Unpretty Disruptions: Listening and Queering the Visual in Richard Fung's Videotapes

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The term *unpretty* came up unexpectedly in the course of informal conversation, as insights often do. It was a pithy way to talk about Richard Fung's videomaking aesthetic and its interventions on behalf of critiquing whiteness in its many forms. The unpretty is a queering and querying visuality that thrives in Fung's work in three formulations: his deconstructive approach to generic conventions of experimentalism and pornography; the effects of his do-it-yourself/bricolage aesthetics of appropriated images and the materiality (both visual and economic) of videotape; and his critique of whiteness as a representational regime. Its major terms and frameworks are presented in a dialogue format, reflecting what I consider to be the listening ethic of the Fung/us videotape: conversation, with its digressions, repetitions, and free associations hold together such kaleidoscopic thoughtscapes as sexual communities and ethnic diasporas.

Listening as Disruptive Strategy

This listening essay examines how videomaker Richard Fung uses the unpretty strategy to invite reexaminations of dominant visual narrative structures, particularly in Hollywood media and gay pornography. It then pivots to the unstable meanings of the Caribbean, as discussed by Stuart Hall, for thinking about Fung's cinema of intersecting diasporas. Within the "Caribbean Queer Visualities" project, one of the more complex tasks is bridging what can seem like disparate critical discussions of sexuality and of ethnicity. But conversation, not only talking but careful listening, as Fung demonstrates, offers a powerful strategy disrupting this impasse. A portion of Fung's filmography consists of autoethnographies, revisiting his Chinese Trinidadian heritage in the Caribbean, while

other works take on the role of race in forming sexual identity. What holds them together is a critique of whiteness and dominant narrative forms in media.

Lyndon K. Gill's essay "Situating Black, Situating Queer: Black Queer Diaspora Studies and the Art of Embodied Listening" asks us to think about the body as a vessel of listening and of experience. Its theoretical foundations rest on innovations in black feminist anthropology and queer anthropology that are centered on participant observation methodologies. "Black feminist anthropology," Gill explains, "promotes this listening practice as part of an elaborate strategy for interrupting certain forms of biased knowledge (re) production in the service of a holistic praxis of social transformation." And the contributions of queer anthropology are just as crucial because "queer anthropology . . . has insisted upon the inclusion of sexuality as a category of analysis in any fully embodied listening praxis." In thinking the efficacy of queerness in Caribbean visuality, the ancient technology of conversation advances an urgent praxis of producing work that is reflexive and connected to actual viewing communities. Fung's videos present a reflexive discussion about what constitutes documentary, but they also provide a public forum of gay Asian men discussing and deconstructing white gay media's construction of desirability.[1]

Fung's videotapes provoke us to listen to the voices in our heads. He appropriates the conventions of documentary, such as medium shots of experts speaking, explanatory text, voiceover, historical footage, and narrative, but he disrupts the expected flow of these elements with reflexive fantasy or performance sequences. In his 1986 *Chinese Characters*, for instance, gay Asian men describe (their) experiences with gay pornography as they sit posed within a carefully staged mise-en-scène. Diverse voices and viewpoints are heard, but each man on screen is not identified by name, and the use of asynchronous sound makes each vignette resonate beyond the expository. The word *characters* in the video's title seems benign, yet the text of the film reveals that it is a barbed and incisive read on the way personhood is always already fabricated and what seems authentic is generated through our absorption or imitation of the characters and caricatures we see and are seen through in media. The artfulness of *Chinese Characters* reworks and unpretties conventional documentary technique in order to explore dialogues of sexuality and race and their reproduction in society and in the self. Brief shots of Croton leaves in the "South" section of *Chinese Characters* highlight the West Indian location of Fung's childhood, where he experienced his "first encounter with fairy tales as an already nostalgic text[,] . . . another shore of the ever-expanding Chinese diaspora."[2] The Caribbeanness in Fung's videos visually traces migration and the layered formations of identity for the public self but also the private, intimate self. Through Fung we understand place as itself media—an intervening complex of stories and, of course, desires about location and identity between the self and society. In *Chinese Characters* particularly, but throughout all Fung's videotapes, the editing style embodies the desiring paradox, what it is to want to be wanted where you're not wanted, particularly when Fung's performers reenact scenes from appropriated pornography. The video's cuts, performances, and repetitions embody the uneven sifting, resisting, and desiring of images of the self, even as the othered self.[3] In *Chinese Characters*, how Fung uses the architecture and the porn clips as one framing within the larger frame exemplifies this point—the double framing emphasizes the importance of its contents but undermines it too. Fung's practice of bricolage highlights the value-structured improvising and recontextualizing of preexisting materials.[4]

