dominated by signs and images that dispel memory, history, and presence. However, Lisa Law (2002) has taken issue with this view, arguing that architectural changes do not necessarily extinguish histories of social activism. She has documented how the urban spaces of Hong Kong's downtown area of Central, made-over since the 1970s by global capital, are now used by Filipino domestic workers on their day off to hawk local goods and services, and by migrant workers and other activist organizations to launch protests. She concludes that Hong Kong's inner city is a historically dense and multi-coded landscape, characterized by an emergence of counter-publics.

Lolita's Nostalgic Wanderings

Chinese women are amongst these activist groups, using urban spaces and cyber zones to show glimpses of unorthodox sexual fantasies and to congregate as uncanny counter-publics. They are also developing online self-portraiture to escape from the overly patriotic objectives of the Chinese New World Dream. One way in which they construct joyful, sex-positive personae is through the appropriation of Japanese fashion styles and subcultures. In particular, they draw on a broader Chinese obsession with the Japanese figure of the “pretty girl” (*bishojo*) who dresses in highly feminine costumes and is widely found in the Japanese “Shojo” animations, comics and games marketed to young women. Some critics have reacted strongly to this figure as a sign of weakness related to Japanese consumerism and to the endless distribution and consumption of commodities and images. Young Chinese women who dress as “Lolita” characters - known as costume players or “Cosplayers” - have received particularly negative and sensational coverage in the mass media. The RTHK television documentary, *Pretty Bizarre* (2005), reported outrage at what were described as “psychologically disturbed or oversexed young female members of the community”.

However, Orbaugh (2002) argues that Shojo characters can be seen as a tool for the critique of contemporary adult society. For example, the popular “pretty girl” figure can be seen as representing a state of being that is socially unanchored, free of responsibility and self-absorbed - the opposite of the ideal Japanese adult. Japanese girliness allows women to escape from the Confucian doctrines and censorship politics that frame feminine decorum in terms of responsible citizenship, traditional family values and rigid gender binaries. Shojo culture offers tropes of exoticism and childishness for unbridled gender play within nostalgic and decadent fantasy settings.

Chinese Cosplayers are mostly young animation, games and comics fans who dress up and make public appearances as their favorite characters. Within the subculture of Cosplayers, there is also a group of “cross-players” who experiment with gender, dressing in the outfits of the opposite sex and posting photographs from their public appearances on online forums such as www.crossplay.net. Yet the site makes no reference to

contemporary transgendered subjectivities or queer sexuality and it bans all sexually explicit materials, announcing in the mission statement, "You agree not to post any abusive, obscene, vulgar, slanderous, hateful, threatening, sexually-oriented or any other material that may violate any applicable laws. Doing so may lead to you being immediately and permanently banned (and your service provider being informed)". Many of the male-to-female cross dresser upload images of themselves in sexy, ladylike outfits and "pretty girl" poses. The Hong Kong cross-player, Martin Leung, uses a blog to share his photographs of himself as Princess Princess, a boy who turned into a princess, or as a "Gothic Lolita", an aristocratic young female who wears black lace outfits.

Female costume players also dress as "Lolitas", wearing voluminous lace-covered knee-length dresses, white stockings, and bonnets on their heads. Except for their trendy platform shoes, Lolitas look like Victorian porcelain dolls wearing the clothes of bygone eras. They inhabit a world of pre-sexual adolescence, their innocence emphasized through the heavy layering of vintage clothing and props. They stage city gatherings such as high tea parties where they eat sandwiches using forks and knives and pose for curious Hong Kong photographers and journalists. They are exhibitionistic and media-savvy, but they also act decorously; their aesthetic of nostalgic decadence referring to older feudal bedrooms or secluded rose gardens where sexual moves unfold slowly and with a sense of grace. Modes of well-mannered femininity are taken to an extreme in order to develop erotically charged subjectivities. It suggests a play with dogmatic clichés as means of asserting agency within dominant discourses.

When Lolitas dress up and gather in public settings, they express a nostalgic kind of girlishness to embellish a city dominated by endless shopping malls and anonymous high-rise architecture. They can be seen as figures of consumerism or male sexual fantasy, though they reclaim those figures by making their own outfits, dressing up together and preparing social outings in public spaces. Most Lolita discussions and transactions take place online at blogging sites such as <http://www.lolionline.net> where members look at each other's photo albums and share experiences. As Lolita Cynthia explained to me, this

form of online self-portraiture is undertaken in order to experience an identity transformation: “It makes me more comfortable and makes me want to be in front of the camera more. It is more like a little mask that you wear in front of people. For instance, I smile a lot less usually but when I am in my character I smile a lot more. It is also how people interpret me” (Jacobs, 2008b). Cynthia explains that her smile is not faked, but is rather part of a dream and an escape from everyday life boredom, from pressures from school, work, family and friends. Lolitas mimic and rewrite male fantasies of pure girlishness and in this way escape the pressure they experience, both from the rigid rules of Confucianism and the era of soulless economic expansionism.

