

# A Postmodernist Reading of *Rose, Rose I Love You*

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## I. Introduction

It is admitted that there are numerous, sometimes conflicting definitions for the term "Postmodernism." But as Fredric Jameson points out, one of the major characteristics of postmodernism is the so-called "aesthetic populism,"<sup>1</sup> the destruction of the distinction of high culture and mass culture or low culture. The high seriousness of literature is destroyed. In a sense, it is a reaction against the high culture symbolized by high modernism. Under the heavy burden of high modernist canons, the postmodernists find the shadow of the Great Masters too awesome, too suffocating, and too paralyzing. They have to find their way out. They have to find a new direction. Therefore, postmodernism signifies the destruction of the hierarchy of high modernism. It becomes a radically democratic situation. It is some sort of a liberation from the canons of high modernism. Thus, high seriousness has been giving way to playfulness.

So, decanonization, or as Lyotard calls it 'delegitimation', as Hassan points out, is a major trait of postmodernism, which "applies to all the 'master codes', all conventions, institutions, authorities. Thus from 'the death of god' to 'the death of man' (masculine intended) and 'death of author',"<sup>2</sup> norms are revised or subverted; the logocentric, ethnocentric, phallogocentric order of things are deconstructed, displaced, decentered or demystified.<sup>3</sup> Closely connected with decanonization is carnivalization, another major trait of postmodernism.<sup>4</sup> The term, of course, is Bakhtin's.

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But as Hassan points out, it can embrace many traits of postmodernism: namely decanonization, irony, hybridization. Its "heteroglossia" conveys the anarchic ethos of postmodernism. Carnivalization further means inversion, the logic of the inside-out, turnabout, the clown's uncrowning of kings. This, too, is postmodern.<sup>5</sup> So, in my paper, I, basically, intend to read Wang Chen-ho's 王禎和 controversial novel, *Rose, Rose I Love You*<sup>6</sup> in terms of Bakhtin's carnivalization theory. Closely related to this theory, I think, is the feminist's idea of androgyny, which attempts to revise or subvert the phallogocentric hierarchy of things. In this sense, inversion or reversal is involved as I see it, which is very similar to Bakhtin's carnivalization. Therefore, I try to use this aspect of androgyny to look at this novel as well.

## II. Trickster

David Teh-wei Wang 王德威 praises Tung Ssu-wen 董斯文, hero of the novel as "one of the best [most] outstanding tricksters in contemporary Chinese novels."<sup>7</sup> He further points out that "Characterized as fond of women and food and always breaking wind, Tung Ssu-wen, like Panurge portrayed by Rabelais, is the Satan in Wang's carnivalesque world."<sup>8</sup>

Although Ying Tai Walther 龍應台 dismisses Tung as only a stereotyped character: vulgar and obsessed with foreign worship, one thing she says about Tung is very correct — Tung has the cunning of an advisor to a general (*chun-chih* 軍師).<sup>9</sup> A careful reading reveals that cunning Tung in fact comes closest to the poltergeist, a noisy and mischievous spirit, described by Jung in his *Four Archetypes*.<sup>10</sup> According to Jung's definition, the phenomena of the trickster are closely connected with the poltergeists.<sup>11</sup> Worthy of our special notice is that poltergerists "occur at all times and places in the ambience of pre-adolescent children."<sup>12</sup> It is interesting to note that appearing often in animal form, poltergeists can change their shapes at will.<sup>13</sup> Jung further indicates that "the malicious tricks played by the poltergeist are as well known as the low level of his intelligence and the fatuity of his 'communication'."<sup>14</sup>

First, let us look at the character of Tung. He is portrayed as a graduate from the Department of Foreign Languages and Literature at National Taiwan University. Teaching English in a secondary school in Hualien, he is asked to teach bar girls English in order to better serve the GIs on vacation from Vietnam. Although he is named Ssu-wen 斯文 (gentle,

courteous), he does not look gentle at all. Rather, he is very, very fat with grotesque hips like a clownish comedian on Taiwan's TV. In the novel, he is often laughed at as big boar (*chu-kung* 豬公). For example, Big Nose 大鼻獅, boss of a brothel, complains to his mistress Ah-hen 阿恨 of being tricked by Tung, saying: “斯文老師——他名字就叫斯文咧！——真的是這樣，莫有騙你？喝，一棵人肥得像豬公，還名字叫斯文, Mr. Gentle – he is called Gentle! – It's true, I didn't lie to you! He is so fat like a big boar, and he is called Gentle . . .” (169).<sup>15</sup> Like a poltergeist usually appearing in animal form, Tung is described as a pig-like character. What is more interesting is that Tung is described as possessing baby-like characteristics. When Councilman Chien asks Tung to open an English class for bar girls, Tung looks somewhat reluctant. Then Chien scolds him:

「你是在變什麼蚊！（猶如國語：你到底在搞什麼！）」然後轉用國語結難起來。「你是吃錯藥啦？」

「我怎麼啦？」董老師咬著指甲，一臉的莫名奇妙。

「大人大種，又是在當老師，還咬指甲，唔（不）怕見笑啊！」

“What mosquito are you turning into? (What's the matter with you? in Mandarin)” Then he scolded in Mandarin. “Did you take the wrong medicine?” (slang: meaning “What's wrong with you?”)