Figure 1. Richard Fung's *Chinese Characters* (1986) examines the ambiguous relationship between gay Asian men and white gay porn. Still image provided by the videomaker

Office Hours

Putting spoken exchanges into print amplifies and makes permanent that which is usually ephemeral, since it prioritizes lived experience, verbal, intellectual, and emotional bricolage, and multidisciplinarity. It is a queer thing to do, as in odd, curious, or indeterminate and between specifics. Its place here makes the essay something like the bricolage of a Fung video, foregrounding improvisation, listening, and mutuality. And there is also the somewhat risky unevenness of translating the inflections of the spoken word into written structure. But listening seems a necessary adventure in queering Caribbean visualities and being accountable.

This essay grew from nested collaborations, beginning with "Caribbean Queer Visualities II" and continuing in a discussion after class with Josh Byron, a queer white undergraduate filmmaker in my Black Women Make Movies class.[5] They mentioned their curiosity about combining their filmmaking with curating a microcinema, which made me think of Fung's engagement with multiple publics as a videomaker, writer, teacher, and social activist throughout his career. I sent Josh off on a binge-watch, and when they reported back that they were enthralled with the videos, I decided I wanted to learn from their viewing experience. We recorded the in-person exchange of ideas that followed, and it is excerpted and edited here.

Joshua Byron: But I think that one of the other problems is that even the queer film circuit can become a gateway or a filter very quickly. A lot of queer film festivals, at least the few that I've started to hear of, have this sort of "everything needs to fit in a different program" approach. So they have very specific themes—

Terri Francis: Which can quickly become programmatic and prescriptive.

JB: Which I think is why Richard Fung's situating his films between documentary and art film and as independent films in *community* is a way to circumvent that. In the microcinema, many more people get involved in film [exhibition], so there's kind of this contextual work already happening, and all those people *know* about the film and you get it in different places—and they are closer to it. That is very powerful, and it kind of breaks that festival [model] *down*. I think he's circumventing a lot of these ideas of film festivals as gateways and gatekeepers and just kind of doing the work and getting it in places.

TF: He has said that he sees his work as more pedagogical than anything.[6] One of the issues has to do with the way film festivals solved a problem but raised new problems of inclusion and exclusion, but what you're also saying is that it's . . . the goal of the film festival is something like "consumability."

JB: Yes. I'm critical of media that sells gayness, especially when it is divorced from bodies. The body does not define queerness, but the idea that queerness is in fact a bodily issue is an important one. Stripping sex from queerness results in these ideas of the ideal chaste white gay. Of course queerness is not merely sex, but divorcing queerness from sex can easily result in a diverse silent other.

TF: But the queer film—and I'm thinking of your film *Queer yet Godly* (2015)—like all pretty things, can have a *musicality*, in which its appeal could undermine its intervention.

JB: Yes. Fung's use of pornography in his videotapes reeducates the idea that sex is dirty partly by this intervention of inserting porn into art films and by creating art porn with something like *Steam Clean* (1990) or *Chinese Characters*.

TF: And making sure there's a body there.

JB: A character in *Chinese Characters*—he seems to be from Malaysia—says, "One of the things that I'm grateful about in my experiences with North American porn is it increases my ability to fantasize and make those fantasies come true . . . and feel good about those fantasies. It's not dirty or whatever. It helped me overcome guilt. When I say that, I'm thinking particularly about the washroom. When I was in Malaysia, I was cruising the washroom. But I always feel it's dirty. It's a place where people go and shit and piss, and to change that attitude to, 'You know, so what? You know, it's a bodily function.' It helped me to become more free and open doors to more different ways to have sex." So there is that idea of sex as dirty.

TF: In his case, white porn was liberating, not humiliating, for him as an Asian man. Shaming can be replicated in scholarship too. When we talk about sexuality without sex, it's "the softpedalling of the hanky-panky."[7]

JB: Fung challenges the idea that queerness is not involved with the body. Queerness is always linked to the body, whether the body is correct, is attainable, or is pure. The idea of purity is constantly open to interpretation and interrogation in queer film and especially in Fung's work.

