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Each year through the student clubs, students from Cultural Studies and Bilingual Language and Literature Studies form a team to vet and edit student essays and creative work submitted to *This and That*. The journal celebrates the College of International Education's writing talent. The Journal is headed and produced by English lecturers at CIE.

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POETRY

# A Wire Dancer's Dream

Tam Yi Ki, Cary

I stand on a pillar, my goal  
tied up by a cable.  
It is flickering under all the spotlights.  
The drum beats on, I take a big breath

One step,  
Two steps.

Silence.  
The audience hides in the darkness,  
holding their breath for my first step.  
Silence,  
because I'm still on the wire.

Three steps,  
four steps.

A drop of sweat slides down my left cheek.  
I can feel  
the audience standing up,  
biting hand towels,  
kneading newspapers into rods.  
Five ste—

At first,  
the top was separated by a long distance.  
The goal disappears,  
Everything is covered by white.  
The audience's voice becomes  
clearer and louder.  
OH GOD!  
Regain the snivel, clowns!  
Keep clapping your hands for my defeat!

# Meaning

Chen Zimou

The meaning, literature never tells  
The answer, philosophy never gives

Love, woman never utters  
Tear, man never drops

Why, I wonder, are we always doomed to miss?

# Higanbana

Ng Cheuk Wa

You are  
The tender heart of the devils,  
They can't  
Drive you away.  
You still live in the underworld.  
Evil cries  
Because of your existence.  
Satan falls for you.

You are  
Flowers on the road of the dead,  
You make  
The roads of the dead into red,  
Like a carpet  
Welcoming the newcomer.  
Your petals are bright red,  
Like blood.

You are  
The comfort of the dead souls,  
When they see you,  
They forget their lives in the secular world.  
You lead them to the trail,  
Rhadamanthus,  
Minos and Aeacus are waiting for them,  
Deciding for them  
Their torture or joy.

FICTION

# Family Portrait

Fiona Lam

This is our picture.

He was wearing a white vest, but it was not pure white. You could never remove the dirt from it. He was always bringing along his best friend. That was the only thing he relied on. What a lovely relationship. He was singing and acting like crazy, his face was full of joy like a child playing at the playground. He always wanted to add some color into their relationship which made them happier. Once his hands turned red after drinking, he felt so comfortable with the color. So I gave him more redness to his body. He was scared, like a child losing his mom. He could not hold his sadness and disappointment and turned happy again. He deserved it.

She was quiet and tame. Her eyes were also as red as a rabbit. You could never tell whether she was happy or not because she barely smiled. Her face looked like a sheet of paper though she used to blush and make herself less terrible. The man used to blush her face pink and she loved it. But now he was putting other colors on and she hated them. There was nothing she could do but remain in silence. He used to lay her on the bed which she loved. Now, he was laying her on the floor and she hated it. Once she lay down in front of me, she could not wake up anymore. No more blush on her face. She just kept her wan face forever. No matter how she looked, she

was still beautiful.

“Please, no.” These were the words she said to me. I felt so sorry for her. But she saw everything. I could still remember her face like a girl losing her virginity. She had tried so hard to help me. However, she could not stop me and got herself into a terrible ending. I tried to keep her mouth shut. A lightning crossed the sky and divided it into two halves. I did it. She could not say anything now. She was with them now. I thought I gave her peace.

I'm wearing a red shirt. I step into a studio and take a family picture. He is standing there. White vest turns red. There is some kind of sweetness in my hands. This is the color I will never forget. Women are sitting there with their poker faces, no emotion shown, forever staying low. And I am sitting here by my own, smiling like a happy child.

This is my family portrait.



# Be a Hero of Your Own

Han Shi Ya, Sia

She says:

We are always walking on a paradoxical road, watching ever-changing sceneries and listening to resonating music. Sometimes it makes us feel lonely, sometimes joyful. We often feel we fight alone when we face difficulties. We often alienate ourselves from friends to avoid getting hurt. We often blame ourselves because we fail to meet the expectation of our families. Then one day, we suddenly find all the sorrowful and foolish things we have been trying hard to forget, are gone without a trace.

Most of the time when we get mad and feel broken-hearted, the problem tends to lie within ourselves. Others never have the chance to hurt us, unless we pay too much attention on them than ourselves because we already lost ourselves. Sometimes, we don't know what and how to do next when others comment on us; however, we forget that people always judge each other without reasons. Therefore, we need not be bothered. Happiness hardly ever comes to us if we never try to chase it. What we need to do first is to learn how to be our own master to overcome anxiety and frustration in life.

We try so hard to do one thing but end up spoiling it, so we consider ourselves losers. But no matter how many mistakes we make or how slow our progress is, we are still way ahead the one who is not trying. We learn from lessons so that we know how to move forward. But if

we refuse to confront obstacles and soak ourselves in sadness, we can never succeed. Life is not about waiting for the storm to pass; it is about learning to dance in the rain.

Remember, sometimes no one can help you except yourself. The only way is to trust and love ourselves. We can do whatever we hope; and we never know how strong we really are.

