

“The Law of Attraction” in Interracial Homoerotic Desires

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Asian Men’s Dilemma: “No Asians Please” vs. “Asians +++”

Much scholarship has been done about race and sexuality, but critical studies in interracial sexual attraction associated with homoerotic desires seem largely absent. To discuss “the law of attraction” in interracial homoerotic desires especially between Asian males and white males, it is important to first examine Asian males’ dilemma in terms of their desirability in a white-dominated multi-cultural and multi-racial society.

It is generally believed that in North America Asian women are perceived as more desirable than Asian men. Asian fetish, a slang term probably most of us living in North America have heard of, is normally used to refer to an enduring interest for people, culture, or things of Asian origin by those of non-Asian descent. In the dating scene, Asian fetish has been ascribed to white males who exclusively date Asian women, or at least have a preference for Asian women. Asian men, however, are normally positioned at the bottom of the racial hierarchy of masculinity, after black males, white males and Latinos. In the gay subculture in North America, Asian men, however, are stuck in a dilemma whose dialectic dynamic is routinely read through a hegemonic GWM (gay white male) politics as well as the myth of Asian fetishization underscored by a distinct Orientalist expectation.

Mainstream media in North America have stereotyped against Asian men as asexual, effeminate and submissive, in both the heterosexual

and homosexual spheres. Asian males rarely appear in Western gay pornography, and when they do, they are “presented as wanting to be sexually subordinated and violated by a more dominant, stereotypical white male” (Kendall & Funk, 2003, 106). In gay publications in North America, young Asian men have normally been described as “pearls of the orient”, “easy to find”, “sushi”, “accessible” and “available” (106). In a sum, Asian males in the gay subculture in North America are not presented because of their desirability or attractiveness, but because of their supposed submissiveness, accessibility and availability. The centrality of white male beauty standard is achieved and affirmed at the price of men of other races, conveying a white supremacist message that non-white gay men may all have the propensity to seek a GWM as a partner.

Ironically, Vancouver, albeit a very “Asian” city where nearly one-in-five Vancouverites is of Chinese origin, does not offer its proper share of Asian male images in its mainstream media. In gay media, Asian males are even more disproportionately invisible as an inextricable outcome of the market demand, which is highly racialized and white-dominated. The default perception of Asian men is that they are androgynous, asexual and nerdy. This mainstream stereotyping has in turn deeply impacted the self-perception of Asian men themselves. To some extent it has caused self-hatred among many American or Canadian born gay Asian males who are called “bananas”—white on the inside but yellow on the outside. For them, dating and having a Caucasian male as a partner has become a norm to achieve their expected societal recognition.

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It is noticeable, however, that in recent years there has been an increasing visibility of Asian images in popular media in North America, which is evident in films, news and sports. This trend of presenting Asian images is reinforced by mainstream validation of beauty queens and Asian female newscasters on American TV. Meanwhile, intense publicity of basketball players Yao Ming and Jeremy Lin, iconic Chinese gold medalists of Olympics such as Liu Xiang and Sun Yang are subverting the stereotypical emasculated images of Asian men. The mainstream subversion also infects gay publications, where more Asian men are appearing as the subject of feature stories. In popular gay media there are also more Asian male images present in advertisements compared to a decade ago since they have changed their sole roles from commodities to consumers that advertisers want to target. This is the consequence of the intersection between the rapidly growing buying power of gay and lesbian consumers (Duecy, 2005) and the emerging Asian immigrant consumers and the Asian American consumers—the fastest market in the USA, a minority group that is considered “well-educated, generally affluent, and geographically concentrated” (Kaufman-Scarborough, 2000, 249–262).