TF: Let's not talk in vague generalities. We need a good pictorial and detailed summary of *Steam Clean* here and Thomas Waugh's essay has a rich one: "A subjective hand-held camera moves attentively though a gay male sauna past towel-wrapped clients in the corridor and the cubicles, to an upbeat disco-ish soundtrack. The subject, soon revealed as a slim young Chinese man in a jaunty baseball cap, considers several potential sexual partners and is declined by others, before finally coming to an unspoken agreement with a South Asian man of the same age. In the latter's mirrored cubicle, the two engage in kissing and caressing and then anal intercourse, the seated Chinese man penetrating his partner who is astride his lap. The men's bodies as well as their condom and lubricant are all carefully and graphically shown in closeup operation. Safe sex slogans scroll by in several languages and then the final credits."[8] A description like this makes us notice the body in terms of content but also the body of the picture itself. And let's be specific about the logics of pornography here, which are basically "the lack of mimetic interference with naked bodies, the double-identifications of sexual virtuality, and the rhetoric of the cum shot."[9] The double-identification reference reminds me of a quote from one of the guys in *Chinese Characters*: "But it's sort of a different thing, though, when gay men say, 'Suck my dick,' or something like that. It's sort of different because you can use it for yourself." It's not an either/or top/bottom thing.

JB: But there is still the paradox that the orgasm of the penis, visually or phallically, is placed above that of the woman in straight porn. In gay porn, a similar aesthetic occurs. As Fung incisively points out, engaging Richard Dyer's work on gay porn, "Although at a level of public representation gay men may be thought of as deviant and disruptive of masculine norms because we assert the pleasure of being fucked and the eroticism of the anus, in our pornography this takes a back seat."[10] The pleasure of the penetrating penis is promoted over the pleasure of the anus. Fung deconstructs that in *Steam Clean*. Not wanting to create a passive Chinese stereotype, he made the Chinese man the top; however, this made the Indian man the bottom. Fung assuages this by valuing the pleasure of the anus and having the Indian man play the role of the power bottom. Fung is invested in thinking about bottoming in perhaps a way that invites agency and pleasure. Linda Williams, too, also points out the gendered idea of the "feminized 'bottom'" and all the problematics that entails as well. However, Williams, like Fung, understands that the dominated is also a dominator in a way. The bottom does not forgo all power.[11]

TF: *Steam Clean* is a public service announcement about safe sex but it does seem erotic too. It's instructional but when the titles read, "Fuck safely." That says go have fun, which seems unexpected somehow.

JB: Victorian morality is not new, nor has it disappeared, but the way porn has evolved to draw on ideas of dirtiness has created an ideal dirt aesthetic. Gritty, hedonistic, and socially "dirty." Penetration has historically been the definition of hard core. The penis is what is always hidden, the penis is what is kept "under wraps." Partly due to misogyny, partly due to homophobia, the penis is dirty. Not to be seen.[12]

TF: But it is seen in Fung's films. I actually thought of *Steam Clean* and *Chinese Characters* as forms of erotica, but the José Esteban Muñoz essay in *Like Mangoes in July* has me seeing Fung's "interventionist video performances"—the work they do—in a more nuanced way.[13]

JB: Fung writes, "Even in my own video work, the stress has been on deconstructing sexual representation and only marginally on creating erotica."[14] The deconstruction, while not necessarily filling the same void [of diverse representation in gay porn], is filling a different void of talking about Asian sexuality in explicit ways; it fills this space and problematizes not just the idea that queerness is dirty but whether cleanliness is the goal. Fung criticizes the penetration of queer porn with Judeo-Christian and white values. He also critiques porn's rejection of the validity of the pleasure of wanting to be fucked. The miseducation of white gay porn creates odd ways for queer Asian men to enter into gay sexual contexts. In *Chinese Characters*, one of the men says, "A lot of times people make comments that I speak English normally with a Happy Chinese accent, but when I go to bed and I start to talk dirty, [they say,] 'How come you drop your accent?' [*laughing*] Well—because I learned this right from the start through another language, and I've adapted myself so well that whenever I think of something dirty, I would just speak like a Caucasian." White gay porn as education is limited. But Fung isn't against porn; he calls for better porn industries.[15]

TF: Cut to a man who appears to read from a script. No matter how sincere it seems, the staging is important to how it works. The interviews are so interesting because of what they say but also because the audio looks out of sync with the video, as if it's being translated.