ESSAY

# Postmodernism, Spectacle and Ideology in WeChat

Yu Shuyang, Lolita

“WeChat, a software that has web-based voice message, video, picture, and word communication functions, was launched by the Chinese company Tencent on January 21, 2011” (Wang & Gu, 2015). As the most popular social media site in China, WeChat provides a platform for communication, distribution and exhibition. As the representative of new media, WeChat stimulates a revolution of the way people receive information from mass media; and each user owns his/her distinctive WeChat circle shown on Moments, also interests and tastes shown on followed public accounts. However, the “government censorship and control mechanisms have limited the scope of the application’s potential for community formation” (Harwit, 2016). The ideological control of government on WeChat is manifested by the censorship of sensitive words. The postmodern identity construction on WeChat Moments, and the advertisements on its public accounts which form a spectacle society, uncover the ideological struggle between the public and the government through the censorship and self-censorship of social events spread on the WeChat platform.

Moments is the main function of WeChat which provides an online

space for users to post photos and texts to record their lives and share links of articles on its public accounts. The postmodern identity construction of the WeChat users in Moments is constantly changing through interaction, and the “Share to” function gives rise to highly unstable multiple identities, while the real identity of a WeChat user is hidden behind the perfect self-image presented by particularly chosen Moments posts. Firstly, during the identification progress from modern to postmodern, the subject has an infinite range to construct its identity. When a WeChat user posts his/her own photos or texts and gets likes and comments from his/her WeChat friends, also reply these comments—through the interaction between the subject and other users—such user’s identity constantly changes. Users who attend to make their posts more attractive to get likes, reflect their desire to be accepted by the society; while the social accepted images also change with the rapid development of the society. Secondly, the multiple identities derived from “Share to” function of WeChat Moments are highly unstable, fragmented and indefinable, and the identification progress is never completed. A WeChat user can “customize in the ‘Share to’ feature so that only certain users can view the content of the user’s post” (Wang & Gu, 2015). This function empowers users to decide who can have access to their posts, which gives them “an enhanced sense of security” to “post information more freely” (Wang & Gu, 2015). However, the WeChat contact is tightly related to socializing in reality. In order to avoid being criticized and over-explained by their friends, users tend to hide their real feelings in their posts or post different contents to certain groups of people. As a result, a user may get confused about his real identity, which is fragmented by posts in Moments shown to different groups of WeChat friends. Thirdly, the real identity is hidden behind the perfect self-image shown in the attractive posts, and the subject is never freed from the dialectic between himself and others. In China, with the popularity of WeChat, normally if two people meet for the first time and wish to keep in touch, they will add each other’s contact on WeChat, and view his WeChat Moments. The reason behind such common social method in China is that “Chinese culture does seem to exhibit a tendency to be less direct or

or less confrontational” (Kaplan, 1966). Therefore, people tend to construct their social images on social media, mainly WeChat Moments, which shows one’s daily life and interests, rather than talking about themselves too much in the first meeting. In this situation, more people are accustomed to edit their WeChat Moments carefully and delete the inappropriate posts to build up a perfect self-image. However, in their identity construction, the subject may be confused by the conflict between the real self and the perfect self-image created for pleasing others in socialization.

The WeChat public accounts run by individuals who embed advertisements from cooperating companies and brands in their posts, are changing users from passive consumers to active producers; meanwhile encourage consumerism and dialectically form a spectacle society which weakens the reality. Normally a public account focuses on certain topics, and it delivers posts daily or weekly to followers on its home page. Some public accounts are held by organizations and companies, and others are run by individuals, which usually cooperate with companies and brands. Typically, this kind of public accounts use dramatic titles to attract followers clicking on their articles, and advertisements of the company or of certain brands that are at the end of the articles. The followers are persuaded to click on the advertisements because of the personal influence of the account holders, which provides account holders economic profits from advertising to maintain the operation of the accounts. Since 2015, this trend has become more popular in China due to the increased use of WeChat and change of people’s consuming habits. This new form of promotion gives rise to a media revolution in China, because individual users “are not passive users but active designers who shape, redesign, and localize an available technology to fit into their local contexts” (Sun, 2012). People are no longer passive consumers of mass media in the era of We Media, now anyone can open a public account on the WeChat platform to produce one’s own contents and build up a personal brand. However, some public accounts, especially those related to fashion, usually encourage their followers to buy the commodities in

