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Doll Love and Silicone Satisfaction: adapting and articulating identity, gender and sexuality through dolls and anime characters amongst Hong Kong Cosplayers

Animation, manga fans and Cosplayers are pursuing a DIY culture of self-display and online socializing, while develop shades of queer and alternative sexuality and multiple identities within the boundaries of commodity culture. As Lisa Rowel points out in *Desiring China*, modes of sexual innovation and restlessness can be more easily developed if they are divorced from the “dangerous passions of politics” (1) People identify with a “Japanese” kind of openness and/or modern cosmopolitan branding as an escape from the boundaries and stigmas within Chinese sex culture, but they also reveal a deep longing to inhabit the characters and costumes of commodity culture. The “other” here provides a safe refuge. A similar tendency to articulate identity, gender and sexuality through the purchase of specific brands can be found in the material possessions of ball-jointed dolls. Some Cosplayers avidly collect and dress up ball-jointed dolls as mini-versions of themselves. These dolls become best friends, sisters, brothers, confidantes and counselors for the collector, as Cosplayers seek gratification and unconditional love in a mute humanoid form. In this paper, we will reveal the adoption of humanoid forms and animation characters as a new type of collective intelligence. We will also question its role in future articulations of queer Asian politics by outlining attitude towards locally and globally endorsed subjectivities of “excentricity” and “otherness” in these mediated contexts.

[1] Rofel, Lisa, *Desiring China: Experiments in Neoliberalism, Sexuality, and Public Culture*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2007, p. 121.