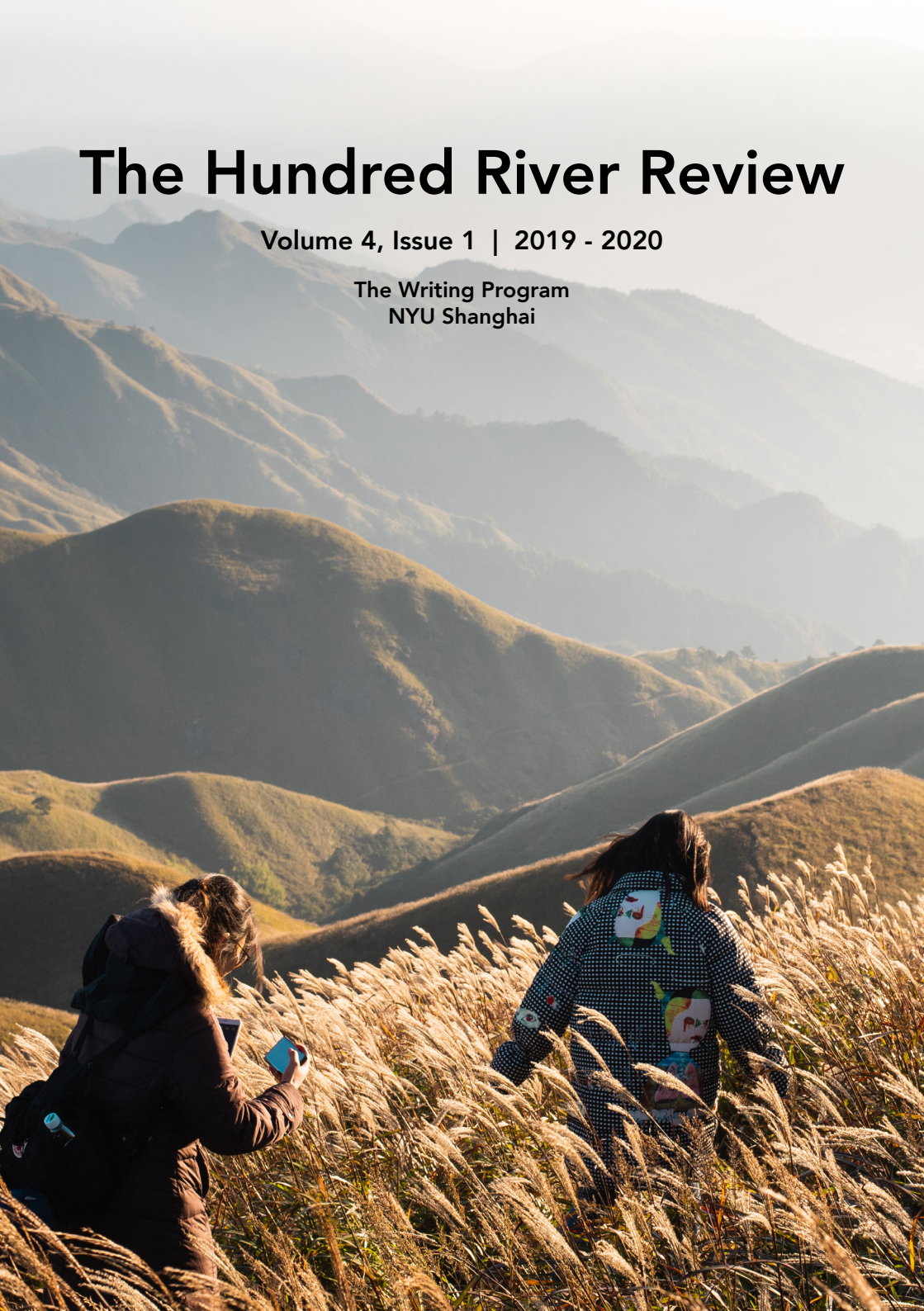# The Hundred River Review

Volume 4, Issue 1 | 2019 - 2020

海纳百川 有容乃大

The ocean accepts a hundred rivers
to contain each one equally

The Hundred River Review is a journal of excellent student writing produced in our core writing courses here at NYU Shanghai. We celebrate essays that challenge our thinking, present us with new ways of seeing texts, build great arguments, and model the writing goals of our core courses.

We believe that students want to share their writing and read the work of their peers, and *The Hundred River Review* provides a space for this exchange.

The Hundred River Review

Volume 4, Issue 1

The Writing Program
NYU Shanghai

Letter from the Editors

We are excited to bring you the fourth volume of *The Hundred River Review*, NYU Shanghai's journal of excellent student writing. Each year, we look for exemplary student essays that display the critical and interdisciplinary approach that characterizes NYU Shanghai's academic mission. This year has presented unique challenges in the wake of COVID-19, both academic and otherwise. These students revised their work while adjusting to online courses, home quarantine, and displacement, but they continued to demonstrate resilience and determination in the face of these challenges. We are impressed not only by their skill, but also by their dedication. It has clearly been worthwhile.

In this issue, students analyze a wide range of topics from the fields of science, social science, and the humanities. Xinyu Wang challenges Karl Popper's theory of falsification, arriving at the idea that science is a social construct which depends on the cultural environment it exists in. Ryan Hoover deftly unpacks the complexities of Donna Haraway's *Cyborg Manifesto* in order to challenge the notion that the internet is an equalizer. Yuxuan Li examines the film *Wonder Woman* through a feminist lens in order to advocate for a reimagining of iconic feminist superheroes in commercial films. Ellen Ying provides historical context for the changes undergone by the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* in the 1960s, thus highlighting the ideological conflicts that influenced this "neutral" scientific text. Yukun Jiang reexamines the achievements of the Qing Dynasty's educational reform, boldly challenging the historical narrative of his high school textbooks. Leyi Sun performs

a rigorous close reading of religion in *Dracula* to reveal how science and technology influence the way characters believe in God. Lanxin Shi uses Ibsenism in China to examine the complex ways that literature undergoes a metamorphosis from one culture to the next, thus explaining how ideas are developed through a dynamic conversation between these cultures.

Every year, we aim to showcase pieces from the core courses, *Writing as Inquiry* (I & II) and *Perspectives on the Humanities*, that can serve as a model for future students. We hope that these essays encourage you to write inquisitively, assert boldly, and inspire you to enrich your own academic work.

Sincerely,
Lore Leupold, Sam Fritsch, and Alice Chuang
The Hundred River Review Editorial Board

Table of Contents

Faculty Introduction

For her final research paper in my fall 2018 *Perspectives on the Humanities* course, Xinyu Wang explored a long-running debate from the philosophy of science. Xinyu's paper makes a seemingly arcane academic debate come to life. Her essay critiques Karl Popper's theories by juxtaposing them with the work of other scholars. Throughout the paper, Xinyu examines the assumptions within a number of texts, exposing logical flaws while also finding resonances and connections among the work of theorists such as Bruno Latour and Trevor Pinch. I especially admire Xinyu's ability to compare and contrast sources through well-chosen and seamlessly integrated quotations. Although the paper foregrounds other scholars' ideas, Xinyu's clear and forceful prose ensures that her own interpretation is never lost. The last section of the paper underscores the broader implications of the argument, showing how abstract philosophical questions might shape our understanding of pressing problems, such as climate change.

Joseph Giacomelli
Lecturer in the Writing Program

Science as a Social Construction

XINYU WANG

"The whole of science might be an error!" This astonishing saying comes from the 1959 book *The Logic of Scientific Discovery* written by Karl Popper, one of the most influential philosophers of science in the 20th century. By extensively criticizing the mainstream scientific methods of inductivism and empiricism, he proposes falsifiability and testability as the only demarcations of science and non-science, thus supporting the notion of absolute objectivity of science. Surprisingly, this striking notion gained wide acceptance among eminent scientists in the middle of the twentieth century. The Nobel Prize winner, Peter Medawar, even states, "There is no more to science than its method, and there is no more to its method than Popper has said" (Mulkay 1). However, does the acknowledgement from prestigious scientists such as Medawar necessarily mean that Popper's methodology is groundbreaking and worthy of widespread adoption? Especially in an ever-changing era, with more and more intertwined global issues like climate change and public health concerns, is the simple rule of falsifiability still valid and powerful enough to deal with these complex scenarios? This question matters a lot to the future path of the development of science. To answer this question, I will examine Popper's philosophy of science

closely, and bring critics, such as Thomas Kuhn and Bruno Latour, into conversation. By challenging Popper's pursuit of absolute objectivity in science, I argue that science is a socially-constructed concept, which is affected by factors such as power games and multiple interpretations. These social dimensions influence both the formation and perception of science.

In the first place, Karl Popper denies traditional scientific methodologies, such as empiricism and inductivism, because of "an asymmetry between verification and falsification" (Popper, *The Logic* 19). Popper argues that traditionally, scientific theories are verified by many successful cumulative experiments. However, in Popper's eyes, if the results of one of these experiments are faulty, the entire scientific theory is proven false. In this sense, "theories are therefore never empirically verifiable" because it is always possible for "an empirical scientific system" to be refuted by experience (Popper, *The Logic* 18). Moving away from inductive logic, Popper looks for a criterion of demarcation for scientific epistemology, which turns out to be testability and falsifiability. Following this definition, any scientific theory should have the potential to be disproved with counterexamples. Hence, we can only accept a developed theory tentatively if the current "critical efforts are unsuccessful" and we maintain "an eagerness to revise the theory if we succeed in designing a test which it cannot pass" (Popper, "Conjecture" 28). Furthermore, once the theory is falsified, we regard it as a mistake and abandon it immediately, thus making progress in our scientific discovery.

He believes that only in this way can we obtain absolute objectivity in science and distance knowledge from subjective social factors. In Popper's own words: "I shall try to establish the rules, or if you will, the norms, by which the scientists are guided when he is engaged in research or in discovery, in the sense here understood" (Popper, *The Logic* 29). Despite his good intention and seemingly reasonable approaches, the concept of falsification is quite problematic and the pursuit of absolute scientific objectivity is unattainable.

By emphasizing unreliable factors in an experimental procedure, the results of an experiment can be proven unsound. Since Popper bases his idea of falsification on the reliability of these experiments, the evidence that Popper uses to reject a scientific theory can also be refuted by using his logic. In response to this critique, he just calls it "a form of metaphysics" and claims that "you will never benefit from experience" in thinking that way (Popper, *The Logic* 28). This is actually a weak and unconvincing defense, as the point when the theory is truly falsified remains unclear. And the lack of criterion for valid falsification makes everything count as science, as long as we try really hard to reject it using empirical evidence afterwards. In this sense, falsifiability loses its meaning as the demarcation of science and non-science.

Thomas Kuhn, another great philosopher of science, explicitly denies the validity of falsification from a different perspective. In his book *The Structure of Scientific Revolution*, he points out that even if falsification is valid in most cases, we

cannot use the "emergence of an anomaly or falsifying instance" to reject the whole theory (146). Instead, true falsification is more like "a subsequent and separate process," which might be called another "verification of a new paradigm over the old one" (Kuhn, "The Structure" 147). To some extent, a successful falsification in Kuhn's mind should be based on the establishment of a new paradigm. A successful falsification does not necessarily mean that the challenger knows why the old theory is wrong or how the correct one should look. Instead, the over-emphasis on a contingent falsification exempts the scientists from making continuous efforts to build the new paradigm, as it is always easier to find a single counterexample than to establish a whole new system. Even worse, the focus on falsification confines one's thinking within the others' seemingly mature model. This adherence makes it even harder to make breakthroughs. Therefore, the excessive emphasis on falsification actually hinders the development of science. From these two aspects, we can clearly see that Popper's failure to define valid falsification and his over-emphasis on the notion of falsification make his philosophy of science logically flawed.

These logical fallacies are deeply rooted in Popper's understanding of how science progresses and how he defines already falsified theories. In his opinion, progress is only made after a developed theory is falsified, which can be considered as a simple linear model. And once the old theory is falsified, it is identified as a mistake. However, most scientific work happens in the process of trying to improve or supplement existing theories,

not to falsify them, although falsification may sometimes be the result. Furthermore, many groundbreaking scientific discoveries are entirely independent of previous ones and approach the nature of the world from a completely different perspective. A perfect example would be the relationship between Newton's Law of Motion and Gravity and Einstein's General Theory of Relativity. Einstein's research on the nature of time and space is neither built upon Newton's theory nor meant to falsify it. However, Arthur Eddington, an English astronomer, observed the contradiction between the two systems and proved Einstein's theory to be more accurate (Valtonen 44). Following Popper's definition, Newton's theory should be identified as a mistake and abandoned thereafter. But, in fact, Newton's theory is still taught everywhere and helps people understand motion and gravity, as it can apply to most cases in our daily lives. It is unfair to say that we are passing down a meaningless mistake from generation to generation.

Besides the theory's absolute accuracy, other social aspects, such as usefulness to society and its courage of innovation, should also be considered when we decide whether to preserve or abandon the theory. Even already abandoned and outdated theories, such as Ptolemaic astronomy and Phlogiston theory[1], should not be characterized as mistakes, but as "an amazing piece of puzzle solving" (Kuhn, "Logic

---

[1] Ptolemaic astronomy is the theory that Claudius Ptolemy synthesized to explain the motion of the stars, sun and planets, in which the Earth is in the middle of the rotating universe. The phlogiston theory is a superseded scientific theory that postulated that a fire-like element called phlogiston is contained within combustible bodies and released during combustion.

of Discovery" 11). The way they organized available data was perfectly scientific at that time. Those who make "mistakes" in science are actually brave scientific innovators, who describe and explain nature to the best of their abilities. The neglect of other possible development models and the rejection of predecessors shows that Popper's philosophy of science ignores the actual practices of scientific discovery.

The reason why such a great philosopher of science considers the development of science in such a simple way is that the whole set of Popper's scientific epistemology is built upon his ideal that science should be detached from society. However, this notion turns out to be impossible, as the development of science inevitably involves human factors, which is proven by Bruno Latour and Steve Woolgar in their book *Laboratory Life: The Social Construction of Science*. Based on their careful observation of daily practices inside the laboratory, they found that the production of scientific knowledge in such a comparatively pure and closed space is still "disrupted by the intrusion of external factors" (Latour, *Laboratory* 21). These factors involve the collision of different ideologies, the conflicts of scientific methodologies, and the personalized interpretation of the specific phenomenon. In order to eliminate the conflicts between methodologies and reach an agreement, scientists need to deploy their persuasive skills, like discussion. Thus, the laboratory can be seen as "the organization of persuasion through literary inscription," which, according to Popper's rule of demarcation, belongs to the non-science field (Latour,

Laboratory 44). Furthermore, the motivation behind these scientific experiments is also highly intertwined with social factors. When scientists are asked about what motivates them to do science, the most frequent three answers are internal satisfaction, personal credibility, and material rewards (Latour, *Laboratory* 190). Obviously, the latter two are achieved through active engagement with society. The original incentives for doing science fully illustrate that the intention of most scientific activities is already influenced by social factors from the very beginning. In such a way, social aspects are an inseparable part of science.