Despite the biased perceptions of Asian males and the generally acknowledged status inequality between white males and Asian males in the hierarchy of desirability, however, the increasing visibility of white-and-Asian gay couples is noticed in major cities in North America. Of all my interviewees,¹ two from Toronto, Canada, Todd and Blake, both in their late 30s or early 40s, share the same story about GWM and GAM (gay Asian male) dating scene in Toronto in recent years. Todd says, “On Church Street (the heart of Toronto’s gay village) almost every gay couple is a

1 Qualitative interviews with 15 interviewees from North America and Western Europe are included in the article. Most interviews were conducted in person in Vancouver and Toronto, while two online through Fridae.com. Interviewees’ ages range from 23–65.

white-and-Asian couple.” Blake confirms his story by saying, “I’m one of the many ‘rice queens.’ Almost every gay friend of mine is dating an Asian guy.” The slang term “rice queen” has been ascribed particularly to GWMs who exclusively date Asian males, regardless of individuality. Traditionally, “rice queen” is a stigmatized term used to describe those older or unattractive GWMs who can hardly find a date among other white males and thus turn to Asians. With the world’s political and economic center relocating from the West to Asia Pacific, and the rise of East Asian and particularly Chinese economy and discursive power in international affairs during the last decade that continues to challenge Anglophone discursive hegemony, the connotation of the term has changed, as it suggests a more refined taste for the exotic and romantic rather than a stigmatized term ascribed to a white “loser”. The stereotyping has particularly been challenged by the younger generation, as a young white male in Los Angeles, California, USA, who calls himself “White on Rice” and who is a fan of Jeremy Lin writes in his blog, *Confessions of A Rice Queen*:

*The recent obsession with Jeremy Lin, point guard for the New York Knicks, is the latest example of well meaning people trying to “redefine” Asian men, and they certainly picked an excellent poster boy. In addition to his athletic prowess, Lin sounds like a smart, humble, and nice guy.*²

Notably, in Vancouver, Canada, there is a high percentage of Craigslist personal ads by white males or other non-Asian males that exclusively seek or claim a preference for an Asian male. Of the 100 personal ads on Craigslist Vancouver that I have chosen of a white male seeking a non-white male, more than 70% are targeting Asian males only or either Asians or Latinos. The rest ads seek non-white and non-Asian males, including Latinos, Iranians, South Asians or blacks. The age range of these Asian seekers is

2 White on Rice 2012: Jeremy Lin: The Amazing Asian Man Redefined!, <http://confessionsofaricequeen.com> [accessed 19.11.2012].

broad, from late teens to 60s, while there is no solid evidence to suggest that Asian admirers are mostly older and overweight gay white males. Some older white males who seek Asians claim that they have desired an Asian boyfriend since their early 20s. In this sense, the interest for an Asian male may be an enduring desire independent of any given age range. Among the interviewees I have communicated with, 55 year old Pierre from Paris, France, a member of Fridae.asia,³ writes in response to my questions:

We French love Chinese culture; we all have a thing for the exotic. I have long dreamed about an Asian boyfriend. It's not at all because I'm older that now I want one. I secretly wanted one even before I was still in closet in my 20s! Unfortunately, there were not many Asian boys in my neighborhood at that time. Most of the Asians I could find were restaurant waiters or university students. I didn't speak their languages, and they barely spoke French. It was only when I got older and had time and enough money to travel to Asia could I meet more of them...

Despite those Asia lovers, Asia phobia exists in the gay subculture across North America. “No Asians” can be seen in gay personal ads. The “No Asians” phenomenon is an interesting topic for further interrogation on two dimensions. Firstly, if “No blacks” is considered political given the long history of slavery, racial segregation in America and political movements against racism, “No Asians” is more of an apolitical way of showing phobia and denial that is often associated with stereotypes and/or personal experiences. In other words, stating “No Asians” is more accepted in personal ads while “No Blacks” could be perceived more as racist (Paul, Ayala and Choi, 2009, 533). Secondly, the addition of “No Asians” to personal ads is unnecessary in indicating sexual preference as the advertiser has the freedom and right not to respond to unwelcomed

3 Fridae.asia portal caters to gay and lesbian Asian community, offering news, city guides, opinion articles and personals.