“What's wrong with me?” Tung was biting his fingernails, looking puzzled.

“A man like you, and a teacher also, is biting his fingernails. You are not afraid of being laughed at!?” (32-33)

When Chien is campaigning for re-election, Tung advises him to use trickery to arouse attention by stripping off all his clothes. Tung tells him that in this way he can show to his constituents that he dares to do what other candidates dare not to. In the farcical episode, Chien, naked except for his underpants, shouting at the top of his voice on the forum, solicits people to support him, challenging other candidates to do likewise. When Chien, naked in broad day-light before the public, is so brazen but without showing the least embarrassment, his cunning advisor, Tung, himself becomes nervous. He is described as “猛咬指甲了，一雙似嬰兒身體底肥腿也篤篤篤抖了起來，biting his fingernails savagely, and his legs, like a baby's, were trembling” (45). Such a description reveals to us the characteristics found in Jung's poltergeist as a pre-adolescent child.

Another interesting characteristic of Tung is that he seems to be endowed with the special capability of expelling gas day or night. Readers will be amazed at finding themselves confronted with the ubiquitous farting of Tung in the novel, some of which are silent, and some of which are like firecrackers. It is very important for us to note that Tung's farting is closely connected with his monkey tricks. Whenever he hits upon inspiration, his fancy ideas coming from God (*hen-lai chih-pi* 神來之筆), he will break wind to celebrate. Or, he will break wind before he thinks of his monkey tricks. *Fang-pi* 放屁 or "farting" also means "nonsense" in Chinese, implying that all of Tung's monkey tricks are in fact nonsense from the traditionally official point of view. But, on the other hand, we can see that Tung's tricks are associated with his farting, his anus, the bodily lower stratum, a characteristic fully in accordance with the poltergeist who also plays his tricks through the "low level of his intelligence and the fatuity of his 'communication'." In the official world, the bodily upper stratum, especially the brain, is praised over the lower stratum, like the phallus or anus, which are generally considered dirty, profane, something to be ashamed of. But in Wang's carnival world, everything is turned upside down. The anus ascends to replace the brain as the controlling power in this novel. The councilman, doctor, lawyer, and people of the upper class are tricked by Tung's "nonsense" through his anus in that the brain is uncrowned and sinks to the lower level.

Through Tung's farting, everything comes to life in the topsyturvy world. The theory that all the symptoms of return to life come in succession starting from the top downward is first introduced by Bakhtin in his treatment of Panurge.<sup>16</sup> Bakhtin argues that in the debasement, which creates the humor and satire, breaking wind is decisive.<sup>17</sup> Because he claims that "Thus we have here a complete turnabout, the replacement of the higher by the lower level: it is not the breath of the mouth, but the flatus that appears as the symbol of life and the true sign of resurrection . . . here the anus symbolizes resurrection."<sup>18</sup> In Wang's novel, Tung uses his anus as a weapon to break down the official world to create a carnivalesque atmosphere "in which the exalted and the lowly, the sacred and the profane are leveled and are all drawn into the same dance."<sup>19</sup> In this way, as pointed out by Jung, the trickster is a collective shadow figure, a summation of all the inferior traits of character in individuals.<sup>20</sup> As a shadow figure, Tung uses his "farting" to break down the serious propriety of the traditional cultural rules. In the carnival world, all the characters are linked together

by Tung's tricks in common folly while the fallacy of the official world is satirically exposed.

For instance, in the bold parody of Councilman Chien's campaigning for re-election, Tung advises Chien to strip off his clothes to show his bravery to fight for the rights of his constituents. Tung's trick is that by daring to strip off his clothes before the public like the stripteaser he will demonstrate he has the guts to dare what other candidates are afraid of. In his campaign poster, Chien is tricked by Tung to show himself half-naked instead of in a suit, with shaggy hair on his chest like Western men, a picture which many people mistake for an advertisement to promote the sale of medicine promoting sexual potency.