Sex Bloggers and the Natural Call

Web users in greater China participate in global waves of sex blogging and pornographic video sharing. Indeed, China and Hong Kong can be said to be going through a blogolution and blogs are frequently used to create sex diaries and share information about the sexual adventures of their authors. In Hong Kong and Singapore, web users also use American-style swingers' sites such as *Adult Friend Finder.com* or local sites such as *SexyWife.com* to share their own brands of home made pornography.

However, in Mainland China government propaganda prevents sex bloggers from using sexual commentaries to express anger or dissent. As Aaron Bowen (2007) has pointed out, Chinese censors can and do censor the sexual content of blogs. He argues that the political, social, and sexual spheres cannot be discretely separated from each other, and that posting sexual content online can often be seen as a form of social or political dissent. Some bloggers enthusiastically post government propaganda while spying on those who post sexual content. This is part of a nationwide effort to cleanse the internet of political dissent and pornography, in which agents are hired to troll online, block internet sites, erase commentary and arrest people for being anti-Communist or “anti-social” (French, 2005).

While the Chinese blogosphere can be seen as part of a broader progressive web culture and the development of libertine values, it is clearly less influenced by the online exhibitionism and geeky intellectualism that have defined the western nets. For instance, American sex bloggers such as Violet Blue (at tinynibbles.com) and Audacia Ray (at wakingvixen.com) operate as accomplished writers whose politicized essays and queer identities are confident, influential and respected. But it is much more dangerous for Chinese web users to divulge such political identities and this awareness has enhanced a dominant blog rhetoric of sexual naïvety or pure lust. This rhetoric reclaims sexual portraiture and storytelling as expressions of “pure” hedonism or a form of sexuality that does not have political or critical ambitions. For example, it is possible for one of the most popular Chinese sex bloggers, Mu Mu, to be a devoted party member and an online exhibitionist at the same time (French, 2006).

Hong Kong web users tend to maintain blogs to engage in “purely sexual” storytelling that is devoid of cultural reflection. They use the blog format to make their own versions of DIY porn sites, posting detailed confessional stories about sex encounters that blur the boundaries between fact and fiction. These are often accompanied by pornographic photographs that directly or obliquely refer to the story. Even though the stories sometimes deal with taboo subjects such as incest and bestiality, people mostly express themselves within quite conventional limits. And while some of the photographs depict the blogger, many are stolen from commercial porn sites. One popular kind of blog is that of heterosexual swinger couples who post stories with photographs and videos on *Sexywife.com*, a site which currently has a constituency of 7000 members in Hong Kong. In these, traditional gender roles are generally maintained. In many cases, the male partner holds the membership and uses the site to brag about and showcase his wife or girlfriend, who is otherwise invisible or absent. In a story posted by *hkw200k*, a husband describes his wife’s feelings and emotions during a visit to a massage parlor where they end up having sex with the parlor’s owner. The site also hosts solo bloggers like “Naughty Tanya,” who posts beautifully framed and decapitated pictures of her voluptuous body in lingerie outfits. The images are designed both to attract comments from other members

and to make money by selling the lingerie. Arisa maintains a similar kind of blog, *Arisa Sex World*, on yahoo.com, using this as a sex diary which records detailed descriptions of sex positions, illustrated with photographs of her body and face.

Bloggers in Mainland China are more vulnerable than those in Hong Kong. Their work is not only more actively monitored, but they are more often attacked by public commentators. Oftentimes these attacks reveal a patriarchal knee jerk reaction, as if female sexual agency can only be appreciated if it reveals a pleasant, subdued and non-confrontational attitude. For instance, in 2005 the city of Beijing organized *Blognight*, encouraging female bloggers to upload a selection of their most beautiful photographs and participate in a beauty pageant. Citizens were encouraged to vote on “the most beautiful blogger” who would win a hefty cash award. The jury received about 300 submissions from bloggers in various poses, fetching dresses and lingerie, including one from Hedgehog Mu, who sent in a photograph of herself fully nude. Hedgehog Mu’s submission received negative reviews all over the web, and was voted down by the jury because of her confrontational and lewd attitude (*Beijing Daily*, May 14, 2006). As this incident shows, the female blogosphere is subjected to a specifically Chinese version of patriarchal commentary. It is harder to place female sex bloggers within the lineage of feminist sex activism or sexpertism that has been apparent in the West. The Chinese climate is more hostile and it is more difficult for bloggers to engage in this kind of art and activism.