Outside of the laboratory, the construction of science is even more complex, as the formation of scientific consensus is no longer limited to the space of a single laboratory. "The interpretative flexibility" is displayed throughout the spread of science (Pinch 409). With this statement, the scholar Trevor Pinch explains that different "social groups," whose members share "the same set of value," may develop different opinions towards the same scientific rule based on how the research procedure is narrated and how their personal interests relate to it (Pinch 414). At the same time, this social mechanism also eliminates interpretative flexibility and closes the debate by accepting the one theory that passes the evaluation of the "Core-set" scientists, who are "intimately embroiled in scientific controversy" (Pinch 425). The formation of this Core-set group and the process of evaluation can be very obscure, and inevitably involves many subjective factors. Ironically,

what Popper is doing is to influence the "Core-set" scientists' epistemology of science. He takes a sociological approach to fight against social influence on science. Popper's attempt fully illustrates that we cannot avoid social aspects when pushing science forward. Thus, we can convincingly conclude that science is defined by people and the cultural environment it exists in.

Since science is deeply affected by these social factors, both the scientists and the public have the obligation to spread science and understand it in a proper way. Otherwise, misunderstanding of science could also cause problems to society in return. For example, if we adopt Popper's point of view in the problem of global warming, we would say that the claim that it is caused by human beings might be falsified at some point in the future. Thinking in this way, there is no point in us taking preventative measures, as any effort we make today may turn out to be useless later. In other words, "dangerous extremists" can use the "sword of criticism" and take falsification as a valid excuse for our nonfeasance (Latour, "Why" 227). When we push the critical spirit of falsification to the extreme, we may easily slip into the moral hazard about social issues that are inextricable from science. "The lack of scientific certainty" should not always be "the primary issue," especially when the critical spirit encourages us to "fight the wrong enemy" (Latour, "Why" 231). The uncertainty should not keep us away from the problem; instead, it should encourage us to take a close look at the problem. Popper's total

denial of inductivism and empiricism has driven him down the wrong path. Rather than subtracting these methodologies from the category of scientific approach, he should try harder to explain the conditions under which they might be renewed. Constructive criticism should lead to further possibilities, not merely subtraction; otherwise, it would only impede the progress of science and the often complex implementation of scientific principles and discoveries into society.

Applying the characteristics of a good criticism, I am also exploring a way to integrate Karl Popper's philosophy of science into the broader social context. The most valuable insight that Popper provides us is the critical spirit in scientific discovery, but he pushes this notion to the extreme, taking falsifiability as the only criterion. The oversimplification and the overemphasis on falsification would be unrealistic in the actual practice of science, since science is highly intertwined with complex social factors in both its origin and its spread. Therefore, the key is how to apply critical thinking to science properly from a sociological perspective. On the one hand, we should promote this kind of critical thinking to fight against the deliberate manipulation of science and to pursue scientific objectivity. For example, some businessmen urge some so-called scientists to give out certificates and make use of the title of "science" to promote sales of their health care products, which turn out to be useless or even harmful. In this case, truthful and objective scientific knowledge from science education should enable people to see through the trick. On the other

hand, objectivity should also be considered in a way that is combined with actual situations to avoid detachment from reality. The pursuit of absolute objectivity can lead to not only moral hazards in global issues, but also problems in cultural encounters. Let's take "gender" as an example. According to Popper's philosophy of science, "male" and "female" might qualify as just two categories with clear biological distinctions. By contrast, considering the social perception and construction of "gender," allows us to see the biases embedded in simplistic dichotomies. Nowadays, "gender" is interpreted in an individualized way with more and more people choosing to define, perceive, and illustrate it in their own ways. Therefore, the awareness of social factors in the construction of science is an important element to help science keep pace with the era and, at the same time, maintain its objectivity in a reasonable way.

Works Cited

Kuhn, Thomas S. "Logic of Discovery or Psychology of Research." *The Essential Tension: Selected Studies in Scientific Tradition and Change*. University of Chicago Press, 1977, pp. 266-92.

---. *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. University of Chicago Press, 1962.

Latour, Bruno, et al. *Laboratory Life: The Construction of Scientific Facts*. Princeton University Press, 2013.

Latour, Bruno. "Why Has Critique Run out of Steam? From Matters of Fact to Matters of Concern." *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 2, no. 2, 2004, pp. 225–48.

Mulkay, Michael, and G. Nigel Gilbert. "Putting Philosophy to Work: Karl Popper's Influence on Scientific Practice." *Philosophy of the Social Sciences*, vol. 11, no. 3, Sept. 1981, pp. 389–407.

Pinch, Trevor J., and Wiebe E. Bijker. "The Social Construction of Facts and Artefacts: Or How the Sociology of Science and the Sociology of Technology Might Benefit Each Other." *Social Studies of Science*, vol. 14, no. 3, Aug. 1984, pp. 399–441.

Popper, Karl. "Conjectures and Refutations." *Philosophy of Science A-Z*, 2007.

---. *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*. Routledge, 1992.

Setargew Kenaw. "Psychoanalyzing Historicists?: The Enigmatic Popper." *Journal for General Philosophy of Science / Zeitschrift Für Allgemeine Wissenschaftstheorie*, vol. 41, no. 2, 2010, pp. 315-322.

Valtonen, Mauri, et al. "From Newton to Einstein: The Discovery of Laws of Motion and Gravity." *Three-Body Problem from Pythagoras to Hawking*, Springer, 2016, pp. 31-49.

Faculty Introduction

Ryan Hoover's essay, which questions the inclusive and equalizing power of the Internet, comes out of the first-year-writing seminar, *Writing as Inquiry*, which I taught during an exchange semester in Shanghai last spring. For this research-based essay, called "The Present is the Future," we began our work by reading and discussing Donna Haraway's strange and conceptually rich "Cyborg Manifesto." Though it seemed impenetrable, Ryan's work here is exemplary of finding ways to apply Harraway's 1985 text without rejecting her or deifying her (as many have) but by applying her thinking to our shifting present-future circumstances. Ryan's essay uses a dynamic and specific array of evidence to create a vital conversation about the unforeseen biases of Internet algorithms and where humans might intervene as he makes a resounding case for "the reimagining of societal relationships and organizations."

Amira Pierce
Senior Language Lecturer, NYU New York

Internet:
The Machinery of Global Division

RYAN HOOVER

In the spring of 2014 in Fort Lauderdale, Brisha Borden and Vernon Prater were both charged on separate counts of petty theft for $80 worth of goods. They were both assigned algorithmically generated risk assessment numbers on a scale of 1-10 by the local police to determine the likelihood of criminal re-offenses. One-time misdemeanor offender Borden received a 9 (high risk), while convicted armed robber Prater received a 3 (low risk). If it is true that the internet has such innovative technologies, like predictive algorithms, then how are there such wide discrepancies in various groups' experiences with such technologies? In her 1985 piece "Cyborg Manifesto," Donna Haraway examines the tensions between technology and race, gender, and societal status. In Jenna Wortham's 2016 article "How an Archive of the Internet Could Change History," she looks at the potential of the internet as an equalizer for marginalized groups. Both Haraway and Wortham believe that the internet and similar technologies are an impetus for the enrichment of the human/cyborg kind. However, their hopes are overly idealistic as they overlook two key obstacles. First, they neglect the reality that internet access

is asymmetrical given physical and societal barriers. Second, they overlook the fact that internet infrastructure itself is racially biased due to the underrepresentation of people of color in the development and testing of algorithms.

Donna Haraway's manifesto claims that technology will equalize people across lines of race, gender, and societal status. She introduces and develops the idea of the cyborg as a postmodern and postgender being where humanity and technology merge. By doing so, Haraway challenges the suffocatingly restrictive societal constructs of gender, race, and class; she proposes the cyborg as a "powerful infidel heteroglossia" (Haraway 68). The usage of the term "heteroglossia" implies that the cyborg is a symbol for a new language that usurps the sexism, racism, and classism of conventional society. Interestingly enough, the *Encyclopedia of Postmodernism* defines "heteroglossia" as the understanding of language as being controlled by two opposing forces—one being the dominant, central, centripetal and the other being dominated, outside, and centrifugal (Taylor). This definition of heteroglossia is noteworthy because it connects the language of oppression to the societal oppression that exists in present day society. Haraway's notion of an "infidel heteroglossia" is one that sees the new language of cyborg, a language that intermingles humanity and technology, equalizing all people into a middle ground. In Haraway's ideal reality, this cyborg language desegregates the core and periphery, so that all can exist on one equal plane. The cyborg supposedly dissolves

societal barriers to women and people of color, so that everyone can obtain equal opportunities with technology. However, Haraway's vision of a future in which the traditional institutions are challenged by a unified cyborg language is an idealised one; Haraway makes suppositions about the possible societal effects of these emerging technologies.

Likewise, Jenna Wortham, a present day media writer and woman of color, argues that the internet is a tool for equalizing marginalized groups by allowing underrepresented voices to be heard in the cacophony of history. Wortham examines how archiving the internet, as done by Wikipedia and Rhizome, provides a voice for previously peripheral groups. The idea of a single history is completely flawed in Wortham's eyes, and she instead subscribes to the notion of a "multidimensional ledger" perspective on history (Wortham). The term "multidimensional ledger" refers to the differing perspectives of people that the internet accommodates to be seen and heard in a more interconnected post-modern society. She uses Wikipedia as an example to demonstrate how previously underrepresented people can have a platform to voice their perspectives on the internet by freely editing articles and historical chronicles. The multiple identities of previously underrepresented groups and the overlap between their identities create an "entangled histor[y]" that is told somewhere between fact and fiction to weave a more nuanced view on history (Wortham). The past for Wortham is not easy to understand, which is why she believes that a diverse

chorus of voices needs to be heard: a similar melding of core and periphery languages must happen. Wortham equates this entanglement of histories to the scientific topic of quantum entanglement. She states that just as two particles may be interdependent on one another's state, so too does the "fact" of history become interdependent on the people telling the stories and stories that are being told (Wortham). In other words, if a teller of historical "fact" is biased in any way, then the reality of history will become warped and entangled with that person's biases. The teller of the internet's history are algorithms, which are inherently biased by the fallible humans who created them.

Although Haraway and Wortham may be correct about the potential of the internet to be an equalizer, they fail to consider barriers to reaching this potential. Firstly, they disregard the physical inaccessibility that disproportionately affects people in developing countries. While oftentimes in Western pop culture the future is discussed as a distant concept like in the shiny, floating cars of the Jetsons, "[T]he future is already here; it just isn't evenly distributed" (Chen & Wellman). Deeply ingrained racism, sexism, and classism have proliferated the global society. While in recent decades great strides have been made, because of the internet there is a widening split between the interior (white, rich, men) and the exterior (people of color, poor, women). The split between these social stratas is directly reflected in the previously mentioned definition of heteroglossia. While the information age has made internet accessibility commonplace in affluent Western countries,

many developing countries cannot afford to enter the digital conversation. For example, in many developing African countries, internet access, while possible, is often too costly. And, even if a family can afford internet access, it is often of such low quality it is rendered functionally useless (Gillwald). The technology infrastructure is simply not adequate in these countries, and, thus, these periphery people are blocked from accessing the internet and the greater globe. Additionally, if there are pre-existing inequalities in developing nations then "these inequalities may increase as the Internet becomes more central for acquiring information about employment, health, education, and politics" (Chen & Wellman). The internet is exacerbating existing disjunctions between social strata. Due to the deep engrainment of the internet in Western society and the inability of people in less affluent countries to buy into the system, the digital divide is ever increasing.

Even if marginalized groups, like women, had equal physical access to the internet, they would still suffer from societal stigmas which prohibit them from equally accessing the internet. According to Stein et al in their article, "Social Inequality," in developing African nations where some families have internet access, the technology is "used almost entirely by the husband, and women, the majority of them illiterate housewives, lack opportunities for training in computer skills" (Stein et al). Not only is the internet serving to divide global communities, it is also separating local people based on gender; many social stratifications, which would be made irrelevant

in Haraway's vision of a shining future, are continuing to bar people from entering this "post-modern" world. How are we to reconcile the incongruities of Haraway's dream of a post-gender world in which the cyborg usurps existing societal constructs? Women in rural areas, both in Africa and in America, are bound by "cultural restrictions on mobility, reduced income, and the frequent lack of relevance of computer technologies to their existence" which "exclude these women ... from the information sector" (Stein et al). So, rather than a physical inability to access the internet, these women are discouraged by societal reservations for women to enter technological industries. The discrimination towards women shows that even 35 years after the publication of "A Cyborg Manifesto," we still have not entered into the post-gender utopia imagined by Haraway.

Societal stigmas prevent outsider groups from equally accessing the internet, but the development and execution of algorithms prevent them from equally interacting with the internet. The most basic internet infrastructure is biased against minorities because test groups are unrepresentative of the people using these technologies. As the author of "Algorithms of Oppression," Saifya Noble, learned, Google's autofill responses were shockingly racist and sexist; she saw the autofill responses for "why are black women so ...?" being "angry", "loud", and "mean." These obviously racist perceptions of black women are perpetuated by the racially skewed programing of the algorithms, which illuminates the Internet's underlying

alienation of black women. The biases that come from long-term societal oppression and socialization manifest themselves in ways ranging from the trivial to the dangerously racist. On the more trivial end of the spectrum (although not being able to access technology in the 21st century is not trivial), we can look at the discrepancy of effectiveness in facial recognition software between white and dark skins. For example, in Snapchat, certain filters fail to successfully register black people's faces. This failure to identify black skin clearly results from the dominance of primarily white test subjects and lack of test subjects with dark skin. However, the facial recognition of black people can have nastier societal implications. A more nefarious example was when an AI judged an international beauty competition, and "out of 44 winners, nearly all were white, a handful were Asian, and only one had dark skin" (Levin). This asymmetrical assignment of beauty was caused by a variety of factors: the biased algorithms to recognize "beauty" in sample pictures, the lack of adequate numbers of dark skin sample photos for the algorithms to recognize, and the bias of the humans who wrote the algorithms.

