ABSTRACT

FEMALE MASCULINITY IN RHETORICAL ENCOUNTERS: THE JUXTAPOSITIONAL RECONTEXTUALIZATION OF TOMBOY AND NÜ HANZI

by Chulin Zhuang

This thesis focuses on the representation and performance of female masculinity in the U.S. and China from a comparative rhetorical and cross-cultural perspective, taking tomboy and nü hanzi (tough girl/lady, manly woman) as examples. To enact a better understanding of female masculinity in its diverse and indigenous contexts, the current study utilizes the “art of recontextualization” through the juxtapositional comparison between tomboy and nü hanzi, seeking to create an in-between space and open up reciprocal dialogues in which both subjects can be better informed. Apart from reviewing how tomboy and nü hanzi are contextualized respectively, I further conduct a critical discourse analysis on nü hanzi in the Chinese news media as a way to fill the “emic” knowledge gap. Based on the review and analysis, the two cases are brought together and engaged in cross-cultural dialogues, which sheds light on the complexity, contingency, temporality, and rhetorical underpinnings of female masculinity. It is hoped that the study can also provide some potential implications for the field of Composition and Rhetoric.
FEMALE MASCULINITY IN RHETORICAL ENCOUNTERS: THE JUXTAPOSITIONAL RECONTEXTUALIZATION OF TOMBOY AND NÜ HANZI

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Dedication

To my grandfather, who inspired me to be a scholar.

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Introduction: Troubling Moments

Last year, I got the opportunity to give presentations on the Chinese term 女汉子 (tough girl/lady, manly woman) at different conferences. After I introduced the term, my audiences asked some questions that I had not considered at that point, which greatly inspired my further inquiry. For example, they asked whether the term 女汉子 indicates lesbianism (similar to butch in English), and whether there is a permissive period for 女汉子, just as tomboyism is generally accepted prior to puberty. One of them also suggested that identities similar to 女汉子 in the U.S. would be more likely tolerated and embraced in daily life while oppressed in a more ideological and conservative national venue. I continued to search for more information about this term, and I was very excited when I found some blog posts introducing this term to foreign audience. In a few responses to the posts, I also spotted some issues including feminist criticism that fail to consider the Chinese context. At that time, I was reading Female Masculinity by Judith Halberstam (also known as Jack Halberstam) along with scholarship in comparative rhetoric and feminist studies on composition, and I kept thinking about those questions and remarks, returning to them with new perspectives from my readings and seminars. What are the issues behind those questions and comments? What kind of social cognitions and assumptions about similarities and disparities exist when encountering a foreign term? What are the potential misrepresentations and misinterpretations? Beyond my personal interest, what issues, such as responsibility and ethics, are involved when introducing such terms to an uninitiated audience? Further, what lessons from such encounter can be productively brought to the classroom? To further my inquiry, I finally decided to write my thesis focusing on the representation and performance of female masculinity in the U.S. and China from a comparative rhetorical and cross-cultural perspective, with potential implications for the field of Composition and Rhetoric.

My endeavor is also guided by the intention of connecting gender studies and our field. Previous studies have revealed a close connection between gender and language as well as the embedded power dynamics, indicating that language difference between men and women results in women’s stereotyped inferiority (e.g. Cameron; Fishman; Lakoff and Bucholtz; Tannen). In this regard, gender has been an important research site in relation to Composition and Rhetoric from a feminist perspective (e.g. Kirsch et al.; Royster and Kirsch; Stenberg). To name a few, Cheryl Glenn, Susan Jarratt, C. Jan Swearingen are some of the renowned scholars keenly
nourishing the study on feminist rhetoric. Moreover, the burgeoning enterprise of comparative rhetoric has witnessed and been enriched by more cross-cultural interrogations and reflections in terms of indigenous feminist rhetorical practices in other non-dominant social, cultural, and political milieux (e.g. Queen; Wang, “Engaging,” “Rethinking,” “Comparative”; Wu). With the development in gender studies and the field of Composition and Rhetoric, we can envision a more complex conversation between these disciplines across time and space. In proposing to study gender and rhetoric comparatively, Plate and Zoberman led us to inquire “how genders are rhetorically constructed in various cultural contexts, and how gender is part of the factors in the development of rhetorical theory as well as specific rhetorical strategies” (5). Almost inevitably, related inquiries as such involve questions about the usage of rhetoric and how it is perceived and embraced in multiple venues. While Kennedy defines rhetoric broadly as an emotional energy, here I tend to tackle rhetoric in a basic sense as “the art of knowledge-making” (Covino and Joliffe 8), which normally but not exclusively involves verbal or textual acts that are contingent, selective, contextualized, and by extension, behavioral and performative. Echoing the call to study the “facts of nonusage,” defined as “linguistic and other symbolic behaviors and experiences that have been disqualified, forgotten, or deemed something other than rhetoric” (Mao, “Thinking” 449), I will pursue rhetorical studies in ways that are more expansive and critical, and most importantly, ongoing and open-ended. Grounded in this belief, my thesis suggests that not only feminist linguistic practices, which have been investigated from different perspectives earlier, but also the construction, representation, and performance of gender in general can be and should be viewed as rhetorical artifacts.

Contemporary discussion of gender is mainly built on the social constructionist perspective that gender is a social construct and an acquired status, which does not rely on biological difference but is constructed socially, culturally, and psychologically (e.g. West and Zimmerman). Instead of being fixed and static, it is performative, continuously repeating or changing in different social or cultural contexts and communities (Butler, Gender; Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, “Think Practically,” “New Generalization”; Wenger). The formulation and institutionalization of gender manipulated by social norms and ideologies are so ingrained that we may easily take them for granted without noticing that they are in fact highly rhetorical. Media representation, for example, is more conducive to a more complex rhetorical rendering of gender identities (Carstarphen and Zavoina). Consequently, media rhetoric and visual rhetoric
are constantly engaged to analyze gender portrayals and the ideology as well as power dynamics underneath. Related studies (e.g. Morris; Skorek and Schreier) have indicated that gender issues such as inequality and women’s stereotyped inferiority are “glocal” (Friedman, Mappings), featuring universality around the world and particularity within a certain culture due to the intersectionality with other constructive factors. According to Butler, gender as “a shifting and contextual phenomenon” and “a relative point of convergence among culturally and historically specific sets of relations” (Gender 15) intersects with “racial, class, ethnic, sexual and regional modalities of discursively constituted identities” (6), which may lead to differences and inconsistencies of gender performance in different cultural, social, and historical contexts. However, existing gender studies are mostly centered on Euro-American countries or dominated by the U.S. model. It should be noted that gender as a dynamic construct is not only constantly shaped by different social, cultural, and political contexts and variables, but can also inform those contexts, power dynamics, and ideological underpinnings. Such constructed and constructing nature lays a comparative ground for rhetorical gender studies here and now as well as there and then, entailing rich social, cultural, and political artifacts and other interrogative spaces in which rhetoric plays a shaping role and in turn constantly undergoes changes by those material and ideological shaping forces. As an “interdisciplinary enterprise” that “investigates across time and space communicative practices that frequently originate in noncanonical contexts and are often marginalized, forgotten, or erased altogether” (Mao, “Thinking Beyond” 448), comparative rhetoric can yield fruitful engagement with gender studies by recontextualizing related rhetorical practices, turning to the non-dominant local contexts, and bridging “self and other, past and present, indigenous and exogenous, and local and global” (“Beyond” 216).