In the farcical parody of the election scene, Chien, half naked shouts to the audience that he dares to strip completely naked to show his guts. Wang describes that like a striptease dance, Chien's movement is sometimes fast, sometimes slow as if accompanied by music; all of the audience stares intently without blinking lest they miss a moment of the exciting show. Disregarding the warning of election supervisors, Chien takes off his trousers and is ready to rip off his undershorts. At this moment,

全場的人都直起脖子摒息以待，女性觀眾大都閉上眼目，裝著不敢看；有的用手摀住眼，從指縫裏偷瞧。董斯文臉上笑微微的，好一副得天下英才而育之的欣喜勁！

all the audience craned their necks, holding their breath, waiting; most of the women audience closed their eyes, pretending not to see; some used their hands to cover their eyes, peeping through the cracks between their fingers. Tung, with a sweet smile on his face, betrayed his proud ecstasy as if he were teaching the best student in the world. (46)

Shouting, "No more, no more," the supervisors run at full speed up to the forum to stop Chien as if the police were trying to catch a thief. Tung is nervously biting his fingernails, shouting in his mind: 老大！快脫快脫啊！快脫快脫啊！快啊快！他媽的，快啊快啊——"Big Brother! Hurry up! Hurry up! Strip! Strip! Quickly! Damn! Quickly! —" (46) When the supervisors are about to catch him, Chien turns suddenly his buttocks to the audience and strips off his undershorts as quickly as possible. When Chien is naked on the forum, the audience breaks into a thundering chorus of laughter and surprise. At the moment, Tung is depicted as eagerly

wanting to run up the forum to kiss Chien, telling him that he is very, very proud of him. Then Wang writes: 笑咪咪地，他換個坐姿，好驕傲地放了個有聲之屁。可惜的是：注意力都集中在錢老大光屁股上的大家，簡直是無有一個有幸聞嗅到。“Smilingly, he changed his sitting posture to fart proudly with a sound. What a pity: Everyone’s attention was focused on Chien’s big, naked buttocks; they didn’t have the luck to smell his fart” (47).

Struggling with the supervisors who try to hide his phallus with his trousers, Chien shouts at the top of his voice to the audience:

「你們都親自看到了㗎！我七號錢銘雄唔（不）是一隻嘴敢，我是真正敢！我七號錢銘雄是真正敢做別人唔敢做的，講別人唔敢講的。我七號錢銘雄就是電影裏頭的七號情報員！敢人家所不敢的，敢人家所不敢的我就是你們需要的人，就是你們應該選的人——」

You all have seen it with your own eyes! I am No. 7, Chien Ming-hsiung! I am not just a talker! I dare to act! I am No. 7, Chien Ming-hsiung, who really dares to do what others dare not, to speak what others are afraid of. I, No. 7, Chien Ming-hsiung, am like 007 in the movies, who dares to do what others are afraid of. The one who dares to do what others are afraid of is the person you need, is the person you should elect – (47)

We can imagine at this moment the grotesque image in which Chien does his best to solicit the audience to support him, to vote for him while at the same time he is fighting off the supervisors who try to hide the nakedness of his striptease. Such a structural opposition, according to Rosalind J. Gabin, is the main reason to produce humor.<sup>21</sup> She further explains that “the humor relies heavily on the element of surprise – classic humor theory often speaks of the startling nature of humor’s incongruities – as it jolts the audience into a sharp apprehension of the expected by giving it the unexpected. . . .”<sup>22</sup> Here, the humor lies in the juxtaposition of the election which the audience expects with the striptease dance which is totally unexpected by the audience.

By means of Tung’s trick, a serious election is turned into a carnival world of laughter, gaiety and revelry. When the supervisors are tired with the struggle and let go of Chien, suddenly his pants drop to the ground. At this moment, Chien’s genitals are completely exposed to the public. Everyone is dumbfounded with peeled eyes. Startled, the women in the

audience scream as if seeing ghosts at midnight; while the men are amused looking at it and commenting about it:

「還不小哦！」  
 「哦！算是大號的囉！」  
 「跟阿凸仔（俗稱美國人）差不多哦！」

.....  
 錢老大像好多年後那一些主演所謂社會寫實電影的女星一般，果然一脫而紅，高票當選，同時還贏了「脫褲錢」的尊號。

“Not small!”  
 “Oh, King-size!”  
 “Almost as big as an American’s!”

.....  
 Big Brother Chien, like an actress who became famous by stripping off her clothes in the so-called social realism movies many years later not only won a landslide victory but also gained the nickname: “Stripper Chien” (48).