The Guandong-based Mu Zimei, who could be described as “the mother of Chinese sex blogging”, had a very popular blog to describe her social encounters in trendy bars and clubs and the various seduction routines that she uses, resulting in one-night stands. She published the names of the men she slept with and described the fights she had with them in bars, making fun of them and their shortcomings. Her tone was proudly juvenile and she sometimes used erotic prose poetry to mimic the clipped, telescopic communication of the one-night stand. Her accounts openly violated Confucianist morality and conventional notions of romance and love, but they were not politicized in the way that the writings of many Western sex bloggers are. Instead she produced essays which talk about liberating

the “self” or “human nature” from social norms. In short, her blog functioned as a “one-woman liberation movement” centered on a radical and angry defense of casual sex and the ability to separate sex from emotional entanglements (Farrer, 2007).

James Farrer (2007) has described how Mu Zimei teased the patriarchy by requiring journalists to sleep with her before granting an interview, “the longer the sex, the longer the interview”. Her blog received millions of hits after it was reported in the news but the comments were mostly negative and the government finally shut down the mother blog. Other sex bloggers have enthusiastically adopted Mu Zimei’s use of humor and bawdiness, receiving many hits and comments, as well as attention from supportive international media organs such as the *Asian Sex Gazette*. Qin Dai created a buzz by posting snapshots of her naked buttocks and back alongside a copy of a romantic novel that she was writing. She responded to negative criticism by comparing her writings to those of Franz Kafka, arguing that being a writer fulfilled her urge to “let her deep-rooted joy and freedom float freely”. One of her opponents, Annie Rose, a Kafka connoisseur, attacked Qin Dai, writing, "She can't say how she's like Kafka at all. He was a great writer and had nothing to do with nude ass. Qin just wants to make a name for herself by stripping". She insisted that Qin apologize to her parents and to her buttocks as well. Such conflicts show a deeply rooted sense of conservatism and lack of support and networking between female bloggers.

Another blogger, Mu Mu, posts images of her naked body while refusing to reveal her face, making people speculate about the motives behind her images. She explains that these portraits are a defense of pure sex and designed to prevent people from excessively analyzing her facial expressions and emotional states. (*Asian Sex Gazette*, 2006) Other bloggers have built archives of Chinese people’s porn; for example Lost Sparrow has compiled an encyclopedia of lovemaking noises based on the premise that they would sound different in different parts of China. (Chien, 2005) Hairong Tian Tian hit the news after she started collecting pictures of men’s limp penises. She has explained that she wanted to explore the “the root of Chinese masculinity” by showing the cock in its most

mundane state (Skirmisher, 2006). Just like Hong Kong's Naughty Tanya, Hairong Tian also has an extensive gallery of photographs of herself in fetching lingerie outfits. The amateurish look of these poses are reminiscent of performance art, but like Naughty Tanya, she also uses the photos for commercial purposes - in order to sell her lingerie.

In these ways, Chinese bloggers tailor sexual agency to the demand of benign consumerism while engaging in humorous activism on the side. Porn culture in the West is very different given its geek girl establishment, run by pro-porn feminists and queer celebrities such as Joanna Angel, Audacia Ray and Violet Blue who operate in alternative creative industries. The Chinese blogosphere is more vulgar and ephemeral, a bit like a 1960s nudist performance piece or like acts of streaking in public places. As the experience of the "mother of sex blogging", Mu Zimei shows, if women make bold statements, they have to deal with hostility from other web users or from the agents of surveillance and censorship. These fights may be signs of sexual and political progress. According to Farrer (2007), it is exactly the social process of debates like this that signifies a threat to communist authorities. However, it is currently uncertain whether a more boisterous and challenging Chinese type of sexual self-presentation will appear.

Performing Sex in Chinese Fashion

As a Belgian sex researcher living and working in Hong Kong, I am constantly made aware of the fact that there is a wide cultural gap between Chinese and non-Chinese forms of sex activism. It is currently unthinkable that Chinese cultures will officially open up internet pornography markets to foster their new economies or that they will tolerate new types of sex activism, particularly given that the new availability of netporn has been matched by an upsurge in religious and conservative citizen movements.

According to Aaron Bowen, China currently has about 162 million internet subscribers, only 12.3% of the total population of China, but equivalent to more than 50% of the total population of the U.S. As internet connectivity in China grows, so too does China's

influence over the internet. China has already managed to convince major search engines such as *Yahoo* and *Google* to censor its political content. It will be interesting to see whether China will attempt to encourage web users to adapt their sexual tastes and opinions to a restrictive and patriarchal porn web in future.