ads without making a public claim to offend a particular ethnic group. The proclamation “No Asians”, which has been regarded by many Asians as racist and offensive, is internalized racial prejudice reflected in a personal ad as it is targeting a whole group of people. This internalization of racial prejudice is elaborated with the “frustration-aggression” theory in *Race and Racism*: “Denial of certain goals or gratifications leads to frustration, which is, at least in some situations, displaced from the causal agent of the frustration to an unrelated scapegoat. The scapegoat then becomes the object of aggressive behavior... When the choice of scapegoats becomes culturally stabilized on members of certain groups, racial or ethnic prejudice results because the expression of aggression is rationalized in terms of the alleged undesirable traits of the scapegoats [23] (Berghe, 1967, 19).”

Thus, the “No Asians” phenomenon is often related to personal experiences of frustration with individuals of Asian origin that leads to render all gay Asian males a “scapegoat”—the object of aggressive behavior to relieve frustration. In fact, many people tend to generalize a whole ethnic group of people by limited personal experiences with individuals from that ethnic group, especially when they are not familiar with their culture and language. An interviewee, a real estate agent based in Vancouver, Canada, Douglas, explains why he claims “No Asians” in his personal ad on a local cruising website:

I swear I will never date any Asian guys anymore. They are all heart breakers and gold diggers. I put the disclaimer “No Asians” because I don't wanna make the same mistake over and over again. The first one I dated was sweet in the beginning, very cute, with a hot body. But one night after sex he told me he needed to borrow 500 dollars to buy a computer. I gave him the money. A few weeks later he said right after we had sex that he was going to fly back to Asia to see his family, and asked me if I

could buy him a round trip flight ticket. The real estate market was very bad at that time and I had no business for almost six months, so I said "Sorry, I can't help you." Then he disappeared from the next day. I tried to call him but the cell phone number had been changed...

The racialized rejection and fetishization have thus positioned gay Asian males in such a dilemma: On the one hand they are still marginalized and alienated by mainstream media as well as gay media in the West; on the other hand, they are perceived as desirable in reality especially to those non-Asian gay males who are drawn to the exotic. These Asian admirers are not necessarily "losers" or looking for a sexual subordinate; rather, it is their transgressive nature as a sexual minority that motivates them to seek the adventurous pleasures of dating someone outside of his own race and culture.

East Meets West: The Myth Behind the Success of a Thai Film

The selective sexual interest in a particular race is mystic. Much has been written about such preferences as a phenomenon but "research has provided little on the felt experiences of MSM of color on the Internet when race or ethnicity is defined in clear-cut terms as a determinant of attraction" (529). To examine this determinant of attraction (with the attraction between white males and Asian males being one prominent sector) that so many scholars have talked about without little research outcome, I will move on to exploring sexuality, interraciality and "the law of attraction" between East and West behind the success of the Thai film, *The Love of Siam*, an epitome of our knowledge and discursive production of sexuality in relation to interraciality and multiraciality. The rejection and fetishization dilemma naturally brings me to pondering over the tremendous box office success of the film, one about boys in love, as well as

its country of origin, Thailand—Southeast Asia's most famous sex tourism destination and the alleged "gay mecca" for both Asian and Western gay tourists. My initial reaction to the success of the film was that it could be associated with Thai fetish—a subcategory of Asian fetish.

Thailand has a widely known *kathoey* culture with a considerable *kathoey* population. Peter Jackson, Australian scholar of Thai sexualities, believes that *kathoey* as a term referred to intersexuals in premodern times, while the connotation of the term expanded to cover cross-dressing males (2003). While the default presumption of any given queer Thai film always being *kathoey*-related, *The Love of Siam* is not about *kathoey*s, but a gay teen romance, which has triggered new discourses over sexuality, same-sex desire and traditional familial values in Thailand.