This grotesquely funny scene is just like the “feast of fools,” which, Bakhtin tells us, is actually a parody and travesty of the official cult.<sup>23</sup> It fits very well Bakhtin’s description that the organizing principles of the carnival part are laughter and the material bodily lower stratum.<sup>24</sup> Here, the bodily lower stratum, the sexual member, represents a carnivalesque image with the ambivalent function: on the one hand, it represents the principle of the reversal of the hierarchic order as pointed out by Jung<sup>25</sup> or debasement. On the other hand, it, as the fertilizing and generating stratum, links always with birth and renewal, reflecting the concept of becoming in order to break down the official world of ideological intransigence, a closed world of death.<sup>26</sup> So, we can see that Councilman Chien is degraded to the level of the stripteaser. He stands naked on the forum to be looked at, to be laughed at, to be teased by the common folks. Ironically, he is not judged by his bodily upper stratum, like the brain, talents, honesty, but by his bodily lower stratum like the stripteaser. On the other hand, a stripteaser ascends to the level of a councilman. As Bakhtin indicates, the “swing” of grotesque realism, the play of the upper with lower sphere, is strikingly set into motion: the top and the bottom, heaven and earth, merge in that image.<sup>27</sup>

If Councilman Chien in revealing his sexual member signifies life, rebirth, then Lawyer Chang is a symbol of the official world of fear and death.

He is described by Wang as dressed in 一身黑——黑色西裝、黑色眼鏡、黑色皮鞋。噶，連插在西裝口袋上的小手帕也選近於黑的咖啡色。瞧他這一身像要出席喪禮的打扮。“everything black — black suit, black glasses, black shoes, even the color of the small handkerchief stuffed in the pocket was dark brown, a color close to black as if he were going to a funeral” (209). What is more important is that he is depicted as skinny and small, looking *shen-k'uei yang-hsu* 腎虧陽虛 (sexually impotent). It is clear to us that Chang represents the traditionally official world which emphasizes the bodily upper stratum rather than the lower stratum, a situation of stifling seriousness which can cause fear and disgust. Therefore, when he is introduced by Tung to give a talk at the opening ceremony of the class, all he says is that when you hit a person while driving and do not kill him, you have to run over him again to make sure to kill him in order to save yourself the trouble of paying for his hospitalization. And he warns the bar girls that they cannot strike. He threatens them that if they strike, they will be shot because striking is illegal. After the talk, every girl is frightened. But one girl tells the others that 免驚啦！那有這款嚴重！我們是民主國家咧！那裏像他講的，動不動就犯刑法第幾條又第幾條，就要坐牢就要槍斃。哼！聽他放臭屁！“Don't be afraid! It isn't so serious! We're a democratic country! It isn't true that you will be put into jail or get killed if you violate such and such laws. Shit! Don't listen to his bullshit!” (225-26). Here bullshit or *fang-ch'ou-p'i* 放臭屁 (breaking stinking wind) serves the function to reverse the hierarchic order, to poison the false seriousness of the old world. Bakhtin assures us that “The idea of the deposed higher powers and truths had become part of the nucleus of carnival images.”<sup>28</sup> In Wang's novel, we can see that all who are of the highest social class, like the councilman, lawyer, and doctor who is depicted as a gay monster using his practice to satisfy his homosexual need, are debased while all who are of the lowest social are crowned like the bar girls.

The most ridiculous and poignant parody of the novel is that Tung compares the bar girls he selects to serve the GIs to be like running a great enterprise. In the parody, the pimps ascend to the level of entrepreneurs and the prostitutes are crowned as decent workers. Through Tung's *chien-ch'iao* 奸巧 (cunnings, trickery), everything is turned upside down in the carnival world. He compares the business of prostitution to the enterprise of the Tatung Company, a symbol of Taiwan's successful enterprises:

我深信你們四大經理都是偉大的企業家，都有大同公司的偉大理想——大同公司，你唔知？賣電風扇的大同公司，你唔知？——對啦！對啦！



就是大同大同服務好那個大同公司啦！……我們一定有大同的偉大抱負。

I believe you four managers are all great entrepreneurs; you all have the ideal of Tatung Company – Tatung Company, don't you know? Tatung which sells electric fans, don't you know? Right, right, Tatung, Tatung, good service; it's that Tatung Company! ... We must have the ideal of Tatung. ... (198)

