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My Man Fridae: Re-Producing Asian Masculinity

Gary L. Atkins[1]

INTRODUCTION

Since the days of Western empire, Europeans have energetically manufactured images of their own masculinity to contrast the images of the men they colonized. In the case of people living in Asia, images of the native men could either be romantic or highly derogatory. The most troubling images often constructed the Asian male as effeminate and as possessing a problematic sexuality relative to the European male. Whether positive or negative, the stereotypes were created by Europeans—and, later, Americans—who then spread the stereotypes around the world with mass communications.

Today, Asian men are asserting control over their own global representations, both in traditional forms, such as novels, movies, magazines, and television programs, as well as through computer games, new forms of visual arts (including the ubiquitous manga), and, most especially, the Internet. Nowadays, virtually any Asian man (indeed, any man) can find some medium through which he can offer a self-portrayal of his own idea of his masculinity to the rest of the world.

This article examines one medium of that self-portrayal, exploring an Asian-based and owned Internet site used primarily by Asian men who communicate there in English. The article describes the way these men portray themselves in what has become an ongoing global dialogue among various, oftentimes contradictory, concepts of masculinity. It focuses specifically on the Asian men who have historically been the source of the most derogatory and stereotypical caricatures—men who identify themselves as gay.[2] In examining this group of Asian men, this article

suggests that they are creatively using "something old"—stereotypical portrayals of Asians—as well as "something new" to directly and indirectly challenge typical heterosexual and "Orientalist" constructions of masculinity. The first section of the article describes the term "Orientalism" and provide examples of European-created stereotypes of Asian men. The second section recounts the creation of the website called Fridae.com ("Fridae"). The third examines some of the tools Fridae offers to men for use in their gender performances. Finally, the fourth section describes the choices those men are making.

I. CONSTRUCTING "ORIENTALISM"

Scholars often refer to images of Asian men that were created by Europeans or Americans as "Orientalist,"[3] which typically means that they were stereotypes rather than fully-fleshed characterizations. However, the word "Orientalist" is itself problematic. In the opening of his classic study on the issue, Edward Said noted that what typically was considered the "Orient" for Europe—the Arabic lands of the Middle East and Northern Africa—was not necessarily the Orient for Americans, who tended to think of "Orientals" as Chinese, Japanese, or Southeast Asians. Thus, the term itself blurs the distinction between stereotypes of Islamic societies and stereotypes of Hindu, Buddhist, and Confucianist traditions. Despite this ambiguity, however, Said notes that the term and the imagery it invokes consistently refer to a cultural strategy based on "[a] flexible *positional* superiority, which puts the Westerner in a whole series of possible relationships with the Orient without ever losing him the relative upper hand."[4]

A sexual characterization inevitably helps shape this "positional superiority." As Ann Stoler writes, "eroticized native bodies densely occupy the landscape of Western literature," as well as its visual arts.[5] Often, the Orientalist literary and artistic images present submissive and

seductive Oriental women, offered in contrast to the more proper (and more frigid) European female.

But Stoler would likely agree that Orientalism is much more than just an adolescent heterosexual male's fantasy of freely available women. Arguably, the depiction of relationships between males is more important than the characterization of females, as it played an elemental role in maintaining colonial political power. Stoler continues:

> Colonialism itself has been construed as the sublimated sexual outlet of virile and homoerotic energies in the West. But to argue that different notions of bourgeois manhood were merely confirmed by colonial ventures is to dilute a more complicated story. For if the colonies were construed as sites where European virility could be boldly demonstrated, it was because they were also thought to crystallize those conditions of isolation, inactivity, decadence, and intense male comradery where heterosexual definitions of manhood could as easily be unmade.[6]

In other words, the lure of the Orient, from the Westerner's perspective, has never been simply the conquest of one male over another. Instead, it has been a paradoxical male adventure into a looking glass world where masculinity could be refracted into dozens of different parts.

This was aptly captured in David Henry Hwang's famous play *M Butterfly*. In the play, the Oriental male in opera diva drag, Song Liling, has it half-right when he tries to explain why the white European diplomat has mistaken him for a woman. "The West," Liling says, "thinks of itself as masculine—big guns, big industry, big money—so the East is feminine—weak, delicate, poor."[7] But ultimately, as the play itself shows, that very quality of what is, to European eyes, a more fractured masculinity, undoes the European male himself.

While there are many examples of Orientalist imagery, two examples of past images of Asian men may suffice to demonstrate certain elements that have been labeled "Orientalist." These examples reveal the complex and

ongoing interaction between definitions of European manhood and Asian masculinity.

In the early 20th century, Thomas Burke's novel, "The Chink and the Child," became so popular that three film versions of it were completed by 1936, including one by D.W. Griffith.[8] In the novel and in those films, a slender "yellow man" arrives to teach Buddhism to the West. What begins as a potential critique of an all-too-warrior-like Western masculinity—and praise for a more spiritualized, if stereotyped, Eastern masculinity—ends tragically as the yellow man pursues a twelve-year-old child (referred to as being "lily-white"), who is being battered by her pugilist father. The yellow man becomes so infatuated with his new love that all he can do is repeatedly mumble her name and age: "Lucia . . . Lucia . . . twelve . . . twelve"—as they embrace and kiss. The novel notes, "[e]ach night he would tend her, as might mother to child"—importantly, not as *father* to child. Eventually, the yellow man kills the Western father and then commits suicide. The story plays on Western ideas of Asian male sexuality as being perverse, abnormal, and so impotent that it is forced into pedophilia and, eventually, murder.[9]

This type of Orientalist image transforms the Asian male body into a site of power exchange, in part, by creating a discourse about what European masculinity is and is not. It permits Europeans to regulate both their own and Asian masculinity as a result of the power imbalances created by colonialism and control of the media.

For example, first, there is an *interracial* exchange between Caucasian men as the holders of global (pugilistic) power and Asian men as the recipients and servants. Asian men lie outside the center of power and must try to find an adjustment within it, much as the "yellow man" does by coming to London. Second, there is an *intergenerational* discourse about Caucasians and Asians that labels many erotic contacts between them "pedophilic." In the heterosexual example of "The Chink and the Child," the pedophilia is expressed as the Oriental's desire for the white, female

child. At other times, it is expressed as a white man's desire for an Asian male body—a body that is stigmatized as looking more boyish and feminine than a European male body because of its supposedly smoother skin and lack of hair. The threat of such an accusation of pedophilia is part of a racist discourse intended to maintain racial purity, because it regulates both the Caucasian and Asian male, warning them to keep their erotic attractions limited to their own skin type.

A different and yet commonly disseminated image of the Asian male was innocent and romantic, and, to a great extent, ambivalent in terms of gender. Perhaps it was the echo of a boyish masculinity lost to the demands of imperial wars. In 1923, during the same period as "The Chink and the Child," a young gay artist named Walter Spies arrived in Southeast Asia. He soon wrote home to his mother that the men he was meeting were "slim and delicate, beautiful as gods in their costumes defying the imagination."[10] In a later letter, he added (with "obvious delight," his biographer noted), "[m]y dinner has just been brought in by my delicate, lotus-eyed, barefoot boy, whom I have as good as adopted."[11] Spies capitalized on that romantic slender Asian male image in many of his paintings, helping to almost single-handedly construct our modern day belief that Bali is a magically sensual land of long-limbed male artists with narrow-waists and dancers who, in their costumes, easily slip from one gender to another.