The film has achieved a box office miracle as well as overwhelming praises by mainstream media across Thailand. Released in Thai cinemas on November 22, 2007 and shown on 146 screens across the country, *The Love of Siam* was ranked Number 1 at the Thai box office the first weekend, and grossed a total of US\$1,305,125 to date, which has well doubled its budget.⁴ It was also released in Taiwan, Japan and Singapore. The film was also nominated for Best Supporting Actor (Mario Maurer who appears as Tong in the film) and Best Composer (Kitti Kuremanee) at the Hong Kong International Film Festival. In October 2008, Mario Maurer won the Best Actor award in Southeast Asian film category at the 10th Cinemanila International Film Festival. Besides, the film was also submitted to the 81st Academy Awards, representing Thailand.⁵ In addition, director's cut DVDs are released in the U.S. and the world through Strand Releasing, a well known LGBT independent film distributor based in Los Angeles.

4 Box Office Mojo 2007: Thailand Box Office, <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/intl/thailand/?yr=2007&wk=48&p=.htm> [accessed 19.11.2012].

5 Daily Xpress 2008: Oscar gets some 'Love', http://dailyxpress.net/2008/10/15/coverstory/coverstory_4636.php [accessed 19.11.2012].

Interraciality and Multiraciality are Marketable

The story of *The Love of Siam* is very simple. Two teenaged boys live in the capital city of Thailand—Bangkok as neighbors, Mew and Tong. Mew, gentle and mellow, has Chinese background, while Tong, more on the butch side, has a Catholic family. After an accidental encounter, they become friends. Tong protects Mew when Mew is bullied by schoolmates. Their friendship deepens. One day, Tong's family travels to Chiang Mai on vacation, during which period his sister, Tang, is lost. Tong stays with Mew and his grandmother, being comforted by Mew over his. The devastated family relocates to another part of Bangkok a few months later. Tong and Mew bid farewell. Six years later, Tong and Mew reunite on the Siam Square. The reunion ends up with a long, romantic kiss between the two boys. The kiss is accidentally witnessed by Tong's mother, who interferes with their affair and makes them separate. The story has an open ending, wherein Tong gives Mew his Christmas present, saying: "I can't be your boyfriend, but that doesn't mean I don't love you."

The success of *The Love of Siam* has gone beyond the film itself. Coming-of-age gay teen romance in cinema was not new back in 2007. Prior to *The Love of Siam*, there were a whole bunch of gay teen romance films that had received positive responses, including *Wild Reeds* (1994), *Beautiful Thing* (1996), *Get Real* (1998) and *Come Undone* (2000). Multi-layered thematic structure in a rom-com was not new either. BBC's *My Beautiful Launderette* (1985) was a great success primarily for subtly intertwining and presenting several social issues including racism, class struggles, civilization clash, interracial homosexuality along with Britain's social and economic policies under Margaret Thatcher's leadership. With all the successful cinematic precedents worldwide, *The Love of Siam*, in terms of genre and theme, does not possess sufficient dynamics to give a shock. In addition, a few critics critiqued the film's flawed qualities, among them



Stills of Witwisit Hiranyawongkul (as Mew) and Mario Maurer (as Tong) in *The Love of Siam* (*Rak haeng Siam*, 2007 – © Production Companies).

Gregoire Glachant of BK magazine, who commented that the film was not well shot as the camera work seemed to have no artistically planned angles, directions and directorial purposes (2007).

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Stills of Witwisit Hiranyawongkul (as Mew) and Mario Maurer (as Tong) in *The Love of Siam* (*Rak haeng Siam*, 2007 – © Production Companies).

To examine *The Love of Siam*'s overwhelming reception in and outside the Thai society, we should look at the marketability of the interracialized aesthetics as revealed in the film. A whole set of strategies were reportedly plotted and deployed to achieve its financial triumph, including the misleading heterosexual presentation of the pre-release promotional campaigns, the ethnic and cultural backgrounds of Sino-Thai Mew and Euro-Thai Tong (whose family is Catholic while most of the Thai population are Buddhists and who is played by a half Chinese and half German actor), which constructs a romantic ideal as typically perceived in the Thai racial hierarchy that excludes the indigenous queer Thai people or the low class queer population. Such an exclusion of indigenous queer Thai people is also noticeable on other media in Thailand, including TV commercials, music video, print advertising and fashion magazines occupied by Sino-Thai or Eurasian models.