As Brian Holmes has observed (2008), Chinese media culture and art can be a significant cultural language if it offers a new kind of dreamscape for developing a cultural and critical autonomy:

Critical interpretations of the new cultural forms, and of the social and political frames in which they create their effects and meanings, will be crucial in opening the imaginary space where people can gain some kind of relative autonomy, some capacity to be their own steersman. But that critique must reach all the way into the images themselves, it must be transformative. The stakes of these new images are tremendous. When state-capitalist power begins manufacturing your dreams, then art becomes the primary process of politics.

There is an emerging wave of sexual storytelling and sexual debate in greater China, which is also nourished by a history of radical-critical visions about the body politic in performance art. Some of this focuses on the coalescence of economic-political growth and death (Berghuis, 2006). In 2000, Zhu Yu created a scandal by taking a number of photographs of himself, while eating a foetus as a protest against state abortion as a means of population control. Peng Yu and Sun Yuan extracted fat from a baby's corpse and dumped it into Beijing's most polluted rivers as a commentary on death and looming catastrophe.

Other artists have focused on more intimate issues. Hairong Tian Tian and Ye Fu made a performance art piece, *Living in a Glass House* (2007), in which they lived in a tiny glass room, separated from each other by a transparent wall, for a month. This was intended

“to highlight a gender gap in modern family relationships in China” and offered a powerful metaphor of alienation and imprisonment, encouraging viewers to contemplate contemporary Chinese relationships. There have also been performance pieces which operate as forms of self-portraiture, critiquing Confucian gender decorum and commercial images of Asian sexy babes. For example, the Hong Kong artist, Phoebe Man, produced *A Masquerade on the Internet* (1999-2000), an early cyber sex project in which men in a chatroom were asked to describe what kind of ideal online woman they would want to be. Man then materialized their ideals by means of masquerade and photograph. In a later project, she became ‘Rati’, a girl whose face and appearance were invisible inside a gigantic vagina. In a humorous video piece she is shown sitting at home in front of her computer, nervously walking around her apartment and going out on errands.

It is useful to look at intersections between the ephemeral blogosphere and more critical art forms to see how women might construct critical sex imaginaries. Performance artists tend to take a more confrontational approach to the body in challenging consumerism and government surveillance (Jacobs, 2005). Their productions can be seen as an emotive outburst against the new climate of sex surveillance and the new economy’s promise of endless consumerism. In contrast, the forms of self-presentation I have outlined here seem to mimic the fantasies of China’s utopian New World Dream, the acquisition of individuality through consumption, and the exercise of spoilt or shopaholic femininity, often related to Japanese pop culture. Dressing up as Japanese Lolitas or 18th century court figures, women make delightful and nostalgic appearances in vintage clothing. The counter-cultures of Cosplay do not reveal a feminist awareness, though they do maintain supportive web zones for romantic fantasies and sexual taboos. Similarly, the feminine self-portraiture found in sex blogs, usually focuses on compulsive confessional sex stories. While a small number of artists and bloggers develop a dark and oppositional philosophy, the majority of Chinese women are developing performative modes of sexuality and gender by obeying patriarchal Confucianist thinking and the paradigm of endless consumerism. This is a kind of collective acting out of hyper-feminine roles and

responsibilities that reveal their power over self-portraiture. They reveal their own self-absorbed and playful versions of good decorum or idealized femininity.

References

Arisa Sex World, <http://hk.myblog.yahoo.com/arisa2007001>. Accessed 28.10.08.

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

Bowen, Aaron 'Sex, Blogs, and the Great Firewall Part I - Censorship', <http://www.neasist.org/icisc/blog/?p=38>. Accessed 28.10.08

Chien, Eugenia, 'Chinese Women Bloggers Explore Uncharted Territories.' Pacific New Blog, Posted Oct 29, 2005
http://news.pacificnews.org/news/view_article.html?article_id=30576ff1dd2beb5da172e6a41ffe5f33
Accessed 28.10.2008

Cuthbert, Alexander R. & McKinnell, Keith G. (1997) 'Ambiguous Space, Ambiguous Rights: Corporate Power and Social Control in Hong Kong', *Cities* 14(5): 295-311.

Crossplay Mission Statement,
http://www.crossplay.net/index.php?name=Your_Account&file=register. Accessed 28.10.08.

DeWoskin, Rachel (2005) *Foreign Babes in Beijing: Behind the Scenes of a New China*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company Ltd.