Although this lean, "peasant man-boy" would become a stock stereotypical image, it is worth noting that in Spies's case, he was working as an openly gay artist; his images were not simply romantic, but were also a direct political commentary against the Aryan male musculature being promoted by the Nazi party in his German homeland. For example, in his famous 1932 painting *Rehjagd* ("Deer Hunt"), Spies subversively assigned penetrative roles to his slender lotus-eyed men, contrary to the expectations of European manhood. One panel of that painting shows the signature slender form of a young Asian archer, who is dressed only in a loincloth, drawing a very long phallic arrow across his groin and aiming it straight

into a watery opening painted as both sky and lake. The archer's target, a symbol of male grace and power, is a long-antlered stag that is contained in a second panel. A third panel shows the stag's death and another, its resurrection. The painting is a standard, and yet erotically suggestive, masculine trope of a death-by-penetration, followed by rebirth. There is, however, an important twist in "Rehjagd": the Asian archer takes aim at a stag that is drawn not as an animal native to Bali, but rather, as a Siberian roe buck, a resident species near the Ural Mountain internment camp where Spies had been imprisoned as a young man during World War I (and where he is rumored to have discovered his homosexuality). In other words, the Asian archer penetrates and slays a symbol of *Caucasian* manhood. In his painting, Spies seems to invite reflection upon the nature of both masculine and political sexuality. In particular, he seems to comment upon the anxious interactions, during the final days of imperialism, between men who were not "at the center" and those who were. Nazi sympathizers in the Dutch Indies eventually got even with Spies; predictably, they labeled *his* interracial and intergenerational images and attractions pedophilic and then engineered a smear campaign that landed the artist—and many others—in prison, all in the name of defending "European" masculinity.[12]

In both Burke's and Spies's imagery, the Asian male body was used to discuss and construct European and Asian masculinity.

Some writers have argued that Asian masculinity should be reconstructed by drawing upon certain "heroic" traditions that existed in Asian literature prior to colonialism. Within traditional Confucianism, for example, the single most important paradigm for analyzing masculinity is the dyad of *wen* and *wu*.[13] Wen emphasizes male cultural, literary, and intellectual attainment—the traditional grounding in Confucianism for honoring teachers, writers, and scholars by placing them at the top of a hierarchy of male power.[14] Wu emphasizes physical attainment, display, and discipline, particularly in the martial arts.[15] According to this construction, true

masculinity was attained or performed when a man of substance embodied both characteristics.[16]

When a man excelled in one or the other, it was generally the wen sage who was honored more than a wu sage.[17] If Confucius represents the ideal of a wen sage, the wu mantle has typically been worn in China by Guan Yu, a historic military leader who lived at the end of the Han Dynasty, in about 220 A.D.[18] Guan Yu was mythologized as a god of war with a fierce red face.[19] Scholar Kam Louie notes that "it is difficult to find any parallel figure in Western narratives of power and rulership."[20] Louie describes the Guan Yu mythical character as a combination of Robin Hood and Daniel Boone, El Cid and Arnold Schwarzenegger.[21]

Those who oppose the use of this heroic, pre-colonial approach to construct new images of Asian masculinity have suggested that it promotes outdated patriarchal philosophies. Ironically, the "outdated" patriarchal ideas conveyed in Confucianism have been replaced by the import of European and American notions of equal rights for women. Regardless, these heroic images of Asian men, at least the wu images, have begun to triumph internationally, drawing large audiences to films starring actors such as Bruce Lee and Chow Yun Fat—and even to those featuring the more comedic and Westernized Jackie Chan.[22]

In light of this discourse, the modern day gay-identified Asian male faces three challenges: first, to construct an Asian masculinity that modifies Orientalist stereotypes; second, to "queer" that masculinity so that it is not simply a duplicate of the strictly heterosexual European or American—or, for that matter, the heterosexual Asian—models; and third, to challenge indigenous Asian traditions that have always equated what the West calls homosexuality with transgenderism—in other words, the assumption that a male homosexual is an effeminate cross-dresser.

II. CREATING FRIDAE.COM

In 2001, a young Singaporean named Stuart Koe decided to mount an improbable canvas for reconstructing a new Asian masculinity: a for-profit, gay Internet portal in the authoritarian media and sexual climate of his hometown. Koe, then twenty-eight, was a graduate of Singapore's elite Raffles High School and had just earned a doctorate in pharmacy in the United States. In Singapore, he worked for the nation's Economic Development Board, the agency charged with catalyzing one prong of the government's social contract with its citizens: to deliver an increasingly better economic life (the other prong focuses on rigid control of politics and social life, so as to bind together a culturally and religiously diverse population). While working for the Board, Koe assisted with a project aimed at propelling Singapore's economy toward a media- and biotechnology-savvy future.

Tiring of the role of a civil servant, Koe says he eventually "hatched an idea."[23] He would offer an Internet portal giving financial advice services to gay men in Southeast Asia. At that time, the 1990s fantasy that money could be made easily from Internet startups had not yet burst. Koe soon had the equivalent of $1.5 million U.S. dollars in startup money—primarily, he says, from straight male investors in Hong Kong.[24] Soon the business plan evolved into more than just a financial services platform. Instead, it would offer news, features, personal profiles, and advertisements. As Koe said, "it evolved into not so much providing services, but creating a medium to address the gay community" in Southeast Asia.[25]

Both appropriately and ironically, the partners settled on a name that capitalized on images of people of color and colonialism. "The name 'Fridae' was based on Robinson Crusoe's 'Man Friday'—the indispensable servant, the gay man Friday," Koe said.[26] The metaphoric allusions seemed wild with possibility: the stranded white man's fright when he first saw the footprint in the sand on the island he thought to belong to him alone; the confrontation of two gendered understandings of masculinity, one escaping

but also imposing slavery and the other gently offering service. Indeed, even the fictional character Crusoe had written homo-erotically of his "wild ideas" and the "strange, unaccountable whimsies" that accompanied his discovery of another man.[27] Granted, some racial slippage occurred between the original Man Friday encountered by Crusoe and the Asian Fridae that Koe created. However, given that the colonial world was basically divided into white and non-white, an Asian Man Friday was not difficult to conceive. From a practical standpoint, the greater difficulty was figuring out how to trademark a name that also referred to a day of the week; then a friend suggested he spell "Friday" like an ice cream "sundae."[28]

In March 2001, Fridae emerged as a new piece of Singapore's cyber-economic future. In many respects, the city-state was both the most likely, and the most assuredly unlikely, spot in Southeast Asia for a major gay medium such as Fridae to arise. It was likely because Singapore's population speaks English, which is the common trade jargon slicing across the various national languages of Southeast Asia; because Singapore's national ethos includes a practical emphasis on business ventures; and because, by the time Fridae was created, Singapore's young men and women had easy access to computers and to the Internet, in part because of a 1990s initiative that had called for wiring all households, businesses, schools, government departments, and even public spaces with coaxial and optical fiber networks. By the time Fridae started, the effort was well under way.

But Singapore was also an assuredly unlikely spot for Fridae. Censorship of the arts and of the media was well ingrained in the government policies and in the citizenry.[29] Censorship was even an integral part of the Singaporean government's attempt to capitalize on information technology; it tightly controlled the flow of information—particularly materials flowing into homes, directed at youth, or for public consumption (rather than private enjoyment).[30] The Internet posed significant challenges to censorship—

computers would be in both homes and businesses; they could be used by adults and youth alike; and they could carry materials for public consumption on web pages, as well as private information used in e-mails or subscription services (such as in Fridae's personal profiles).