Spurred by the feedback on my earlier presentations and continuous research, I used the term female masculinity proposed by Judith Halberstam and utilized it as a contextualized gender performance and phenomenon. However, though I am aligned with Halberstam that the formulation of this term has revolutionary significance, I am aware that it is not without problem. As Paechter rightly points out, this descriptive phrase puts “female” in the position of a qualifier while treats “masculinity” as a fixed, solid noun (“Masculine Femininities” 259), indicating the dominant and inherent place of masculinity. I would argue that such connotation exists and should be carefully interrogated in the current project. It should also be noted at the outset that
female masculinity is not a local term in China, nor is it translated into a literal equivalent. Rather, I use it as a fluid concept that is rooted in and illustrated by social, cultural, and linguistic phenomena. Ultimately, my purpose of using this term is to take it as a trope, and in the process of constructing it, move towards a way of deconstruction and reconstruction. Scholarship of female masculinity is much influenced by the U.S. model, primarily contextualized in Judith Halberstam’s book *Female Masculinity*. In the U.S. context, female masculinity is often linked to sexuality in the discussion of feminist and queer theories, if not exclusively. This model also dominates many studies on female masculinity in Asian countries (e.g., Japan, Korea, China), which may undermine the particularity of representing and performing female masculinity in those social and cultural contexts. For instance, the newly popular Chinese term *nü hanzi* 女汉子 (tough girl/lady, manly woman) in the Chinese media provides an example in which sexuality and feminist as well as queer concerns may not be the core of the discourse. To some degree, it connotes a kind of female masculinity that in fact diverges from the dominant U.S. pattern. On the one hand, the female masculinity contextualized in *nü hanzi* becomes an artifact of the Chinese society, culture, politics and rhetoric; on the other hand, it justifies the importance of analyzing terms and phenomena in the local contexts, which is highlighted in comparative rhetoric. To this end, I aim to explore the construction, representation, and performance of female masculinity in the U.S. and Chinese contexts, taking *tomboy* and *nü hanzi* as examples that embody continuous concerns, misunderstandings, and overall, productive complexity. My primary goal, however, is not to codify their similarities or differences so much as to open up trans-rhetorical and cross-cultural dialogues by juxtaposing the two cases. In so doing, we can not only begin to interrogate and negotiate gender identities and boundaries in multiple contexts underscored by their indigenous rhetorics, cultures and politics, but also further our reflections and progress in the enterprise of comparative rhetoric as well as the field of Composition and Rhetoric as a whole. At the same time, striving to avoid “generalization” and “piecemeal” analysis (Lloyd), my study is oriented by several inquiries that lead to some preliminary focuses:

1. How are *tomboy* and *nü hanzi* respectively contextualized, in terms of the construction, representation, and performance of female masculinity?
2. For the relatively new term *nü hanzi*, what can we learn from the more intensive examination of its vibrant venue -- the media discourse?
3. From the two cases, what rhetorical underpinnings and dialogues can be brought to light?
To answer these questions, I will first introduce my methodology grounded in comparative rhetoric, then review studies on female masculinity in both the U.S. and China, especially contextualizing *tomboy* and *nü hanzi*. Since *nü hanzi* is relatively new and existing studies are far from sufficient, I will specifically look into the case of *nü hanzi*, focusing on how it is constructed in the Chinese media and how and why it represents a kind of female masculinity that diverges from the U.S. pattern and adheres to the Chinese tradition and current contexts. Further, I will engage comparative rhetoric as a way of interpretation to explore the rhetorical underpinnings, defamiliarizing and recontextualizing the rhetoric of female masculinity in the U.S. and China through the juxtaposition of *tomboy* and *nü hanzi*, followed by conclusion and potential implications for further studies. In what follows, a brief summary of each chapter is provided.

Chapter One will discuss my methodology by reflecting on comparative rhetoric. Drawing on the major scholarship, I will map out a theoretical framework integrating “juxtapositional comparison” (Friedman, “Why”) and the “art of recontextualization” (Mao, “Beyond”) as well as highlighting self-reflexivity for rhetorical interpretations. To facilitate the interpretation, especially in the case of *nü hanzi*, I will also utilize CDA to analyze media discourse.

Chapter Two will provide a literature review through a comparative rhetorical lens, contextualizing the scholarship of female masculinity in both the U.S. and China. In the U.S. context, I will ground my review of female masculinity in Halberstam’s book *Female Masculinity* and take *tomboy* as an example since it is more frequently discussed and involves productive comparison with the Chinese terms. In the Chinese context, based on the review of relevant scholarship, I will summarize how female masculinity is addressed in China and how it can help to disrupt the dominant U.S. model. Then I will move to the case of *nü hanzi* and introduce its origin, definition and recent discussion, etc.

To enhance our understanding of *nü hanzi*, Chapter Three will contribute to the discourse analysis on this term in the Chinese media. I will turn to a study on *nü hanzi* in the Chinese news media, specifically, the headlines of news and editorials about *nü hanzi* in the China News Service (CNS) from April 30th 2013 to October 30th 2016. By conducting transitivity analysis on the news headlines in different contexts, I will look into the participants, processes, and circumstances involved and unpack the semantic relations as well as ideologies and power
dynamics in the discourse, which will elucidate how nü hanzi is constructed and contextualized in multiple contexts based on the Chinese culture, politics, and rhetoric.

Drawing on the literature review and critical discourse analysis, Chapter Four will situate nü hanzi back in the juxtaposition with tomboy and practice the “art of recontextualization” in order to generate dialogues between the two terms and enhance the mutual understanding of female masculinity in the U.S. and Chinese contexts. The complexity, contingency, and temporality of female masculinity, its national and feminist linkages, as well as the cultural and rhetorical traditions in terms of mind/body and masculinity/femininity will be discussed.

Finally, Chapter Five will conclude the thesis by reflecting on the study and potential implications for the field of Composition and rhetoric from methodological, political, and pedagogical aspects.
Chapter One: Mapping Comparative Rhetorical Interpretation

Engaging Comparative Rhetoric

Comparative rhetoric, aiming to “study different rhetorical traditions and their practices across time and space through a dialogic lens” (Mao, “Studying” 216), is an enterprise developed in the recent globalizing and transnational era (Hum and Lyon 153). With a commitment to challenge the power imbalances and “transform dominant rhetorical traditions and paradigms” (Mao, “Thinking” 448), it embarks on multifold inquiries that enact different ways of seeing and knowing. Underneath this endeavor is, first and foremost, the raison d’être of comparison. In her 2011 article “Why not Compare,” Susan Friedman acutely responds to the political concerns about the unequal position in comparison and the violent removal of the other from its context resulting in potentially undermining the understanding of its particularity (754-55). Articulating the cognitive imperative, social and cultural imperative as well as the epistemological and political imperative to compare, she further proposes juxtapositional comparison as a comparative methodology and maps out collision, defamiliarization, and collage as three modes of such comparison. Performing comparison is more than seeking sameness and difference, but an act to engage and defamiliarize both the other and the self, which requires constant ethical and methodological reflection. As Friedman insightfully points out, “The decontextualization that comparison relies on as it moves beyond the particular and local also involves a recontextualization that is potentially illuminating” (“Why” 757). In this sense, comparison is also an act of recontextualization. Here what I want to clarify is that comparative rhetoric emphasizes the local contexts and the native standpoints, on the one hand, and the interconnectivity between the local and the global, on the other. Such emphasis moves towards what LuMing Mao calls the “art of recontextualization.” Earlier I have mentioned that my study focuses on several inquiries by juxtaposing the case of tomboy and that of nü hanzi. To conduct a productive juxtapositional comparison and open up reflective dialogues, I further utilize the “art of recontextualization” in my analysis.