EastSouthWestNorth Blog, 'The Greatest Internet Crime Trial in China', http://zoniaeuropa.com/20050514_1.htm. Accessed 28.10.08.

Farrer, James (2007) 'China's Women Sex Bloggers and Dialogic Sexual Politics on the Chinese Internet', *China Aktuell* xxxvi(4): 9-45.

Fong, H. 'Hong Kong Connection: Pretty Bizarre'. RTHK Hong Kong Public Television Hong Kong, 2005

French, Howard (2006) 'As Chinese Students Go Online, Little Sister is Watching', *New York Times*, May 9,
http://www.nytimes.com/2006/05/09/world/asia/09internet.html?_r=1&oref=slogin
Accessed 10.10.2008?

French, Howard (2005) 'A Party Girls Leads China's Online Revolution', *The New York Times*, 24 November

http://www.howardwfrench.com/archives/2005/11/24/a_party_girl_leads_chinas_online_evolution/. Accessed 10.10.2008

Ho, Josephine (2005) 'Queer Existence Under Global Governance: A Taiwan Exemplar', Keynote speech, *Beyond the Strai(gh)ts: Transnationalism and Queer Chinese Politics*, Institute of East Asian Studies, UC Berkeley, April 29-30.

Holmes, Brian (2008) 'One World, One Dream: China at the Risk of New Subjectivities', <http://brianholmes.worldpress.com>. Accessed 08.1.08.

Hong Kong Sexy Wife and Naughty Tanya, <https://sexywife.kennedy2046.com>. Accessed 28.10.08

Jacobs, Katrien (2005) *Libi_doc: Journeys in the Performance of Sex Art*. Ljubljana: Maska Productions.

Jacobs, Katrien (2007) *Netporn: DIY Web Culture and Sexual Politics*. Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield.

Jacobs, Katrien (2008a), Interview with media activist Oiwan Lam, 15.11.07.

Jacobs, Katrien (2008b) Interview with Lolita Cynthia, 17.8.06.

Lam, Oiwan (2007) 'Don't Turn Kong Kong into a Mono-Colour Ghost City', www.interlocals.net/?q=node/9. Accessed 18.10.08

Law, Lisa (2002) 'Defying Disappearance: Cosmopolitan Public Spaces in Hong Kong', *Urban Spaces* 39(9): 1625-1645.

Leung, Martin, <http://album.blog.yam.com/maggielleung71>. Accessed 28.10.08

Orbaugh, Sharalyn (2002) 'Shojo', in Sandra Buckley (ed.) *Encyclopedia of Contemporary Japanese Culture*. London and New York: Routledge.

Phoebe Man's Web Art, <http://www.cyman.net/web.htm>. Accessed 11.11.08.

Rofel, Lisa (2007) *Desiring China: Experiments in Neoliberalism, Sexuality, and Public Culture*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Tiny Nibbles, www.tiny nibbles.com. Accessed 28.10.08.

Waking Vixen, www.wakingvixen.com. Accessed 28.10.08.

Zimei, Mu, 'Left_Over Love Letters', <http://www.ec35.com/muzimei> and <http://comebackgirl.nease.net/mzmx.html>. Accessed 28.10.08

'China's unrepentant bare-assed blogger', *Asian Sex Gazette*, Posted 16.06.2006, <http://www.asiansexgazette.com/asg/china/china05news92.htm>. Accessed 12.11.07.

'Mu Mu: China's nude breed of blogger', *Asian Sex Gazette*, Posted 11.11.2006, <http://www.asiansexgazette.com/asg/china/china05news86.htm>. Accessed 12.12.2008.

'Living in Glass House: China's Version,' Posted on *Skirmisher Blog*, Posted 16. 05. 2007 <http://skirmisher.org/culture/living-in-a-glass-house-chinas-version>. Accessed 10.12.08.

'Hot Chinese Blogger Wants a Photo of Your Penis' Posted on *Skirmisher Blog*, 6.11 2006, <http://skirmisher.org/filth/hot-chinese-blogger-wants-a-photo-of-your-penis/>. Accessed 10.12.2008

'Romantic Night arrested' News excerpt at <http://news.qq.com/a/20070518/000934.htm>. Accessed 1.1.2008. Excerpted from *Beijing Daily*, May 17 2007

'Hedgehog Mu at Blognight' News Excerpt at <http://news.sohu.com/20060222/n241960175.shtml>. Accessed 1.1.2008 Excerpted from *Beijing Daily*, May 14, 2006

'Mainland Now Home to more than 50M Bloggers' *South China Morning Post*, January 8 2009.