In response, Singapore's founding father and senior minister, Lee Kuan Yew, asserted, "[t]he top 3–5 percent of a society can handle this free-for-all, this clash of ideas," but the rest of the population would be destabilized.[31] In the face of an Internet technology that threatened to undermine government control, the head of the Ministry of Information and the Arts, George Yeo, asserted that "censorship can no longer be 100 percent effective, but even if it is only 20 percent effective, we should not stop censoring."[32]

One strategy to maintain censorship was to eventually transfer authority over the Internet from Singapore's Telecommunication Authority, which regulated traditional point-to-point private media such as telephones, to the Singapore Broadcasting Authority (SBA), which knew how to apply a tighter regimen to media such as television and radio. The SBA's charge was to "concentrate on areas which may undermine public morals, political stability, or religious harmony in Singapore."[33] Yeo called the shift "an anti-pollution measure in cyberspace."[34]

There were other reasons why Fridae's rise in Singapore seemed paradoxical. Singapore continues to adamantly outlaw "sodomy," which it defines as including oral or anal sex of any kind, whether between homosexuals or heterosexuals.[35] Although the law is left over from British colonialism, Singapore's government defends it as part of "Asian values," even though Asian countries which were not colonized, such as Thailand and Cambodia, have no such law.[36] This sodomy law turns openly gay men and women into presumed criminals and often serves as the basis for denying them roles in government, teaching, law enforcement, and practically any other work where a presumed felon might be unwanted.[37] To this day, the government has repeatedly refused to license a lesbian and

gay political association called People Like Us.[38] Further, while licensing requirements for public speeches or presentations that address gay issues have eased somewhat in the past few months, throughout the period when Koe was starting Fridae, the Ministry of Information and the Arts censored plays and movies with gay or lesbian themes, denying them the necessary public entertainment licenses.[39] When asked about allowing changes involving recognition of gays or lesbians, government ministers routinely defended their refusal with the assertion that Singapore was an "Asian society."[40]

Despite the politically hostile environment, within four years of its inception, Fridae was the largest gay and lesbian web portal in Asia.[41] According to Koe, its editors were delivering news and feature stories to almost 150,000 members, while the site was generating about twenty million page views and a quarter-million unique visitors each month.[42] Although these numbers are not remarkable when compared with some European or American-based sites, such as Gay.com, they are quite significant for Southeast Asia. One secret to Fridae's ability to function successfully was that while its major audience was based in Singapore, its Internet service provider was actually located in Hong Kong, far away from the Singaporean government's control. Koe first adopted the slogan "Asia's Gay + Lesbian Network."[43] A few months after Fridae launched, a local magazine reporter wrote, "Fridae isn't just a prelude to the weekend. It's a cyber gateway to lavender living in the Asia-Pacific."[44] In 2004, after clashes with Singapore's government censors began, Koe urgently shifted his slogan to "Empowering Gay Asia."[45]

While Koe did not necessarily set out to create a laboratory where Asian gay men could experiment with the types of images of masculinity that they wanted to project, Fridae has done just that. Traditionally, "[a] lot of the media portrayals of a gay Asian have been that of a rather fey, rather weak counterpart to a white boyfriend," Koe said, echoing Orientalist stereotypes.[46] He continued, saying:

> It's only been in the last five years that there's been this wave of (publicly) out gay Asians. This current cohort of adult gay men is the first large adult cohort of gay men in Asia. Before the age of the Internet, most people were still rather alone but with the advent of the Internet, people had a way of forming communities.[47]

In the new community created by Fridae, they could declare their own concept of gender.

III. ELEMENTS IN READING GENDER AT FRIDAE.COM

A description of the communication of Asian masculinity on Fridae requires a few tools. What is typically labeled "gender" is one of the human species' most complex pieces of theatrical communication—drawing upon elements based in biology and anatomy, as well as elements created entirely within cultures. In other words, gender performance is a bit like staging a Shakespearean play; the same material and dialogue can result in various theatrical interpretations. However, societies and religions often insist that gender be performed in a precise and exact way, whether the performing body is male or female. Often, those who do not precisely follow these culturally-prescribed roles and expectations can expect catcalls, insults, and even violence. Expectations about how to perform the gender script are often asserted as part of political, and especially nation-building, demands—the "American man," for example, is supposed to perform differently than the "Italian man" or the "French man," and most especially, differently from the "Chinese man" or "Thai man."

Among the *biologically influenced elements* that may arise in the male gender interpretations are: (1) body size and muscular structure; (2) quantity of hair on the body and texture of the skin; and (3) the size of the penis, which is transformed into a symbol of virility. For example, a typical Orientalist portrayal of an Asian male might emphasize his slimness, his smoothness, and (through subtle connotations) his presumably smaller-than-European phallic endowment. On the other hand, *culturally influenced*

elements may include: (1) style of physical mannerisms and movements expected of a "man;" (2) socially appropriate erotic desire to be asserted in sex; (3) the ways in which sex and emotion are to be connected, if at all; and (4) strength of economic independence asserted, which itself becomes another symbol of virility. Cultures interpret these elements differently, allowing gender to become an imaginative performance by the individual actor as well as an imaginative reading by the audience.

This particular list of seven biologically and culturally influenced elements is not an exhaustive list of gender tools, nor is it universal among cultures. While some cultures may recognize these seven elements, other societies may add to or amend the list. It is, however, unlikely that any given culture would ignore all of these gender creating tools. In Fridae's electronic cyber culture, these seven elements are evident gender construction tools—they relate directly to the labels that men are allowed to choose from when constructing their individual web profiles.[48]

Imagine how differently the male body can perform gender when utilizing just these seven tools. One male might project that biologically he has a muscular body, hairy coarse skin, and a large penis; that he walks and talks "like a man" and dresses as he wishes in professional or rugged sports wear; that he hunts for and takes sex as a dominant "top;" that his paycheck is his own; and that he knows what his goals are in life and he has the power and will to achieve them. Another male may, instead, present himself as slim, with silk-like skin and a small or average penis; as someone dressed in uniforms insisted upon by his employer (be they waiters' uniforms or civil servant coats-and-ties); as someone who wants to either chat and hold friends' hands or lean on their shoulders, rather than as someone who hunts and takes sex wherever he can find it; as someone who is a "loyal son" and who still lives with his family; and, finally, as a someone who has no real goals—other than those assigned to him by his parents or his employers.

As is true with many personal-ad websites, Fridae provides its members with the opportunity to seek out types of people they might like to meet,

using a search engine to locate certain characteristics. For example, it is possible to find those individuals who identify with what might be called the Orientalist stereotype—the Chinese male, for example, who sees his body as slim, mannerism as effeminate, penis as small, and sexual role as a person to be penetrated. Interestingly, at the end of 2004, with more than 27,000 profiles for English-speaking Chinese men posted on Fridae, that particular search revealed only two individuals, or seven ten-thousandths of a percent, who identified themselves as meeting all those qualifications.[49] A search for the stereotypical Caucasian male, as projected in Orientalist discourse—the one who might see his body as "muscular," his mannerism as "masculine," his penis as "large," and his sexual role as that of a top—was only slightly more successful, with twenty profiles out of about 9,000, or two-tenths of a percent.[50]

In other words, pure Orientalist stereotypes of the European and the Asian male were practically nowhere to be found. In their place were fusions that included some of the old, Orientalist elements, with new elements that mixed and destabilized traditional Orientalist concepts of masculinity. These findings support Stoler's comment that in the former colonies, European concepts of manhood were not simply declared, but were unmade—in some cases through Asian bodies.