The “art of recontextualization” can be viewed as a complex methodological development in response to the challenges in conducting comparative rhetoric. Starting from Robert T. Oliver, one of the pioneers practicing comparative rhetoric, the methodological challenge for comparative rhetoricians has been a persistent concern. LuMing Mao, for instance,
summarizes that comparative efforts as such are often or may be easily trapped into two pitfalls: a generalization based on the presumption of “rhetorical universals,” or a piecemeal point that usually results in resorting to a “deficiency” model (“Reflective,” “Studying”). In general, our challenges pivot around the negotiation between these polarities and within multiple binaries. Drawing on David Hall and Roger Ames’ “art of contextualization,” Mao’s call for turning to the “art of recontextualization” as a discursive third highlighting the interdependence, interconnectivity, and dialogism within and between subjects and contexts, opens up a reflective space for our further undertakings. To help us better understand this methodological lens, the focus/field model (Hall and Ames) illustrating the “art of contextualization” can shine a light on the recontextualizing practice. Imagined as a model of Chinese family relations and, by extension, other sociopolitical orders, the focus and the field formulate a kind of relationship that is not quite “one-many” or “part-whole” but “this-that” (273), indicating their interdependence and correlation. In fact, as Hall and Ames imply, the vague focus, in lieu of the precise locus (178), and the field, equally vague and also unbounded, are mutually constituted and constituting (273). The unbounded fields and the shifting foci are “never finally fixed or determinant” but involved in “an always vague and incomplete process” (ibid.). This model of mutual entailment can provide several heuristics for a careful and reflective mode of recontextualization. First of all, the consciousness of context urges us to place our focus, the subject under study, in relation to its “field” and reject “any external principle or overarching context to determine the context of the other” (“Beyond” 218). Second, the mutually constitutive relationship between the focus and the field foregrounds a sense of interdependence and dialogism, both within the self and on the site of the other, and further between the two. For one thing, cultivating the research lens and ability to identify the interconnectivity between and among our own foci and fields may prepare us for a more critical and illuminating engagement with the other’s foci and fields. For another, such knowledge and reflexivity can stimulate a conversation that reveals and promotes the mutuality and reciprocity between the self and the other. Third, the focus/field model constitutes an ongoing and open-ended process, which informs the discursive open-endedness and indefiniteness of contextualization and representation of any kind. Along with this is the limitation of our practices, and more importantly, the awareness of such limitation and the constant effort to revisit it, both of which create the possibility for us to rethink our ways of being and knowing, learn from the other, and enrich our own legacies.
There is more. The “art of recontextualization” is, by nature, a dynamic process that is imbued with multiple ways of conciliation and engagement. From the outset, it involves a movement from the “etic” to the “emic” and the interaction in between. Originally used in structural linguistics to distinguish phonetics and phonemics, and further developed by cultural anthropologists, the “etic/emic” concepts are utilized as a comparative approach to addressing “the need to study non-euroamerican rhetorical practices on their own terms (the emic) while being cognizant of and responsive to the influence of the dominant rhetorical tradition (the etic)” (“Beyond” 213). Aware of the embedded indication of these borrowed terms, for instance, the “development of objective principles” and the “structured, step-by-step apparatus,” hence the potential limits of their application to comparative rhetoric, Mao initiates a critical reconfiguration, calling into question our practices of this approach (ibid.). If we integrate the “etic/emic” into the “art of recontextualization,” at least two issues can be reviewed here. At the most basic level, this approach is a reminder of our standpoints, one that brings into light our biases, either unnoticed or self-aware. Stated differently, this self-consciousness of our positions orients, or at least supports, our efforts of recontextualization. The ongoing etic/emic process thus “raises the level of understanding and enriches the modes of reflection” (Mao, “Reflective” 418). Beyond this, as Mao cautions, “the boundary between the etic and the emic is never clear-cut in practice,” and the two may be more likely operated simultaneously and dynamically (“Beyond” 214), rather than one at a time. Therefore, notably, we may envision a more interdependent, interactive, and correlative mode of the etic and the emic. As indicated earlier, the “art of recontextualization” underlines the need to critically review one’s own contexts and the economic, political, sociocultural and historical underpinnings that shape the ways of being, knowing and performing. With this critical sense of the self, the same interrogation should be extended to the other, whose indigenous traditions also play a role in reshaping ours. This process is, more likely than not, recursive and simultaneous, rather than linear and procedural. When we conduct close study and careful analysis on any sites of inquiries, it in fact requires a productive vantage point that realizes a certain degree of immersion and estrangement. In other words, recontextualization is both etic and emic, situated in an etic-emic continuum and largely regulated by the dynamics in between. It is this feature that allows researchers to “bring both their own contexts and those of the other into simultaneous view” (“Beyond” 218).
If this is the case, still, more challenges remain for our emic endeavor. In an effort to examine the “political, economic, and sociocultural underpinnings” of local contexts as well as the heterogeneity and multiplicity of those contexts ("Beyond" 219-220), how can we develop a more comprehensive understanding of the emic meanings and contexts? As Mao puts it, “meaning is being produced and consumed by the occasion of use in complicity with or in competition with existing meanings or associations” ("Studying" 225). Similarly, Hum and Lyon suggest that “[n]o rhetorical situation or text is truly understood except in relationship to other situations and texts” (155). In other words, meanings are mutually dependent and such relationship is vital for a true understanding of rhetorical practices. Beyond a cultural anthropologist turn to go native and study the native’s point of view, a more profound view of the native tradition further relies on our efforts to discover and array the meaning matrix that represents the local – an act of recontextualization that links local and global as well as past and present. To this end, Mao proposes that we turn to the concept of “discursive fields,” which he defines as “textual spaces where related concepts and categories cluster, and where different semantic alignments and subject positions take shape” ("Studying" 223). Taking the word individualism in Chinese as an example and further elaborating on shu 怨 (“reciprocity” or “putting oneself in the other’s place”) in the Analects, Mao explains,

Within each discursive field, one particular concept may depend on other concepts to realize its full meaning, and the totality of meaning that emerges from any given discursive field may be greater than the meanings conveyed by individual concepts within the same field. Further, discursive fields often exist in an agonistic relationship to other discursive fields at any given time. That is to say, one field may try to delegitimize or marginalize all other fields by staking out its own ideational grounds and by claiming its doctrinal supremacy. ("Studying" 223)

That is to say, we should not only be cognizant of the interconnectivity between and among meanings, but also be aware of the power dynamics in the discursive fields. Meanings are shifting in response to diverse contexts. For any particular subject under study, there may be various meanings and contexts co-existing, some being dominant. To borrow from Hall and Ames, some meanings and contexts may be importantly present, while others may be merely
The important/mere presence of meanings in different contexts entails questions about “what,” “how,” and “why.”

This leads to my next point -- about the facts of usage/nonusage. Kennedy defines comparative rhetoric as “the cross-cultural study of rhetorical traditions as they exist or have existed in different societies around the world” (1). In real practice, how should we grapple with those “rhetorical traditions”? Where do they exist? What forms do they take? Turning back to these questions pushes us to think about the subject of our study as complex and contingent rather than homogenous and essential. To put this point another way, we need to move from the “facts of essence” to the “facts of usage” (Schiappa). Edward Schiappa distinguishes the “facts of usage” from the “facts of essence” in that “essence” focuses on “What is X?” while “usage” asks how X is actually used and specifically contextualized (6-7). Further, the facts of usage, as Mao implies, formulate “an ecology of historicity, specificity, and incongruity” (“Beyond,” “Thinking”). He writes:

[W]hen self and other, past and present, indigenous and exogenous, and local and global are brought together or forced upon each other, the historicity of the social and the cultural and the linguistic invariably attend to all facts of usage. Further, studies of facts of usage can only become viable when they address both the specificity of occasions of their use and the real and potential incongruities that constitute their raison d’être. (“Beyond” 216)

In this sense, the rise and fall of discursive fields capture and are subject to the facts of usage. The mere or important presence of certain fields, meanings, and contexts at the same time presupposes cases that are downplayed, neglected or made invisible, which should also be seriously taken into account. In other words, as Mao wisely suggests, we need to take a step further to explore, acknowledge, and address the “facts of nonusage” -- the “instances of erasure or elision” and “knowledge that has been buried, disqualified, or ruled out of order” (“Thinking” 452). Since both facts of usage and facts of nonusage “result from and perpetuate the social, cultural and linguistic norms” (ibid.), and the two become the Yang 阳 and the Yin 阴1 of the social reality, we should identify the interdependence and complementarity between them and not hesitate about our turn to studying the facts of nonusage. In so doing, we may enrich our enterprise with more critical inquiries and insightful conversations.