promotional articles by using persuasive stories and attractive discounts. The advertisements resemble the simulation which “describes a process of replacing ‘real’ with ‘virtual’ or simulated events” (Best & Kellner, 2016), because the simulation of commodities replaces objects in real life. The consumers are consuming the concepts of the commodities, but not the commodities themselves. For example, in October 2016, the French luxury brand Yves Saint Laurent (YSL) launched a successful advertising campaign on the WeChat platform for the Christmas limited edition of Rouge Pur Couture Lipstick Star Clash. The WeChat public accounts were flooded by the promotion articles of YSL Star Clash lipstick, and lots of female WeChat users posted status on Moments to persuade their boyfriends or husbands to buy this lipstick for them as an “expression of love”. Obviously it was not a natural trend formed among the WeChat users, but a well-planned promotion of the YSL company, which stimulated the consumption desire of the WeChat users, especially young women. In addition, it created the spectacle of “a man buys a YSL Star Clash for you means he loves you and you deserve this expensive present”. According to Debord (1994), “When the real world changes into simple images, simple images become real beings and effective motivations of a hypnotic behavior”, the pervasiveness of YSL promotion simplified the complicated love to plain behavior of “buy you the lipstick”. From the YSL lipstick promotion case, while we are enjoying the convenience of WeChat, we should beware the fact that WeChat has “attained the total occupation” of our daily life and created an online spectacle society (Debord, 1994). In the spectacle society, people are encouraged to consume commodities, especially luxuries, which represents their social status and pursuit of high-quality life. However, consumerism makes us feel empty because “electronic or digitized images, signs, or spectacles replace ‘real life’ and objects in the real world” (Best & Kellner, 2016). What we actually consume is the spectacle which weakens reality and makes us lose connection with the real life. Dialectically, except for the active participatory of constructing identities, the WeChat users are also separated from actively producing one’s life through passively consuming spectacles

on the WeChat platform, which makes us engaged in “a postmodern world of signs without depth, origins, or referent” (Best & Kellner, 2016).

The social events spread on the WeChat platform are hindered by severe censorship from the government, and the users use self-censorship to gain the control of ideologies, which illustrates the mechanism of ideological process is shaped by language, while the government and the public are struggling for the ideological power. According to Wang and Gu (2015), WeChat “enables international information flow” in China, “where communication is largely controlled and censored by the government”. They furthered that in February 2015, a video named “Under the Dome” was produced by a journalist Chai Jing and became a hit on the Chinese Internet. In the video, a series of statistics and facts about the smog problem in China were shown to call the public’s attention to the issue and criticize the lack of action of the Chinese government. Wang and Gu (2015) suggested that, “While the production and the broadcast of the video had nothing to do with WeChat, the dissemination and its subsequent discussion by the general public was closely linked to this technology”. The WeChat users used the “Share to” function to spread the video and discussed the issue on Moments limited to WeChat friends who are in one’s contacts, hence ensured the discussions “within a relatively safe online environment” (Wang & Gu, 2015). In this case, because the rapid spread of information on WeChat aroused severe reactions from the public and threatened the authority of the Chinese government, the government censored the WeChat messages to gain control of the information flow. Some articles on the WeChat public accounts cannot be read because of “violation of laws and regulations”, some words are forbidden in posts and comments on Moments even in private conversations, and accounts of some users are blocked. However, having experienced everyday online censorship, “Chinese citizens were generally accustomed to this kind of regulation, and they typically practiced self-censorship in their communication” (Harwit, 2016). Through self-censorship of avoiding the use of sensitive words and to be

blocked, the Chinese WeChat users have created some new forms to express their opinions, like using other Chinese characters with the same sound to replace the sensitive words or using English translation of the sensitive words. According to Stuart Hall (1982), “the mechanism of ideological process is shaped by linguistic character of ideological discourses in the symbolic”. In the case of “Under the Dome”, a pure word was given the political and sociocultural meaning and became a signified, a “sensitive word”. Subsequently, the censorship mechanism detected it in online posts or comments on WeChat, and forbade users to use this sensitive word to challenge the government by its connotation. In the background of government censorship and self-censorship, the social events like the hit of “Under the Dome” on WeChat, are “problematic” or “unexpected”, which “break the frame of our previous expectations about the world” (Hall, 1982). Both the public and the government have not experienced this kind of events before the rise of social media in China. The social events may involve “powerful social interests”, or involve “starkly opposing or conflicting interests”, in any situation, a social event is signified in a particular way, which represents the ideological power (Hall, 1982). The public and the government have struggled for gaining control of ideological power on the WeChat platform. However, the public and the government are not in binary opposition, their interests are not opposing, but somehow conflicting, the maintained rules set by the government have constantly combined with the “active or inactive consent” of the public (Hall, 1982), which means that the agreement of the public to the government regulations have influenced the development of our society ideologically.

As the leading social media site in China, undoubtedly WeChat is extremely successful. WeChat is the most popular and convenient communication tool in the market, Moments provides Chinese citizens an online social space, and the public accounts become users’ main resources of getting information. While we are in the progress of postmodern identity construction on Moments, we should also be aware of the negative effects of the advertisements on some public

accounts which form the spectacle society to threaten our real life. The ideological struggle between the public and the government originated from users' self-awareness of their postmodern identification, and the monopoly of ideology of some public accounts, awakens users' awareness to struggle for the ideological power.

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# Cinderella and the Shifting of Medium

Ip Wai Chi

Cinderella is a popular fairy tale. All of us are familiar with this story and the message behind it, especially Disney's Cinderella. Considering the changing ways of telling and expressing fairy tales due to the development of the mass-media, the story of Cinderella may also change fundamentally. However this essay will argue that Cinderella has not evolved in alternative media. Firstly, I will discuss the patriarchal ideology presented in the Grimms' version and argue that the voice of the female is suppressed by the changing of power in different editions. Secondly, I will mention the differences between the Grimms' version and the Disney's animated film, and argue that the ideology does not change in the story, and the function of film leads to the domination of the Disney's image of Cinderella that emphasizes the original message and how the Disney's version of Cinderella presents some additional American values.