IV. CONSTRUCTING MASCULINITY ON FRIDAE.COM

First, an overview of Fridae.com includes the following.[51] Of the more than 85,000 English-language profiles posted on Fridae at the end of 2004, about 80 percent came from males, most of whom identified themselves as gay.[52] Fridae also allowed users to catalog themselves by race or ethnicity, with particularly detailed attention paid to more than ten Asian ethnicities—Chinese, Malay, Thai, Filipino, Indonesian, Taiwanese, Vietnamese, Indian, and so forth. Non-Asians could choose from the categories of Caucasian, Hispanic, and Black. Fridae's biggest category of male users worldwide was Chinese, comprising approximately 40 percent of total English-

speaking Fridae users.[53] Other Asian ethnicities constituted 46 percent of the users.[54] Although Caucasians were the second single largest racial or ethnic group, they lagged far behind the Chinese, comprising only 13 percent of total users.[55] Asians are overwhelmingly Fridae's predominant user group.

Although Fridae's men were drawn from a wide variety of indigenous traditions and geographies, most of them Asian, they all shared certain common characteristics. Each user knew how to write at least a little English (for most of them it was their second, or possibly third, language), and they used it to cut across local Asian dialects. The users could understand at least some English-labeled categories that related to sex and gender. Everyone knew how to access computers and had the means to do so. Given these shared characteristics, Fridae was not an ideal source to study truly indigenous expressions of male gendering. Indeed, it is questionable whether any computer-based site, given the knowledge required to access the medium, could accurately reflect indigenous reconstruction of masculinity. It was, however, an excellent location to examine the constructions made by men who were educated enough to use computers and who were developing more than a locally bounded identity.

On Fridae, each man could list where he lived. Overall, almost 65 percent of Fridae's men lived in Asia, with the bulk of those, about 32,000, in Southeast Asia, and another 10,000 in East Asian nations.[56] There were significant spikes in communication (about 20 percent of the users) to the United States, Canada, Australia, and Great Britain.[57]

Most men were young, with more than half of Fridae's users between the age of eighteen and twenty-nine and another third between thirty and thirty-nine.[58] This tends to suggest that the portrayals of masculinity on Fridae are not good indicators of long-standing concepts of manhood, but instead indicators of change.

It is important to note that Fridae's personal ads contained a mix of paid and free users, as well as active and non-active users—individuals who had

signed up, but had then vanished, leaving their profile behind.[59] As is true for any self-selected online group, men could freely choose what information they wanted to post without second-guessing or confirmation. For example, each user decided whether they thought their bodies were "chubby" or "overweight," "lean and toned," or "slim." Thus, in "reading" Fridae, it has to be read much like a novel—not as a study of reality, but as a collectively produced painting representing thousands of individual choices.

Based on this type of "reading," Fridae's users were actively participating writing a gender discourse, beginning with those three biologically influenced elements: size and musculature of the user's body, the texture of the users hair and skin, and penis size.

When it comes to the size and musculature of the male body, contemporary science suggests three types of bodies—the so-called *endomorphs* (rounded, stocky, and perhaps fat), *mesomorphs* (muscular and solid), and *ectomorphs* (slender, elongated, with smaller muscles).[60] Orientalist depictions typically, contrast Asian ectomorphs with Caucasian mesomorphs, although if the Asian character is comedic, then his body may be portrayed as exaggeratedly round and fat (endomorph). Instead of the clinical "-morph" approach to catalog body types, Fridae's users choose from nine different popular descriptions: "average," "chubby," "curvy," "large/solid," "lean/toned," "muscular," "overweight," "slim," and "voluptuous." Significantly, three-fourths of the men decided this aspect was an important enough piece of their gender performance to make a public choice, identifying themselves by one of the nine categories.[61] An even greater percentage of Chinese men seemed to think it important, with about 90 percent choosing to catalog their bodies' sizes and structures.[62]

Perhaps surprisingly, many Fridae users, regardless of ethnicity, portrayed their body size and musculature in the same way. For example, about 40 percent of the Caucasians and about 40 percent of the Chinese selected the label "average," thus allowing the viewer to look at whatever

pictures, if any, had been provided with the profile, and also leaving it to each individual poster to decide, in his own mind, what "average" meant to him.[63] Only 15 percent of the Chinese selected the word that has been most associated with the Asian stereotype: "slim."[64] But an almost equal percentage of Caucasians also chose that word.[65] Where there were differences were in the selections of the words "muscular" and "lean/toned." The latter is a category that blends the Orientalist stereotype ("lean") with a new fitness notion, "toned," meaning body definition that outlines the male muscles, especially on the chest and arms. Only about 7 percent of the Chinese males described themselves as "muscular," while Caucasians were twice as likely to claim that designation.[66] In the "lean/toned" category, 30 percent of the Chinese men claimed the label while only about 20 percent of the Caucasians did.[67] In other words, the data suggests a slight allegiance to the Orientalist stereotype, characterized by so many artists, like Walter Spies, as the "barefoot boy"—although the "boy" had now toned his muscles.

However, there is an even more important statistic about body size and structure. Three of Fridae's nine labels for body size and structure speak of male fitness and virility: "large/solid," "lean/toned," and "muscular." Although there were slight differences in the percentage of racial performance in each of these three, when the categories were added together, the results were the same: whether Asian or Caucasian, about 40 percent of the males who chose a description chose one of those symbolizing virility.[68] As with the selection of the label "average," there was no racial difference whatsoever.[69] What can be said, then, is that the men on Fridae overwhelmingly present themselves as either having "average" sized bodies or as having "virile" bodies and that there is no racial difference in the number of men selecting one image or the other.

The second biologically influenced element is male hair and skin texture, which lends itself to an imaginative perception of the body as smooth or as coarse. From there it is a short leap to stereotypes about the "feminine"

porcelain-like skin of Asian men or the more pebbled, or "rugged," textures of Caucasians. As with the other categories, Fridae left it to each individual to decide how to present that element. Users could choose from six possibilities: the stereotypical (for the Asian) "smooth" or the labels "some" and "lots," as well as three fetishlike designations including, "chest," "butt," and "shaved"—the last category apparently suggesting that what biology had determined, a little cream or a razor had overruled. Logically, any man, including every Asian man, who had hair on his head or his groin or even the slightest amount on his calves or arms could claim the category of "some" hair. Thus, the choice to identify oneself as "smooth" illustrated a gender image more than a description true to reality. Indeed, Fridae's decision to offer the word "smooth" as a category in contrast to "some" or "lots" was itself symbolic of Orientalist thinking, since the logical contrast in quantity would have been a phrase like "little or no hair," rather than a texture word like "smooth."

Again, most men, about 60 percent, considered this an important enough piece of their gender performance to include a response.[70] Here, in contrast to the previous rejection of certain Orientalist images about body size and structure, the races instead choose to dramatically embrace the image that Asian men are "smooth" and Caucasian men are not. For example, 64 percent of the Chinese males who responded chose "smooth" as a description, while only 17 percent of Caucasians did so.[71] About 30 percent of the Chinese men described themselves as having "some" hair, while almost 60 percent of Caucasians did.[72] Was there really a difference in reality . . . or simply a difference in self-identity? One possible interpretation is that Orientalist stereotypes have firmly taught Asian men that they are "smooth" and so they simply identify with that definition. Another is that the gay Asian men who answered affirmatively to "smooth," rather than simply staying silent, felt it important to claim that particular label as a distinctive trait of gender difference. There was an intriguing variation in users from the United States, where percentages for Caucasian

men selecting each label stayed the same, but the percentage of Chinese males who saw themselves as "smooth" was noticeably higher than the global average. Seventy-eight percent of Chinese males from the United States called themselves "smooth," while those choosing "some" hair fell to only 18 percent.[73] In other words, Chinese males in the United States seemed even more likely than their global Asian counterparts to distinguish themselves as "smooth."[74]