1 See more discussion about the Yin and the Yang in Chapter Four, “Enacting Yin-Yang.”
With this development of the “art of recontextualization,” I tentatively sketch out below a model of the recontextualizing process (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. A Pattern of Recontextualization

What I want to highlight in this model is (a) the interactive dynamic between etic and emic, global and local; (b) the co-existence and mutual dependence of meanings and contexts, which constitutes the facts of usage featuring the interplay of historicity, specificity, and incongruity; and related, (c) the other side -- facts of nonusage, pivoting around social norms, can be entailed by facts of usage and yet remains to be explored and addressed. Grounded in the focus/field model, this pattern also involves multiple correlational foci and fields. For example, the meaning focus is related to its context field, which is a local focus in the meantime. Likewise, the local field is one of the global foci. They are interdependent and interconnected in an ongoing process. Embedded in this process is a sense of self-reflexivity (Garrett), a careful consideration when speaking for the other (Alcoff), and an awareness of defamiliarizing both self and other (Friedman, “Why”) in constant and open reexamination, reanalysis and reunderstanding. At the same time, it is vitally important to acknowledge that this model is open-ended. Our primary
goal of enacting the “art of recontextualization,” which Mao identifies as “a metadisciplinary stance,” is to cultivate a reflexive sense of “our own biases, binaries, and boundaries” (“Beyond” 209), and embark on “an intersubjective process through which other and self engage in a cross-cultural dialogue with an abiding sense of self-reflection, interdependence, and accountability” (222). The real practice, as we may expect, is by no means unitary or explicit but greatly dependent on the exigency and the subject being represented, and influenced by one’s personal interest, experience, cultural heritage, etc. For instance, in the 2013 special issue about “comparative rhetoric” in Rhetoric Society Quarterly, scholars address different rhetorical issues of focus, time and space, enacting the “art of recontextualization” in different ways. In my thesis, I aim to juxtapose the case of tomboy and nü hanzi, and by (re)contextualizing the two, create trans-rhetorical and cross-cultural dialogues to open up a third, in-between space where different traditions become more self-aware and better-informed through conversation. Considering the current knowledge gap, I will take a closer look at the case of nü hanzi by analyzing media discourse before moving to such interpretation.

**Integrating Critical Discourse Analysis**

To this end, CDA also provides a productive methodological lens. Originated from critical linguistics, which was developed at the University of East Anglia in the 1970s (Fowler et al.; Kress and Hodge), CDA differs from the traditional approaches in that it not only involves textual analysis but also focuses on the social factors of discourse. According to Fairclough’s three-dimensional conception of discourse, any discourse is seen as a piece of text and an instance of discursive practice as well as social practice (Discourse 4), foregrounding the dialectical relationship between language and society -- language is socially shaped and also socially shaping (Discourse, Media). Based on this, CDA pays particular attention to the constructive and constitutive nature of discourse and the social, cultural and political context surrounding it. Drawing on multiple disciplines, social theories and methods, it is critical in the sense that it reflexively discloses the interrelation of discourse, power, and ideology, with a potential to initiate social action (e.g. Chilton et al.). Therefore, CDA analysts are much aware of the hegemonic power and ideological meaning embedded in and constructed by discourse (Van Dijk, “Discourse”; Fairclough, Language). For example, Fairclough suggests that there is power relation in and behind discourse (Language), which is also tethered to ideology. As Van Dijk
puts it, ideologies refer to “shared representations of social groups” from a sociocognitive perspective and are “generated and generally reproduced in social practices” and “acquired, confirmed, changed and perpetuated through discourse” (“Ideology” 115). Manifested in discourse and constructed by discourse in turn, they play a “fundamental or axiomatic” role in shaping social cognition and contribute to legitimating domination and exerting power (116-17). Such attention to power, ideology and the link to social factors in general is deemed increasingly influential for the field of Composition and Rhetoric. For instance, as Huckin et al. contend, CDA offers a productive methodological lens to our field in three unique aspects: drawing our attention to “issues of power and privilege in public and private discourse,” facilitating “the parallel analysis of multiple, multimodal, and historical texts,” and providing a way to “coordinate the analysis of larger (macro) political/rhetorical purposes with the (micro) details of language” (111). Overall, it generates critical reflection and understanding of the discursive construction that is particular to its social environment, also contributing to our efforts in comparative rhetoric. In my case, for example, a CDA approach to the nü hanzi discourse is a step towards “emic” understanding, which lays the ground for further comparative interpretation and reflection.

The critical examination of discourse can help uncover and denaturalize language use pertaining to power and ideology in complex social phenomena. As Ruth Wodak articulates, “CDA aims to investigate critically social inequality as it is expressed, constituted, and legitimized by language use” (“Critical” 53). In this regard, issues concerning gender, race, class and so forth, laden with ideology and power dynamics, are some of the most revisited topics. For instance, considering the complexity and intersectionality of gender and its increasingly subtle relationships with power and ideology, Michele M. Lazar directed our attention to feminist critical discourse analysis, enacting a political perspective to demystify the ideological discursive construction of gender. As she rightly points out, gender ideology, among other ideological assumptions, is “constantly re-enacted and circulated through discourse as commonsensical and natural,” accounting for its “taken-for-grantedness and normalcy” (7). The mission of feminist CDA, therefore, is to uncover “how gender ideology and gendered relations of power are (re)produced, negotiated and contested in representations of social practices, in social relationships between people, and in people’s social and personal identities in texts and talk” (11). Moreover, such efforts, as I expect, should be accompanied by a developing sense of
reflectivity in today’s changing and globalizing world, in terms of our self-examination and the acts of engaging and representing the other. It is from this perspective that I find a CDA approach with a comparative rhetorical lens productive for my inquiries.

Aiming to investigate the use of language at a sociopolitical or socialcultural level, CDA strives to keep pace with the changing society and cover different kinds of discourse. Among them is media discourse, and most significantly, news discourse (Fairclough, *Media*; Fowler; Van Dijk, *News*). For one thing, media discourse is prevalent, playing an important role in reflecting and shaping social cognition and ideology. For another, its multimodal, interactive and global patterns call for more critical investigations. At the same time, it provides rich resources for studying rhetoric in everyday life and from a comparative perspective. The complexity of the event and the multiplicity of media allow different contexts to co-exist, in which meanings shift and manifest themselves differently. Those contexts, according to Van Dijk, are also ideologically biased (e.g. “Discourse,” “Ideology”). To gain a better understanding of media discourse challenges us to look at discursive practices in relation to the “field” rather than in isolation, paying attention to their indigenousness, intertextuality, and interconnectivity. By so doing, we may take a step further to disclose and look deeper into the hidden media story. In my case study, I specifically focus on multiple contexts in news discourse -- a genre featuring particular, institutionalized ways of production and consumption as well as social functions, which may be more revealing yet subtle with respect to power and ideology. In real practice, CDA is not pinned down to a unified framework or method due to its interdisciplinary nature. Aside from the critical perspective, the description and interpretation of discourse are largely consistent with linguistic analysis, primarily based on Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), which considers language as a system of choices with interpersonal, experiential, and textual metafunctions. More details related to the analytical approach will be introduced in Chapter

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2 Building on linguistic and sociopolitical theories, representative scholars have proposed some analytic frameworks that are acknowledged as the most influential, such as Fairclough’s dialectical-relational approach, Van Dijk’s sociocognitive approach (*Ideology*), and Wodak’s discourse-historical approach (“What”). Although it is not the purpose of my thesis to elaborate on these frameworks, my analysis is basically grounded in Fairclough’s three-layer model: description, interpretation, and explanation (*Language*), which to some extent corresponds to Van Dijk’s three-level analytical model: superstructure, surface structure, and deep structure (see *Discourse and Communication*).

3 From the perspective of SFL, language comprises systems of relationships and provides a series of choices. According to Halliday, the meaning of language is generated by choices made by language users in language system, which allows different semantic functions to be realized in interaction activities. There are three metafunctions of language: interpersonal metafunction (mood, modality, appraisal), experiential metafunction
Three.