It is very interesting to note that in Tung's trickery of selecting the girls, there is a downward movement, which, according to Bakhtin, is also inherent in all forms of popular-festive merriment and grotesque realism.<sup>29</sup> The downward movement begins with the selection of the site for the English class. Ironically, a church is selected. Then comes the selection of the bar girls for the class. The girls will be trained to speak English, an ability centered in the upper sphere of the body. Next, the height of every eligible girl must be no less than 155 cm (71). Then the breasts of every candidate must be big (92-93). Tung tells the pimps that 美國人喜歡奶大的女人，奶越大，他們越甲意（中意）！所以挑出來的小姐不但要有奶，而且要大奶。“Americans like women with big breasts. The bigger the breasts, the more they like them. So, the selected girls must not only have breasts, but also have big breasts” (92). What is the standard to measure the breasts? Tung tells them: 像文旦柚那樣，就是大；像陽明山橘子那樣，就是小！“like *wen-tan-yu* (文旦柚 pomelo), they are big; like the oranges on the Yangmingshan, they are small” (93). Finally, he comes down to the genital organ. Tung asks if 選出來的小姐，你們有沒有查清楚她們每一個人來月經的日期。“for every selected girls, have you checked the date of her period?” (97). Tung does so for he claims that the monthly period will interfere with the service. As in the Rabelais' world, in the travesty, “the downward movement is opposed to the upward movement. The entire spiritual topography is turned upside down.”<sup>30</sup> Bakhtin further writes that the downward thrust of all the images intends to show that “the soul's beatitude is deeply immersed in the body's lowest stratum.”<sup>31</sup> He explains:

If the Christian hell devalued earth and drew men away from it, the carnivalesque hell affirmed earth and its lower stratum as the fertile womb, where death meets birth and a new life

springs forth. This is why the images of the material bodily lower stratum pervade the carnivalized underworld.<sup>32</sup>

Therefore, we can see that Tung, as a trickster, uses trickery derived from his anus to parodize the official values. In the carnival world, everything is turned upside down. The upper level, symbolized by the councilman, lawyer, and doctor is debased and the lower level symbolized by the anal and genital parts is crowned.

### III. Language

In an interview, Wang expressed that his aim was to write the novel as something unique and different from that of his predecessors.<sup>33</sup> Readers who read the novel for the first time will be amazed at, will be uncomfortable about, or will laugh at the mixture of different languages in the novel. Besides Chinese, Wang uses Taiwanese, Japanese, and English in a very vulgar or obscene way to form, instead of a symphony, in his world the gossip of a lively, noisy marketplace. Such a bold use of languages, however, does not draw much criticism from the critics. Walther praises the mixture of languages, official or obscene, reflecting the pluralism of the society as the only merit of the novel.<sup>34</sup> Up to the present time, the most insightful observation of Wang's usage of the different languages in the novel must be attributed to David Wang, who argues that "the heteroglossia of different languages is used to replace the single voice of totalitarianism."<sup>35</sup> It aims at revealing the ridiculous cracks of the seemingly unified norm on the surface as the real spirit of farce.<sup>36</sup> David Wang rightly point out:

Wang Chen-ho uses a mixture of Taiwanese slangs, cliché, pidgin English, and chop suey Japanese to tell his story. This inherits the atmosphere of the carnivalesque reversal decadence. Especially, the patriotic slogans and Biblical allusions are quoted randomly and are even distorted to carry vulgar, or obscene connotation intentionally. Such a rhetorical chaos creates a cacophony of discourse, not only mocking Taiwan's multifarious culture, but also stressing the novel's rebellion against the monophonic system on which traditional orthodox novels depend.<sup>37</sup>

It is obvious that Wang intends to use different languages to signify the

world as an interaction of signs. On Taiwan, an island having been influenced by different cultures – mainly, the Chinese, Japanese, and American, a language mixed with different dialects or foreign phrases is in fact spoken by different levels of people. Moreover, Wang seems to try to use the vulgarization of the language to create a carnival world of caricatured characters. It seems more real that people of the lower class do use such vulgar language.

A closer examination of the images used by Wang will reveal another purpose for the vulgarization of the language. On the one hand, Wang uses serious clichés like “今日事，今日畢 Don't wait until tomorrow for what you can do today,” “一分耕耘，一分收穫 No Pain, No Gain,” “抬頭挺胸，勇往邁進 March forward with your head held high and your chest stuck out,” “做人要光明，處世要公平 Be open-minded and act fairly,” and *li* (禮 propriety), *i* (義 justice), *lien* (廉 honesty), *ch'ih* (恥 humility) to constitute the official world which, on the other hand, is confronted with and penetrated by the popular world, a world full of very improper and obscene images such as *fang p'i* (放屁 farting), *fang-shih* (放屎 defecate), *ta-p'ao* (打砲 fuck), *hsiao-pien* (小便 urinate), *hsu-hsu* (噓噓 urinate), and *fang-niao* (放尿 urinate). Such a distinction between the official world and the popular world is vividly illustrated by the following dialogue in which Tung speaks to Councilman Chien over the telephone to discuss the business of recruiting girls for their enterprise. Because Tung is speaking in the school, Wang describes him as speaking very meticulous Mandarin which symbolizes the official world. By contrast, Councilman Chien uses very vulgar language:

到底是老師，斯文又恢復虫イ尸，ㄉㄤㄤ涇渭分明的國語。

「我不擔心那個！」

「的相反！」

「好啦！我都急得要ㄉㄤ、尿（尿失禁），你還在跟我講玩笑呀！」

After all as a teacher, Tung resorts to fastidiously correct Mandarin.