The creators of algorithms, and thereby the algorithms they produce, are unrepresentative of the users because they are overwhelmingly white and male. According to a study by the National Urban League, due to the high concentration of white males in the tech industry and the low quantity of people of color, under 5% in the industry being black, the technologies that emerge from tech companies are inherently

biased (Lockhart). If there are not people of color in the development of these emerging technologies, then how could the internet and related technologies be compatible with people of marginalized groups? The absence of representation of minority groups in the development, sampling, and execution of algorithms is emblematic of the unequal accessibility for outsider groups. Algorithms in particular leave little room for non-core peoples. These predictive algorithms do not allow for a deviation from the past, they do not leave room for change, and they reinforce history's past racist views. Many people do not realize the prevalence of algorithms in daily life and how they influence the outcomes of major life choices. For example, algorithms are used to assign interest rates on home loans, and, unsurprisingly, neighborhoods with a majority of people of color will have, on average, higher interest rates (Noble). Rather than believe that the internet is a neutral entity, the ugly truth must be addressed: internet algorithms are pervasive in society and systematically biased against minority groups.

So, the problem of internet inequality and division is two-pronged: a physical lack of access and a societally cultivated culture of oppression. Haraway and Wortham see an emancipatory future in technology, but they need to go a step further. Technology alone is not enough: there needs to be a reimagining of societal relationships and organizations. Instead of pretending that we live in a postmodern or post-gender world and ignoring what divides us, we should embrace the various intersectionalities of our identities to better develop

technologies for the future. Rather than letting past data be the main mechanism of algorithms, we should make room in these programs for change. A two-pronged problem requires a two-pronged solution. Firstly, people in power need to invest in the development of internet infrastructure, both in rural areas of wealthy nations and developing countries to allow physical internet access. Secondly, and more challengingly, societal awareness must be raised by privileged groups about the pervasive and largely invisible issue of internet inaccess between genders, races, and classes to help raise up underprivileged groups. On an individual level, we must demand greater inclusion from corporations, especially in their hiring processes and technologies. On a societal level, cultures that traditionally oppress must foster a more inclusive community that encourages people of all creeds, shapes, and colors to participate and be involved in technological development. Finally, all of us must not accept the internet and algorithms at face value, but, instead, look past the code for greater societal empathy and understanding.

Works Cited

Angwin, Julia, et al. "Machine Bias." *ProPublica*, 9 Mar. 2019,
www.propublica.org/article/machine-bias-risk-assessments-
in-criminal-sentencing.

Chen, Wenhong, and Wellman, Barry. "Minding the Cyber-gap:
the Internet and Social Inequality." *Blackwell Companions
to Sociology: The Blackwell Companion to Social Inequalities*
edited by Mary Romero, and Eric Margolis, Blackwell
Publishers, 1st edition, 2005. *Credo Reference*, http://proxy.
library.nyu.edu/login?url=https://search.credoreference.
com/content/entry/bkcsi/minding_the_cyber_gap_the_
internet_and_social_inequality/0?institutionId=577.
Accessed 7 Apr. 2019.

Gorski, Paul C. "Digital Equity." *Encyclopedia of Activism and
Social Justice*, edited by Gary L. Anderson, Sage
Publications, 1st edition, 2007. *Credo Reference*, http://
proxy.library.nyu.edu/login?url=https://
search.credoreference.com/content/entry/sageact/
digitalequity/0?institutionId=577. Accessed 18 Apr.
2019.

Haraway, Donna. "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology,
and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century."
*Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of
Nature*. New York: Routledge, 1991.

Levin, Sam. "A Beauty Contest Was Judged by AI and the Robots
Didn't like Dark Skin." *The Guardian*, Guardian News

and Media, 8 Sept. 2016, www.theguardian.com/
technology/2016/sep/08/artificial-intelligence-beauty
contest-doesnt-like-black-people.

Lockhart, P.R. "The Digital Revolution Is Leaving Black
People Behind." *Vox*, Vox, 4 May 2018, www.vox.
com/technology/2018/5/4/17318522/state-of-black-
america-2018-national-urba n-league-silicon-valley-race.

Noble, Safiya U. "Algorithms of Oppression." *NYU Press*, Feb.
2018, nyupress.org/9781479837243/algorithms-of-
oppression/.

Stein, Richard A., and Ionescu, Ana-Cristina. "Social Inequality."
The SAGE Encyclopedia of World Poverty, edited by
Mehmet A. Odekon, Sage Publications, 2nd edition,
2015. *Credo Reference*, http://proxy.library.nyu.edu/
login?url=https://search.credoreference.com/content/
entry/sagewpova/social_inequality/0?institutionId=577.
Accessed 7 Apr. 2019.

Taylor, Victor E., and Charles E. Winquist. *Encyclopedia of
Postmodernism*. Routledge, 2002. *EBSCOhost*, search.
ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=
70607&site=eds-live.

Wortham, Jenna. "How an Archive of the Internet Could Change
History." *The New York Times*, 21 June 2016, https://
www.nytimes.com/2016/06/26/magazine/how-an-
archive-of-the-internet-could-change-history.html

Faculty Introduction

Yuxuan Li wrote "*Wonder Woman*: A Poor Representation of Feminism" for *Writing as Inquiry I*. The assignment asked students to produce a research-based, argument-driven essay on a topic that points to a practical or research problem important to a larger audience. While situating their own arguments on the controversial topic within an ongoing conversation, students were also expected to consider alternate and opposing positions, create strong exigency for their own positions, offer in-depth analysis, employ the pillars of argument, and adeptly accommodate the essay to the values, interests, and previous knowledge of the intended audience and academic writing conventions.

Yuxuan clearly problematizes popular and critical interpretations of the 2017 film *Wonder Woman* as a positive contemporary American feminist representation. She considers the viewpoints film directors Patty Jenkins and James Cameron have made about the film's relation to American feminism, and she resorts to film critics like Laura Mulvey and Zoe Williams to enrich the conversation. Yuxuan successfully utilizes that debate to articulate, and transition, the conversation to her significant research question: "In what way is the film *Wonder Woman* representative, or not, of contemporary American feminism?" To answer this question, Yuxuan examines the body image of the heroine, traces the source of her superpowers in the film

versus the original comics, and finally compares how racially different Wonder Woman is from other contemporary female superheroines. The film, she concludes, falls short from actually challenging the status quo on three fronts: *Wonder Woman* reproduces a sexualized female body, chooses a privileged white woman to play Wonder Woman, and endows her with superpowers rooted in male power. Yuxuan's essay makes clear and sound claims and employs compelling evidence. It is well-researched, and its prose is clean and eloquent. It is an excellent model of a short, research-based essay in *Writing as Inquiry I*. I commend Yuxuan on this achievement.

Adam Yaghi
Lecturer in the Writing Program

Wonder Woman:

A Poor Representation of Feminism

YUXUAN LI

Wonder Woman, a 2017 American film, became the highest grossing female superhero movie in history. Certain moviegoers regard *Wonder Woman* as a feminist movie which promotes female independence and power. As the director Patty Jenkins said to *Variety*, *Wonder Woman* is "the success of feminism." However, the movie also triggered criticism of Wonder Woman's identity as a feminist. For example, in an interview with *The Guardian*, director James Cameron views Jenkins's vision of Wonder Woman as "an objectified icon" and "a step backward." In "How *Wonder Woman* Is, and Is Not, a Feminist Superheroine Movie," Kyle D. Killian also points out other aspects of *Wonder Woman*'s deficiency. Taking these arguments into consideration, I would like to ask, in what way is the film *Wonder Woman* representative, or not, of contemporary American feminism? In this research paper, I identify the answer by analyzing how the camera captures Wonder Woman's physical appearance, how she obtains her superpower in contrast to the original comic version, and how her identity compares with recent female superhero characters. Contrary to the popular perception of *Wonder Woman* as a model feminist movie, I argue that the film does not meet the

ideals of contemporary American feminism. Specifically, the film objectifies Wonder Woman under the male gaze, panders to patriarchy, and lacks intersectionality.

Produced by DC Films, *Wonder Woman* is the fourth installment of the DC Cinematic Universe adapted from the comic of the same name. The film tells the story of how Princess Diana of Themyscira, later known as Wonder Woman, discovers her full powers and true identity when fighting alongside men to end all wars during World War I. As the daughter of Queen Hippolyta, Diana was raised on the hidden island of Themyscira, which is the home of Amazonian warriors created by Zeus to protect humanity. On learning of the world war from the US pilot she rescues, Diana "ventures into the world of men to stop Ares, the god of war, from destroying mankind" (Kolpaper.com). In the final battle with Ares, she learns that she was the daughter of Zeus and achieves the ultimate victory. In addition to the exhilarating plot, *Wonder Woman* is also the highest-grossing film directed by a woman. The director, Patty Jenkins, was named by *Time* magazine as a runner-up for the Time Person of the Year in 2017. The film not only grossed over $821 million, but also gained a largely positive reputation. For example, on Rotten Tomatoes, a review-aggregation website with over 26 million visitors per month, the film holds an approval rating of 93% with an average rating of 7.64/10 (Rotten Tomatoes.com).

However, despite its reputation among certain moviegoers, *Wonder Woman* also received a lot of criticism. Although *Wonder Woman* is directed by a female director, the film still exists under the male gaze where women are objectified to satisfy a male audience. Some people argue that Jenkins's direction "points a way forward toward the possibility for women directors" (Zacharek). While it is true that a female director directing a big-budget blockbuster film indicates a recognition of women's ability, such progress does not go far enough. How so? The main character in *Wonder Woman* is shot with strong visual impact which conveys erotic cues to a male audience. In "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," Laura Mulvey, a renowned feminist film theorist, describes such phenomenon as "women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote to-be-looked-at-ness" (19). She also introduces a term to explain the reason behind this visual effect: the film is under the "male gaze." To be succinct, Mulvey points out that the images, characters, and plots in most commercial films inadvertently privilege the male audience to offer "visual pleasure." Although *Wonder Woman* is directed by a remarkable female filmmaker, it still presents the main character under the male gaze. For example, Gal Gadot, the actress who plays Wonder Woman, has a charming appearance with a slim figure, fair skin, a noble nose, and double eyelids. In addition to her appearance, her costume also objectifies her. Wearing a bustier and shorts, Wonder Woman's body shape is intentionally flaunted on the screen. Even in action scenes,

the shoots focus on her face and thighs to show how beautiful and sexy the character is. As Killian stresses, "that should not be the focus of a kickass heroine – her beauty, bone structure, and sexiness – if she is to be a feminist icon" (59). Bustier and bare thighs are not the necessity of a female superhero, but they do offer visual pleasure for the male audience. In this case, Cameron gets it right because Wonder Woman does become an objectified icon with strong erotic impact under the male gaze.

However, some film critics defend the sexualized image and refuse to admit Wonder Woman is an objectified icon. Zoe Williams, for instance, disagrees with Cameron when she writes, "this isn't objectification so much as a cultural reset: having thighs, actual thighs you can kick things with, not thighs that look like arms, is a feminist act" (par.3). In this way, Williams denies that the exposure of Wonder Woman's body objectifies her as a woman. Admittedly, Wonder Woman is a powerful superhero whose thighs are literally powerful weapons. In this case, the film takes this female audience perspective into consideration. However, this does not spare her from objectification under the male gaze. The film still caters to the male audience through the overexposure of her body. Such exaggerated exposure is unnecessary because it by no means makes her stronger, but, rather, makes her more attractive in the eyes of men. Therefore, it is overly optimistic of Williams to claim the sexualized image as "a cultural reset" rather than objectification.

Jenkins also responds to Cameron's criticism by stressing that critics should not focus on the appearance of Wonder Woman. As she says to *Los Angeles Times*, "When people get super critical about her outfit [meaning Wonder Woman], who's the one getting crazy about what a woman wears?" However, the sexualized image itself will diminish the belief in gender equality. In "The Empowering (Super) Heroine? The Effects of Sexualized Female Characters in Superhero Films on Women," Hillary Pennell conducts a psychological study on the short-term impact of sexualized-heroine images on women. Pennell invited 82 female undergraduates from Midwestern University in the U.S. to participate in an experiment, in which participants were instructed to conduct a survey adapts from the Attitudes toward Women Scale (AWS) by Behm-Morawitz and Mastro, which includes items like "Men and women should share household work equally," and "Men are better at taking on mental challenges than women," after watching clips of sexualized female superheroes. Volunteers were asked to rank the items from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (7) (Pennell 217). The higher the number is, the less egalitarian attitudes toward women it demonstrates. The result shows that, compared with volunteers who did not watch the clips, "the exposure to the sexualized-heroine images of women in superhero films decreases egalitarian gender role beliefs and body esteem" (Pennell 212). In this case, even if Wonder Woman is not a vulnerable female victim, her sexualized image under the male gaze will weaken women's belief in gender equality and lead to self-objectification. Since *Wonder Woman*

is a box-office film, this psychological influence may affect millions of women. Therefore, as a feminist movie directed by a female filmmaker and released nearly 40 years after Mulvey's study, *Wonder Woman*'s failure to escape from the male gaze demonstrates that it is a poor representation of contemporary feminism.

Besides the objectified character, *Wonder Woman*'s adaptation in the plot also reflects a retrogression. Compared with the original comics, the film's adaptation of the source of Wonder Woman's superpower indicates a submission to patriarchal society where women are defined by men. In "Wonder Woman's Lib: Feminism and the 'New' Amazing Amazon," Paul Kohl refers to Simone de Beauvoir's feminist theory to demonstrates the original version of Wonder Woman created by William Marston in 1941 as progressively feminist. As Beauvoir states in *The Second Sex*, women have always been defined as the subordinate "other" by male domination in social practice. However, as Kohl points out, the original version of Wonder Woman challenges the male definition of women because "Wonder Woman's birth is an all-woman affair" (95). Because Wonder Woman was born and raised in a world where men do not exist, Marston creates a symbol subversive of patriarchy. Women's power is not defined by men, but comes from women. However, such resistance is greatly weakened in the 2017 film. Instead of being created out of clay by her mother and given a soul by female deities (Kohl 96), the film sets Wonder Woman as the lovechild of the god Odin, and she, thus, inherits

her superpower from her father. This change in the origin of Wonder Woman's superpower implies that "women have gained only what men have been willing to grant" (Beauvoir 19). While the original version breaks down the idea that only men have power, the film regresses to the patriarchal norm that women's power is given by men. Killian agrees when he writes, "she [Wonder Woman in the 2017 film version] becomes more powerful than she knows because of the identity of her father, [and] what could be more patriarchal than that?" (60). Some people may refute such arguments because Wonder Woman finally beats the male villain in the movie. Admittedly, such a plot point reflects the courage, strength, and power of women. However, Wonder Woman remains under patriarchy because her victory is based on what she is given by men. Therefore, compared to the original comic book version, *Wonder Woman* is a poor representation of feminism because it does not break the male definition of women. The film instead submits to a normative patriarchal society.