The patriarchal ideas are obvious in Brothers Grimm's Cinderella. In its narrative, the male character is perfect. For example, the prince is faithful to Cinderella. "Whenever anyone came and asked her to dance, he would say: 'She is my partner.'" Moreover, the power of men is strengthened as the prince has the privilege to choose his

bride and set the 'rule' that his bride's feet must perfectly fit the shoes. In addition, the fault of the male character is neglected. In this story, Cinderella's father has the responsibility to protect her but "the father's responsibility for creating turmoil by choosing a monstrous marriage partner recedes into the background or is suppressed" (Tatar, 1999). His image is very passive. Instead, the female characters are humiliated in the whole story. For example, Cinderella suffers from domestic drudgery, the stepsisters need to cut their toes and heels to fit the shoes and at last the punishment of them is that their eyes are pecked out by the doves. Furthermore, the patriarchal narrative constructs a perfect female image of Cinderella to fulfill the desires of men. For example, her beauty is underpinned in the story. When she goes into the ball with her beautiful new dress: "she looked so beautiful in the dress of gold that they thought she must be the daughter of a foreign king." It reveals the male gaze and what the male wants the female to be. In addition, the stepmother says "How can you go to a wedding when you're covered with dust and dirt? How can you want to go to a ball when you have neither a dress nor shoes?" It shows the importance of beauty in a woman's mind and this thought is obviously constructed by the patriarchy.

Comparing the female and male characters in Cinderella, the female characters do not gain anything that they want. They just suffer and they are humiliated. However, the male characters have nothing to lose, or they even gain something they like, such as the remarriage of Cinderella's father and the beautiful bride of the prince. On the other hand, the relationship between the female and male characters in such narrative serves the patriarchy as the male characters are heroes and women are victims. In the story, Cinderella's misfortune ends when the prince chooses her as his bride. The prince seems like a hero and he saves Cinderella from her misfortune. In short, the patriarchal narrative serves the patriarchy and emphasizes the patriarchal messages. Since the literary fairy tales are popular, the patriarchal ideology has been embedded in the mass's mind while the voice of female is suppressed.

In fact, most of the traditional stories of Brothers Grimm, including 'Cinderella', were told by women. "The Grimm Brothers' most inspiring and prolific sources were women, from families of friends and close relation" (Marina, 1999). It reveals the strong connection between women and fairy tales and the ability of women to edit the stories when they are telling the tales to the audience. Thus, their voice is supposed to be obvious and strong. However, as it is mentioned above, the female voice in the Cinderella is very weak and the patriarchal message is very strong. One of the possible reasons is that the male editors consciously or unconsciously altered the stories and the message when they turned the verbal fairy tales into literature. The ability of changing the stories was shifted from female to male due to the development of the media from domestic storytelling to book publications.

On the other hand, printed fairy tales are considered a new kind of communication in public institutions (Zipes, 1994). Although the social-industrial transformations from the community giving way to society is caused by the loss of live contact between the storyteller and the audience, the literary fairy tale edited by the educated author benefits the development of society since the optimistic notion of dreaming and miracles is spread and encouraged (Zipes, 1994). Therefore, it is good for society.

Firstly, the father of Cinderella survives but her mother dies in the Grimms' tale. However, Cinderella is an orphan in the Disney film as both of her parents died. This difference underpins the absent image of her father and simplifies the story simultaneously. Secondly, Disney's step-sisters are ugly and evil while they are merely bad but beautiful in Grimms' version. It emphasizes their evilness and simplifies the characteristics of them as being wicked only. Thirdly, the animal characters in the Disney film play the role of Cinderella's protectors and friends who can fight against the villains such as the cat, Lucifer and the stepmother, Mrs. Tremaine. Fourthly, in Grimms' version, Cinderella attends the ball and meets the prince three times. Instead, Disney's Cinderella only goes to the ball once.

This easily pleases the audience. Finally, the punishment of Grimms' tale is pecking out the eyes of the stepsisters but this is not mentioned in the film. It is considered as the simplification of the film and audience so that different social classes would not be offended.

The Disney film actually keeps the ideological messages of Grimms' version of Cinderella that is about the notion of patriarchy in the nineteenth-century. Therefore, the patriarchal ideology presented in the film presents no difference with the ideas mentioned in the first section.

In addition, this film is an American version on the fairy tale. The ideological values such as the importance of justice and hard work are presented in this film (Zipes, 1994). For example, the animal friends of Cinderella help her to make the dress and open the door. These indeed maintain a world of justice and restore harmony to the world, and hence they become the star attractions of the film and make the film lively (Zipes, 1994). In addition, the popularity of this movie dominates the perspective, and thus, gradually colonizes other national audience.