To briefly sum up, this chapter maps out the methodology utilized in the current analysis, which draws on juxtapositional comparison and the “art of recontextualization” with a focus on the etic/emic dynamics, the multiplicity of and interconnectivity between various meanings and contexts, the facts of usage/nonusage, and the self-reflexivity in such interpretation. Before I move to the discourse analysis, I will first review related literature as a way to contextualize female masculinity.
Chapter Two: Contextualizing Female Masculinity

Female Masculinity in the U.S.

The concept of female masculinity is introduced in the book *Female Masculinity* by Judith Halberstam, a gender and queer theorist. Halberstam’s conceptualization of female masculinity has become influential thereafter, which also provides a foundation for the current project. Moreover, in order to conduct more concrete and productive comparison later, I take the term *tomboy* as a representative.

*Halberstam’s Pattern of Female Masculinity*

In *Female Masculinity*, Halberstam complicates the notion of masculinity and initiates a conversation of masculinity without men, holding that “masculinity must not and cannot and should not reduce down to the male body and its effects” (1). Undermining the foundational white male masculinity, she turns to “the kinds of masculinity that seem most informative about gender relations and most generative of social change” (3). In this sense, masculinity becomes more variant and inclusive. Halberstam brings up the discussion about female masculinity to “explore a queer subject position that can successfully challenge hegemonic models of gender conformity,” which is generally viewed “as a pathological sign of misidentification and maladjustment, as a longing to be and to have a power that is always just out of reach,” from time to time entailing male supremacy, social rebellion, sexual alterity, heterosexual variation, a place of pathology or healthful alternative to conventional femininities (9). She claims that female masculinity is a multiplicity and proliferation of masculinities; however, women’s unique contributions to “modern masculinity” are basically “completely unnoticed in gender scholarship” (46). Examining female masculinity, as she demonstrates, can contribute to troubling the dominant masculinity and patriarchal relations. More broadly, such effort “can make crucial interventions within gender studies, cultural studies, queer studies, and mainstream discussions of gender in general” (2).

Moving beyond the problematic pattern of confining female masculinity to lesbianism, which is believed to seek no more than what is already known and oversimplify the performance of female masculinity, Halberstam specifies and categorizes different terms of female masculinity in detail such as *butch* of different types, *tomboy*, *drag king* and *dyke*, etc., engaging
literary and media analysis as well as visual rhetoric. Drawing on the methodology that she calls “perverse presentism” (50), she denaturalizes and complicates our understanding of gender, sexuality and masculinity. However, her interrogation of female masculinity centers on embodied female masculine performances driven by various types of same-sex desire. Heterosexual female masculinity, as she acknowledged, is not a main concern within the scope of the book. She posits, “I have no doubt that heterosexual female masculinity menaces gender conformity in its own way, but too often it represents an acceptable degree of female masculinity as compared to the excessive masculinity of the dyke” (28). At the same time, she indicates that “in the absence of sexual identities, gender variance must have meant something different” (59). For example, the masculinity of rural heterosexual women may result from their work and desire, and may in some way connect to “latter-day cowgirls, tough women who worked with horses and cattle and competed in rodeos,” which implies that there is not necessarily a contradiction in being heterosexual and masculine, and in this case, the unconventional behavior is justified in relation to naturalness and health (58). Another important point that may not be adequately addressed in the book is the relationship between masculinity and race as well as class. Briefly, Halberstam points out that the masculine superiority -- assumption that “masculinity always and everywhere constitutes superiority, even when found in women” are limited to class (78). As Ellis infers, while masculine traits are often linked to intellect and distinction in the case of upper-class women, they may be associated with criminality when performed by lower-class or middle-class women. These issues are underdeveloped in the dominant discourse of sexuality in the book and are in need of more discussion.

In fact, what Halberstam mainly concerns about is the relationship between female masculinity and non-normative sexuality. Such emphasis on queer sexuality has driven studies on female masculinity in many other districts. For instance, Fran Martin’s research on masculine women or tomboys in Hong Kong and Taiwan is grounded in the framework of female homoerotic imaginary; similarly, Carmen Ka Man Tong links tomboy identity to lesbian schoolgirls. Audrey Yue, more explicitly, investigates Asian drag kings, postcolonial female masculinity and hybrid sexuality in Australia. Although examining and theorizing female masculinity in relation to queer sexuality may provide a most productive avenue to disclose power dynamics and envision new masculinities, it at the same time runs the risk of making queer sexuality the core of female masculinity and overlooks other possibilities that may also
have cultural and social significance.

**Tomboy as a Case in Point**

Tomboyism is posited as “an extended childhood period of female masculinity” in Halberstam’s book (5). As Paechter puts it, “[t]omboys in many ways enact a masculine self-presentation in a female body, challenging this oppositional positioning” (“Tomboys” 226). Studies on this subject encompassing literature, history, psychology and sociology, both literary and empirical, unveil many dimensions of this code of conduct. In the introduction of a 2011 special issue on *tomboys* and tomboyism, Michelle Ann Abate begins with a remark that “[p]erhaps no other form of female gender expression is both more widely known and less critically addressed than that of tomboyism” (407). It serves as a fair and productive representative of my inquiry for at least three reasons: (a) it is a cultural concept as well as an embodied phenomenon that it is historically, socially, politically and racially constructed, projecting dynamic, fluid, and multivalent meanings (Abate, *Tomboys*, “Introduction”); (b) this type of female masculinity is closely associated with Halberstam’s focus on queer sexuality while at the same time well illustrating female masculinity within a heterosexual matrix and disclosing more historical, social, and cultural underpinnings beyond sexual alterity; (c) although not an equivalent to *nü hanzi* -- the subject to be investigated on China’s part, it can initiate a productive conversation between the two, considering their characteristics such as definitions, prompting factors and impacts, etc.

**Framing Meanings of Tomboy**

As Farr points out, although there may be “a stereotyped generalistic understanding” of the term *tomboy*, its meaning is by no means “simple or stable” (502). In fact, the meanings of *tomboy* are varied, multidimensional and dynamic, contextualized in different time and space. Based on the *Oxford English Dictionary* (*OED* 207-10), the prefix “tom,” which commonly means “prostitute,” has rich and complex cultural connotations, mostly related to lesbianism and masculinity. As Mary Elliot rightly points out, this cultural richness leads to “more complexity” of tomboyism (qtd. in Abate, *Tomboys* xiv). According to Judy Grahn, the term may be “as old as the 13th century,” originating from a spirit cat named “Tomboy” belonging to an accused witch (qtd. in Hall 557). In Abate’s book *Tomboys: A Literary and Cultural History* -- perhaps
the most influential project on this subject, she contends that the term *tomboy* dates back to the 16th century and has undergone several meaning transformations thereafter. It was originally used to describe men rather than women (xiii), firstly referring to a “rude, boisterous or forward boy” in the 1550s (*OED* 211). Several decades later, it shifted to a “bold and immodest woman” (ibid.), and evolved into its current usage -- “a girl who behaves like a spirited or boisterous boy; a wild romping girl; a hoyden” in the late 1590s and 1600s (212). Although *tomboy* has a long history, it is still a hot spot in today’s academia. In Paechter and Clark’s review of the term, they summarize that studies on *tomboy* mainly center on two aspects: empirical, primarily psychological, treating tomboyism as a common childhood stage (e.g. Burn et al.; Carr, “Tomboy”; Morgan), and non-empirical (literary and cultural studies) represented by Halberstam’s work, which associate tomboyism with rare, extreme female masculinity (342-43). Meanwhile, Abate’s project studies tomboyism as “a cultural phenomenon and literary convention” (*Tomboys* ix), identifying two main meanings of tomboyism: “a sign of lively girlhood and a precursor to a life as a vigorous and vibrant adult woman” and “a perversion of the physical and psychological traits of femininity and even a menacing index of proto-lesbianism” (xi). Existing studies of *tomboy* have unpacked more details of these aspects and keep expanding the meaning with sociocultural changes and the emergence of more literary works.