The third biologically influenced element that can be used in a gender performance relates to penis size. Susan Bordo, in her book *The Male Body*, argues that the idea of "phallus" is just as powerful a symbol as "heart," and both attach their references to a particular organ of the body.[75] Heart speaks of compassion. Phallus instead references the power of male fertility, either literally in a man's ability to penetrate and be "potent," or more metaphorically, in his ability to form dreams that awaken others or that arouse and harden passions. Phallic masculinity is also indicated by the ability to determinedly execute one's will and reach a goal. But there is an important difference in the symbols of heart and phallus. No one tries to literally weigh a person's heart to determine its quantity or quality of compassion. But with phallus, a direct measurement is often built into the cultural scripts. The bigger and harder the penis—or the bigger and harder some other part of the body that symbolizes the penis—the more powerful and virile the man is assumed to be. As Bordo puts it, "[t]he phallus is the penis that takes one's breath away—not merely because of its length or thickness . . . but because of its *majesty*."[76] Reference to the penis has been critical in Orientalist portrayals. The Asian penis and its symbolic phallus are often portrayed as smaller and according to some critics, seldom big enough to be seen at all, so that reverence to its "majesty" is laughable.[77]

Men on Fridae have a chance to describe what the website euphemistically refers to as "shoe size." Here, a significant change occurs in the rate of response. Unlike the responses to the other two biological elements, where a majority of men responded with an answer about their

body size or body hair, on this topic most men chose to remain silent. Among all males on the system, only about one-fourth assigned a rating for their penis, choosing from the four labels of "small," "average," or what Susan Bordo might call the majestic "large" and "extra large."[78] Perhaps in keeping with the Orientalist stereotype that Caucasians are more visibly masculine, Caucasians were the least reticent about sharing their penis size. Almost half of the white men revealed what they thought they "kept in their shoe closet," while less than a third of Chinese and even fewer other Asian groups did.[79] Of those that did respond, there were mixed results that challenged and reinforced traditional Orientalist stereotypes. On the one hand, only 5 percent of the Chinese men who answered actually considered their penises "small," while another 70 percent said "average."[80] (For Caucasians, 2 percent said "small" and 56 percent said "average."[81]) On the other hand, and perhaps in confirmation of the effect of Orientalist representations, only 25 percent of Chinese men claimed "large" and "extra large" penises, compared with 42 percent of the Caucasians.[82] In other words, Caucasians were more likely to publicly add a phallic element into their gender performance (by being more willing to choose a label for a global audience to read), and they were also more likely to project that the anatomy behind the phallic metaphor was "large" or "extra large."

In sum, within these first three biologically influenced elements of a gender performance, there was something old and something new. Asians and Caucasian men on Fridae projected equal performances when it came to the size and fitness of their male bodies—challenging Orientalist stereotypes of the Asian man as somehow less virile. On the other hand, Asian men themselves seemed to still embrace the notion of the Asian body as "smooth," while Caucasian males identified themselves as having "some" hair—although importantly, not a "lot" of hair, not even on the chest. Asian men were more reluctant to publicly project a phallic label as part of their gender performance or to claim sizeable penises. At the same time, when they did make a declaration, a majority still insisted they were

"average," which can be read as a claim of normalcy as well as a refusal of the Orientalist idea that they are somehow "less than the norm" in the realm of phallic action.

Fridae provides four culturally influenced elements of gender performance: first, the user's mannerism and physical movement; second, the user's preferred sexual role; third, the user's connection between sex and emotion; and finally, the user's relative economic independence.

The first factor, mannerism and physical movement, considers how one walks, gestures, dances, and speaks. Does an individual seem "masculine" enough, "butch"? Or does the individual walk and speak in a style that seems "feminine"? "Talk like a man" and "walk like a man" are familiar commands in European and American society, and often, the only safe defiance of these cultural norms occurs in comedy. Asian males have sometimes been saddled with the image of being "screechers" or "gigglers" when compared with the supposedly more masculine "growl" of Caucasian men. This is perhaps due to the fact that Asian languages are often tonal, with a wider variation of pitches than is common in European languages.[83] "Mannerism" also refers to the cultural regulation of dressing and whether a particular man moves comfortably in the clothes assigned to his gender, or dresses in some type of "drag" (the clothing assigned to the opposite or to an ambivalent gender). For example, Spies's description of his lotus-eyed boys contains an explicit reference to their very different costumes that set them apart from Europeans and make them look like "gods."[84] In some of his visual art, the costumes are androgynous garb that disguise the male body; at other times, they are nothing more than loosely draped cloth that accentuate the long torsos and slim buttocks of the Asian men he depicts.[85]

Fridae collapses the subject of "mannerism" into a simple choice for its men: "masculine," "femme," "neither," or, of course, silence. Through this category, a piece of gender construction seems to emerge in the overall statistic of who chooses to label himself and who remains silent. Worldwide, an average of 60 percent of Fridae users addressed this

question.[86] Interestingly, 70 percent of Chinese men responded to this question, indicating perhaps that Chinese men considered selecting a label about mannerism somewhat more important than the norm.[87] Even more Caucasians—90 percent—selected a mannerism label.[88] In other words, publicly declaring a "mannerism" seemed far more important to Caucasian men than to Asian men generally, and more important for Chinese men than for other Asians. Other Asian men lowered the global average by being generally less interested in giving any response at all. (The reasons that they chose not to respond might present an interesting piece of research, revealing why some Asian men consider mannerism important to publicly declare while others do not.)

It may be that responses were particularly high in this category, compared to others, because most of the men were gay-identified and may have felt it important to take a public stand on a tradition in many Asian societies: classifying any man who is solely attracted to another man to be of a third or a more feminine gender. For example, in Thailand, homosexuality has often been conflated with the transgenderism or transsexualism of the long-standing role of the *katoey,* or lady-boy, who dresses in women's clothes and who, more recently, may seek a sex change operation. Many other Asian societies have similar roles for transgendered men, such as the *hijra* in India, the *waria* in Indonesia, or the *mak nyahs* and *pondans* in Malaysia. [89]

The men who responded to the question of "mannerism" seemed determined to reject the association between homosexual desire and feminine manners. Once again, the races agreed. Less than a half percent of Caucasian and less than 2 percent of Chinese men chose the word "femme" to describe their mannerisms.[90] Interestingly, they did not simply choose to counter-describe themselves as "masculine." Instead they split, with roughly half choosing "masculine" and the other half choosing "neither."[91]

Given that most of the men responding were "gay, bisexual or curious" males, the results can be interpreted at least two different ways. First, the numbers seem to confirm that almost half of these men reject the stereotype that non-heterosexual men are somehow less "masculine" in their mannerisms. Asian cultural scripts that assume, or demand, that homosexual men have feminine gestures or feminine walks or feminine forms of speech are flatly and firmly rejected—and that in itself is an important piece of news. Secondly, an almost equal percentage of men actively rejected the script that they are *either* traditionally "masculine" or stereotypically "femme." "Neither" is an obviously speculative name to choose, and *why* a man would actively select it, rather than bypass the category all together, certainly leaves an open question for future research. Does this selection represent a revolt against the old labels? Does it signal a greater willingness to embrace a variety of both masculine and feminine gender mannerisms? We do know that "neither" is a powerful ambiguity—especially since so many men felt compelled to affirmatively select it, rather than simply remain silent.