In conclusion, there is no difference between the Grimm's version and Disney's Cinderella. The story has not changed fundamentally but its expression alters due to the development of media. The new expression even emphasizes the original patriarchal notion, since both versions show male control over women. However, many new versions of Cinderella are produced nowadays. For example, Disney's Cinderella that was produced in 2015 indeed showed the improvement of the development of the characters. Cinderella in this version is more active. She does not look for a prince to save her but searches for her own happiness on her own terms (Cutruzzula, 2015). I am looking forward to more creative versions of Cinderella.

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# Niagara and Feminism

Lam Ho Yan, Ernest

For the past few decades, the social status of women has been rising. The development of feminism has made equality between the two sexes, to a certain extent, a universal belief. The growth of feminism has highlighted the importance of studying and analyzing the image as well as the role of women in media texts. British feminist film theorist Laura Mulvey put forward her theories on women in cinema in her 1975 publication “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema”. In the following, I will be analyzing a film titled *Niagara* using the theories proposed by Mulvey. Mulvey believed women in films are always subordinate to men, but in reality that might not be the case, especially under a new era with new ideas.

*Niagara* is an American film produced in 1953, directed by Henry Hathaway and starred Marilyn Monroe. The film is seen as the capstone that sustained Monroe’s star status. Using Mulvey’s theory on the role of women in movies, the film is a typical example for illustrating women’s “to-be-looked-at-ness” for both the audience and the male characters in the film. “Scopophilia. There are circumstances in which looking itself is a source of pleasure” (Mulvey, 1999). As explained by Mulvey, the presence of women in

films serves two purposes; one for being the erotic object for the audience, the other being women as an erotic object for the male characters in the film, hence to provide the pleasure of looking for the male audience. Marilyn Monroe is famous for her appearance as well as her comic persona in films; she is often regarded as a sex symbol. Throughout the film, Monroe is seen “fulfilling her duties” as a sex symbol. Her character in the film Rose Loomis is introduced to the audience half-naked wearing only red lipstick and in bed with only a white sheet covering her body. In that particular scene Monroe has no line and only provides a visual and somewhat erotic performance to the audience. It is also worth noticing that there is a fair amount of screen time where we see Monroe walking. In all of those scenes, Monroe is seen with her iconic blonde hair and tight clothing as we can see her body shape clearly. These shots are strangely long to a point where one can study Monroe’s gesture as she purposely shakes her hips when she walks. Some of these scenes focus on only the back of Monroe, while the other scenes also capture the male characters looking at her when she is walking or entering the room. Whenever Monroe walks, not only is she an erotic object for those watching the film, but also for the male characters in the film. The director deliberately captured their reaction as a way to emphasize Monroe’s allure.

According to Mulvey (1999), the cinema also provides a second form of pleasure: narcissism. “The cinema satisfies a primordial wish for pleasurable looking, but it goes further, developing scopophilia in its narcissistic aspect.” By illustrating patriarchal practices, the male audience can make identifications with the male characters. In *Niagara*, the major male characters are presented as controlling. Mr. Cutler, one of Monroe’s acquaintances, is seen many times in the film instructing his wife how to pose while he takes pictures of her. We also see him as the one who makes decisions between the two; when he decides the couple would leave the cabin but quickly changes his mind to have a business meeting, or when he “decides” his wife is only hallucinating when she sees a man entering their cabin. The male protagonist is seen as the one who makes things happen and plays an active role in forwarding the story. Mr. Cutler, for example, can

provide the identification for the male audience of being the controlling one. As mentioned before, *Niagara* is produced and released in the post Second World War era. It is proposed by many analysts that male audience at the time needed to regain their identity and masculinity, which might be caused by the increasing amount of women entering the workforce. The anxiety of men is suggested what aroused gender issue: "... the real gender issue was not women's discontent, but rather men's anxiety over their masculinity" (Banner, 2008). In the film, Monroe's husband George Loomis is a retired soldier. Although Loomis is a killer, ultimately he is seen as a hero for sacrificing himself and saving Mrs. Cutler. The male audience are able to make identification with the powerful and flawless ego of George Loomis. With such similar backgrounds, the mirror of being the hero is more complete.

Mulvey (1999) proposed a revolutionary "gaze theory" and theory on visual pleasure. Yet, like many analysts have noticed there are limitations on Mulvey's theories or even contradiction in the way she presents her idea. Feminism is definitely in its prime in recent years, similar to feminism the general public is getting more welcoming towards homosexuality. Many cultural theorists have started the discussion on gay cultures, hence some critics challenge Mulvey's theory on visual pleasure leans on heterosexuality only. "Mulvey describes the passive, feminine sense of 'to-be-looked-at-ness' can also be applied to images of masculinity, both with regard to heterosexual female and gay identification" (Manlove, 2007). In this sense, the mechanism of visual pleasure will be completely changed—"to-be-looked-at-ness" transformed from erotic object to masculinity. Many successful women in the entertainment industry are seen as gay icons, such as Judy Garland, Audrey Hepburn and Bette Davis. Gay icons in media texts are whom the LGBTQ community makes identifications with, instead of looking at women as an erotic object, they see women as a figure for empowerment. Marilyn Monroe is a gay icon for her star power and charisma. "Monroe is adored, imitated, and idolized, and the enormous amount of material written about her ... proves that she will continue to be a source of interest" (De Vito, 2006). Other than a sex symbol,