Although the criteria used to identify *tomboy* vary, they are basically intertwined. Commonly based on the preference in terms of activities and playmates, some scholars link tomboyism with girls’ cross-gendered identification (e.g. Bailey et al.; Green et al.; Jones; C. Martin), while others consider it as a form of androgyny (e.g. Hemmer and Kleiber; Plumb and Cowan). Abate explains that by the late 20th century, *tomboy* had become common in North America and culturally codified into a twelve-point “Tomboy Index” 5 concerning *tomboy* traits in appearance, interests, activity and peer preference, etc. (xvi). Briefly speaking, the traits mostly identified include “[a] proclivity for outdoor play (especially athletics), a feisty independent spirit, a tendency to don masculine clothing and adopt a boyish nickname” (ibid.). Based on a list of definitions from dictionaries and literature, Hall summarizes similar

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4 In their 1973 book *Male and Female Homosexuality*, Saghir and Robins propose *tomboy* as a “persistent aversion to girls’ activities and girls as playmates” (qtd. in Ahlqvist et al. 565), which is replaced by a later definition that focuses more on the preference for boy playmates and related activities (Hyde et al.).

5 This is elaborated in Burn, O’Neil and Nederend’s 1996 article.
characteristics in “Tomboys: meanings, marginalization, and misunderstandings.” Considering the common four criteria -- playmate preference, choice of activity, toy preference, and gender identity, she suggests that tomboyism is “a sexual identity continuum within which tomboys as a group vary in degree, but not in type” (561). They have diverse performances with at least four things in common: “preference in clothing and appearance, male friends, physical activity, and male-identified toys” (563). Notably, as Farr maintains, tomboy can “encompass a fluid and ever-changing construct of personality, physicality, and body” (501). Challenging and expanding traditional femininity, it is widely used to describe personality or psychological characteristics in a feminine body (500). Moreover, it often conveys “a particular masculinity focused on skills or competencies rather than appearance” (Craig and LaCroix 451). All in all, this code of conduct is “a way of being, performing, or understanding oneself as female that has significant elements that are stereotypically associated with masculinity” (Paechter, “Tomboys” 223).

These attributes also shape tomboy as a social identity -- a pivotal point in many empirical studies. In Carr’s 1998 study on 14 women who self-identified as tomboys, she detects “two ‘moments’ of consciousness -- a rejection of femininity and a choice of masculinity” and “two forms of agency -- active gender resistance and conformity” (“Tomboy” 528). More specifically, Craig and LaCroix theorize tomboy as a protective identity in terms of “sexual reputation, orientation, and the privileged access to masculine domains” (463). Farr, on the other hand, explores the meanings of tomboy in the lesbian community (specifically, the online women-seeking-women personal ads), suggesting the fluid and complex tomboy identity in the aspect of body, personality, interests, and aesthetics. In sum, tomboy is a queering of gender conventions and “an act of resistance and identity expansion” (Farr 500).

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6 Likewise, Ahlqvist and her colleagues design nine qualitative categories to identify tomboy including appearance, sports, personal-social attributes, gender-based interests and activities, social relationships, gender flexibility, preference for the male sex, color, etc. (568).

7 Carr regards tomboy identity as an agentive choice between embracing masculinity and rejecting femininity 530), proposing five common themes of tomboiyism concerning agency: “aversion to feminine activities and preference for the male sex, color, etc. (568).

8 According to Craig and LaCroix, tomboy identity provides limited protection for (a) sexual reputation of heterosexual girls and women; (b) closeted lesbians; and (c) access to “male privileged spaces, activities and conversations” (450).

9 According to Farr, tomboy connotes (a) an “intermediate identity distinct within a butch/femme dichotomy”; (b) a “tempering agent for traditional femininity; (c) a “fluid construct of personality, physicality, and body”; (d) an “understood descriptor of a particular aesthetic or physicality”; and (e) a synonym of butch (500).
Furthermore, *tomboy* has various connotations and functions differently in diverse contexts. Abate’s literary, cultural and historical study well supports this point. Throughout the history from the mid-19th century to the eve of millennium, tomboyism was initially viewed as an alternative to traditional femininity and childrearing practice, occasionally contextualized as a means to ensure national unity, western democracy, and the white supremacy, simultaneously linked to non-normative sexuality, and gradually developed into a cultural or business symbol (e.g. the “Pretty Tomboy” online clothing store). In other words, *tomboy* identity is not only a process of “doing” and “undoing,” but also a process of “making” and “unmaking.” As we keep enriching the meaning-making of *tomboy* in the modern society and look back to its historical evolvement, these foregrounded or backgrounded connotations, or in other words, the meanings importantly and merely present across contexts, not only imply the complexity of tomboyism, but also lead us to rethink its dynamic social, cultural, and political breeding grounds as well as psychological factors.

*Exploring Reasons behind Tomboyism*

What are the factors behind tomboyism? To answer this question, I turn to Abate’s influential work and take a closer look this time. As Abate strives to “uncover the origins of tomboyism, chart its trajectory, and trace the literary and cultural transformations the concept has undergone in the United States” (*Tomboys* xi), she demonstrates that this code of conduct is fluid and multivalent throughout the history, troubling the boundaries between “male/female, black/white, adult/child, heterosexual/homosexual, savage/civilized, different/same and drag/passing” (xxx). It would be helpful to map out Abate’s literary, cultural and historical study and align the features of tomboyism with each decade as well as the social, cultural, and political conditions in that period (Table 1).

**Table 1. An Overview of Abate’s Project**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Period</th>
<th>Features</th>
<th>Reasons for Tomboyism</th>
<th>Reasons against Tomboyism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1840s - 1850s</td>
<td>- A preparatory stage for “the physical and psychological demands of marriage and motherhood” (6).</td>
<td>- Economic instability and feminist movement propelled changes in childrearing practices and standards of feminine beauty.</td>
<td>- Efforts to eradicate slavery</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Literary example: <em>The Hidden Hand.</em></td>
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raised concerns over white racial supremacy and the reproductive ability of middle- and upper class white women.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1860s</th>
<th>1870s</th>
<th>Civil War</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- A national and cultural phenomenon to ensure national unity.</td>
<td>- Women were encouraged to work outside since most men were away for the war.</td>
<td>- The potential to “eradicate traditional American social and family life” and “engender male-identified single women” (31).</td>
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<tr>
<td>- More masculine</td>
<td>- Increasing social, economic, and professional opportunities for young capable women in public and traditionally male-dominated fields.</td>
<td></td>
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<td>- Tomboy taming</td>
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<tr>
<td>Literary example: <em>Little Woman</em></td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1880s</th>
<th>1890s</th>
<th>The New Woman</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- “A biologically determined identity” (67)</td>
<td>- Industrialization, urbanization, commercialization liberties and freedom led to substantial change in women’s gender roles.</td>
<td>- Medical beliefs that educational and professional engagements will ruin women’s reproductive abilities and result in “race suicide” (51).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- “A social scourge” and “a genetic defect” (52)</td>
<td>- The New Woman was acknowledged as the “economically productive member of society” (51).</td>
<td>- The potential of women turning into sexual deviants from gender deviants.</td>
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<td>- Began to be associated with homosexuality</td>
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<tr>
<td>Literary example: <em>A Country Doctor</em></td>
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</table>