Perhaps surprisingly, most of the straight-identified Fridae users who did respond to this question also refused to box themselves into the traditional assumption that they were "masculine" in their mannerisms. Only 30 percent of the straight-identified men who made a selection chose "masculine,"—actually less than the percentage of gay men who did so.[92] Sixty-five percent of the straight men chose "neither."[93] Thus, in the realms of representing "mannerism," straight and gay men on Fridae are truly twin brothers.

Next among the culturally influenced performance choices is the all-important matter of what role one assumes in sex, invoking the erotic energy of penetrating and dominating someone (a "top" or an "active"), or the erotic energy of wanting to be penetrated or dominated (a "bottom" or a "passive"). Here, the norms of heterosexually dominated cultures tend to be the most rigid: it is "masculine" to be active and penetrate, it is "feminine"

to be passive and to be penetrated. In Southeast Asian cultures and beyond, sexual role is so fundamental that it has often formed the basis for making other decisions about a person. Homosexuals are assumed to be bottoms; "real men," on the other hand, can remain heterosexual as long as they penetrate—even when the only other people they want to penetrate are men. Both men and women can represent that their erotic desire is either to be active or to be passive and to either penetrate another person or to be penetrated. Alternatively, both genders can also project a more fluid desire to do *either*—a desire that virtually no contemporary heterosexual culture, whether European or Asian, endorses. The Orientalist approach typically portrays the European male as one who actively penetrates, through culture and the bedroom, a more passive Asia and a more passive Asian. In a famous article about the portrayal of gay Asian men in pornography, Richard Fung put it bluntly; "Asian and anus are conflated."[94] Thus, challenging the Orientalist image of Asians as "passive bottoms" would seem to be one important strategy for gay Asian men to construct new images of their masculinity; and yet to simply claim to be "active tops" would not particularly "queer" the typical heterosexual image.

On Fridae, men are given a choice of silence or of selecting from "bottom," "top," or "versatile," the latter being an ambiguous category, somewhat like "neither" in mannerisms, but generally indicating that the man enjoys both to be penetrated as well as to penetrate. On Fridae, most men—in fact an overwhelming 90 percent of the men—remained silent.[95] Indeed, acknowledging a preferred role in sex was one of the most label-resisted categories of all. Nonetheless, there was at least a slight percentage of Caucasians that, as with their penis size, seemed more willing than Asians to publicize this facet of their erotic desire.[96] Why the reticence? Why not either claim a racial stereotype—Orientalist or Occidentalist—or explicitly refuse it? Did the act of speaking seem too personal here for both races? If so, why would twice as many men share about something that, arguably, was even more personal: their individual penis size?

Those 10 percent of men who did speak may offer a clue as to those who did not; although, this is obviously an area for additional research. Of those men, gay and straight, who did adopt a label, there was an overwhelming agreement about their sexual desires in the bedroom. Whatever their sexual orientation, whatever their race, 60 percent of the men who responded said they were "versatile."[97] That public declaration seems remarkable—males, of whatever race or sexual orientation, agreeing to project a gender image that they desire both to be penetrated as well as to penetrate.

As for those who chose the more traditional categories of "top" and "bottom," there was only a very slight Orientalist overtone. Among the gay-identified Caucasians who answered, three in ten listed themselves as "tops" and one in ten as "bottoms."[98] Among gay-identified Asians, there was a virtual dead split, with two in ten as tops and two in ten as bottoms.[99] So the Asians who responded were more likely than Caucasians to represent themselves as seeking the "feminine" role in bed, but only very slightly so, and one might say negligibly so in light of both the high degree of "versatility" that was claimed, as well as the resounding silence from most users. Interestingly, the percentages for straight-identified men on Fridae matched those of gay Caucasian men exactly: three in ten said they were tops, and one in ten were bottoms. As with mannerism, so too with the bedroom.[100]

The fact that a high percentage of users chose to remain silent on the question of sexual role could be interpreted to signify an intriguing change in the definition of masculinity. The indication suggests that the men on Fridae want their erotic roles to be an area of private mystery—information to be discovered in e-mails or personal contacts with other men, rather than advertised publicly. A notable distinction can be drawn between the silence here and that which might be present on a more heterosexually-oriented website. There, a heterosexual male or female might modestly ignore such a question, but their penetrating or penetrated roles would be so automatically assumed that a website would probably not even ask whether

they enjoyed being a "top," a "bottom," or "versatile," except perhaps as a kind of fetish.

The third culturally influenced element in gender performance addresses the connection between sex and emotion. A society might believe that women, or the more "feminine," seek relationships, while those who are "masculine" primarily hunt for sex. Based on this construction, males who value hugging, holding hands, friendship, and love over seeking sex may be considered to portray a more "feminine," rather than "masculine," interpretation of gender.

Fridae asks men to list what they think is their "best attribute"—something physical, something emotional, or something financial. Since, for the most part, these are men writing to attract other men, presumably they chose what they thought would be most interesting to other men. The physical category contains a kind of menu of the male anatomy: "body," "butt," "face," "legs," or, of course, "shoe size." The emotional selections have labels like "intelligence," "personality," "heart," and "humor." The "checkbook" selection provides to the practical-minded user an opportunity to reinforce or reject the traditional Orientalist stereotype—a stereotype that emphasizes greater financial wealth and independence of Westerners in relation to the financial dependence of the Asian men or women whom they seek. Contrary to stereotypes of both masculinity and of a "sugar-daddy," most men selected a label from the emotional category rather than highlighting physical or financial attributes.[101]

In a similar vein, Fridae also allows men to list what they were looking for in a relationship with another man: "action/sex," "friends," "love/relationship," or "conversation/e-mail." Unlike the other categories, men chose multiple answers, selecting one or more representations. In defiance of the traditional masculine gender performance, the category overwhelmingly selected by all races (up to 90 percent) was "friends."[102] However, Fridae users subtly reinforced the Orientalist stereotype with their second choice selection, which suggested that the Caucasian male is more

sexual than the Asian male. Sixty percent of Fridae's Caucasian men wanted "action/sex," while only 40 percent of the Chinese men selected that label.[103] Instead, 60 percent of Chinese men selected "love/relationship," and 50 percent chose "conversation/e-mail."[104]

This data supports the conclusion that Chinese men were far more likely to select one of the emotional categories—friendship, a loving relationship, or conversation—as part of their gender representation, as well as what they were looking for on Fridae. To an extent, this may reinforce the Orientalist construction that the Asian male is less interested in sex than the Caucasian, but only to a limited extent, considering that 40 percent of Chinese men were still willing to openly signal their desire for "action/sex."[105] Therefore, it may simply suggest that most Chinese men on Fridae were not as likely to confirm their interest in sex as publicly as a Caucasian.

Finally, Fridae provides users the opportunity to identify the economic component of their gender performance. Economic independence can be, and often is, considered "masculine," while dependence is considered "feminine." Many a Hollywood movie—"Scarlet Street" comes to mind—has been built upon the notion of an emasculated male trapped supporting an insatiable wife. Much like the size of a penis, control over "bread-winning" can become a symbol of more than just money or successful hunting. It can symbolize the ability to set independent dreams and goals and the determination to reach them.

Fridae's economic indicator for constructing a gender image allows men to list whether they live "alone," "with a house/flat mate," with "parents," or with a "partner." As with the question about the role in bed, not many men responded—just 17 percent of Caucasians and 11 percent of Chinese.[106] Perhaps this is because they prefer not to immediately publicize their living situation to online strangers. Regardless, the racial difference in the answers from those who did respond was dramatic. Among Caucasians, 62 percent lived alone; among the Chinese, only 29 percent.[107] Only 4

percent of the Caucasians lived with their parents, while almost 50 percent of the Chinese did.[108]

This disparity may arise from, or be explained by, the different cultural backgrounds of Fridae users. For Westerners and Caucasians, living alone has long been a rite of passage into manhood, and it has therefore played a significant role in the masculine gender performance. Asian men, on the other hand, are expected to live at home until they marry, and even then they may still live with their parents to take care of them. Each, in its own way, can be an example of "masculine" responsibility. In Fridae's case, however, since most users are in their twenties or thirties, a statement that they are living with parents generally means the parents are still providing them with housing and food, rather than the other way around.