Aside from the sexualized visual effect and plot adaptation based on patriarchal society and its expected norms, *Wonder Woman* falls behind the third wave of feminism due to a lack of intersectionality. In "Superheroes and Third-Wave Feminism," Neal Curtis demonstrates the relationship of the 21st-century superhero industry with the third wave of feminism. Curtis identifies "a broader engagement with the intersectional axes of class, sexuality, race, ethnicity, disability, and complex gender politics" (382) as the core of the third wave

of feminism, which began in the early 1990s United States. The recent trend in superhero comics reflects such intersectionality. Curtis mentions Kamala Khan in *Ms. Marvel*, which debuted in 2014, as an example. As a "young Muslim woman, a Pakistani-American, a working-class millennial generation" (Curtis 382), Khan engages broader groups of women into the discussion on intersectional women's identities, which is consistent with the third wave of feminism. However, compared with the female superhero image in contemporary comics, the film *Wonder Woman* fails to keep up with this evolution. While Killian demonstrates this backwardness from the perspective of heteronormativity (61), I believe the limit on race is more obvious evidence for the lack of intersectionality. Although the actress playing Wonder Woman is Israeli, her appearance is that of a typical white woman: pale, slender, tall nose, and long hair. Moreover, the main characters in the film are all played by white people. Some may argue that this is because the story is set in England during World War I. However, even in the birthplace of Wonder Woman, a fictional ideal matriarchal society, only a few people of color are shown on screen, they only appear for a few seconds, and they have no impact on the plot. In addition to sexual orientation and race, *Wonder Woman* also fails to engage women from different classes. As the princess of Amazon, Wonder Woman was born in a privileged class. She does not earn a living by working, nor has she suffered from class discrimination. Hence, such a privileged character is less likely to resonate with the audience, especially women from the working class. In general, what *Wonder Woman* reflects is not

gender equality for all women, but feminism for heterosexual, privileged, and fair-skinned women. Therefore, compared to many current female superhero characters, Wonder Woman neglects the intersectionality among different groups of women, and, thus, falls behind the third wave of feminism.

In conclusion, *Wonder Woman* does create an inspiring female superhero who is powerful and empathic, but this so-called representative of feminism does not meet the ideals of contemporary American feminism. The character is objectified by the male gaze to please the target male audience, and the sexualized depictions reduce the target women's belief in gender equality. Meanwhile, the adaptation in the source of Wonder Woman's superpower implies a submission to men who define women in patriarchal society. Last but not least, the feminism promoted by *Wonder Woman* is limited to a certain group, lacking intersectionality among race, class, and sexuality. Such identification provides moviegoers who believe that *Wonder Woman* is a symbol of feminism with new perspectives to view the film, thus inspiring them to reevaluate the impact of *Wonder Woman* on disseminating feminism in current society. There is no denying that *Wonder Woman* brought broad public attention to a rising generation of superheroines, such as in *Captain Marvel* released in 2019, and *Black Widow* scheduled to be released in 2020. However, if fans and critics regard *Wonder Woman* as a model of contemporary feminism, the stereotype of feminism is likely to be limited to such "equality" within white elites who succumb to patriarchy and hinder the real

social practices of equal rights for most people in the world. Therefore, it is important to reflect on the poor representation of feminism in *Wonder Woman* and rethink the depiction of a progressive feminist character in commercial superheroine films.

Works Cited

Curtis, Neal, and Valentina Cardo. "Superheroes and Third-Wave Feminism." *Feminist Media Studies*, vol. 18, no. 3, 2017, pp. 381–396., doi:10.1080/14680777.2017.1351387.

Freeman, Hadley. "James Cameron: 'The Downside of Being Attracted to Independent Women Is That They Don't Need You'." *The Guardian*, Guardian News and Media, 24 Aug. 2017, www.theguardian.com/film/2017/aug/24/james-cameron-well-never-be-able-to-reproduce-the-shock-of-terminator-2.

Jenkins, Patty, director. *Wonder Woman*. Mondadori, 2017.

Killian, Kyle D. "How Wonder Woman Is, and Is Not, a Feminist Superheroine Movie." *Journal of Feminist Family Therapy*, vol. 31, no. 1, 2018, pp. 59–61, doi:10.1080/08952833.2018.1556487.

Kohl, Paul. "Wonder Woman's Lib: Feminism and the 'New' Amazing Amazon." *The Ages of Wonder Woman: Essays on the Amazon Princess in Changing Times*, edited by Joseph J. Darowski, McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2014.

Kolpaper. "Wonder Woman Wallpaper - KoLPaPer - Awesome Free HD Wallpapers." *KoLPaPer*, Kolpaper Wallpaper, 16 Mar. 2020, www.kolpaper.com/2497/wonder-woman-wallpaper/.

Mulvey, Laura. "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema." *Visual and Other Pleasures*, E-book, Palgrave Macmillan, 1989, pp. 14–26., doi:10.1007/978-1-349-19798-9_3.

Pennell, Hillary, and Elizabeth Behm-Morawitz. "The Empowering (Super) Heroine? The Effects of Sexualized Female Characters in Superhero Films on Women." *Sex Roles*, vol. 72, no. 5-6, 2015, pp. 211–220., doi:10.1007/s11199-015-0455-3.

Setoodeh, Ramin, and Ramin Setoodeh. "'Wonder Woman' Director Patty Jenkins on Equal Pay, Hollywood Sexism and James Cameron's Nasty Words." *Variety*, 11 Oct. 2017, www.variety.com/2017/film/features/patty-jenkins-wonder-woman-hollywood-sexism-equal-pay-james-cameron-1202583237/#article-comments.

Woerner, Meredith. "The World Needs Wonder Woman. Director Patty Jenkins Explains Why." *Los Angeles Times*, 30 May 2017, www.latimes.com/entertainment/herocomplex/la-et-hc-wonder-woman-patty-jenkins-20170530-story.html.

"Wonder Woman (2017)." YouTube, YouTube, 15 May 2017, www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pd1aEcZsLtQ.

Zacharek, Stephanie. "'Wonder Woman' Review: Gal Gadot Is a DC Marvel." *Time*, 1 June 2017, www.time.com/4799963/wonder-woman-review/.

Faculty Introduction

Ellen Ying wrote the essay "Drawing the Boundary" for my fall 2018 *Perspectives on the Humanities* course. Our class examined how the humanities can shape our understanding of science and the role of science in society. In her final research paper, Ellen applied a critical, historical approach to one of her main academic interests, the theory and practice of psychology. Ellen's essay chronicles and analyzes several important episodes from the recent history of the discipline. Eschewing a simplistic dichotomy between science and non-science, the paper uncovers a story of contentious politics and complex social dynamics. The essay reflects the impressive breadth of Ellen's research. At the same time, the paper also showcases Ellen's ability to carry out incisive "close readings" of primary sources – in this case, several editions of the DSM. Lastly, I am impressed by Ellen's skill and creativity in applying theories such as the notion of "boundary work" to her topic.

Joseph Giacomelli
Lecturer in the Writing Program

Drawing the Boundary between Psychosocial and Biomedical Disorders: The Credibility Contest between Freudianism and Neo-Kraepelinianism in the DSM

ELLEN YING

Introduction

Published by the American Psychiatric Association (APA), the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM) is a handbook offering a common language and diagnostic criteria for the classification of mental disorders. The fifth edition of the DSM (DSM-V), which was published in 2013, is now one of the most credible standards of diagnosis used by various social entities, including clinicians, researchers, health insurance companies, pharmaceutical companies, and even policymakers and legal systems. In contrast to the prestige of contemporary versions, the DSM did not start to gain authority or receive much attention until DSM-III, which was drastically divergent from the previous two editions, was published in 1980. In this paper, I will examine the changes from DSM-II to DSM-III as well as the historical backgrounds fueling these changes. I argue that the boundary between psychiatry

and other professions in the 1960s to 1970s was blurred due to psychiatry's adoption of Freudian psychoanalysis. In response, a new school of psychiatrists, Neo-Kraepelinianists, changed the DSM so that patient diagnosis was more based on specified symptoms and "mental disorders" were redefined as problems within individuals. In doing so, they successfully distinguished scientific Neo-Kraepelinianism from unscientific Freudianism, thus establishing their own epistemic authority and redrawing the boundary between psychiatry and other professions.

The loss of boundary of American psychiatry

To understand the driving force behind the changes from the DSM-II to DSM-III, I will first explain the ideological trend of American psychiatry in the 1960s and how it blurred the boundary of psychiatry as a scientific profession. The 1960s American psychiatry was dominated by Freudian psychoanalytic perspectives. During the post-World War II period, practitioners and students of psychiatry witnessed how this approach was effective in treating soldiers returning from battlefields with mental disorders and were therefore overwhelmingly passionate about it (Decker 341). They believed that perceivable symptoms of mental illness are mere reflections of people's underlying psychological dynamics. To interpret and cope with these symptoms, the most effective way is to put them in the context of a person's personality and life experiences (Mayes and Horwitz 249-250). The widely shared interest among psychiatrists in practicing psychoanalysis made

Freudianism the mainstream ideology of American psychiatry at that time.

A direct consequence of the dominance of Freudian psychoanalysis was that psychotherapy, as opposed to medication, became the main treatment for mental illnesses among psychiatrists. Freudian psychotherapy features conversations facilitated by psychoanalysts that are aimed at figuring out and resolving patients' unconscious mental conflicts. No medical training was required for the practice of psychotherapy. Psychiatrists, whose traditional approach was medication but started using psychotherapy, were still occupying the "professional monopoly" for *treating patients* as if they were still specialized in medication. In contrast, non-psychiatrists could only be eligible to provide *counseling* although their practice also focused on psychotherapy (Mayes and Horwitz 255). Practicing the same approach yet being entitled to different authorities, non-psychiatrists such as psychologists, social workers, and counselors began to question the psychiatric authority on treating patients with mental illness.

Meanwhile, the prevalence of Freudianism also led to a widespread engagement among the American psychiatrists in preventative actions for mental health problems. A side note of the Freudian view on the nature of symptoms as symbolic reflections of deeper dynamic processes is that everyone's mental health condition ranges "along a continuum with health at one end and illness at the other" (Decker 342). There

is no one definite boundary between being mentally healthy and unhealthy; all people are constantly facing the risk of having mental disorders. Therefore, psychiatrists started to make efforts to solve "social problems that made for unhealthy and impoverished environments for their patients" and to intentionally find people who had incipient syndromes of mental disorders and treat them before they started to get worse (Decker 342). They were no longer merely interested in the issues inside the clinics and started to strive for finding resolutions for social problems.

When psychiatrists started to practice psychotherapy in a way that required no medical specialty and engaged in non-medical affairs outside of clinics, the boundary between psychiatry and other professions was blurred. Although psychiatrists still claimed themselves as medical professions on the face value by using terms such as "diagnosis," "patients," and "treatment," the biomedical aspect of mental disorders in fact yielded to Freudian psychoanalysis and psychotherapies (Decker 342). Psychiatric practice became essentially the same as non-psychiatric practice, and the field of psychiatry lost its prestige as a medical specialty. Thus, became subject to critiques on its authority on the diagnosis and treatment of mental disorders.

The challenge to psychiatry's neutrality and scientificity

With medical specialty no longer prominent in the

psychiatric practice, medical and social science scholars started to question the epistemic authority of psychiatrists, criticizing their lack of scientificity and neutrality. Critiques finding faults with the scientificity of psychiatry mainly focused on the low reliability of psychiatric diagnosis. Thomas Scheff, a sociologist and also a major critic of psychiatry, for example, pointed out that mental illness was used as "an explanation of the last resort" (qtd. in Mayes and Horwitz 252). He noted that when psychiatrists could not normally explain deviant behaviors, they usually categorized them as mental illnesses even if those behaviors might have causes that can be fixed without any medical treatment. Consequently, the possibility of false diagnosis of mentally healthy people emerged, which was finally revealed by an experiment in a mental hospital. David Rosenhan, a Stanford psychologist and lawyer, conducted a secret experiment to provide evidence for the lack of reliability in psychiatry. He asked people to visit the clinicians in the hospital and to show fake symptoms of having hallucinations. After they were admitted into the hospital, however, they immediately started to act like "normal" people. Regardless, they remained imprisoned in the hospital, with one pseudo-patient being kept for 52 days (Decker 344). From this experiment, Rosenhan successfully gave a powerful punch to the field of psychiatry by revealing that those people who called themselves psychiatrists could not even give a legitimate diagnosis to patients. This shocking picture of psychiatry posed a huge challenge to its scientific authority.

Besides, more deadly to the legitimacy of psychiatry was the practice of Freudian psychoanalysis, which is not value-neutral, but often operated under the guise of objective science. Thomas Szasz, a famous American critic of psychiatry, directly criticized the discrepancy between psychiatrists' claims and their practices. He commented that although psychoanalytic psychiatrists merely communicated with "patients" through psychotherapy, they still talked "as if they were physicians, physiologists, biologists, or even physicists" by using terms such as "sick patients," "treatment," and "hospitals" to medicalize their study (Szasz, *The Myth of Mental Illness*: 4*)*. By pointing out this inconsistency between what psychoanalytic psychiatrists do and what they say, Szasz questioned whether Freudian psychiatrists were trying to use seemingly scientific approaches to cover its unscientific essence. Freudian psychoanalysis, without a solid empirical foundation, is very likely to involve therapists' biases and values. In the attempts of Freudian psychiatrists to fix the problems their "patients" have in living, their own religious and political orientations, as well as attitudes towards related issues such as abortion and suicide, can influence their judgements (Szasz, *The Myth of Mental Illness* 125-126). Their ideas on the patients' real problems and the proper means to fix them can be substantially colored by their own stances. However, all these were disguised under psychiatrists' claim to be medical professionals who approach mental illnesses through scientific principles. According to Szasz, his behavior of "imitating medicine" served as a strategy to create a delusion that the field of psychiatry was capable of revealing the truths

neutrally and objectively while it in fact could not.

Confining the classification of "mental disorders" in DSM-III

When the reliability and objectivity of Freudian psychiatry faced severe challenges, a group of neo-Kraepelinian psychiatrists initiated the changes in the DSM, thus not only leading an ideological reform of the field, but also establishing their epistemic authority. Modelled on the scientific and empirical approach of Kraepelin, a renowned German psychiatrist at late 19th century, neo-Kraepelinian psychiatrists asserted that psychiatry should utilize modern scientific methodologies and base itself on empirical scientific research as a branch of medicine (qtd. in Decker 348). They claimed that "the domination of American psychiatry by psychoanalytic and psychodynamic thinking…was responsible for its unscientific character" (Decker 345). Thus, they inserted an evidence-based Kraepelinian tradition in the changes of the diagnostic standards, which was supposed to be more scientific, reliable, and neutral than Freudianism, so that the focus of American psychiatry could be shifted back to a biomedical approach.