JB: Fung is intent on deconstructing the ethics of porn not on the basis of exploitation or economics but on the basis of inclusion. Fung sees porn as possible pedagogy, yet a dangerous one in which Asians are often demeaned or left out entirely.

TF: Let's go back to the discourse of dirtiness and cleanliness you raised a minute ago.

JB: "Queer dirt." That's my shorthand for the idea of queer as dirty. Many heterosexuals associate gay male sex acts with the anus and thus with excrement; queer folks are mediated through notions of uncleanliness and disgust, and this is even more relevant for queer folks living with HIV/AIDS. In a personal essay, "poz" blogger Alexander Cheves describes a confrontation with his father, where he said, "'It's poop. That's all gay sex is. You'll live in some apartment that smells like stool, and you won't even notice it because you'll live in it.'" Cheves writes that his father said, "'You'll go off to the city and die of AIDS,'" tying together queerness, urban filth, and disease.[16] The confluence of discourses of dirt and queer sexuality underscored his sense of shame once he was diagnosed.

TF: Fung is able to almost use—

JB: Deprettying. The videotape as a medium has the ethics and aesthetics of DIY. There's a fuzziness and unprettiness to it that recalls porn and dirtiness.

TF: Yeah.

JB: It's not exactly unprettying. But it's unprettying enough that you're focused less on cinematographic issues such as, "Is this shot well? How does this sound?" And I'm not saying that the sound is bad, or the shots. There are some very beautiful moments and there's some very interesting sound mixing. That's *not* the problem. But I just think it's not going to be this Hollywood aesthetic, or even *trying*, because that's not the point of queer film.

TF: Because queerness seems like an indeterminacy. A kind of movement among and between. And I remember in my conversation with Richard at the symposium, I said, "Queerness feels like a lifeboat, it feels like a raft"—but what did I mean by that? I could have meant a lot of things.

JB: But that's what queerness is. It *can* mean a lot of things. It's this murky space that people can be in. Versus—I think gayness is very restricted to certain cultural aspects, to certain ways of being read. And queerness is kind of a breach against those specificities.

TF: A breach against the specificities . . .

JB: So the *lifeboat* might be getting off the boat and floating through the different islands, and so maybe the queerness . . . I don't know . . . is the moving between.

TF: The moving between—

JB: But I don't think it's moving between sexualities either. I've seen queerness defined that way, and that's still a restricting way of thinking about queerness. Because it's not just movement between, "Hi, I'm bi," or "I'm pan." But I think it's kind of moving between and breaking even those [categories] down into fluidity. Queerness also lends itself to more gender fluidity than gayness.

TF: For a while I was worried about this term being too comfortably flexible. I was worried about appropriating, overusing it . . . *breaching* it somehow.

JB: I think it's a hard word to breach.

TF: It's very friendly.
JB: It is! Queer friendly. I think it's much more open than gayness. Which I thought was interesting, watching Fung's films. So many people define themselves as gay.

But, I mean, of course it's a different time. But to see these people describe themselves as gay struck me. I noticed that they do seem to differentiate between *white gay* and *gay*, which I think is totally right, but that's what queerness is trying to compensate for—the whiteness of gayness.

TF: Could you say more?

JB: Well, I feel like the whiteness of gayness is that gayness has been a constructed field to be super involved with marriage and [policies such as] with Don't Ask, Don't Tell and super involved in

these constructions of nationalism with homonationalism. Being against capitalism is a much more queer [perspective] because white gayness wants to assimilate. Queerness is much more likely to be paired with other forms of resistance, so I think when I hear somebody say that they're queer, I think they're invested in the cause. It's much easier to be invested in antiracism or socialism or punk aesthetics with queerness than it is through gayness because I think gayness is much more rigid. It wants you to get the man, get the cottage in Massachusetts, and have the white dog. A lot of people in Fung's films—that's not what they're looking for, and so they understand [queerness] intuitively without using that term. And I think the film *Orientations* (1984), in talking to people of color, supports this idea. As black women are precluded from white ladyhood (read, cleanliness/whiteness), so too are queer men, especially queer Asian men.[17] However, the distinction between *queerness* and *white gayness* here is critical. As white gays assimilate into marriage and the army (as Conrad Ryan points to in his Against Equality project), they are allowed to participate in the chasteness and cleanliness of whiteness (as I am asserting). However, queer Asian men are not allowed this right, and gay shame perpetuates powerful emotional, cognitive, and spiritual blocks.