<p>| Early 20th Century | | |
| Retained the antebellum element of improving women’s health on the basis of femininity and heterosexuality while rejecting the postbellum female masculinity and sexual inversion (74). | - Nativism and xenophobia as a result of the increasing non-white immigration (73) as well as the declining health state of white women again foregrounded the concern over women’s reproductive capabilities and the fear of losing white racial supremacy. | - The strengthened connection to adult “sexual perversion.” |
| - The physical culture movement: allowed women to be physically strong “within the bounds of societal approval” and under the patriarchal authority (74). | | - The risk of lesbianism and transvestism. |
| - A voluntary choice and a modifiable construct (rather than a genetic feature) to prepare for marriage and motherhood (78-79). | | |
| - Linked to primitivism and the naturalization of femininity. | | |
| - “An economic necessity” to obtain whiteness and Americanness for non-white immigrants (96). | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Literary Examples</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1920s - 1930s</td>
<td>Herland, O Pioneer!, My Antonia</td>
<td>- Flappers: “a paradoxical combination of adolescent tomboyish androgyny and adult feminine sexuality” (121);</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>“located in the realm of heterosexuality” (126);</td>
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<td></td>
<td>distanced from feminism; linked to primitive nonwhiteness; disappeared after the Great Depression.</td>
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<td>- Tomboyism remained on the cultural stage and welcomed its “final phase of the ‘golden age’ of tomboy literature,” especially</td>
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<td>children’s literature in the 1930s (137).</td>
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<td>- Tomboyish traits in children’s literature was more related to American Indian tribes, as opposed to African American</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>sources in previous literature (141).</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>- Capable, productive, but also feminine and heterosexual</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Literary example: Hula</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Due to the labor crisis during the wartime, women of different backgrounds joined the workforce as tomboyish workers.</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>- Concerns over women’s proper place and natural abilities.</td>
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<td>- Connection to “queer” and “freak.”</td>
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<td>- Fears that temporary tolerance for gays and lesbians during the wartime might become permanent (157).</td>
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<tr>
<td>1940s - 1950s</td>
<td>“A valuable means to protect Western democracy” (146).</td>
<td>- Tomboyish toughness, female strength and independence (the icon of Rosie the Riveter).</td>
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<tr>
<td>The second World War</td>
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<td>- Controlled within the sphere of femininity and made culturally contained.</td>
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<td>- “A temporary condition of the war effort” that should be abandoned after the war (150).</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Cast as unnatural and even abnormal due to anxieties about the tomboy identity (154).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Literary Examples</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
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<td>------------</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| 1950s-1960s | *The member of the wedding*                                                       | - Closely related to homosexuality and female masculinity (butchness). 
- Associated with “more anti-social elements and even self-destructive behaviors,” signaling transgender and transsexual conducts (176). 
- Contextualized in pulp fictions as a part of the nation’s subversive counterculture, rather than the dominant investment in “serving larger societal aims” (179). |
|            |                                                                                   | - The “intense oppression against individuals with alternative gender and sexual identities” paradoxically went along with the modern gay and lesbian movement (171). 
- Curiosity about homosexuality drove the prevalence of pulp fictions (172). |
|            |                                                                                   | - “[W]hite envy for black culture” (182).                                                                                                                                 |
| 1970s-1980s | *Women in the Shadow*                                                              | - Returned to the mainstream 
- A confident and independent figure and a “common and normative” identity (197). 
- A “survival tactic” beyond “a feminist statement” (197). 
- Depicted with more homoerotic traits (199). 
- Literary figures mainly acquired their “black” traits from surroundings (living condition, life experience, etc.), compared to the “black” physical cues presented in films and literature before (214). |
|            |                                                                                   | - The second-wave feminist movement led to the rethinking of childrearing practices (196). 
- The liberation movement made gays and lesbians more socially visible and scientifically accepted (199). |
|            |                                                                                   | - The “dissolution of American family life through separation and divorce” (197).                                                                                                                                 |
| 1990s      | *Paper Moon*                                                                      | - Gender-bending actions and appearance (new clothing styles and the embodiment of tribal cultural practices such as tattooing and body piercing) (223). 
- Remained dominantly feminine and heterosexual, |
|            |                                                                                   | - With the development of feminist movement, adolescent girls and young women were empowered to challenge the traditional gender roles (e.g., “new and more powerful presence” in sports and the mainstreaming of “Girl Power”) (222). |
|            |                                                                                   | - Parents’ anxiety persisted in face of the “scientific blurring between childhood tomboyism, Gender Identity Disorder, and adult lesbianism” (231). |
serving as no more than a cultural symbol and a business token (e.g. “Pretty Tomboy”) rather than real empowerment.

- The “return of whiteness to white tomboyism” (232) eliminated “the unmarked nature of whiteness” (233) and partly made LGBTQ movements more inclusive (234).
- LGBTQ movement produced lesbians on the silver screen.

As Abate reveals, tomboyism was closely related to the historical moments of the nation and the belief of white supremacy as well as the fear to lose it. With the changes of historical contexts, tomboyism was in a recursive move wherein it emerged, disappeared and reemerged. There were times, especially war periods when vibrant and productive women were in need, tomboyism was encouraged and valued as a productive code of conduct to meet the nation’s requirement for labor and human resources. Throughout the history, whenever the white supremacy was considered threatened, for example, by the increased social status of black people or the huge immigration of non-white people, tomboyism was embraced as a eugenic practice to boost the country’s white population. However, there were concerns about this code of conduct, mostly related to women’s conventional gender roles and sexual orientation. Such concerns were more importantly present when the country resided in a relatively stable period, and some of them still exist today. Consequently, despite the advantages of tomboyism, it is often only tolerated prior to adolescence. As Abate puts it, “[a]lthough the nation may value strength, independence and assertiveness in young girls, it does not esteem such qualities in adult women” (xix). When girls proceed to adolescence, persisting tomboyish behaviors are punished and tamed. Besides, along with the emergence and development of sexology, Freudian theory, queer theory and LGBTQ movement, tomboyism is closely related to non-normative sexuality, which often arouses parents’ fear of this code of conduct, and accordingly, the necessity to abandon it.

Apart from its tie to nationalist ideologies, tomboyism has also been studied on an individual scale, especially in empirical research. Scholars have reported and summarized various reasons for the construction of tomboy identity. In “Tomboy resistance and conformity,” Carr lists the main reasons for which tomboys constructed their identities consciously. As she suggests, some girls rejected feminine activities and identities and preferred masculine ones
simply just for fun, while others might choose to be tomboys because they perceived the role of mother as “no future” and rather strived for the safety and protection deriving from masculinity. In other cases, tomboys also armed themselves with masculinity due to the perception of men’s privileges and the desire to gain attention from male role models (ibid.). Consistently, approaching tomboy as a protective identity, Craig and LaCroix outline the benefits of tomboy identity from this limited protection, which can serve as the supporting reasons for being a tomboy. For instance, girls who are tomboys enjoy gender flexibility (C. Martin), popularity and even respect (Showfety), and have better health conditions compared to the conventional feminine passivity and inactivity (Halberstam; Jones). These benefits are “largely tied to valuing competence, skill, and function over aesthetics or form” (Craig and LaCroix 462), and it is believed that “tomboys have independence, competitiveness as women, bravery, and imagination to offer society” (Hall 563). This also connects to Farr’s point indicated earlier that tomboyism can reflect “personality or psychological attributes” (500) and such tomboyish characteristics are often viewed desirable especially when the body appears feminine (503). Overall, being a tomboy engenders agency and power. As Craig and LaCroix highlight, the benefits “may be largely about identifying as a person who acts upon the world rather than as an object to be viewed and subjected to the world” (462).