The first neo-Kraepelinian change in DSM-III was a structural change emphasizing specific symptoms of mental illnesses as opposed to their etiologies. This is best illustrated by a comparative close reading of one of the diagnoses in DSM-II and DSM-III, "schizophrenia." In DSM-II, the diagnostic

criteria of schizophrenia were as follows:

> This large category includes a group of disorders
> manifested by characteristic disturbances of thinking,
> mood, and behavior. Disturbances in thinking are
> marked by alterations of concept formation which
> may lead to misinterpretation of reality and sometimes
> to delusions and hallucinations, which frequently
> appear psychologically self-protective. Corollary
> mood changes include ambivalent, constricted and
> inappropriate emotional responsiveness and loss of
> empathy with others. Behavior may be withdrawn,
> regressive and bizarre. (33)

In this entry, the psychoanalytic authors emphasize the cause of the "disturbances in thinking," namely "alterations of concept formation" that serves the purpose of psychological self-protection, which is an important concept in Freudian tradition. Although it also describes the symptoms of disturbances, hallucinations, corollary mood changes, etc., the manual does not clearly specify what counts as these symptoms and leaves plenty of space for psychiatrists' own subjective interpretations on patients' behaviors.

In comparison, the criteria in DSM-III clearly specifies necessary symptoms, conditions, and duration of the symptoms for the diagnosis of schizophrenia. For example, one of the six symptoms is described as "somatic, grandiose, religious, nihilistic, or other delusions without persecutory or jealous

content" and the duration has to be "at least six months" (DSM-III 188). Different from DSM-II, which merely mentions delusions, DSM-III specifically points out what kind of delusions a patient has and how long they should exist to be counted as an illness. Also, the language is solely focused on the symptoms without judgements on etiologies. This makes the diagnosis less dependent on psychiatrists' own subjective perceptions of the symptoms and their interpretations of the causes of these symptoms, but more on a specific set of standards given by the DSM. The new standardized diagnostic criteria was regarded by neo-Kraepelinian psychiatrists as a useful way to improve the accountability of diagnosis, and the treatment effect could be reliably tested by empirical research.

Neo-Kraepelinianists' second important change is the addition of the definition of "mental disorder." The DSM-III was the first version throughout the history of the DSM that gave a written definition of mental disorder. The term "mental disorder" is defined as "a clinically significant behavioral or psychological syndrome or pattern that occurs in an individual and that typically is associated with either a painful symptom (distress) or impairment in one or more important areas of functioning (disability)" (DSM-III 363). Also, "when the disturbance [of an individual] is limited to a conflict between an individual and society, this may represent social deviance, …but is not by itself a mental disorder" (DSM-III 363). The significance of this definition lies in the confined scope of the term "mental disorder." It is only defined as a syndrome

associated with distress or disability *within* an individual, but not a problem *of* an individual which he/she encounters in daily life with people around, i.e. with society. The distinction between "dysfunction in" and "dysfunction of" an individual, as Kinghorn points out, "distinguishes the mental health disciplines (particularly psychiatry) from nonmedical disciplines which also attend to personal distress and social deviance" (54). In other words, this definition totally confines the object of the expertise of the new psychiatry within an area that necessarily required medication. The settled definition of mental disorders was completely different from the Freudian psychiatry's blurred realm of psychosocial interest, a part of which would be easily influenced, or be seen as influenced by other non-medical factors. It thus created "a clinical safe space" (Kinghorn 54) for Neo-Kraepelinian psychiatry, where the practice of diagnosis and treatment could not be affected by factors like politics and could be more neutral than the Freudian approach.

Taking together the structural changes of classifications and confined definition of mental disorder, the rationale behind DSM-III was to claim that the mission of psychiatry was to identify symptoms of mental disorders inside patients and to use medicine to alleviate these symptoms. Unlike Freudianism, this new approach made psychiatric diagnosis seem easier to be tested by empirical studies, more reliable, and more etiologically theory-neutral (Kinghorn 49). Although psychiatrists later argue that the ways of classifying and defining mental disorders initiated by DSM-III still do not fully create

a value-vacuum "clinical safe space" for psychiatry (Kinghorn 56), nor does psychiatry have an absolutely solid empirical ground (e.g. there is still no empirical evidence supporting a distinctive line of six-month duration for the diagnosis of mental disorders), the goal of DSM-III was not to become absolutely neutral and scientific in the first place. What Neo-Kraepelinian psychiatrists tried to accomplish in the changes of the DSM was to appear to, in a *relative* sense, be more neutral, more reliable, and thus more scientific than Freudian psychiatry. In doing so, Neo-Kraepelinian psychiatrists were doing what Gieryn calls "boundary work" of "expansion" (Gieryn 16). By claiming themselves to be more scientific than Freudianism, they tried to establish their own authority on psychiatric diagnosis and treatment. During a time when Freudianism was disparaged to its lowest point, it is not surprising that Neo-Kraepelinian psychiatrists successfully managed to claim their epistemic authority. The basic principles they laid out in the third version have still been used by the latest version of the DSM, even though they were still not as perfect as the Neo-Kraepelinian psychiatrists imagined them to be.

Conclusion

The changes from DSM-II to DSM-III highlight a history of ideological dynamics within the field of psychiatry. By looking at the specific historical contexts and the ways in which these changes were made, it is not hard to see how the social and professional critiques on the de-professionalization

of Freudianism created a convenient environment for Neo-Kraepelinianism to lead the change in the DSM in order to establish their epistemic authority. Like Freudianism, the new diagnostic manual based on Neo-Kraepelinian tradition could not stand a close scrutiny on its scientificity. The ideological framework retains its authority even until now in DSM-V with only minor changes being made. By analyzing how Neo-Kraepelianism established its authority over Freudianism historically, we can see that the field of psychiatry as a branch of science is not only driven by scientific, empirical, and neutral knowledge or methodologies, but is also vulnerable to the influences of ideological conflicts and attempts to gain authority. Psychiatrists should therefore always view their profession critically to fully grasp the hidden dynamics beyond the simple classifications and diagnosis written in an authoritative manual. Only by doing so can the field of psychiatry keep evolving and benefitting society.

Works Cited

Decker, Hannah S. "How Kraepelinian was Kraepelin? How Kraepelinian are the neo-Kraepelinians? -- from Emil Kraepelin to DSM-III." *History of Psychiatry*, vol. 18, no. 3, pp. 337-360.

Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders. 2nd ed., American Psychiatric Association, 1968.

Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders. 3rd ed., American Psychiatric Association, 1980.

Gieryn, Thomas. *Cultural Boundaries of Science: Credibility of the Line.* Chicago, 1999.

Kinghorn, Warren. "The Biopolitics of Defining 'Mental Disorders'." *Making the DSM-5: Concepts and Controversies*, edited by Joel Paris and James Philips, Springer, 2013, pp. 54-61.

Mayes, Rick, and Allan V. Horwitz. "DSM-III and the Revolution in the Classification of Mental Illness." *Journal of the History of Behavioral Science*, vol. 41, no. 3, 2005, pp. 249-267.

Szasz, Thomas. "The Myth of Mental Illness." *Biomedical Ethics and the Law*, edited by James M. Humber and Robert F. Almeder, Springer, 1979, pp. 121-130.

---. *The Myth of Mental Illness: Foundations of a Theory of Personal Conduct*. New York Hoeber-Harper, 1961.

Faculty Introduction

Yukun Jiang's essay "Modernization in Late Qing: Never a Success?" was written for my fall 2018 *Perspectives on the Humanities* course. By re-evaluating a much-maligned institution—the education system of the Late Qing era—Yukun articulates a surprising and counter-intuitive argument. I have to admit I was slightly taken aback when Yukun told me he was undertaking such an ambitious project for his final paper. But through thorough research and careful writing, Yukun crafts a compelling case for the gradualist, hybrid approach of some Late Qing educational and scientific reformers. The essay shows equal adeptness at engaging with scholarly interpretations and analyzing primary sources, which range from nineteenth-century texts to Yukun's high school textbook. Using carefully structured paragraphs, the essay discusses Late Qing scientific education in light of recent scholarship about the global circulation of scientific knowledge. Ultimately, Yukun's essay invites us to re-examine not just a specific period in China's past, but also the very notion of scientific "modernity."

Joseph Giacomelli
Lecturer in the Writing Program

Modernization in Late Qing: Never a Success?

YUKUN JIANG

In high school history textbooks standardized by the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, Chinese students learn about the prosperity and cultural export of the great Tang Dynasty, the power of the unrivaled Mongolian cavalry of the Yuan Dynasty, and the technological advancements and economic development of the Song Dynasty. However, when the same students turn to the section on the Qing Dynasty, they will only see decline, the consequent Chinese suffering under imperialism, and a loss of sovereignty. This is a common perspective on the Qing Dynasty shared by many Chinese scholars after the rise of China in the last three decades. For example, historian Chen XuLu argues that after the first Opium War, "the Qing Dynasty [was] forced to start modernization under the fire of western guns" (54). However, I argue that scholars should not ignore the active role of the late Qing Dynasty in modernization, particularly with emphasis on educational reform as an essential component of modernization. More broadly, in this essay, I will not focus on the Qing Dynasty's feudal limitations and failures, but, rather, take a contextual view that Late Qing laid a solid foundation for further modernization. The Qing government, I argue,

did not override the educational system by fully adopting Western science, but, rather, made sophisticated political efforts to localize Western science in ways that would nurture well-rounded talents for the country. Furthermore, the Qing government's retainment of title rewards in the new exam system was a sophisticated move that both encouraged more students to participate in the new education system and stabilized the court.

Incorporation of Western Science into the Curriculum

Scholars, such as Wang Kai, often argue that modernization attempts by the Late Qing Dynasty inherently introduced and strengthened Western imperialism into the Chinese education system. After the First Opium War (1840-1842), the Qing Dynasty started the "self-strengthening movement," in the hopes of, as Wei Yuan argues, "defeating foreign invaders by learning from their advantages" (qtd. in Ju 101). According to the Chinese standard *Textbook of High School History*, one of the most essential parts of educational reforms by the late Qing government was sending young students abroad (1). Many scholars have criticized this attempt. Wang Kai, Professor at the University of Science and Technology of China, for instance, argues that the educational reform actually aggravated and solidified Western Imperialism in China through "disciplinarized institutionalization of western science." In particular, Wang uses statistical evidence to show that the vast majority of study abroad students were assigned

decent positions in the government later, which helped to "root western Imperialism into feudal Chinese society during the process of educational reform" (5). In this interpretation, Wang suggests that the study-abroad students served as the medium for Western Imperialism.

However, Wang overlooks the complex dynamics of science circulation in the Qing Dynasty. Specifically, I argue that the Qing government made sophisticated political efforts to localize Western science to better suit the needs of educational modernization at that time. To demonstrate this, firstly I will analyze "The Constitution of the Imperial Academy" from *The Draft History of Qing*, which was the first document on the national educational system by the Qing government. The Constitution reads:

> Although the political and educational atmosphere of China and foreign countries were originally different, their advantages should be made use of…
> [S]ubjects taught in each level of schools should contain Confucian cultivation, classics reading, mathematics, poetry, Chinese and foreign history and politics, physics, chemistry, martial arts. ("The Constitution of the Imperial Academy")

In other words, the document stipulates that "Confucian cultivation" subjects— such as "classics reading," "poetry," and "martial arts"—as well as Western science subjects—such as "politics, physics, [and] chemistry"—should be taught in the

new schools. The introduction of Western science did not totally supersede the imperial exam system and traditional Confucian subjects, but, rather, they were combined to co-exist in the same educational system. In particular, those once considered inferior manufacturing subjects, such as physics and chemistry, were given equal status in education for the first time in history. This fact sheds light on the Qing's philosophy then: that Western science and Confucianism were not considered inherently contradictory to each other, but, instead, they could be applied simultaneously for a better civil education.

Revolution of the Imperial Examination System

In addition to incorporating Western science into the curriculum, the imperial examination system during the late Qing Dynasty also underwent tremendous changes to better select talent for government positions. In the imperial exam system, students in ancient China studied Confucianism, took imperial exams, and received three levels of rewards upon passing—"Xiu Cai," "Ju Ren," and "Jin Shi." These title rewards are analogous to "Bachelor," "Master," and "Doctoral" degrees respectively in Western education systems (Pang 41). According to the new education system under the late Qing Dynasty, if a student finished each stage of the new exam system, which included both Confucianism and Western Science, he would receive title rewards that were the same as the old exam system, which only included Confucianism ("The Constitution of the Imperial Academy"). In other words, the

Qing government made it so that even if a student chose to take the new Western science education, this student could still obtain the same benefits as his Confucian counterparts.

Traditionally, Chinese scholars criticized this retainment of title rewards. For example, Yaqun Zhang argues in *The Institute of High Education Research Journal* that the way the Qing government linked education and the system for selecting officials was counterproductive to the modernization process because imperial title rewards led to instrumentalism in education, which prevented "pure-science learning" (4). In other words, Zhang believes students would study to obtain official positions rather than pursue knowledge. Similarly, Wang Yao argues that the presence of title rewards in the new exam system indicates that the Qing government still deemed education more as a method of selecting government officials than a way of equipping individuals intellectually (5). In addition, scholars also find fault with the negative social effects of the new exam system. In journalist Wang YingYing's paper, she argues that the advent of the new exam system shook the student body and created chaos and disorder in society (Wang 3).

However, such criticism ignores the potential harm brought by a sudden separation between education and the selection of government officials. I argue that it was precisely the retainment of title rewards that shaped a smooth transition in the Qing educational reform. First, the retainment of title

rewards encouraged students to make the transition to the new exam system. According to Confucian ideals, "he who excels in learning shall be an official, and uses what he has learned to serve the country" ("The Analects of Confucius"). In other words, students can only serve the country if they excel in learning and receive government positions. Both are indispensable prerequisites for serving the country. Under the old imperial exam system, once a student passed the exam and received the title rewards, he could choose to be a government official and fulfill this Confucian ideal. However, if the Qing Dynasty did not choose to retain title rewards in the new exam system, students would have to choose between sacrificing government positions (and the social benefits associated with them) or the Western science knowledge necessary to equip the country with advanced military defenses. In this situation, students would face a dilemma, in which it would be impossible for them to fulfil the Confucian ideal of serving the country. Therefore, the Qing's retainment of title rewards was beneficial because it allowed students to achieve the maximal effect of promoting study in the new education system at a time when feudal Confucian notions were deeply rooted in people's minds. According to Pang, in the first four years, 829 students won title rewards by taking the new exam system, which constituted twenty percent of all title rewards granted in that period (42). The surge from zero to twenty percent within only a four-year period undoubtedly demonstrates the effectiveness of the Qing's retainment of title rewards. In a nutshell, the retainment of title rewards stimulated more students to study under the new education system.