Apparently, in the relatively more tolerant and inclusive Thai society with a long history of socially identifying the *kathoey* as the third gender, queerness is not as much of a political subject in the social context as in the West, even if we delve deeper into the issue, there still exists in the Thai context differing levels of awareness and tolerance of the nuanced plural subcategories of the non-normative sexualities. In this sense, *The Love of Siam* as a cinematic hit in Thailand and even outside of the country may be read more as an ethno-cultural, representational aesthetic model than a political phenomenon in forms of advocating anti-homophobia and teens' sexual awakening. In a sum, the success of the film is not simply based on its queer nature in a Thai context but marketable interracial aesthetics.

Questions about the success of the film may be raised here: Whose love of *The Love of Siam* makes the film successful, especially outside of Thailand? What do they particularly love about *The Love of Siam*? To answer these questions, we will have to examine the construct of "the law of attraction" and transgressive pleasures in fulfilling homoerotic desires.

“The Law of Attraction”: Clichéd Stereotypes and Social-Economy

Speaking of Asian males as the subject of the desire of gay white males who are called “rice queens”, there has been too much cliché in scholarship stating that these white males have this “China Doll syndrome”, like the submissiveness of Asians and have “obsession with things Asian” (Tsang, 1999, 535). Hence, those who have these likings would likely turn to the subject of such clichéd stereotypes. That cliché, however, needs updating as worldwide the East and West balance has been changing during the last decade.

Sexual attractiveness, especially male sexual attractiveness cannot exclude itself from the social-economic status that it is associated with. Compared to female sexual attractiveness, male sexual attractiveness depends more on status than physical features (Symons, 1979). This is truer when we consider the determinants of racial hierarchy of sexual attraction and desirability, since international discourses in favor of Caucasian male attributes are a by-product of the social-economic superiority of the Western world. Likewise, in Southeast Asia, ethnic Chinese men are considered more on demand in the dating scene due to their economic status.

This is confirmed in *The Love of Siam*. As I have touched base above, the portrayal of Mew as a Chinese descendent and the use of Chinese music in the film and casting Mario Maurer, a boy of Chinese and German descent, as Tong, may be seen as part of the director’s marketing strategy, which is instrumental in bringing the success. Given the fact that only 14% of the total population in Thailand is of Chinese origin and 75% is ethnically Thai, the purposeful use of such characters and cast in a Thai film should be read through what I call “the law of attraction” in a highly racialized

postcolonial concept of aesthetics. The intended portrayal of Mew as a Chinese descendent is surprising to me. In the film Mew is given a Chinese background, highlighted by his grandmother teaching him to play on the piano an old melancholy Chinese song to convey feelings of yearning.

Thailand has strong economic and cultural ties with China due to history and the ethnic Chinese population. Thai people’s most loved Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn is an erudite scholar who has studied Chinese history and literature since childhood under the influence of the Thai king and queen. She also has literary works in Chinese published in China. Besides, ethnic Chinese people hold positions of both economic and political power in Thailand. Chinese in Thailand as a minority ethnic group dominate a highly disproportionate percentage of the country’s economy, professional and educational achievement and hold the highest household incomes compared to other minority groups. Last of all, for marketing consideration, Thailand is surrounded by the strongest economies in the Sinophone world, including Mainland China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Macau and Singapore. Other neighboring countries with strong economy in Southeast Asia all have a large Chinese population, such as Malaysia and Brunei. For a film to reach a wider audience across the neighboring Asian countries with a large Chinese middle class population, having a Chinese hero or an ethnic Chinese actor is ideal.