In summary, it appears as though a subtle reconstruction of Asian masculinity is emerging from Fridae.com. It would be too simplistic to say that gay Asian men are either rejecting or embracing Orientalist stereotypes. Instead, at a very grassroots level, they seem to be fusing old and new elements. Further, when old constructions are embraced, they are represented in a way that raises questions about whether the old characterizations are really being reinforced or, instead, are slowly being dismantled.

V. CONCLUSION

Are today's gay-identified Asian men on Fridae building an Asian masculinity that alters the Orientalist stereotype? When most Asian users decline to self-identify as "slim," and instead claim to have "average" or virile bodies, equal to Europeans, they seem to be rejecting a very dominant Orientalist characterization, just as those who speak about their "shoe size" and claim "average" rather than "small" are asserting a phallic image contrary to Orientalism. But when Asian men identify themselves as "smooth," perhaps they are not really challenging Orientalist stereotypes—except that a self-declaration of "smoothness," alongside declarations of

virility and "masculine" mannerisms, is quite different from the traditionally imposed European designation of "smoothness" that was linked to slender androgyny and feminine mannerisms.

Are today's gay-identified Asian men on Fridae managing to "queer" their masculinity so that it does not strictly duplicate heterosexual European or American models? From one standpoint, the answer is no. Fridae's young men certainly emphasize their "large/solid," "muscular," "lean/toned" bodies and "masculine" mannerisms, so much so that this emphasis might be read as an adoption of traditional European imagery into the presentation of the Asian male body. On the other hand, the fact that those incorporations are being performed by explicitly *gay-identified Asian* male bodies is itself an important form of "queering." When the traditional tropes of masculinity can no longer be defined as the sole property of the heterosexual European male, then an important de-stabilization of both heterosexual and colonial norms has occurred, just as Stoler noted. In addition, it is not just the traditional tropes of masculinity that Fridae's men are asserting. These were not gay men saying that they wanted to be just as penetrative, or just as masculine in their mannerisms, as Orientalist images would have it. A declaration of "versatility" in the bedroom—males expressing desire to both penetrate and be penetrated—and a strong declaration of "neither" masculine nor feminine in mannerisms, is a fundamental shift in the definition of what constitutes masculinity. The fact that this particular declaration was being made by gay and straight Asians alike seems to signal a different understanding about "masculine" performance.

Finally, are the men on Fridae challenging indigenous Asian traditions that equate male homosexuality with male-to-female transgenderism and with adopting the passive, penetrated bedroom role? Most definitely yes Overwhelmingly, the men on Fridae reject the idea that they are "femme," instead claiming to be either "masculine" or "neither" in mannerism. They either stay silent about their sex roles in the bedroom, ambiguously

allowing that topic to be resolved in private encounters, or they strongly declare that they are "versatile."

In the end, what might be said is this: to draw the gaze of the masculine white diplomat, *M Butterfly's* Song Liling need no longer be dressed in female garb to perform the roles of seductive spy and object of European desire. In the new version, Song Liling might just as well be outfitted in a tank top and sweat pants, attracting the gaze of the white man to his "smoothness," while seeking to satisfy his own desires with a white—or Asian—man, ready to surprise his prey in the bedroom with his embrace of versatile behavior.

Thus, while Spies's archer and stag are still independently recognizable, the portrait edges have started to blur.

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[2] The word "gay" is problematic since it is clearly a term imported from the West, even if the relationships and the desires it describes are as common to Asia as to any other part of the world. Many different indigenous terms exist within Asian languages to describe various gender roles—terms such as *katoey* in Thailand. New terms are also being created, such as *tongzhi* in Mandarin, which more precisely describe what the West considers to be "sexual orientation" rather than "gender orientation." The word "gay" is used here because it is the word provided by Fridae.com.

[3] EDWARD W. SAID, ORIENTALISM 1 (1978).

[4] *Id.* at 7.

[5] Ann Stoler, *Educating Desire in Colonial Southeast Asia: Foucault, Freud, and Imperial Sexualites*, *in* SITES OF DESIRE, ECONOMIES OF PLEASURE: SEXUALITIES IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC 27, 32 (Lenore Manderson & Margaret Jolly eds., 1997).

[6] *Id.* Stoler deals thoroughly with the triad of race, sexual desire, and imperialism in her books RACE AND THE EDUCATION OF DESIRE (1995) and CARNAL KNOWLEDGE AND IMPERIAL POWER (2002).

[7] DAVID L. ENG, RACIAL CASTRATION: MANAGING MASCULINITY IN ASIAN AMERICA 1-4 (2001).

[8] KAM LOUIE, THEORISING CHINESE MASCULINITY: SOCIETY AND GENDER IN CHINA 121 (2002). Excerpts of the novel can be found at http://gaslight.mtroyal.ab.ca/gaslight/chnkchld.htm.

[9] For a discussion of "The Chink and the Child," see *id.* at 143.

[10] HANS RHODIUS & JOHN DARLING, WALTER SPIES AND BALINESE ART 21 (John Stowell ed., 1980).

[11] *Id.*

[12] A good summary of these efforts against Spies can be found in ROBERT ALDRICH, COLONIALISM AND HOMOSEXUALITY 161-65, 198-202 (2003).
[13] LOUIE, *supra* note 78, at 4.
[14] *See id.* at 10.
[15] *See id.*
[16] *Id.* at 11.
[17] *Id.* at 17.
[18] *Id.* at 24.
[19] *Id.*
[20] *Id.*
[21] *Id.*
[22] For a criticism of the "heroic" approach, see King-Kok Cheung, *The Woman Warrior vs. The Chinaman Pacific: Must a Chinese American Critic Choose Between Feminism and Heroism?*, *in* CONFLICTS IN FEMINISM 234, 236-37, 244-45 (Marianne Hirsch & Evelyn Fox Keller eds., 1990). For a thorough discussion of the *wen* and *wu* elements of traditional Chinese concepts of masculinity, see LOUIE, *supra* note 78.
[23] Interview with Stuart Koe, Founder of Fridae.com (May, 2004).
[24] *Id.*
[25] *Id.*
[26] *Id.*
[27] DANIEL DEFOE, ROBINSON CRUSOE 122 (Penguin Books 2003) (1719).
[28] Interview, *supra* note 23.
[29] *Cf.* Garry Rodan, *The Internet and Political Control in Singapore*, 113 POL. SCI. Q. 63 (1998), *available at* http://www.psqonline.org/ (search for "Garry Rodan"; then follow article title hyperlink).
[30] *Cf. id.*
[31] *Id.* at 76.
[32] *Id.*Garry Rodan, *The Internet and Political Control in Singapore*, 113 POL. SCI. Q., at 63, 80, (Spring 1998), *available at* http://epn.org/psq/rodan.html.
[33] *Id.*
[34] *Id.*
[35] SING. PENAL CODE § 377. *See also* forPLU.com, Homosexual Rights Around the World, http://www.forplu.com/community/life&style/feature/homorights.htm (last visited Nov. 29, 2005).
[36] *Id.*
[37] *See* Wayne Arnold, *Quietly, Singapore Lifts Its Ban on Hiring Gays*, INT'L HERALD TRIB., July 7, 2003, at 1, *available at* 2003 WLNR 5243323.
[38] Barry Porter, *Gays Don't Count in Singapore*, SINGAPORE WINDOW, May 28, 2000, http://www.singapore-window.org/sw00/000528sc.htm (last visited Nov. 29, 2005).
[39] *See* Rodan, *supra* note 29; YawningBread.org, Sirenes Who Will Turn You Gay (Apr. 2005), http://www.yawningbread.org/arch_2005/yax-429.htm (last visited Nov. 29, 2005).
[40] *See* YawningBread.org, '*Asian' Means We Have to Live with Hypocrisy and Paralysis* (Jan. 2005), http://www.yawningbread.org/arch_2004/yax-345.htm (reproducing a Singapore Straits Times article by Rebecca Lee), which refers to an interview that a