TF: So you make a distinction between queerness and gayness?

JB: White gayness and queerness are distinct and opposed, particularly in how each handles skin. A queer aesthetic cannot seek to assimilate to white norms of civility, shame, power, patriarchy, or celibacy. Queerness seeks to neither impose chasteness nor hypersexuality and allows for both to exist as long as neither is imposed. This is one of the key differences between white gayness and queerness. Queerness allows for multitudes. Or as Thai filmmaker Apichatpong Weerasthakul states in a recent interview, "For me the word 'queer' means 'anything is possible.'"[18] Queerness is not as much concerned with what it is as what it is not. It is not white gayness. It is not cis white heteropatriarchy. That's where the shore ends. Queerness's borders are set against those of white men.

TF: Ok, I need to think about this ocean metaphor some more. Because if queerness is a lifeboat in the Caribbean Sea, then we need to consider the history of that water as one point in the maritime routes of the Atlantic slave trade. New thalossology scholars reject the tendency to theorize "from the shore" because that is an imperial/colonial position. They tend to propose oceanic orientations/metaphors instead.[19] These folks rarely address queerness explicitly, though they do emphasize openness. Some queer-Caribbean scholars talk about the region as *inherently* queer because the islands themselves are so different from one another culturally/linguistically/historically, yet they are put together under a single designation (Caribbean), arguably because they are surrounded by the same sea.[20] That is, they argue that Caribbean identity is located in the shifting expanse of the sea, not in the stability or logic of the shores.

Blood and Water: Queering Caribbean Cinema

Landmark Caribbean diaspora films *The Harder They Come* (1973), *Pressure* (1975), and *Bim* (1975) proceed along a trajectory of aggrieved and alienated masculinity. And yet sexuality has not been a prominent component of how Caribbeanness in the cinema has been formulated.[21] But the impulse to define Caribbean identity in terms of location and race has been in play, particularly when it comes to theories of its complexity and range. In "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," Stuart Hall launches his provocation on Caribbeanness with reference to an emerging new Caribbean cinema. The essay is essentially an effort "to theorise identity as constituted, not outside but within representation; and hence cinema, not as a second-order mirror held up to reflect what already exists, but as that form of representation which is able to constitute us as new kinds of subject, and thereby enable us to discover places from which to speak." Without reference to specific filmmakers (he mentions the photographer Armet Francis), Hall suggests that Caribbean cinema is marked by a "diaspora aesthetic," by which he means the African diaspora. Africa is, as Hall admits, "a privileged signifier." He conjures the appeals of that "imaginary plenitude, recreating the endless desire to return . . . to go back to the beginning," but ultimately argues for a cinema that allows us to think instead about the vicissitudes of subjectivity.[22] Among the Caribbean nations, the archipelagic republic of Trinidad, Fung's birthplace, consisting of some twenty-two islands, exemplifies Hall's challenge to oneness.

Fung's videotapes exemplify Hall's Caribbean cinema in their unprettiness, which encapsulates their essayistic visual rhetoric, the effects of the videotape, and their discursive deconstructions of white sexual identities. In particular, *Sea in the Blood* (2000) "tells a story of discovery and desire, in which Fung disrupts both the imperial travel narrative and the heterosexual imperative by

placing queerness in the context of the classic contemporary rite-of-passage/coming-of-age tale: backpacking abroad."[23] Mixing the pedagogical with the poetic and the ethnic with the sexual and autobiographical, the video opens with footage of Fung floating in what appears to be a red sea. He explains this effect was a happy accident that came from finding "a lens for deep water diving that was on the camera when [he] rented it," and how he took advantage of the way it filtered colors and light under water. The water creates an ambivalent sense of cleanliness and dirtiness. Its bubbles suggest air but also somehow the presence of a noxious gas. As Fung and his partner, Tim, float in the water, the image suggests all at once a bath, drowning, and embryonic immersion. Tim and Fung play at swimming through each other's legs like underwater leapfrog. Sequenced early in the film, they seem to give birth to each other, playing in an indeterminate and unbounded space, but the images also suggest interchangeability. The reddish color creates a visual metaphor of urgency and blood, foreshadowing the hematologic condition of thalassemia that afflicted his late sister, Nan, and the HIV virus with which Tim is living.[24] In its explanation of Nan's illness, *Sea in the Blood* adapts the educational film, a genre that constitutes some of the earliest motion pictures to circulate in the Caribbean and the home movie.[25] The red water evokes history as well. Although the actual location of the film may not be the Caribbean, the image of the water evokes the dirty and unpretty histories beneath, sunk into the water.