“I don't worry about that!”

“On the contrary!”

“All right! I am so anxious that I may piss my pants; you're still joking. . .” (53)

Interestingly, the juxtaposition of these two worlds, I believe, is the most

significant feature of Wang's using the vulgarization of the language.

More importantly, we must notice that Wang uses the slogans and cliches, images of seriousness, hypocrisy, and death to symbolize the official world. And he puts this world in a ridiculous and vulgar context. For example, all the slogans are put up in the classroom designed for the purpose of opening an English class for the bar girls who, we understand, speak very vulgar and obscene language. Not only does the juxtaposition create a comic effect, but it also indicates that Wang intends the official world to be teased, laughed at, and broken down by the popular world. And it is interesting to note that the popular world is full of scatological images. The most obvious scatological image is of course farting, which seems to be everywhere in the novel. As discussed above, these scatological images, as in the example of farting, serves the function of decanonization of all the "master codes," all conventions, institutions, authorities.<sup>38</sup> Here, I would like to cite a very grotesque scatological image in juxtaposition with sacred images of the holy cross and the Bible to demonstrate this function:

你進了上頭漆寫「得恩堂」的鐵門，迎面就可以睹到釘在石灰牆上與人一般高的松木十字架，髹在上面的紅漆，有不少地方已剝落了！暴露出木頭的原色，將尚未掉落的紅漆襯映得越發活似斑斑可考的血跡。滴血的十字架下擺著……架上的燙金聖經、歌本、福音……却又冊冊鮮新，全是外國教會寄來沒多少時日。臨著破書架是扇小板門。門拉開，往前走個十來公尺就可以走到設在戶外的廁所，是舊式茅坑型，蹲在上面，臭氣衝鼻的；頭一低下，還可以分明見到滿坑的糞和蠕動不停的白色蛆。

After you entered the iron gate with a painted sign that said: "Te-en T'ang" 得恩堂 (Chapel of Bestowed Grace), you would see a holy cross as tall as a man, which was pinned up on the mortar wall. Lots of red paint on the cross had come off, revealing the original color of the wood. Against the remaining red paint, the wood seemed to be vividly spotted with blood stains. Under the bleeding cross, there stood. . . . On the shelf, copies of the Bible with gilded covers, books of holy song, and gospel were piled up . . . each volume was brand new, just arrived from the churches abroad not long ago. Close to the broken book shelf was a small wooden door. When it was pulled open, by walking about 10 meters straight ahead, you could come to an outdoor bathroom, an old-fashioned privy in fact.

While squatting above on it, you would be over-whelmed with the unbearable odor. Looking down, you would clearly see the privy brimming with excrement and crawling, wriggling white maggots (1-2).

We may be shocked or feel uneasy by the grotesque juxtaposition of scatological images and holy images. Professor Walther expresses such a strong disapproval of using such scatological images that she claims the language is one of the serious problems of this "not so funny comedy."<sup>39</sup> But as pointed out by Bakhtin, "Exaggeration, hyperbolism, excessiveness are generally considered fundamental attributes of the grotesque style."<sup>40</sup> Bakhtin argues that although the interpretation of the grotesque image as satirical is typical and widespread, the function of the grotesque images lies beyond that and is more positive.<sup>41</sup> In terms of the scatological images, he explains:

We must here stress that it was in the material acts and eliminations of the body — eating, drinking, defecation, sexual life — that man found and retraced within himself the earth, sea, air, fire, and all the cosmic matter and its manifestations, and was thus able to assimilate them. Indeed, the images of the material bodily lower stratum have a prevailing cosmic connotation. . . . Therefore dung and urine, as comic matter that can be interpreted bodily, play an important part in these images. They appear in hyperbolic quantities and cosmic dimensions. Cosmic catastrophe represented in the material bodily lower stratum is degraded, humanized, and transformed into grotesque monsters. Terror is conquered by laughter.<sup>42</sup>

In the example quoted from the novel, the frightening holy image of bleeding cross is "degraded" and "humanized" by the scatological images of excrement and maggots. So it is important for us to see the distinction between the official world of correct language and the popular world of familiar speech and grotesque images in Wang's usage of the language. It is also worthy of our notice that the excessive scatological images serve to de-canonicalize fearful authority. In the carnivalization of the world, laughter is achieved to humanize everything.