Secondly, the retainment of title rewards ensured a stable political situation in the Qing Dynasty. As mentioned before, the vast majority of government officials at that time won their positions through title rewards from the imperial exam. If title rewards were to be abolished, a great proportion of government officials would be concerned about the validity of their positions. Under such circumstances, factions might develop between those officials in favor of the new exam system and those who advocated for the old exam system, resulting in an unstable government. However, in the perilous condition of the late Qing Dynasty, what it really needed was cooperation in order to advance the country militarily and defend it. Therefore, I would deem the Qing's retainment as a strategic concession to maintain political stability in the court. Furthermore, with the increase of students participating in the new education system, the Qing government had a more diverse talent pool for court and could, therefore, better equip itself politically and militarily.

In brief, incorporating Western science into the curriculum and revolutionizing the imperial exam system, to a great extent, exemplifies how the Qing government tailored Western science into its own educational system in a uniquely Qing-way. As Raj Kapil argues in his article, "scientific propositions, artefacts, and practices are neither innately universal nor forcibly imposed on others. Rather, they disseminate only through complex processes of accommodation and negotiation, as contingent as those involved in their production" (9). Kapil implies that as Western science entered

Qing society, it was changed and adapted according to the Qing Dynasty's particular political and scientific needs. In other words, modernization was not forced on China by Western Imperialism, but it rather was actively adopted and integrated by the Qing government through a process of localization and interpretation.

Conclusion

The Late Qing Dynasty exerted elaborate efforts to assimilate Western science into the Qing's education system in such a way that was both effective and suitable for Qing society at that time. It combined traditional Confucian subjects with Western science subjects to shape well-rounded talents and, therefore, strengthen its military defense. Besides, it intentionally retained title rewards in the new exam system to increase participation in the new education system and stability within the court. With recent changes in attitude towards Qing's efforts among contemporary Chinese historians, clearly it is high time we justified and re-oriented the critics of the Late Qing Dynasty. The late Qing Dynasty did not have the privilege of following a safe and smooth path of modernization, but had only one burdened with entrenched traditions. With outer threats from Western imperialism and inner social turmoil and instability, the Qing government took the first step towards modernization and laid a solid foundation for future Chinese-modernization processes, particularly in education. In the end, I would claim that modernization in Late Qing was a success built upon all those failures.

Works Cited

Chen, Xulu. "A Small Step in Modernization." *Jin Dai Zhong Guo She Hui De Xin Chen Dai Xie /The Evolution of Modern Chinese Society.* Chinese Renmin University Press, 2005, pp.105-120.

Huxley, Thomas Henry. *Evolution and Ethics*. The Pilot Press, 1947.

Ju, Jiwu. "Wei Yuan And His 'Records and Maps of The World.'" *Geographical Research*, vol. 13, no. 1, 1994, pp. 100-103.

"Key Passages in the Analects of Confucius." *The Analects of Confucius*, https://friesian.com/confuciu.htm.

Klein, Thoralf. "Rethinking the Origins of 'Western' Imperialism in China: Global Constellations and Imperial Policies, 1790—1860." *History Compass*, vol. 10, no. 11, 2012, pp. 789-801.

Kwong, Luke S. K. "Chinese Politics at the Crossroads: Reflections on the Hundred Days Reform of 1898." *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 34, 2000, pp. 663-695. *ProQuest*,http://proxy.library.nyu.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.proxy.library.nyu.edu/docview/38914987?accountid=12768.

Qian, Zhou. "Chronology of Yan Fu." *Journal of Fujian Normal University*, Edited by GuiChun He, vol. 4, 1984.

Raj, Kapil. *Relocating Modern Science : Circulation and the Construction of Knowledge in South Asia and Europe, 1650-1900*. Palgrave Macmillan Limited, 2007.

The People's Republic of China. Dept. of Education censorship. Office of Shanghai High School Textbook Committee. *Gao Zhong Li Shi (Di Wu Fen Ce) / High School History (volume 5)*. East China Normal University Press, 2008.

Pang, Yao. "The Development of the Imperial Examination Degree System in the Late Qing Dynasty." *China Academic Journal Electronic Publishing House*, vol. 6, 2018.

Wang, Kai. "Bending and fitting: Disciplinarized Institutionalization of Modern Science in China During the 'Treaty Century'." *Social Sciences*, vol. 6, no. 4, 2017.

Wang, Yao. "A Research On the Reasons of the Abolishment of the Imperial Examination System in the Late Qing Dynasty." *The History Issue*, vol. 1, Jan. 2014.

Wang, YingYing. "The Abolishment of Late Qing Imperial
      Examination System and the Future of Intellectuals."
      All About History, 2007.

Yan, Fu. *Tian Yan Lun / Theory of Natural Selection*. Bei Jing
      Lian He Chu Ban Gong Si, 2013.

Zhang, Yaqun. "The Belated Imperial Examination Reform
      of the Late Qing Dynasty: Reasons and Lessons." *The*
      Institute of High Education Research Journal, vol. 8.
      no. 4.

Zhao, Erxun. "Ren Yin Xue Zhi / The Constitution of the
      Imperial Academy." *Qing Shi Gao (Juan Ba Shi*
      Er) / The Draft History of Qing (volume 82). Qing
      History Museum Press, 1927.

Faculty Introduction

Vera Leyi Sun originally wrote this essay for my *Perspectives on the Humanities* course: "Brutes, Monsters, Ghosts, and Other Troubling Creatures." The assignment asked students to select a historical event or trend that contextualizes their analysis of a literary text and to show how their argument participates in scholarly debates on this literary text. In a sharp, lucid way, Leyi's essay addresses how changing attitudes towards Christianity and science in the late Victorian period speak to representations of faith in Bram Stoker's Dracula. She skillfully incorporates and interweaves scholarly sources to trace developments in science in the nineteenth century and to support her interpretation of the novel. Moreover, she explores the nuances of her claims by closely reading key passages from the novel. I'm impressed by her thoughtful analysis of the characters' invocations of God—and the power of rifles—as they battle Count Dracula. Leyi's attention to both narrative arc and textual detail models the analytical work we encourage in *Perspectives on the Humanities*.

Alice Chuang
Lecturer in the Writing Program

Conditional Belief in *Dracula*

LEYI SUN

Dracula, Bram Stoker's famous gothic horror novel, is filled with superstitious and religious elements. The vampire that used to exist only in folktales becomes not only a real creature but also one of the main characters. Crucifixes, the sacred wafer, and garlic are used by the human protagonists to combat the vampire. Nevertheless, the novel was published in 1897, during the late Victorian period when many authors began questioning the power of religion because of the influence of scientific and technological development. Accordingly, modern machines and emerging technology play a critical role in the story as well. Instead of telling the story of how God helps humans in the battle with Dracula, it demonstrates the challenge that Christianity faced. Characters first start questioning the power of God, and then such questioning evolves into a conditional faith in Christianity: they only believe in God when he is proven to be able to offer tangible help. Such transition, from mere suspicion to conditional belief, is due to the development and utilization of science and technology.

As Herbert Schlossberg claims, though religion in Victorian England had gone through a slow recovery, this resurrection did not last long (1). He mentions, "it was as difficult

to embrace Christianity in 1900 as it was to reject it a century ago" (1). Schlossberg presents a stark contrast: firm faith in Christianity a century before versus the questioning attitude in the late Victorian era. Critical scholarship centered on the Bible emerged in the nineteenth century, testing and determining the correctness of authorship, dating, context, as well as the truth of claims in biblical texts (22). *Essays and Reviews*, an 1860 volume of seven essays written by authors including Jowett, Temple, and Pattison and published in England, attacked the morality, doctrines, miracles, and many other aspects of Biblical history (25, 26, 27). Meanwhile, scientific advances were undermining the power of religion. While scientists in earlier times perceived their jobs as Natural Theologists and sought to prove the existence of God with discoveries in the natural world and scientific evidence, from the 1870s to 1880s more of them grew disillusioned with the Church and believed that their career in science should not serve religious purposes (Turner 360, 365, 372). Public perspectives towards religion were also changed by popular scientific texts. The publication of John William Draper and Andrew Dickson White's books stimulated great interest among the public and prompted people to reconsider the relationship between religion and science (Schlossberg 35, 36). In 1859, Darwin published *The Origin of Species*. With the advent of Darwinism, those who previously supported Natural Theology eventually accepted that "natural selection replaced God" (Schlossberg 38). Therefore, historically, progress made in the realm of science posed a serious threat to the domination of Christianity.

In *Dracula*, the questioning of God and Christianity is firstly revealed by Jonathan Harker's belief in the crucifix, the symbol of God in Roman Catholicism and a weapon of humans against vampires. In Transylvania, Dracula's region, Jonathan is kindly offered a crucifix necklace on his way to meet this vampire for the first time. He is first reserved about the effect of the crucifix, stating "as an English Churchman, I have been taught to regard such things as in some measure idolatrous, and yet it seemed so ungracious to refuse an old lady meaning so well and in such a state of mind" (Stoker ch. II). Not knowing what would happen afterward, the Protestant regards wearing this Catholic symbol as excessive and ignorant. Nevertheless, Jonathan Harker later becomes aware of the crucifix's value: when Dracula becomes frenzied as blood comes out of a cut on Jonathan's throat, it is the crucifix necklace that expels the furious vampire away (ch. II). After this incident, Jonathan Harker, though committed to the Church of England, starts to rely on this symbol of Roman Catholicism. He thanks the old woman and places the crucifix beside his bed as "it is a comfort and a strength to me whenever I touch it" (Stoker ch. III). Other critics mention this scene in their articles as well. Stephen Purcell specifically argues that Jonathan Harker's use of the crucifix does not represent his conversion to Christian values and morality. Instead, he relies on the crucifix only because it is testified to be useful with or without holiness (295). However, Jonathan Harker asks himself, "Is it that there is something in the essence of the thing itself, or that it is a medium, a tangible help, in conveying memories of sympathy

and comfort?" (Stoker ch. III). He is uncertain about the source of the crucifix's power: does the power come from the object itself (the fact that the crucifix once saved Jonathan) or does it come from God (the religious value with which the crucifix serves as the "medium" to convey God's comfort and sympathy to his children)? Such uncertainty reveals that the reliance on the crucifix does not ignore the role of God completely. More importantly, although he once thought the crucifix was dated and useless, Jonathan Harker is now thinking about whether God is helping him through this crucifix. Once a faithful adherent of the Church of England, Jonathan Harker is now vacillating between his original belief and Roman Catholicism and questioning the power of God, to whom he had always been devoted.

The characters' questioning attitude, later on, becomes conditional belief. Lucy Westenra has received no help from God when Dracula is draining her blood, so she no longer anticipates that God will play the role of the savior (Stoker ch. XI). Lucy, the first victim, is bitten and had her blood drained several times before she is transformed into a vampire by Dracula. Throughout those attacks, God neither keeps Dracula away from Lucy's house nor stops him from draining her of her blood. On the night when Dracula attacks her again, Lucy witnesses her mother's death and faces Dracula, who appears in the form of dust seeping into the room. The poor girl records this moment in her memorandum and prays "What am I to do? God shield me from harm this night! I shall

hide this paper in my breast, where they shall find it when they come to lay me out. My dear mother gone! It is time that I go too. Good-bye, dear Arthur, if I should not survive this night. God keep you, dear, and God help me!" (Stoker ch. XI). Lucy particularly mentions "when they come to lay me out" and "it is time that I go too," indicating that she accepts her doomed fate and recognizes the fact that she will die soon. Therefore, though Lucy mentions God many times and asks him to save her, she does not expect God will appear as her savior.

In the article "An Up-To-Date Religion: The Challenges and Constructions of Belief in Dracula," Elizabeth Sanders claims that Dracula's depiction of Christianity is a form of compromise, between extreme belief and extreme disbelief (78). One of the three main aspects she examines is the protagonists' prayer to God. As Sanders discusses, "prayer seems to comfort the heroes and justify human decisions and actions, but does not facilitate any real contact between the moral and the divine" (89). Those prayers lack substantial power or meaning as the characters have no anticipation of God's agency to help them. Maybe praying to God does bring Lucy calm or comfort, but the effects are only psychological. As God offers no concrete help, Lucy shows no more expectation and loses hope in God. The loss of hope can be interpreted as conditional belief: God fails the character's expectations and does not manage to save her, thus she stops believing in God as the savior.

There is a transition from Jonathan Harker questioning God at the very beginning to Lucy Westerna's conditional belief in God later. In the earlier part of the novel, Jonathan Harker is merely suspicious of whether God is still the omnipotent being he has always believed in, whereas in the later part, Lucy adopts a conditional faith in God—she knows that God didn't offer a hand before, so she is reserved in her faith. What leads to this shift are technology and science. There are several events in the novel when the characters use science, and one of them is blood transfusion. Van Helsing puts much effort into saving Lucy Westenra, but transfusing blood is the most important among them. As he puts it, "She wants blood, and blood she must have or die" (Stoker ch. X). The first blood transfusion is incredibly successful. When Arthur's blood flows into Lucy's veins, her life is brought back (Stoker ch. X). After this first experience, the transfusion of blood, a modern medical technique, is verified to be effective and crucial to save Lucy's life. Therefore, when she suffers from Dracula's attack again, blood transfusion is the first thing done without any delay (Stoker ch. X). Blood transfusion is immediately adopted because they believe that it is going to work. The reason why they have such belief is that the blood transfusion was successful before. In other words, they have belief in blood transfusion because it saved Lucy before. Similarly, there is another moment in the novel when science and technology are trusted because they have been proven to be effective. On the eve of preparing for the final battle against Count Dracula, Quincey Morris suggests bringing Winchester rifles: "I propose that we add Winchesters to our armament. I

have a kind of belief in a Winchester when there is any trouble of that sort around. Do you remember, Art, when we had the pack after us at Tobolsk? What wouldn't we have given then for a repeater apiece!" (Stoker ch. XXIV). Morris specifically uses the word "belief" and describes his past experience to show where his belief comes from: the Winchester rifles had once successfully driven the wolves away and gotten them out of trouble from Dracula. Again, the characters rely on the gun because it has saved them before.