Monroe is seen as an outspoken and independent woman, qualities that she does show in *Niagara* that some might have overlooked. While she dresses the way that she does, she shows absolute awareness that she is being looked at; she is not dressing to please but out of confidence. Moreover, she shows her "in-control-ness" when she refuses to dance. Monroe shows courage in the way she embraces her sexuality and womanhood. The LGBTQ community can easily identify with such braveness since it is the same kind of quality needed to embrace their queerness and individuality. Movies as part of the media do not axiomatically connect women to weakness. Some of the representations of women in films do indeed show strength and independence, hence women in films can also initiate identification.

Some critics also point to Mulvey's reading on Alfred Hitchcock's *Vertigo*, in particular her readings on the male protagonist. "... Yet he is also a passive victim of another, more powerful gaze. Not only is Scottie a complete dupe ... he also believes that it is he who is in control" (Manlove, 2007). Not only can men be the victim of the gaze, men in films are not necessarily in control the way Mulvey perceives. Similar to Scottie in *Vertigo*, George Loomis in *Niagara*, though not a passive victim of a powerful gaze, is a victim of circumstances. Early on in the film it is revealed that he has mental health issues. Multiple times in the film he is seen having a mental outburst, when he breaks Monroe's vinyl or when he breaks the model car he carefully crafted. All of these induces he is not in control of his condition; he is controlled by an unfavorable situation. It is even bluntly stated that Loomis' anxiety is caused by the manipulation of Monroe's character. Like Scottie or Loomis, male characters can be manipulated by a hidden and more powerful figure. The cinema is not certainly a patriarchal space, where the male protagonist is automatically given a perfect and ideal ego. Rather, it is possible that men appear more helpless and fragile than women do in films.

Mulvey's theories are undoubtedly influential and crucial in academia, though it seems that it failed to stand the test of time since it

contradicts some current beliefs. Upon studying the media text and theories, it is made even clearer how there are more than one side of every story. Ultimately it points back to one postmodern feature, the absence of universal truth. When it comes to postmodern media, particularly in films, there is not one specific role that one gender is destined to play. The relationship is always interchangeable and unpredictable.

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# Accepting Homosexuality in The History Boys and Carol

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*The History Boys* is a play by Alan Bennett with the subplot of exploring homosexuality among three characters, Hector, Irwin and Posner. It shows homosexual suffering among three different generations. *Carol* (2015), a British-American romantic drama film directed by Todd Haynes and written by Phyllis Nagy based on Patricia Highsmith's *The Price of Salt*, explores two female characters, Therese and Carol. The young photographer and the older woman go through their forbidden romantic love affair in the repressed 50s in the US. Both stories show us that homosexuality is not a moral problem nor a disease but just a simple choice of a romantic relationship with a loved one and an expression of love between two people.

First, homosexuality is discovered by self-awareness. Both Posner and Therese found themselves sexually attracted to people of the same sex. No one told them how to become and why they are homosexual. Both Posner and Therese are conscious about eye-contacts among other individuals. In *The History Boys*, Scripps reveals that 'Posner...seldom took his eyes off Dakin, he knew that Irwin looked at him occasionally too and he wanted him to say so.' (Bennett, 2006,

P.44). And then Scripps asks how Posner knows Irwin likes Dakin too. Posner's answer also shows how important eye-contact is. Posner says, "because nor do I. Our (Posner and Irwin) eyes meet, look at Dakin." In *Carol*, the film has several scenes that Therese appears in a location and notices there are always some women awkwardly gazing her, suggesting that eye-contact is the key element to tell their affection and interest without any word. Meanwhile, the way Carol is introduced in the film starts from a gaze towards Therese. At the same time, Therese looks back and falls in love at first sight. Here, eye-contact becomes a signal for them to "communicate" their desires.

Both Posner and Therese confirm themselves homosexual after feeling jealousy towards their beloved ones. In *The History Boys*, Posner feels heartbroken after Dakin shows his victory with Fiona and Irwin. According to the scene in which Dakin expresses his victory on Fiona, Posner ends with "Oh Scrippsy, I can't bear to listen, but I want to hear every word. What does that mean?" (Bennett, 2006, P.29). We can see Posner feeling lost, which reveals his love towards Dakin. Also, Posner's jealousy towards Dakin causes him misery and dissatisfaction. This leads to love which does not and may not occur to Posner. According to Scripps:

Dakin's navel, I remember, was small and hard like an unripe blackberry. Posner's navel was softer and more like that of the eponymous orange. Posner envied Dakin his navel and all the rest of him. That this envy might amount to love does not yet occur to Posner, as to date it has only caused him misery and satisfaction. (Bennett, 2006, P.21)