This strategy in film-making for international marketing purposes is also deployed in Western or Sinophone films, wherein audiences may see A-list Chinese stars, such as Jackie Chan, Jet Li, Zhang Ziyi (*Rush Hour 2*, 2001, *Horsemen*, 2009 and the face of Maybelline, Tiffani, Garnier, Omega Watches and Shangri-la Hotel and Resort Group), Gong Li (*Miami Vice*, 2006), Michelle Yeoh (James Bond series: *Tomorrow Never Dies*, 1997), Li Bingbing (*Resident Evil: Retribution*, 2012), Yu Nan (*Speed Racer*, 2008 and *The Expendables 2*, 2012), and Zhou Xun (*Cloud Atlas*, 2012) plotted

into pure Western stories. Chinese faces have never been in demand like this in Western films before. The fact that this dramatic shift takes place with the emergency of China as a potential superpower in the world proves that beauty also lies “in the adaptations of the beholder” (Symons, 1995).

In a sum, the economic and/or political superiority of a country contributes to the reconstructing of the hierarchy of desirability, along with other factors, such as racial difference, which needs to date back to those Euro-centric colonial days. It is a “make believe” process of geographically relocating or proliferating the centralities of the desirability of a people in a given region that determines which country has a people more in demand. In the People’s Republic of China, for example, Russians, especially Russian women, were perceived as admirable in mainstream media when the former U.S.S.R. was a superpower, but nowadays with the downfall of the soviet giant, the admiration for Russian women has been replaced by sympathy and mockery due for Russian mail-order brides and prostitutes working overseas. South Korean men and women, however, are perceived as desirable in urban youth cultures across Asia, thanks to its economic miracle during the last few decades, though in the past they were pitied for being subordinate to its powerful neighbor, Japan, and for having suffered much from the Japanese war crimes.

Therefore, it is understandable that *The Love of Siam* creates a Chinese character, Mew, and appropriates Chinese elements in a Thai story, which caters to the Asian especially Sinophone film market, not only having earned box office success or film festival nominations and awards in Thailand, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Philippines and Japan, but also having brought Witwisit Hiranyawongkul (as Mew) and Mario Maurer public appearances and work contracts in mainland China and South Korea, with Mario Maurer acting in the first Thailand and Korea jointly made TV series—*Autumn Destiny* in 2010 and a Chinese film, *Love on That Day* (*ai zai na yitian*) in 2012.

With its close ethno-cultural ties to the Sinophone world as well as China’s booming economy and its growing economic infiltration in Thai society, gay sex tourism in Thailand has spared a larger share of its facilities to gay Chinese tourists from mainland China. According to TAT (Tourism Authority of Thailand), Chinese tourists top the visitor list as of 2012.⁶ Whether a tourist looks for sexual services from a man, or a woman, or a *kathoey*, anyone from any age range, any race and of any shape, may find his ego flattered as “[t]his is all a part of the fantasy in the land where the sex tourist advertisements say ‘Come to Thailand where all your fantasies will be made to come true’ (Green, 19). While the sex paradise—Pattaya’s “boys town” is full of gay white males of all ages, Bangkok’s gay scene has many “sticky rice” places, such as gay saunas, massage parlors, go go bars and discos, for Asian tourists to meet local Thai guys. Thailand as the gay mecca that draws both gay Asian males and gay white males proves that in a relatively neutral country that is neither Euro/Americentric nor Chin-centric, the racialized hierarchy of sexual attraction is nearly non-existent. Instead, the hierarchy of sexual attraction is built on an economic hierarchy on a global and regional economic chart. A Chinese Singaporean gay man, Mr. Chen, and his white Canadian husband, Ron, both in their 40s, have described to me during an interview that they are equally welcomed and desired by gay men in Thailand. The reason is obvious: They are both tourists, and tourists are considered wealthier than the locals in Thailand.

Mr. Chen: *I have met gorgeous guys there... It is a great feeling to be desirable! I don't think in Thailand white men are more in demand like what they say here in North America. As an Asian man, I do not think I'm less desirable than any white men traveling in Thailand...*

6 Thailand: The Nation 2012: Chinese tourists reach top of tourist list in Thailand, <http://www.nationmultimedia.com/business/Chinese-tourists-reach-top-of-visitor-list-in-Thai-30186428.html> [accessed 19.11.2012].