Science is an evidence-based subject: a hypothesis is first proposed, then people seek evidence to prove or disprove its validity, and finally they rely on science based on the hypothesis that has previously been proven. In *Dracula*, the hypotheses are the blood transfusion and the rifles. Evidence for the blood transfusion is the fact that it brought Lucy back, whereas evidence for the rifles is their aid in expelling wolves. Only after evidence reveals itself would the characters start trusting science and technology. The evidence-based characteristic of science and technology prompts the characters to adapt this process of looking for clues to prove the validity of their belief in God. God becomes the hypothesis, and the characters must wait for the evidence to prove his existence. The conditional belief then comes in: the belief in God is conditional on whether God produces evidence. Once tangible evidence of God's help is found, the hypothesis is proven and there emerges a reason for having faith. Jonathan Harker's experience with the crucifix inspires him to question and think about God as

a hypothesis rather than an axiom. As for Lucy, she sees no evidence of God's salvation. God as the hypothesis cannot be proved, so she has no expectations that he will show up.

There is another condition when Stoker's characters do believe in God: when they are facing or thinking about the afterlife. Lucy Westenra leaves a memorandum during the night when she has a premonition of death, not expecting God to save her life but praying to him to shield her lover Arthur after she is gone (Stoker ch. XII). After being coerced to drink Dracula's blood, Mina Harker fears her impurity when the sacred Wafer, the symbol of God's body, leaves a scar on her forehead. She feels deep dread and despair towards carrying that mark until "the Judgement Day" to receive God's punishment (Stoker ch. XXII). When Lucy and Mina are thinking of their afterlife, they still have faith in God's power to fulfill their wishes and cleanse their souls. Such belief when facing death is an exceptional form of the conditional belief discussed above: the belief exists despite the lack of evidence from God. The reason for the existence of such a belief is that the characters are thinking about their afterlife. While, in their present life, they can draw conclusions from their experiences and wait for proof of God's existence, characters will never know what will happen to their souls after death. It also doesn't make sense in their present life to search for proof of how God will save their soul in the afterlife. Thus, the other condition of believing in God is when characters are facing death and when it is impossible for them to find any proof. So, if there is room

or a way to find God's tangible evidence, the characters wait for such evidence to appear before trusting in God; if there isn't any, their faith will be with God regardless of whether God gives them evidence.

In history, the development of science and technology undermines the power of religion, and *Dracula* reflects the influence of science on Christianity as well. In the novel, science doesn't create the characters' doubt towards God, but it provides a way for the firm believers to handle doubt. Being an evidence-based subject itself, science leads the characters to think of God as a hypothesis and wait for him to give evidence. Thus, in the novel, Christianity leads to people's faith with a condition: God needs to show tangible evidence that he helps or saves his people. If this condition is satisfied, characters are still God's followers. Otherwise, they keep waiting for evidence and only believe in God in order to be saved in the afterlife.

Works Cited

Purcell, Stephen. "Not Wholly Communion: Skepticism and
        the Instrumentalization of Religion in Stoker's
        Dracula." *Christianity & Literature*, vol. 67, no. 2, Mar.
        2018, pp. 294–311. *SAGE*,
        doi:10.1177/0148333117708257. Accessed 22 Oct.
        2018.

Sanders, Elizabeth. "An Up-To-Date Religion: The Challenges
        and Constructions of Belief in *Dracula*." *Religion &
        Literature,* vol. 47, no. 3, Nov. 2015, pp. 77-98.
        EBSCOhost, proxy.library.nyu.edu/login?url=http://
        search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9
        h&AN=119242763&site=ehost-live. Accessed 22 Oct.
        2018.

Schlossberg, Herbert. *Conflict and Crisis in the Religious Life of Late
        Victorian England*. Taylor & Francis Group, 2009.
        ProQuest Ebook Central, https:/search.proquest.com/
        docview/2133946183/bookReader?accountid=12768

Stoker, Bram. *Dracula*. Project Gutenberg, 2018. Accessed 11
        Oct. 2018.

Turner, Frank M. "The Victorian Conflict between Science
        and Religion: A Professional Dimension." *Isis*, vol.
        69, no. 3, 1978, pp. 356–376. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/
        stable/231040. Accessed 26 Oct. 2018.

Faculty Introduction

Lanxin is a thinker, quiet and unassuming yet with a passion for Nietzsche's philosophy not often seen among today's university students. So I am not surprised that in brainstorming ideas for her *Perspectives on the Humanities* final project, which asked students to extend the study of East-West cultural relations into the modern period by exploring a case of literary exchange like the exhibit cases already discussed in class, Lanxin decided to tell a complex story whose central figure is arguably modern China's most Nietzschesque writer, Lu Xun.

For a sharp critic, Lanxin's essay may seem overly ambitious, dividing the reader's attention between two or three major topics that it attempts to cover simultaneously: the laws and dynamics of cultural transmission, the reception of Ibsenism in early 20th-century China, Lu Xun's (and to a lesser extent, Hu Shi's) reflections on the liberation of women in a modernizing society. But, it is precisely this rich mixture, as you shall see, that distinguishes this essay. No matter whether you like her philosophizing, it is undeniable that she has done a beautiful job of analyzing her well-selected sources.

Lin Chen

Lecturer in the Writing Program

The Metamorphosis of Nora

LANXIN SHI

> "Men speak and always will speak of what fills their souls and no poetic,
> whether it be that of Tolstoy or of Aristotle,
> will be able to suppress the sufferings accumulated in them."
>
> (Shestov 88)

Introduction

In this essay, I will discuss Ibsenism as a phenomenon of the so-called "Weltliteratur" (i.e., World Literature) under the context of early 20th century China through a close analysis of the local reception towards it. I will argue that World Literature is no omnipotent medicine universal and adaptable for all cultures, but rather, a dynamic conversation joined by both the host culture and the source culture. That is to say, the ideal of World Literature is realized through the metamorphosis of the ideas embodied within the text. This metamorphosis is made possible not only by the text of origin alone, but also by the effort of the audience critically examining the foreign ideas. In the case of Ibsenism and its reception in China, as I will show with detail, the spirit of the original text has undergone a variety of challenges and reinterpretations in order to be able to adequately contribute to the dynamic social forum of early 20th century China.

I will unfold my discussion of this issue through the following two dimensions: first, I will briefly explain the question: What is Weltliteratur, i.e., World Literature? Secondly, I will closely examine Chinese Ibsenism as a case of World Literature. The second dimension will first engage the comparison of Hu Shi's and Lu Xun's Ibsenism, and then focus on the local adaptation of Ibsen's drama by examining the metamorphosis of his *A Doll's House*—more specifically, the metamorphosis of the female protagonist Nora Helmer— in China, exemplified by Lu Xun's *Regret For The Past*. This short novel of Lu Xun's not only concerns the themes of individualism and feminism discussed in the original work, but also casts doubt on the feasibility of those ideas if put into the specific historical and social context of the host culture, viz., early 20th century China.

What is Weltliteratur?

In the early 19th century, the prestigious German writer Johann Wolfgang von Goethe foresaw a kind of globalization that will happen in many realms including literature, as the progress of the human race unfolds. He then introduced the term "Weltliteratur," i.e., "World Literature," to describe this future trend of the universalization of literature. In the article "Goethe's 'World Literature' Paradigm and Contemporary Cultural Globalization," John Pizer states, "Goethe's vision of a new literary modality emerging from the progress generated by the increasingly international nature of discursive

interchange reflects the holistic perspective that guided his forays into the natural science" (215). That is, what Goethe was then expecting with the term "World Literature" is the birth of a literature that is no longer limited within certain exclusive cultural localizations. In other words, the term anticipates a kind of literature that will include the discussion of values and ideas that are *universally valid* and will grow similar to scientific discourse.

The history from the late 19th century to the present day has witnessed how Goethe's term makes sense if understood as a prediction of the *phenomenal* diffusion of literature throughout the world. By phenomenal diffusion, I am referring to the phenomenon that a great quantity of literary works have been spread out from their home culture to other cultures and are introduced and discussed in various places thanks to the development of the global market. Goethe's idea of World Literature is thus proved valid in the sense that it is able to function as a kind of trigger in foreign cultures that contributes to the debating forum regarding social issues, philosophical discussions, cultural transformations, etc. But Goethe's interpretation of this term is confronted by certain limitations, too. His definition of World Literature is too ideal, or even too simplified, so that it is only possible in a phenomenal sense. Its feasibility is undermined when examined from an immanent level—by which I mean the stability and unchangeability of the inner ideas or theories embodied within the original texts. As David Damrosch suggests in his "World Literature, National

Contexts," "the study of world literature may be most fruitful if it doesn't directly go global, instead understanding world literature as a variable and contingent concept, taking distinct forms in different national contexts" (520). He asserts this because when a piece of literature goes global, it will unlikely to remain in the same contextual environment as its original culture. The inner ideas of the original texts, which are usually shaped by the specific historical and cultural environment of the native culture, will almost inevitably undergo a certain transformation when it diffuses into a foreign culture. In a foreign culture, it is often the case that a series of ideas need to be reshaped in order to fit into the cultural context and demand of the new audiences. After this transformation, the new interpretation can be absorbed into the initial *host culture*, i.e., the culture which the ideas of the original source culture disperses to and which transforms those ideas. That is to say, the idea is no longer foreign to the "receiving" culture; instead, it now actively engages in the social issues of the culture that reshapes it, and the rudimentary contrast between the source culture and host culture is reconciled within this process of metamorphosis. Strictly speaking, it is no longer the case that there is one "source culture" which actively imposes its ideas onto a "host culture," but rather, the ideas are developed by the effort of both sides. The true value of the philosophy embedded in the idea is not constituted by the original texts alone, but by the multifarious interpretations provided by different cultures. World Literature is thus realized in this web of multicultural interpretations.

On a practical level, it is also impossible to define World Literature as a unidirectional influence, where World Literature is an unchanging container of certain universal, objective ideas, that is imposed by one culture upon other cultures. Above all, its phenomenal diffusion is not a neutral process; rather, it is influenced by the needs of the culture that receives the literature. As David Damrosch asserts, "A culture's norms and needs profoundly shape the selection of works that enter into it as world literature, influencing the ways they are translated, marketed, and read" (519). The import of books and ideas is closely related to the demand of the receiving nation or culture, which already entails a subjective filter. Furthermore, if what World Literature brings to the host culture are immanently valid ideas, then they should be unable to be converted when they enter a foreign environment. But the fact is that they not only change meanings after diving into alien cultures, but also provoke reactions from the latter which vary enormously from place to place; sometimes those reactions even differ between people who come from the same cultural background. The reason for this interpretive divergence is that the term "World Literature" is not a lifeless notion nor a container full of a priori, fixed ideas; instead, it is an organic and lively whole. It is not a mechanical process of pairing ideas and thoughts, but a dynamic conversation between cultures. As Damrosch claims,

> World literature . . . is always as much about the host culture's values and needs as it is about a work's source culture; hence, it is a double refraction, one that can

be described through the figure of the ellipse, with the source and host cultures providing the two foci that generate the elliptical space within which a work lives as world literature, connected to both cultures, circumscribed by neither alone. (514)

In other words, World Literature is constituted dynamically, with the complex refraction and transformation of ideas happening in the process of the phenomenal literary diaspora. In the remainder of this essay, I will give a specific example regarding Ibsenism in early 20th century China to further demonstrate the dialectical dynamics among cultures existing within the notion of "World Literature."

Chinese Ibsenism as a Phenomenon of World Literature

The term "Ibsenism" was first introduced by Hu Shi in 1918 in a special issue of the magazine La Jeunesse (《新青年》) as the New Culture Movement in China reached its climax. This special issue was entirely devoted to introducing the Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen and presenting several of his translated works. There, Hu Shi defined Ibsenism[1] as a kind of realism by which Ibsen's play vividly reflects the

---

[1] Although the term Ibsenism is a very flexible notion which includes a series of genealogy of meanings and connotations, this essay does not aim at defining this notion (Actually the Irish writer Bernard Shaw has written a book on Ibsen's plays and ideas—which he refers to using one single word "Ibsenism"—with the title *The Quintessence of Ibsenism*, discussing Ibsen's receptions in England. But it is uncertain whether this book has an influence on Hu Shi and Lu Xun, and the reception of Ibsen's works in England is not this essay's focus, which would differ from Chinese reception enormously considering the difference in time, culture and social environment). Instead of analysing Ibsenism the notion an sich, this essay will focus on a specific case, viz., how Ibsenism is interpreted and utilized in China, so to demonstrate the term's flexibility as an example of the transformation of idea and conception within the larger dialectical body of world literature.

corruption and morbidness of society without any disguise. As is analysed in the first section, the selection of works imported into a host culture reflects its own needs. This special issue on Ibsen demonstrates what young intellectuals and revolutionaries were musing about during that crucial historical period of rapid social and cultural transition: the questions of social reform, women's liberation, individualism, and so forth. The introduction of Ibsenism thus functions as a catalyst, prompting people to ponder these central topics. It also points out a possible way for their resolution.

Nevertheless, as Ying-Ying Chien reveals in her analysis of the reception of Ibsen in China, "it is noteworthy that Ibsen's plays and the related women's issues were received in China not directly—that is, not as in the Norwegian context—but were transmuted into the Chinese context through certain important 'intermediaries' for specific purposes" (98). Ibsenism was not taken as a still and inflexible subject; instead, its themes were examined and selected carefully so that they could be revised to meet the specific expectations of the Chinese audience at that time. Among the Chinese intellectuals who presented Ibsenism to the readers, Hu Shi and Lu Xun are two essential figures. These two Chinese intellectuals were highly influential during the early 20th century, their interpretation and analysis of various literary works have played a significant role in changing Chinese society and culture, and their works even continue to be relevant to Chinese society and culture today. Interestingly, however, their interpretations of Ibsenism are very different,

if not contradictory to each other. Hu Shi's understanding is, as we will see, very idealistic and optimistic, while Lu Xun's criticism connotes more worry and scepticism towards the compatibility of Ibsen's ideas and the specific Chinese context. I will unfold my discussion on Ibsen's play *A Doll's House*, which tells the story of Nora Helmer, the housewife of the family, who gradually realizes that she has been the obedient doll or puppet of her husband while she took control of the children as her own puppets. Due to this realization, Nora eventually walks out of the house to seek her independence and freedom. I will analyse this divergence in Hu's and Lu Xun's interpretations by focusing on Nora, one figure in the play *A Doll's House*. I will also discuss the issue of New Women in China, which is closely related to the two interpretations of Nora.

As is illustrated in Hu Shi's essay on Ibsenism, the fundamental method of Ibsenism is realistic literature. He asserts that "considering none of us could be deemed free of responsibility for the evilness existing within the society, we must speak of the reality" ("Ibsenism")[2], as Ibsen has done in his plays. In other words, Hu deems Ibsen's depiction of social ills as a reflective result of the author's criticism of contemporary society and thus is a way of contributing to the larger social transformation. It is also important to notice that Hu's analysis itself on Ibsen's subject matters is a reflective result of his own position regarding those social issues. In his analysis, Hu identifies three aspects of social forces discussed variously in

---

[2] 《易卜生主义》. Translated by me.