Fung's work engages diaspora, in the way that Hall means it, without idealizing a mother country, but Fung goes further in constituting the Caribbean as intersecting diasporas of Asia, Europe, and Africa—out of many, many people. In Fung's videotapes, the essayistic structure, with its capacity for layered and multidirectional referencing, is Caribbean in that it signifies a direct structural critique of classic Hollywood editing patterns that favor a simple and coherent, heroic and white-identified narrative. In contrast, Fung's work often consists of multiple voices and perspectives, often contradicting one another.

In his appropriation videotape *Islands* (2002), Fung models the challenge to whiteness that ought to be a hallmark of Caribbean cinema. Fung manipulates and reanimates clips from the CinemaScope 1957 feature film *Heaven Knows, Mr. Allison* as a method of deprettying a grand Hollywood film. His process draws our attention to the emotional and visual structures normally hidden by the smooth seamlessness of Hollywood film editing patterns.

Figure 2. Richard Fung's *Sea in the Blood* (2000), a personal documentary about living with illness, traces the artist's relationship to his sister Nan's thalassemia and his partner Tim's life with HIV. Still image provided by the videomaker.

The 8-minute *Islands* consists of shots extracted from *Heaven*'s 147 minutes, representing disruptions, which cut into the feature film's continuity. Instead of *Heaven*'s self-referential story world, *Islands* opens it up to recontextualization and critique. Fung's process of extracting and rerecording minimizes the grand physicality of the CinemaScope format, cropping its wide 2:66 aspect ratio to video size. CinemaScope is meant for projections in large spaces in which the illusions of proximity and clarity can work their magic over distance.[26] But the microproduction of *Islands* re-visions *Heaven* as a small-screen intimate and reflexive video that brings the viewer up close to the materiality of the cinematic image.

CinemaScope films are panoramic and have stereophonic sound, an ideal technology to showcase the Caribbean picturesque and similar fictions of landscape. An early discussion of this technology in *American Cinematographer* exclaims, "From its panoramic screen, two and a half times as large as ordinary screens, actors seem to walk into the audience, ships appear to sail into the first rows, off-screen actors sound as though they are speaking from the wings." By remaking *Heaven* Fung disrupts yet reveals the visual, political, and emotional structures of cinematic suture between audiences and the self-proclaimed, amazing experience: "[The] most completely entertaining motion picture your heart has ever known!" Yet *Heaven* already contained an ironic twist in its structure in that it is a relationship film—about a tough Marine and a gentle nun stranded on an otherwise "uninhabited" island—photographed with a format that uses close-ups of faces, the bodily stage where the dramatic action of their relationship would be overblown. From *American Cinematographer*: "Although close-ups are reproduced dramatically in CinemaScope films, fewer may be needed because medium shots of actors in groups of three and four show faces so clearly that the most minute emotions and gestures are obvious." Sounds like a good thing, but in fact, by 1957, four years after this article was published, CinemaScope became known for "the mumps," which referred to the effect of stretching the actors' faces when they were shown in close-up. The anonymous author of the *American Cinematographer* article predicts, "In the beginning, it is likely that most CinemaScope productions will be basically outdoor spectacle dramas."[27] *Heaven*, set in the South Pacific during WWII and featuring a tropical location and explosions, uses CinemaScope to its advantage.