#### IV. Androgyny

As I have pointed out above in Part I, a trickster, according to Jung, is often a shadow figure. He is often revealing the "unreason and unconsciousness"<sup>43</sup> of us, which we regard as inferior or shameful in our consciousness and try to suppress. Therefore, Jung expounds that "The one standing closest behind the shadow is the anima,"<sup>44</sup> which, explained by Jung, is the unconsciousness or the female principle. And the human being or the self consists of the anima and the animus, the consciousness or the male principle. As a trickster often reveals the unconsciousness, he is, in a sense, showing the anima to embrace his femininity. There is a very interesting paragraph in which Jung describes the trickster demonstrating his feminine principle that I would like to quote here:

He is so unconscious of himself that his body is not a unity, and his two hands fight each other. He takes his anus off and entrusts it with a special task. Even his sex is optional despite its phallic qualities; he can turn himself into a woman and bear children.<sup>45</sup>

From the above quotation, it is obvious that Jung seems to indicate that a trickster is androgynous. A careful reading of Wang's novel shows that Tung, the trickster, can also be interpreted as androgynous, which, however, seems to be largely ignored by critics.

According to Carolyn G. Heilbrun's definition, the ancient Greek word — from *andro* (male) and *gyn* (female) — defines a condition under which the characteristics of the sexes, and the human impulses expressed by men and women, are not rigidly assigned.<sup>46</sup> The origin of androgyn can be traced back to the Genesis of the Old Testament. Heilbrun explains that:

In the West, cabalistic mysticism has interpreted Genesis I:27 — "god created man in his own image . . . male and female created he them" — as implying the androgynous nature of God and of human perfection before the Fall. From cabalism this notion passed into the Christian mysticism of Boehme, where it is fused with the Pauline mysticism of Galatians 3:28 — "There can be no male and female; for ye are all one man in Christ Jesus."<sup>47</sup>

Professor Sung Mei-hua 宋美璿 also argues that those who support the idea of androgyny embrace the cablistic interpretation of Genesis, emphasizing the return to a harmonious union of *Ying* and *Yang*, and on the other hand, avoid the Freudian theory of phallism to stress the pre-Oedipal phase.<sup>48</sup> As I have discussed in Part I, Tung is depicted like a baby who tends to bite his fingernails, a characteristic fully in accordance with that in the pre-Oedipal phase stressed by androgynists. What is more interesting is that Tung is described as one who can achieve sexual gratification by himself. He seems to possess the two sexes in his body without lacking or needing the aid from either sex to fulfill sexual desire as Wang writes that, 每個月的初一和十五，就似要舉行什麼神秘祭典般地，他總把自己安全地鎖在學校的單身宿舍裡很慎重地自娛一番 “On the first day and the fifteenth of each month, as if to hold some sort of a secret, mysterious rite, he would lock himself safely in the school’s single dormitory to carefully masturbate” (6). This trait seems to receive much emphasis from Wang because he devotes the whole of Chapter 13 to describing how Tung performs his rite of masturbation, which leads to his speech the next day in which he tells the high school students that masturbation is nothing to be afraid of (208).

Like Dionysus, pointed out by Heilbrun, as appearing “to be neither woman nor man; or, better, he presents himself as woman-in-man, or man-in-woman,”<sup>49</sup> Tung is described as a woman-in-man. Although he is specified as male (*kung-te* 公的), his feminine side is much more emphasized: For example, his hips are fat and big (5). His breasts are fat and soft like cotton, which Doctor Chün 懌醫師 always likes to touch and squeeze (114). Large breasts and hips most conspicuously characterize a woman. After seeing a film shown at school describing the danger of smoking, he decides to quit smoking. Wang writes that “此後他真地信守誓言終身守身如玉拒絕和香烟再發生關係。Afterwards he faithfully kept his vow to protect his body like jade of his whole life by refusing to have any relationship with cigarettes” (10). Here, the phrase *shou-shen ju-yü* (守身如玉 protect one’s body as pure as jade) is usually used to describe a faithful, virtuous woman. It is seldom applied to a man. The femininity of Tung is further stressed when one of the pimps, Big Nose, complains that what he does is purely based on whim (*hsin-hsüeh lai-ch’ao* 心血來潮) or impulse, which is so changeable that they can never be sure what his next trick will be (99). Such an intuitive unconsciousness is generally categorized as a female principle.