Ibsen's plays regarding the problems of Norwegian society, viz., law, religion and morality, which are, as Chien points out, closely related to his own critique of "traditional Chinese norms and attitudes toward women with regard to religious superstition, social morality, and family values" (100). With the emphasis on Ibsen's social critique, Hu attempts to show the symmetry between China and Norway, unveiling the similar problems existing within Chinese society. Another thematic core of Ibsenism illustrated by Hu is individualism. In his article, he explicitly claims that "the biggest evilness of the society is no more than the suppression of one's individual characteristics which prevents him or her from freedom" ("Ibsenism"). From his perspective, individualism is one of the fundamental values of an independent nation, where every person should have the right to use their free will and thus be responsible for his or her own deeds. In short, Hu's interpretation of Ibsenism focuses more on the relatively big and abstract issues such as social problems in general and the notion of individualism instead of diving into the specific social issues in China. Additionally, he ends his essay with an optimistic prediction of the future of China, expressing his hope of a "progressing society" that would improve slowly but smoothly, which is a very typical view in his mild progressive philosophy. This optimistic view is different from Ibsen's own ending, which leaves space for interpretation as Ibsen does not provide any determined destiny for Nora who walks out at the end.

Lu Xun's attitude towards Ibsen, however, is very

different. First of all, Lu Xun does not deem Ibsen's play as "realistic" in the same way as Hu Shi. Although it is undeniable that Ibsen has depicted the imperfections of society, Lu Xun views Ibsenism as a kind of poetics whose aim is essentially "writing poetry" ("Nora"), i.e., composing idealistic things, as he quoted from Ibsen's confession, rather than faithfully demonstrating real problems of a society. In his speech "What Happens after Nora Walks Out" (《娜拉走后怎样》), Lu Xun reveals how Ibsen's social plays are not complete and fulfilled regarding concrete social conditions by questioning Nora's fate outside the time and space of this special play, viz., what will happen to Nora after the curtain falls, and what will become of her if she lives in contemporary China.

Focusing on the practical context of Chinese society at the time instead of the aesthetic effect or the idealistic plot of the play, Lu Xun's prediction towards Nora's fate is far less ideal and poetic compared to Hu Shi's. His response is rather pessimistic: "Logically, however, Nora really has only two options [after she walked out]: to fall into degradation or to return home" ("Nora"). That is, taking into consideration the larger social and cultural environment, it is hardly possible for Nora to survive independently outside her home. First of all, Nora is not economically free[3], which makes it difficult for her to even resolve the problem of accommodation. Secondly, taking into consideration the dominant conservatism in society,

---

[3] One of the thematic threads throughout the original play is the plot of Nora trying to pay off her debt.

the social environment would not support such a "New Woman" who runs away from home in order to seek freedom. As Lu Xun argues, *the very best* scenario is that Nora would live under the sympathy of others, which is, unfortunately, also "a loss of freedom" as the sympathy is given by others, rather than Nora's own independent power. Not to mention that sympathy is such a momentary feeling that "would be stretched thin if a hundred Noras were to leave home while a thousand or a million Noras would only be met with disgust" ("Nora"). Therefore, the departure of Nora is bound to end up in tragedy even in its best scenario.

The last point Lu Xun makes in his speech even takes a darker view compared to Ibsen's original theme and Hu Shi's interpretation of the awakening of inner consciousness and individual freedom. In the last part of his speech, he extends the metaphor of "puppet" or "doll" from the range of family structure to the scale of the whole society. He continues to argue that even if Nora has eventually won her economic freedom, she will still be a puppet in Chinese society where, according to Lu Xun's speech, everyone is another's puppet, in the control of some while they hold the control of the others. The liberation Nora seeks is doomed to fail unless the larger social environment of people enslaving each other has changed. By reinterpreting the model provided by the source culture in relation to the milieu of the host culture, Lu Xun's understanding of Ibsenism transcends its preliminary topics and starts to engage with the local environment and question

the compatibility of the original ideas under the local context.

To conclude, as exemplified by Hu Shi's and Lu Xun's divergence in interpretation, Chinese Ibsenism demonstrates how the potential divergence happens within the process of the diffusion of world literature to a foreign culture. It is true that both interpretations can be indicated from the original works. For Hu Shi, his concentration on individualism and the analysis and critique of family structure is parallel to Ibsen's original concerns, whereas Lu Xun's scepticism in terms of economic freedom is not altogether without traces in Ibsen's play[4]. However, their chosen perspectives still vary due to the distinct expectations and needs of the interpreters themselves. In his Nora speech, Lu Xun famously addresses the idea that "The most painful thing in life is to wake from a dream and find there is no way out. People who dream are fortunate" ("Nora"). This line is adaptable regarding the two Ibsenisms of Hu Shi and Lu Xun. For the former, Ibsenism is a distant but approachable dream, bathing in the light of idealism and individualism. The latter, however, examining the themes through the lens of the local Chinese context, Lu Xun realizes that Ibsenism is only an illusion of reality, beneath which lies an unpredictable abyss, and only those who wake from deep sleep know the fatal danger waiting ahead.

---

[4] For instance, besides the plot of Nora's debt, in the first act, the husband Helmer explicitly says, "No debt, no borrowing. There can be no freedom or beauty about a home life that depends on borrowing and debt" (13).

The Metamorphosis of Remorse

Lu Xun's short novel *Regret For The Past* (《伤逝》)
was written in 1925, two years after his speech on Nora. The
impact of the past discussion on Ibsenism is not invisible in
this novel. It has an explicit reference to Ibsen and his *A Doll's
House* in its narration, and its theme and the protagonists'
characteristics are all representative regarding Lu Xun's
theses on Ibsenism, women liberation, economic freedom and
social transformation. *Regret For The Past* thus can be viewed
as a transformation of Ibsenism and Nora under the peculiar
Chinese context, which embodies Lu Xun's concerns towards
the reality of society and nation.

Regret For The Past is a first-person, narrative novel telling
the story of a "new youth" couple who was influenced by the
Western idea of individualism and cohabited out of their free
will disregarding their families' objections. However, the larger
social environment pushed the couple into an unfortunate
destiny: after living together in a humble house on Chichao
street, the female protagonist, Tzu-chun, was occupied with
chores, whereas the male protagonist Chuan-sheng, the writer
of this series of notes, found it difficult to get a good occupation
to support their living. Busy translating works, Chuan-sheng
grew more and more indifferent towards Tzu-jun. Eventually,
Chuan-sheng indicated that they should part for the happiness
of both, recalling their past conversation on Ibsen and his
"free" and "strong-minded" Nora. One day in the next spring

Chuan-sheng found that Tzu-chun was taken away by her father. The novel ends with Chuan-sheng being accidentally informed of Tzu-chun's death and the regret and sorrow he felt towards this tragedy.

It is a commonly held interpretation in literature that the female protagonist Tzu-chun is apparently a response of Lu Xun towards Nora. Similar to Ibsen's heroine, Tzu-chun gained the courage to leave her family in which the unequal state of its members was subjugating the freedom of individuals. By contrast, however, unlike Nora who walked into a bright and ideal future at the end of the play, Tzu-chun's lack of freedom is not resolved by her departure from her family of origin. It is more accurate to say, using Lu Xun's metaphor from his Nora speech, that Tzu-chun ceased to be the puppet of her family of origin, but started to become the puppet of her lover. As Chien incisively observes, even from the very beginning, when Tzu-chun chose to rebel against her father and uncle, "she is already depicted as very much influenced by her lover both emotionally and intellectually" (109), inspired mainly by Chuan-sheng's empty advocacy of freedom, independence, and new youth. After running away with her lover, Tzu-chun was still economically dependent on him, which makes the relationship between her and Chuan-sheng remain unbalanced. With the enlargement of gaps between them both in terms of economy and intellect, Tzu-chun becomes more and more inferior in this relationship, which drags her towards her destiny. As Chien comments on Tzu-chun's fate,

Although [she wins] the freedom to choose whom to love and share their lives with, [she is] not given the opportunity to question the male-dominated power structure. Running away from one large family, [she] unwittingly [falls] into the trap of another smaller one (their lover/ husband's): [Tzu-chun] dissolves in her lover's apartment under his (in)visible control. Still seen as the "other," our Chinese New Women are not given the power to see themselves as subjects in relation to their male counterparts. (108)

In short, the future of Chinese women is not as easy to change as is depicted in Ibsen's play. Without questioning and overthrowing the essential imbalance that lies within the division of power between man and woman, Nora will never be able to really "walk out" of her family, and Tzu-chun's tragic ending can never be redeemed.

Besides the inequality between man and woman, the indifference and ignorance of the larger social environment also constitute Tzu-chun's tragic fate, separating her from the version of Nora in the original play. Several times in the novel, Chuan-sheng complains about the cold weather outside, alluding to the stagnant and unconcerned atmosphere spread throughout the whole society. The majority of people then were hostile to any reformation, despising the new youth and revolutionaries. This situation worsened the living condition of young people like Chuan-sheng and Tzu-chun both in the physical and spiritual

sense. In his speech given two years prior, "What Happens After Nora Walks Out," Lu Xun was still cautiously optimistic about the possible sympathy given by people in society as the best scenario for Nora. In this novel, however, even the minuscule possibility of sympathy is deprived. For instance, Chuan-sheng was dismissed from his former post due to the rumour related to him and Tzu-chun, which is an unfortunate inflection in the novel, throwing the couple to their worst. The indifference and enmity of the society towards the new youth are the straw that broke the camel's back. The only things remaining are "the cold weather" and "cold wind" (*Regret*), which make it impossible for them to be comfortable at home and outside. The coldness—which is the symbolic representation of the indifferent and conservative mass—has witnessed Tzu-chun's degradation from a lively "new woman," free of shackles and burdens, to one who is occupied with house-keeping, too busy to read, under the implicit control of her lover, and eventually abandoned and dead without any love or hope.

Tzu-chun is no doubt a kind of metamorphosis of Nora, changed according to the peculiar cultural and social environment. Recalling Lu Xun's attitude towards Nora, it is noteworthy that Tzu-chun's fate realizes the hypotheses of Lu Xun in terms of Nora's destination after she walked out: fall into degradation or go home. What is more pessimistic compared to the opinion revealed in the speech two years earlier, however, is that it is no longer a question of either-or; fate can choose both options simultaneously: Tzu-chun

died both of degradation and of her second submission to patriarchy. At the same time, besides being a metamorphosis of Nora, Yzu-chun is also undergoing a kind of Kafkaesque metamorphosis. Kafka's Gregor Samsa turns from a person to a monstrous vermin because of his alienation by humanity and the isolation following it; Lu Xun's Nora, Tzu-chun, being a liberal and tenacious "new woman" at the beginning of the story, gradually degenerates into a miserable figure because of the indifference and the stagnancy of the whole society. Tzu-chun is, like Gregor, alienated and isolated by the society; she ends up turning from Nora to an immanent vermin whose voice is no longer able to be heard, and is abandoned and dead without the notice of the rest of the world.

Conclusion

Ibsenism in China has multiple faces, which instantiate the divergence and transformation occurring in the process of the phenomenal diffusion of world literature. As has been demonstrated in this essay, Ibsen's plays are read variously and are interpreted according to different people's concerns. In the case of Hu Shi and Lu Xun, the former emphasizes individualism and corresponding social critiques indicated within the script's content, while the latter's scepticism towards the untold future after the ending of the play provides a kind of revised version or continuity of Ibsen's themes. Lu Xun's adaptation of Ibsen, moreover, illustrates how the thematic core of a work can undergo, or even be forced to undergo,

crucial metamorphosis when confronting a foreign culture. It shows that the foreign culture, while similar with the source culture superficially at first sight, may differ largely regarding deeper elements such as peculiar social ills, specific historical and cultural background.

As is illustrated in the examination of Ibsenism, instead of being a conception a priori, unchanging and universally valid, the notion "World Literature" is a dialectical whole constituted by both ideas and values provided by the source culture and expectation and ideology by the host culture. It is not a one-way conception, transferring its spirit one-dimensionally from one part of the world to the rest as an omnipotent savior, but a mutual conversation between the original culture and the foreign audiences. On the side of the original culture, the example set by the text can trigger various social reactions and can even provide certain, though not adequate, instructions to resolve the problem discussed by the literature. On the side of the reception, the host culture ruminates and criticizes the presented ideas according to its own special social conditions. If the notion of World Literature is confined only as to impose an unchangeable idea to the rest of the world, it is only an impossible dream. Vain is the attempt of this unrealistic "world literature" to achieve the state of a generalized theory as a unity of ideas feasible for everything, for problems that emerge locally are unpredictable. The pain, suffering, and trauma embodied within a certain culture are unpredictable, mixed with subtle components which are beyond the reach of any

abstract theory. World Literature is made possible only through the metamorphosis of the ideas, the dynamic forum with the participation of all cultures, within which the ideas connoted in the text are shaped and criticized so that it can evolve and interweave into concrete social, cultural, and historical conversations.

Works Cited

Chien, Ying-Ying. "Feminism and China's New 'Nora': Ibsen,
   Hu Shi & Lu Xun." *The Comparatist*, vol. 19, 1995,
   pp. 97–113. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/44366898.
   Accessed 18 Nov. 2018.

Damrosch, David. "World Literature, National Contexts."
   Modern Philology, vol. 100, no. 4, 2003, pp. 512–531.
   JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/379981.
   Accessed 18 Nov. 2018.

Hu, Shi. 易卜生主义 / "Ibsenism". *La Jeunesse*, vol. 4, no.
   6, 1918. https://zh.wikisource.org/zh-hant/易卜生主
   義 Accessed 18 Nov. 2018.

Ibsen, Henrik. *A Doll's House*. Dover Publication, 1992.

Lu Xun. *Selected Stories of Lu Hsun*, Trans. Yang Hsien-yi
   and Gladys Yang. Foreign Language Press, 1960, 1972.

---. "What Happens After Nora Walks Out." Trans. Bonnie S.
   McDougall. https://chinachannel.org/2017/09/29/
   lu-xun-nora/. Accessed 18 Nov. 2018.

Pizer, John. "Goethe's 'World Literature' Paradigm and
   Contemporary Cultural Globalization." *Comparative
   Literature*, vol. 52, no. 3, 2000, pp. 213–227. *JSTOR*,
   www.jstor.org/stable/1771407. Accessed 18 Nov.

Shestov, Lev. *Dostoevsky, Tolstoy and Nietzsche*, edited by Bernard Martin, Ohio University Press, 1969.