Ron: *Thailand is probably the best country in the world for gay tourists... There is not so much racial preference or age prejudice. Anyone, white, black, brown, Asian, fat, skinny, old, young, cute or plain, will not be disappointed! Everyone wants you. Every one has lust for you! There is no race that is superior to others, because they all know tourists are wealthier than them!*

“The Law of Attraction”: Opposites Attract

First of all, it is hard to talk about “opposite attract” between races in a white-dominated context. Post-colonial studies challenge Western ways of thinking of and reading the world. The imbalanced conversation between the colonist and colonized or “us” and “them” has been giving place to a trend towards multi-visions, developing into a negotiation between selectively appropriating otherness and maintaining the attributes of oneself. Although the de-colonized world allows for hybridity, the continuation of colonialism still constructs discursive hierarchies, with the Anglophone world on the top that accounts for most of the knowledge distribution. This dilemma is seen in the popular racist discourses around interracial gay dating scene in North America that denies “opposites attract”: While Asian males seek white males to enhance their social status in a white-dominated society, white males who seek Asian males are stereotyped as unattractive “losers” who cannot find a date among other white males.

As above-discussed, in North America’s male beauty culture, white males are on the top of the racial hierarchy of attractiveness. But who sets the white-dominated beauty standards? It is the West. It is Hollywood. It is those who have social-economic superiority and the discursive power. In his *Beauty: Who Sets the Standards*, Dr. Antonio Fuente del Campo states,

“A concept of beauty is built into all of us and involves a balance between objective criteria and subjective impressions and a capacity to perceive order, symmetry, and harmony. Beauty involves an equilibrium between the whole object and its parts, as well as the various parts in relation to each other” (267). Healthy body parts are perceived as desirable in all cultures, which is one objective criterion. Additionally, facial symmetry is also desired across species as facial asymmetry indicates reduced survival rates (Møller, Soler & Thornhill, 1995). If objective criteria apply to all cultures and races, then the beauty and attractiveness hierarchy must have been constructed on subjective impressions and dissimilar beauty norms. In South Asia, for example, there is the “fair skin obsession” as a colonial legacy (Shankar, 2007, 103), while in the West sunbathing to get tanned is a very common practice. Despite white-dominated beauty standards, dissimilar Eastern and Western beauty norms also embrace each other. In China and Japan, two East Asian countries that have never been colonialized, skin-whitening products are always popular, as fair complexion has always considered beautiful in their long history, independent of modern Western influence.

One of my previous research projects on the most popular cosmetic surgical procedures in China and USA also reflect a cultural difference in viewing attractiveness: While high cheekbones removal surgery is common in China and Korea as they are considered unattractive in East Asian cultures, cheek argumentation is in demand in the West (Hinderer, U. T., 1975, 157–165). Aesthetically, high cheekbones are a feature considered sexy and youthful in the West. Medical discourses in the West in the past over the most commonly practiced cosmetic surgical procedures in Asia, blepharoplasty (double eyelid surgery) and rhinoplasty (nose job) have largely revolved around the Euro-centric assumption that by making eyes bigger and nose bridge higher, Asians want to look more Caucasian. Even though Westerners do not necessarily find smallish and up-slanted Asian

eyes unattractive (in fact, some think they are sexy “bedroom eyes”) and rhinoplasty is commonly practiced to get rid of an overly prominent nose instead of copying an Asian look, the beauty trends in East Asian and Western cultures seem to appreciate the opposite.

Here, I will move on to analysis over the successful casting of Mario Maurer, a Eurasian actor in *The Love of Siam*. First of all, Eurasian is perceived as “foreign” as Caucasian in post-colonial hybridity discourses in Asian cultures, as they share facial features commonly found in Caucasians, such as lighter skin tone, deeper-set colored eyes, a higher nose bridge and a jutting chin, but not to the extent of a pure Caucasian. Exotic features are a sign of attractiveness, which does not necessarily reflect a geographical context of predominant beauty norms but proves that opposites attract. Indeed, Eastern and Western aesthetic standards are intersecting with each other but not indoctrinating one another, especially in this day and age.