Judging from the above analysis, it is evident that Tung does possess femininity physically and mentally to become an androgynous ideal. According to Heilbrun, an androgynous individual's actions are "not strictly held within the limits of a narrow 'norm'."<sup>50</sup> Likewise, Tung's monkey tricks turn everything upside down in the carnival world. What is more important for us to notice is that Heilbrun argues that an androgyne "possess[es] the redeeming powers."<sup>51</sup> Jung in his *Four Archetypes* also explains that "He [the trickster] is a forerunner of the saviour, and, like him, God, man, and animal at once."<sup>52</sup> In Wang's novel, Tung also regards himself as a saviour figure. Using the Biblical allusion, Tung compares himself to Jesus Christ, who cured the leprosy. Imagining that all the forty or fifty girls of the four brothels coming to him to ask for help were like the leprosy, Tung speaks to them:

啊啊！我非常十分可憐你們啊！所以我要盡我所能救贖你們啊！潔淨你們啊！傾囊相授要成功地把你們訓練成最具水準的吧女啊！每一位的你們都要用功努力，以期獲致最大的成就，職是之故，啊啊！你們的社會地位可以獲得昇高啊！你們的生活可以期許改善啊！

Oh, how I pity all of you! So I will do my best to redeem you, to purify you! I will do my utmost to successfully train you into high class bar girls! Everyone of you must study hard to achieve the best result so that your social status will be raised and your living expectancy will be improved! (64-65)

Furthermore, he wants the pimps to treat the girls not as "products" to make money, but as human beings (191). He instructs the pimps to give the girls "春日風的溫暖 warmth like the spring breeze," and "海水深的關懷 care as deep as the sea" (181). He tells them to respect their existence and their character (181). In the end, Tung tells the girls that he aims to raise their social status and turn them into respectable persons in the society (197). Therefore, it is clear to us that the most important function of Tung as an androgynous figure is to bring about the reversal of the hierarchy in the world of the novel. Here, the lower level like the prostitutes are crowned while the upper level — those who symbolize the phallic authority like the lawyer, councilman, doctor, and boss are tricked, laughed at and debased. So, the function of Tung as an androgynous figure is closely connected with that of Tung as a trickster in the carnivalesque world discussed above. David Wang rightly observes that Wang's novel deals with the reversal of



the man and woman relationship.<sup>53</sup> Such a reversal brought about by Tung will help break down the phallogocentric world, free us from the prison of gender to reach the androgynous vision.

## V. Conclusion

I agree with David Wang that "The aim of the farcical writing is to break down the traditional plot, characterization, to open a new way, to shock the readers into new awareness. Some Readers may feel uncomfortable about all the grotesque images, the exaggeration, the unethical game playing; but the new writing ideology behind this should not be ignored. It is especially meaningful in that it opens a new vista for the imagination of the future writers."<sup>54</sup> If one wants to use the traditional reading to explore the didactic or satirical purpose of Wang's novel, he still can come up with such findings: For example, he may find the novel ridicules and satirizes people who become materialistic in the transformation of the society in which people sacrifice everything to gain money. Or, he may point out the poignant satire of the pimps who try to recruit their relatives, even their college graduated sons, to serve the GIs because Tung tells them some of the GIs have homosexual tendencies, or of Big Nose's mistress who refuses to make love to Big Nose in order to remain "pure" to wait for her turn on the waiting list of the candidates to serve GIs. I admit this purpose is quite obvious, but I think it is only secondary. What is more important is to see the novel from a new aspect by using Bakhtin's theory of carnivalization. In this way, we can tear down the barrier of traditional didacticism in our mind. We can see much more. We can take off the serious outfit of hypocrisy and laugh with the caricatured fools in the carnival world. Therefore, I believe that laughter is the primary aim of this novel. We can use deconstructive strategies, in this instance, to see the novel as a joke. In this joke, Tung, the trickster, turns everything upside down. The official world symbolized by didactic slogans and clichés is decanonized by the popular world symbolized by the scatological images. Moreover, we can see that Tung can also be seen as moving toward an androgynous ideal which levels hierarchy and humanizes the traditional world.

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## Notes

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5. Ibid.
6. Wang Chen-ho 王禎和, *Mei-kuei mei-kuei wo ai ni 玫瑰玫瑰我愛你* (Rose, Rose, I Love You) (Taipei: Yuan-ching chu-pan shih-yen kung-szu, 1984). All the quotations in this article refer to this edition.
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11. Ibid.
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14. Ibid.
15. All the English translations in this article are mine.
16. Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rebelais and His World*, trans. Helene Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1984), p. 382.
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25. Jung, p. 135.
26. Bakhtin, pp. 148-49.
27. Ibid., p. 163.
28. Ibid., p. 393.
29. Ibid., p. 370.
30. Ibid., p. 378.
31. Ibid.
32. Ibid., p. 395.

33. Wang, p. 273.
34. Walther, pp. 77-78.
35. David Wang, p. 74.
36. Ibid.
37. Ibid., p. 164.
38. Hassan, p. 445.
39. Walther, pp. 80-81.
40. Bakhtin, p. 303.
41. Ibid., pp. 306-08.
42. Ibid., p. 336.
43. Jung, p. 144.
44. Ibid., p. 150.
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46. Carolyn G. Heilbrun, *Toward a Recognition of Androgyny* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974), x.
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