Fung appears to slow down and pixelate the images of faces borrowed from the film and the takeaway is two-part: the Caribbean is overly seen but then it is also interchangeable. Tourism industries routinely advertise the Caribbean using images that reference locations seeming to offer the traveler panoramic and codified views. In *Heaven*, Tobago's coastline is conscripted into Hollywood as a filming location but not as a setting; the Caribbean is not the intended subject of this film and it is extraneous to the narrative. The location is the star of the CinemaScope format, but the Caribbean is just an extra. Fung depretties images and dialogue from the Hollywood movie, juxtaposing them with recurring images of unpretty black palm trees set against a gray-blue sky and a-synchronous text, all of which is mixed with a B-roll story of Fung's Uncle Clive and his role in *Heaven* as an extra. In a sense, Fung's film concerns the extra, the cuttings containing the extraneous, distracting storylines, and rumors that are marginal to the main event or the dominant narrative. Here such material is activated and deployed as disruptions to the seamless and seemingly impenetrable Hollywood editing style and its emotional colonization of our perceptions of what matters and what to make-believe. Fung's working over of *Heaven* makes us see mediation, both in this source material and in his own *Islands*. Put another way, when Fung appropriates *Heaven*, its framing and materiality come into view.

Figure 3. Richard Fung's *Islands* (2002) is an experimental video that deconstructs a film by John Huston to comment on the Caribbean's relationship to the cinematic image. Still image provided by the videomaker

In thinking the efficacy of queer visualities, we recognize how queerness can appear to encompass a seemingly endless range of utilities. As a metaphor of the Caribbean, queerness offers a way of reflecting on geographical displacement and diversity. The multiple a-ways-and-belongings that characterize the Caribbean cast into relief not only its distinct nations and separate islands but the mixing and exchange that come through bonds of trade, tourism, migration, and aid. The Caribbean in this sense is less a place and more an idea that puts disparate locations into relationship. But then, like queerness, it can quickly become an extra, a location that can be anywhere instead of a carefully wrought setting for contemplating the intricacies and chaos of being a modern person.

The unpretty reminds us of the need for disruption and untidiness in thinking through identity. The unpretty lends queerness—as it does to Caribbeanness—the capacity to visualize, validate, and radicalize sexualities. Yet if queerness works to illuminate sexual multiplicity, it is not merely a cipher for any- and everything. Rather, queerness makes space for compounded and intersectional identities. As a relational term, it provokes and intervenes according to context. *Queer*, applied to Caribbean visuality, aids in envisioning experimental narratives and performance styles. Sexuality is a diaspora. The efficacy of queerness in Fung's work is the unpretty visualizing of homosexuality within the context of exploring migration, race, and ethnicity within intersecting diasporas in North America, Asia, and the Caribbean.

Acknowledgments

Thank you to Martin Law, doctoral candidate in rhetoric at Indiana University, for research assistance.

Endnotes

1 Lyndon K. Gill, "Situating Black, Situating Queer: Black Queer Diaspora Studies and the Art of Em bodied Listening," *Transforming Anthropology* 20, no. 1 (2012): 34.

2 Bérénice Reynaud, "*Chinese Characters*," in Kerri Sakamoto and Helen Lee, eds., *Like Mangoes in July: The Work of Richard Fung* (Toronto: Insomniac, 2002), 45.

3 Stuart Hall discusses the colonization of identity through mediated images in "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," in Jonathan Rutherford, ed., *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1998), 222–37. In particular resonance with Fung, Hall notes, "Not only were we constructed as different and other within the categories of knowledge of the West by those regimes. They had the power to make us see and experience ourselves as Other. Every regime of representation is a regime of power formed" (226–27). Later, drawing on Frantz Fanon, Hall elaborates: "The look from—so to speak—the place of the Other, fixes us, not only in its violence, hostility and aggression, but in the ambivalence of its desire" (233).

4 See Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (New York: Routledge, 1991). *Bricolage* is borrowed from the French, essentially referring to a person's improvisation and experimentation in any activity. In *Subculture*, Hebdige expanded the term *bricolage* to describe the way that consumers created new meanings of and with their purchases through effecting a personal style.

5 The *Small Axe* symposium "Caribbean Queer Visualities II," held at Columbia University, 2–3 April 2015.

6 Helen Lee, "Dirty Dozen: Playing Twelve Questions with Richard Fung," in Sakamoto and Lee, *Like Mangoes in July*, 105. In her interview with Fung, Lee poses the following question: "Do you see yourself as an artist first?" Fung responds, "I don't see myself as an artist first," and he goes on to explain, "I see my work more as pedagogical, though hopefully not pedantic. . . . Put it this way: I don't not call myself an artist, but I feel a little like a fraud when I do" (105).