Audiences see Mew and Tong as an interracial couple, as their differences create a romantic ideal. Mew looks typically Asian, soft, gentle, vulnerable and girly, while Tong looks more Caucasian, taller, boyish, masculine and protective. *The Love of Siam*’s overwhelming reception in and outside the Thai society is largely based on the collective interracialized aesthetics as the implicit portrayal of a teen romance between Sino-Thai Mew and Euro-Thai Tong generates an aesthetic ideal.

Fantasies about a gay “utopia” with friendly locals, sexual tolerance, humility and hospitality, along with affordable lifestyles, are bringing countless gay tourists from all over the world to Thailand every year. *The Love of Siam* functions as a memorabilia for past visitors and an invitation for upcoming visitors. The film reflects an expectation for interraciality and multiraciality in pursuit of homoerotic desires. Meanwhile, the success of the film unfolds to us a fuller picture of the law of attraction associated

with homoerotic desires, not only constructed on the socio-economic hierarchy, but also demonstrating the maxim that “opposite attracts” and proving the trend that mixed race bodies in increasing demand.

In fact, “opposites attract” is particularly true among the queer population as they are more open to interracial dating than non-queer people. The 2010 U.S. Census data indicates that there’s a higher rate of racial and ethnic diversity among same-sex couples than heterosexual ones, according to a study from the UCLA School of Law’s Williams Institute.⁷ This proves that the second section of “the law of attraction”—“opposite attracts” is more embraced in the LGBT community. Those of sexual minority are not only likely more rebellious, but more adventurous and liberal about interracial relationships.

“Opposites attract” happens in both ways. Mark, a white English Canadian man in his early 30s living in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, has been exclusively dating Chinese guys since the age of 18. During an interview he tries to disclose the mysteries of the infatuation for Asian men:

I have always been attracted to Asian men, especially Chinese. Perhaps I was Chinese in my previous life. Who knows? (laughing). I like their food, their arts... You name it. What I like about Asian guys... It’s hard to say. I like the way they show their feelings... There is a depth of feelings in them and they won’t tell you all, but reveal a little bit every time they are with you... Physically I like their smooth skin and their lean bodies. I like their eyes. Anyways, it is the difference that I like...

⁷ Queerty 2012: CENSUS: Gay Couples More Likely To Be Interracial, Multiethnic Than Straights, <http://www.queerty.com/census-gay-couples-more-likely-to-be-interracial-multiethnic-than-straights-20120426/#ixzz21m31XhaJ> [accessed 19.11.2012].

To conclude, when the racial and cultural difference as “phenotype” caters to one’s adventurous needs, the difference becomes seduction and intensifies one’s sexual interest in the exotic “genotype”.

Conclusion

The determinants of the sexual attractiveness and desirability of a particular race are very complex. The multi-layered analysis over the determinants of sexual attractiveness in this article is based on narratives formed based on clichéd stereotypes that are “inviting”, social-economic and political considerations as well as dissimilarities in creating, developing and maintaining beauty norms between different cultures and racial groups. Beauty lies in the eye of the beholder; beauty also lies in the adaptations of the beholder. In this postcolonial era we have come to learn to appreciate the beauty of being different and to destabilize the centrality of one beauty standard. Hence, multiraciality and interraciality have become increasingly popular in aesthetic discourses and popular media, even more so in gay discourses and media as the transgressive pleasures of pursuing and fulfilling homoerotic desires are fueled by the adventures of dating out of one’s race and exploring the exotic and the fresh.

“The law of attraction” associated with homoerotic desires introduced in this article not only covers the essential determinants of sexual attractiveness to the gay male gaze but also seeks to deconstruct the imbalance of desire flow between the more desired and the desiring in a predominantly white society and juxtapose the social-economic, cultural, political and biological dynamics in interracial same-sex attraction.

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