Therese feels mournful after seeing Carol's family and Carol's husband. In the film *Carol*, Carol first invites Therese to her house and flirts with her. Carol's husband's sudden arrival interrupts and ruins the moment. Therese leaves the house later and cries on the train. At that specific moment, Therese understands that her love and jealousy is harming Carol's family and herself too. Here we can see how Therese's and Posner's jealousy discloses their love towards

Carol and Dakin respectively. Also, Carol, Therese and Posner all observe that there was something special. Carol finds out that she is interested in women when she stays up all night with her long-term friend, Abby.. According to the scene in which Therese argues with her unwilling boyfriend, "I (Therese) do not! I just like is all. I'm fond of anyone I can really talk to." (Carol, 2015), Therese could not receive pleasure from men and only feel liberated and joyful with Carol. Although *The History Boys* does not directly tell us how Posner discovers himself as homosexual, we could see that Posner does things to show his affection, for example, mimicking Dakin's hand writing and participating in conversations with Dakin on topics that hurt Posner himself. By comparison, Posner is the only one who admits and confesses his homosexuality in *The History Boys*.

Second, homosexuality is not a disease which could not and should not be cured. In the confession dialogue with Irwin in *The History Boys*, Posner finds that homosexuality is just a phase according to the research he has found. Once you get through the phase, homosexuality will never bother him again. According to *Representations of Youth: The Study of Youth and Adolescence in Britain and America* written by Christine Griffin published in 2013, 'adolescent homosexuality' is frequently represented in the mainstream literature through a distinction between two different forms of homosexuality, a temporary form of homosexuality ('it's just a phase') and an irrevocable form of 'true homosexuality'. The mainstream literature tends to explain the adolescent homosexuality by a bio-medical origin. The reason could be that by using the 'passing phase' thesis to promote and refuse the potential threat, the heterosexual society norm would not be harmed. Therefore, the 'passing phase' thesis gives a powerful means to the adolescent homosexual which they can be defused through the argument that they are likely to be a temporary phenomenon, which could be 'corrected'. However, this thesis does work with Posner in the book *The History Boys*. "He (Posner) lives alone in a cottage he has renovated himself, has an allotment and periodic breakdowns" (Bennett, 2006, P.108). We can see that the "correction" fails and leads to a more painful ending.

In the story background of *Carol*, gender-nonconforming women are considered as "congenital inverts" by the medical and psychological field. Carol's homosexuality was considered a disease at that time and could be cured by special therapy and treatment in a psychotherapist perspective, called conversion therapy. It is a psychological treatment or counselling designed to change a person's sexual orientation from homosexual or bisexual into heterosexual. This is revealed in the scene in which Carol is having a lunch meeting with her husband's family. Homosexuality was still forbidden in the conservative society.

Third, inhibiting or constraining homosexuality would only end in tragedy and personal trauma. Instead of suppressing the desire, we should accept and embrace it whole-heartedly. In *The History Boys*, Posner suffers from mental breakdowns. His correction is obviously not successful. Hector's unsuccessful marriage as a front only leads Hector to a sad life. For example, in the dialogue scene in the headmaster room, "I (Hector) have no idea. What women know or don't know has always been a mystery to me." (Bennett, 2006, P.52). This shows his opinion on his sad marriage with a nameless wife with whom he lacks intimacy.

Carol's unsuccessful marriage shows in the scene in which Carol shares her relationship with her husband: "Harge and I (Carol) never spend New Year's Eve together. Always a business function. Always clients to entertain." (Haynes, 2015) She has attempted to hide her homosexuality and fulfill the expectations of her social class. At the same time, in order to win the lawsuit, Carol has to leave and suppress her desire towards Therese. According to the letter Carol gives Therese, "I have much to do, and you, my darling, even more. Please believe that I would do anything to see you happy. So, I do the only thing I can... I release you." (Haynes, 2015) We understand that it is painful and helpless for Carol to suppress her homosexuality in order to gain custody. However, in the end, Carol openly admits her affection towards Therese during the negotiation with her husband for Rindy's custody. She is truly happy and embraces her sexuality.

To conclude, homosexuality is like any other kind of relationship.

The point of the argument is not to say that homosexuality is more superior than heterosexuality, but that we should not label the choice of your love. As long as we stop labelling and start understanding, embracing and respecting different people's personal choices, tragedy could be avoided.

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# Hermaphroditism in M. Butterfly and Orlando

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Ancient Greek mythology depicts Hermaphroditus as having wings and features of both male and female. Nowadays, Hongkongers are more aware of gender identity. Sony Chan would be a good example. Sony, born as male, refuses to live in the world of the gender binary system. He never underwent any sex reassignment treatments or surgeries and chooses to dress and live as a woman in France. But how deeply do we understand the genders? In *M. Butterfly* (1957) and *Orlando* (1992), two storytellers discuss this issue. In this essay, I will suggest that the gender binary system does not necessarily hold and is not the best option for people.