7 Thomas Waugh, "Good Clean Fung," *Wide Angle* 20, no. 2 (1988): 166.

8 Ibid., 165.

9 Joshua Gunn, "Maranatha," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 98, no. 4 (2012): 373.

10 Richard Fung, "Looking for My Penis: The Eroticized Asian in Gay Porn," in Bad Object-Choices, ed., *How Do I Look? Queer Film and Video* (Seattle: Bay Press 1991), 153. See also Richard Dyer, "Coming to Terms," *Jump Cut*, no. 30 (March 1985): 28.

11 See Linda Williams, "Power, Pleasure, and Perversion: Sadomasochistic Film Pornography," in *Hard Core: Power, Pleasure, and the "Frenzy of the Visible"* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 184–228.

12 See ibid.

13 See José Esteban Muñoz, "Revisiting the Autoethnographic Performance: Richard Fung's Theory/Praxis as Queer Performativity," in Sakamoto and Lee, *Like Mangoes in July*, 53.

14 Fung, "Looking for My Penis," 150.

15 Ibid., 168.

16 Alexander Cheves, "Why I Didn't Come Out as Poz on World AIDS Day," *Advocate*, December 4, 2015, accessed May 30, 2017, www.advocate.com/commentary/2015/12/04/why-i-didnt-talk-about-hiv-world-aids-day. *Poz* is slang for HIV positive.

17 See Mireille Miller-Young, "Sepia Sex Scenes: Spectacles of Difference in Race Porn," in *A Taste for Brown Sugar: Black Women in Pornography* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014), 23–33.

18 Apichatpong Weerasthakul, quoted in Nigel Andrews, "Weerasethakul's Waking Dreams," *Financial Times*, 6 October 2015, www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/2/e23e05e2-105a-11e5-ad5a-00144feabdc0.html#axzz3x9rIV4H9.

19 See Barbara Humberstone, ed., *Seascapes: Shaped by the Sea* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015); Jerry H. Bentley, Renate Bridenthal, and Kären Wigen, *Seascapes Maritime Histories, Littoral Cultures, and Transoceanic Exchanges* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007); and Steven Mentz, "Toward a Blue Cultural Studies: The Sea, Maritime Culture, and Early Modern English Literature," *Literature Compass* 6, no. 5 (2009): 997–1013.

20 See Omise'eke Natasha Tinsley, "Black Atlantic, Queer Atlantic: Queer Imaginings of the Middle Passage," *GLQ* 14, nos. 2–3 (2008): 191–215; and Aliyah R. Khan, "'Calling the Magician': The Metamorphic Indo-Caribbean" (PhD diss., University of California Santa Cruz, 2012).

21 On the collaborative nature of filmmaking, see Jean Antoine-Dunne, "Sound and Image in the Caribbean Imaginary," *Journal of West Indian Literature* 18, no. 2 (2010): 95–114. In *Small Axe*, Meredith Robinson details the development of cultural initiatives in Martinique, Guadeloupe, and Haiti, followed by recent regional and international events featuring francophone Caribbean films; see Meredith N. Robinson, "*Ciné woulé, ciné en progrès*: An Investigation of the Francophone Caribbean Film Circuit, 1968–2010," *Small Axe*, no. 33 (November 2010): 45–68. On defining Caribbean cinema, Mybe Cham writes, "It is a cinema of 'ex-îles'—from the islands/of people from the islands—and it is also a cinema of 'exiles'—by people from the islands, living in exile"; Mbye Cham, "Introduction and Overview," in Mbye Cham, ed., *Ex-Iles: Essays on Caribbean Cinema* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World, 1992), 9–10.

22 Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," 231; 236–37.

23 Katherine B. Lawless, "(Re)Circulating Foreign Bodies: Richard Fung's *Sea in the Blood*," *Feminist Media Studies* 12, no. 1 (2012): 119–32.

24 Lee, "Dirty Dozen," 109.

25 See Terri Francis, "Sounding the Nation: Martin Rennalls and the Jamaica Film Unit, 1951–1961," *Film History* 23, no. 2 (2011): 110–28.

26 See "CinemaScope: What It Is, How It Works," *American Cinematographer* (March 1953), www.widescreenmuseum.com/widescreen/cscope-ac.htm.

27 Ibid.