reporter for the British Broadcasting Corporation conducted with Lee Hsien Loong, who was at that time the Deputy Prime Minister, following a report that Singapore would permit openly gay people to work for the government. The BBC reporter asked why Singapore would not decriminalize sodomy so that the gay employees would not be criminals should they engage in consensual sex. Part of Lee's explanation for maintaining the sodomy law included the statement, "We are an Asian society…."

[41] Interview, *supra* note 22.

[42] *Id.*

[43] *Id.*

[44] Jane Lee, *Liberation Day*, EAST, Sept. 2001, at 86, *available at* http://www.fridae.com/aboutus/news010900_1.php.

[45] Interview, *supra* note 22.

[46] *Id.*

[47] *Id.*

[48] One area of potential future research lies in comparing these seven "tools" to those that might be offered on similar websites that use only national languages rather than English and that appeal to more limited geographic areas than does Fridae, for example Mandarin-speaking websites based primarily in China or Thai-language sites.

[49] The methodology for the statistics gathered was as follows: all statistics are based on a study undertaken during the final two weeks of December 2004 using Fridae's own search engine to find different "types" of men. During this period, Fridae added approximately 3,000 profiles; the percentages cited in the text were always checked against the most current total number of profiles. Random checks of percentages calculated at the beginning of the period were made with percentages calculated at the end of the period to see whether significant changes had occurred in particular categories. There were only slight fluctuations, usually of less than .5 percent. Because "Chinese" is the largest single group of Asian men on Fridae, while "Caucasian" is the largest Euro-American group, those were the two categories most often compared.

[50] *Id.*

[51] *Id.*

[52] *Id.* Of the 68,000 men, about 90 percent, or 57,000, were willing to publicly assign themselves a sexual orientation. Of those, some 80 percent, or about 45,000, chose "gay," while about 6,400 selected "bisexual," about 2,500 picked "curious male" and about 1,700 said they were "straight." A handful of men, slightly less than two hundred, chose for themselves the interesting gender designation of "lesbian male." In addition to "male," Fridae also allows users to identify themselves as "female," "female-to-male," "male-to-female," "male couple," "female couple," "bisexual couple," and "group."

[53] *Id.* While an additional number of Chinese began using a new Mandarin-only section of Fridae that started in mid-2004, this analysis does not include them.

[54] *Id.*

[55] *Id.* Only about 700 Hispanic and Black men—less than 1 percent of the total number—posted profiles.

[56] *Id.*

[57] *Id.*

[58] *Id.*

[59] Unfortunately, Fridae's search engine does not allow a user to distinguish between paid and free users or active and non-active users. This can only be done by individually inspecting each profile for indications of last dates of use, which is, of course, not determinative. The number of actual paid subscribers is confidential business information. The difference between these types of users does not significantly affect the conclusions in this study, since what is being examined is the overall way in which men have chosen to cast their gender selections. It could, however, become relevant if different research questions were posed such as, if one were trying to measure which types of gender performances seemed to have the most "success" on Fridae.
[60] The Somatotypes, http://www.kheper.net/topics/typology/somatotypes.html (last visited Nov. 30, 2005).
[61] *See* methodology, *supra* note 49.
[62] *Id.*
[63] *Id.*
[64] *Id.*
[65] *Id.*
[66] *Id.*
[67] *Id.*
[68] *Id.*
[69] *Id.* That these three categories have a particularly "masculine" tone to them can be shown by the fact that, although Fridae's females were equally free to choose from the three, only 14 percent did so.
[70] *Id.*
[71] *Id.*
[72] *Id.*
[73] *Id.*
[74] The other body hair categories probably did suggest more about reality simply because of their specific phrasing. For chest hair, one of the old markers of European masculinity, 16 percent of the Caucasians claimed it; only 2 percent of the Chinese did. Eight percent of Caucasians said they had "lots" of hair compared to only 1 percent of Chinese men. The percentages came closest in the category of "shaved." Five percent of Caucasians said they had modified their body hair appearance; 3 percent of Chinese men had.
[75] SUSAN BORDO,THE MALE BODY: A NEW LOOK AT MEN IN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE 84 (1999).
[76] *Id.* at 87.
[77] *See* Richard Fung, *Looking for my Penis: The Eroticized Asian in Gay Video Porn*, *in* HOW DO I LOOK?: QUEER FILM AND VIDEO 145 (Bad Object-Choices ed., 1991). Although Fung's article was written more than a decade ago and it is now possible to find many examples of the Asian male penis on display in Internet pornography, many of his points are still relevant. For example, a simple browsing of print media calendars displaying male nudes in the United States *and* in Asia will reveal dozens with Caucasian, black, and Latino penises on display, but very few with Asian penises similarly celebrated.
[78] *See* methodology, *supra* note 49.
[79] *Id.*

[80] *Id.*
[81] *Id.*
[82] *Id.*
[83] Introduction to Tonal Languages, http://www.mnsu.edu/emuseum/cultural/language/tonal.html (last visited Nov. 30, 2005).
[84] RHODIUS & DARLING, *supra* note 10.
[85] *See, e.g.,* Spies's famous drawings called "Hamid" (1923) and "Hahnenkampf" ("Cockfight") (1927).
[86] *See* methodology, *supra* note 49.
[87] *Id.*
[88] *Id.*
[89] For a discussion of the *katoey, see* LADY BOYS, TOM BOYS, RENT BOYS: MALE AND FEMALE HOMOSEXUALITIES IN CONTEMPORARY THAILAND (Peter Jackson & Gerard Sullivan eds., 1999), or RICHARD TOTMAN, THE THIRD SEX: KATHOEY, THAILAND'S LADYBOYS (2003). For a similar discussion of the Indian *hijra,* see ZIA JAFFREY, THE INVISIBLES: A TALE OF THE EUNUCHS OF INDIA (1996).
[90] *See* methodology, *supra* note 49.
[91] *Id.* The Caucasians split fifty-fifty between "masculine" and "neither." The Chinese opted a little more heavily for "neither"—57 percent there, and 42 percent for "masculine."
[92] *Id.*
[93] *Id.*
[94] Fung, *supra* note 777, at 153.
[95] *See* methodology, *supra* note 49.
[96] *Id.* Sixteen percent of white men responded; while only 10 percent of Asians did so.
[97] *Id.*
[98] *Id.*
[99] *Id.*
[100] *Id.*
[101] *Id.* Seventy-five percent of Caucasian men and 70 percent of Chinese men said their "best attribute" was one of the emotional choices. Only a handful (less than 1 percent of either race) flaunted a checkbook as their best attribute.
[102] *Id.*
[103] *Id.*
[104] *Id.*
[105] *Id.*
[106] *Id.*
[107] *Id.*
[108] *Id.*