The protagonists of *M. Butterfly* and *Orlando* share similar experiences in their gender. Both of them were born in a male body and at some point in their life they started living as female. However, the processes they have gone through are not quite the same. It is a remarkable change that gives them a unique view of gender identity. In *M. Butterfly*, Song Liling is a beautiful Chinese actor. He is good at acting, even in his real life. His excellent stage performance has gained Rene Gallimard's, a French diplomat, attention. Song uses this and spies on Gallimard to get military intelligence. Also, he disguises

as a woman to help himself in his assignment for twenty years. He enjoys disguising himself as a woman. Even when his supervisor questions him, "You're wearing a dress. And every time I come here, you're wearing a dress. Is that because you're an actor? Or what?" (Hwang, D.H., 1957, p.48) Song still insists it is for the mission. And he keeps doing so, treating it as art performance. On the other hand, in *Orlando* by Sally Potter, Orlando is immortal and wealthy, being blessed by Queen Elizabeth I, "For you and for your heirs Orlando. The House. But on one condition. Do not fade. Do not wither. Do not grow old." (Potter, S., 1992) So, he never gets old and needs not to worry about death which makes his life sound wonderful. He pursues and proposes to the woman whom he loves without a second thought. But at one point he wakes up as a woman. It is an unbelievable change in a human being but "she" transforms perfectly. She faces the changes peacefully and calmly. Also, she tries hard to get married and gives birth. Though in different eras, the two protagonists seem to resemble each other in personality. They are both facing the transition positively and have done so well. The setting is inspiring and thought-provoking to readers indeed.

The world we know is based on a gender binary system. In the past, people did not understand or accept transgender people. The insistence on binary gender caused gender stereotypes. In *M. Butterfly*, Gallimard and Marc consider women as subordinate to men. They talk of women about sexuality in a sense as if women are only objects. For example, "We all wanted to ball her. But she only wanted me." "I had her." "Right. You balled her." "She never wears underwear." (Hwang, 1957, p.33) Men consider and treat women as sexual objects to satisfy their libido. And in *Orlando*, the movie shows that women are inferior to men. There is a scene of Orlando being invited to a party. "Women have no desires, only affectation. Indeed women are but children of larger growth." "Ah, but I consider woman to be a beautiful romantic animal." "Oh, every woman is adverse to contradiction and frankly...most women have no character at all." (Potter, 1992) A few men make speeches about women belonging to men and their self-identities are only as wives of their husbands. The two proposal scenes describe women's situation

in the past. Love is supposed to be pure and mutual in relationships. But when a man wanted to marry someone he loved, they show the desires of power and lust. "I am offering my hand." "You're mine." They use words like "I adore you" in proposals. Men always try to control women. The traditional view of women is the result of patriarchal society.

In the past, cultural and sexual bias made us failed to see the truth of love. In *M. Butterfly*, Song pretends to be submissive to men at first. But, it is just a trick to deceive Gallimard. His female character is so perfectly presented to fit men's desire. "Okay, Rule one is: Men always believe what they want to hear. So a girl tells the most obnoxious lies and the guys will believe them every time..." (Hwang, 1957, p.82) Song says that in court. After that, Gallimard finds out that Song is a man. He cannot accept this betrayal but Song hopes that Gallimard can eventually love his male identity too. But because Gallimard cannot get away from the restriction of the old ideology, he loses his love and ends with tragedy. On the other hand, in *Orlando's* ending, she eventually finds her identity after four hundred years. "She - for there can be no doubt about her sex - is visiting the house she finally lost for the first time in over a hundred years." (Potter, 1992) She has a daughter without her husband and has written a book. She looks so happy because she is proud of her female identity. "But she has changed. She is no longer trapped by destiny. And she even let it go from the past. She found her life was beginning." (Potter, 1992) This ending shows that women's status has improved and they find their voice. Likewise, it represents a change in the old binary gender system. In Orlando's extreme case, one could see that one's gender would not change his or her inner spirit. However, the gender system needs to evolve. At least, we should view transgender people the same way we do to either gender and not letting gender define us.

Moreover, in the original *Orlando* novel, Orlando has a son instead of a daughter. However, the female director has changed the setting. It is actually a smart move which makes the ending more meaningful by suggesting that women can live happily with their own identity

without relying on men. After all, what makes the difference between the happy ending and the tragedy in the two stories? I believe it is the recognition of gender identity by society and the two protagonists themselves. Although Song is brave enough to insist on the gender she chooses, she has had a hard time because the society does not approve. On the other hand, after some struggle and adjustment, Orlando can live a happy life being accepted by society. I think it is because Orlando has lived through four hundred years and society has become more open-minded towards gender identity. The second reason is that the social status of women has improved after centuries. We should not let the binary gender system define and confine us anymore in the twenty-first century.

Now we have gone through some details about the two different love stories. We can see that sometimes love is not that far away, but it is often the biases in our minds that hinder us from reaching it, one of which is the ideology of gender. People used to think that categorizing gender into two groups would make the world easier but it is proved to be over-simplifying. Binary gender system does not necessarily hold and may not be the best option for human beings. Indeed, society is developing so fast that we need to adapt our old recognition. It is quite clear that the society consists not only of men and women anymore. All humans deserve respect regardless of gender.

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