Tomboys are “granted more social and parental acceptance than their ‘sissy’ counterparts” (Carr, “Tomboy” 530), mainly because this identity displays “masculine” traits that are more socially rewarded (e.g. Burn et al.; C. Martin) and is deemed temporary or transitory (Hemmer and Kleiber; C. Martin). Therefore, as mentioned earlier, the tolerance for tomboys largely hinges on their subsequent and eventual consent to normative femininity (Skerski 468). Upon entering puberty, tomboys are faced with a turning point where they are expected to cease tomboyism. There are reasons for such cessation. Most U.S. women recalled that they generally ceased tomboy behaviors at age 12 or 13 due to parental and peer pressures, physical maturation, heterosexual interests, and school transitions (Burn et al.; Morgan). In Carr’s 2007 empirical study, participants reported similar reasons, with the dominant one being “physical and/or emotional maturation” (“Where” 442). Relatedly, the abandonment of tomboyism involves the negotiation between being a tomboy and a girly girl. Tomboys began to
realize the benefits of being a girly girl,\(^\text{10}\) which seem to “outweigh the disadvantages” as they get older (Paechter, “Tomboys” 232). Therefore, some tomboys consciously became girly girls and regarded this move as “an inevitable part of puberty” (228). For other girls, giving up tomboy identity was out of the fear for “a future butch or lesbian identity” (232). Since girly-girlness is constructed as heterosexual by default (233) while the opposite tomboy identity is associated with queer sexuality, the continuation of tomboyism into adolescence is unsurprisingly considered problematic. Nevertheless, Abate points out that “tomboy taming” is not universal or inevitable and tomboyishness is sometimes retained in adulthood as “an important facet” of personality (Tomboys xx). Moreover, according to Carr’s research, the cessation of tomboyism may be “temporary or partial” and may be reclaimed when the social expectations and pressures lift (“Where” 446). Tomboys may retain many of their tomboy traits and skills just under a relatively feminine performance (Hemmer and Kleiber). After all, tomboy is not a lifelong identity, but a temporary, contingent, ambiguous, and struggling one.

Revisiting the Tomboy Phenomenon

I hope it is quite clear by now that tomboy has diverse, dynamic, and complicated meanings, largely depending on its contexts. The same situation applies to the reasons for and against tomboyism. Linking back to Halberstam’s interrogation of female masculinity and Abate’s intensive study on tomboy’s “hidden” history, we need to further clarify two issues.

First, an important issue that should be carefully addressed is the relation between tomboyism and queer sexuality, for example, lesbianism. Both Halsterstam and Abate acknowledge that tomboyism and sexual orientation have long been considered connected. There is indeed a heated yet inconclusive discussion about their connection among scholars. On the one hand, it is widely supposed that non-normative sexuality comes hand in hand with tomboyism. In “Sexing the Tomboy,” Lee Zevy problematizes the separation of sexuality and childhood that treats tomboy as “an asexual entity” and “a time of cuteness” (186). Although tomboyism is expected to be temporary and confined to a “safe” childhood stage, it triggers the fear of ensuing “sexual pervasion” in adolescence. Indeed, a persistent concern of tomboyism in Abate’s book is its association with lesbianism. As Abate contends, by the 1990s, such association “had become so pervasive that many began to see this code of conduct as a firm indicator of, or at least an

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\(^{10}\) Within societal convention, young women have more access to “adult-focused aspects of embodiment and bodily presentation,” and their feminine expression can also bring them certain benefits to some degree (232).
adolescent precursor to, homosexuality” (Tomboys xxi). Many other scholars who are dedicated to empirical studies on this topic found that compared to heterosexual women, lesbian and/or bisexual women tended to recall childhood tomboyism (e.g. Bailey and Zucker; Phillips and Over) and perform adult tomboyism in relation to gender role orientation and more importantly, sexual orientation (Carr, “Tomboyism”; Cooper). This correlation thus consolidates the connection between tomboyism and non-normative sexuality. On the other hand, some scholars have questioned this commonly held belief. For instance, Carr suggests that tomboy is not necessarily an indicator of butch, lesbian or dyke (“Tomboyism” 119), and Hall, taking heterosexual tomboys into account, argues that “‘Butch’ only partly, and not always accurately, covers the term ‘tomboy’ and its referent population” (563). From a cultural perspective, Craig and LaCroix claim that tomboy is not always considered a strong indicator of sexual orientation but in some cultures (455). Interestingly, they gave examples of studies in China to support this proposition, arguing that the connotation of sexual orientation is clear in the Chinese culture but not the most common usage in the U.S. Though it may seem true, such claim is questionable. Overall, the heated discussion about the connection between tomboy and sexual orientation in the U.S. exactly suggests that non-normative sexuality is at least one of the core discourse of tomboyism, and such association is strong enough to impact the usage of tomboy in many other cultures.

Second, the relation between tomboyism and race needs to be highlighted.11 Among the complex relations, Abate explicitly and specifically argues that tomboyishness and blackness are mutually constructed (xiii). As she constantly emphasizes and strives to disclose throughout her book, tomboy is a racialized construct, occupying “a liminal position between blackness and whiteness (ibid.). For one thing, as the history of tomboyism showcases, it went beyond a new childrearing or gender expression and became a eugenic practice to ensure white racial supremacy (xii). For another, the intention to strengthen white women and their offspring was “consistently yoked with various forms of nonwhiteness,” formulating what Abate calls “a compelling paradox” (ibid.). Instead of deliberately whitening their skin, mostly by using harmful cosmetics, tomboys lived a more natural lifestyle and immersed themselves in outdoor activities, which endowed them with more “dark white and even nonwhite features” (xxvi). In

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11 Anne McClintock suggests that the term “race” was used in “shifting and unstable” ways, referring to “species,” “culture,” “nation” or biological ethnic groups (qtd. in Abate, Tomboys xxiv). Such complexity and ambiguity also play a part in shaping its relation to tomboyism.
addition to the skin tone, *tomboy* characters as depicted in many literary works were “connected with an array of stereotypes about racial Otherness in general and blackness in particular” (xxvii), distanced from or even seemed to have relinquished “their purported racial heritage” (xxv). As tomboyism redefined “acceptable notions of female behavior for middle- and upper-class white women,” it also redefined the conventional notions of whiteness (xxvii). Historically, nonwhiteness was embodied as a natural and healthy sign to ensure the ruling position of whiteness.

*Tomboy* is not only a historical construct but also a contemporary one, running throughout the past and present. With social changes, for example, women’s increasing engagement in sport events and parents’ new childrearing practices, this term gradually goes “unmarked.” While some people now regard *tomboy* as old-fashioned, scholars’ persistent exploration into this topic proves that this term is not outdated but current and on-going. For instance, Ahiqvist et al. conducted a study sampling actual children rather than retrospective adults, which confirms that *tomboy* is a “meaningful label to young girls in the present day and age” (577) and tomboyism is “a somewhat continuous measure” (578). Besides, as *tomboy* becomes a token and a fashion trend, which is a temporary style performing masculinity but eventually subject to normative femininity and male desire, its outlet for gender rebellion has been undermined (Skerski 466). This certainly can bring up a new, contemporary, and also critical discussion about tomboyism. Moreover, it should be noted that *tomboy*, as a liminal figure traversing and redefining masculinity and femininity, is constructed differently. As Paechter and Clark rightly summarize:

> Tomboy identities are constructed and maintained in multiple ways which are strongly determined by the social setting in which girls find themselves, by the facilities and opportunities that are open to them, and by the mores of the communities of femininity practices in which they are taken up and enacted. (353)

Therefore, the meanings and performances of tomboyism differ in various cultural, racial, and social contexts, changing across time and space (see for example, Thorne; Morgan; Moore). The *tomboy* phenomenon is heterogeneous, complex, and dynamic, manifesting historicity, specificity, and incongruity. From this case, we can envision that female masculinity as a gender performance is diverse and contextualized, and attention should be paid to other contexts beyond the U.S. convention.
Female Masculinity and *Nü Hanzi* in China

Approaching female masculinity as a gender performance suggests that the notion of female masculinity may be shaped differently in other societies and cultures, in this case, the Chinese context. Lucetta Yip Lo Kam, for example, draws on Halberstam to provide more diverse interpretations of masculinity in the study of masculine women in Hong Kong. Following Halberstam who denaturalizes masculinity and reclaims its cultural representation as well as interpretation in female bodies, Kam addresses masculinity as “a set of gender attributes that are defined by a given culture in a specific period of time” (100). By this, she significantly indicates that masculinity is constructed in a specific time and place. Further, she demonstrates the “enabling discourses” and “disabling discourses” on masculine women in Hong Kong, complicating the understanding of female masculinity. One important finding of her study is that “masculine-styled or -identified women are not restricted to lesbians, but can also be found in women with other sexual preferences” (101). To some degree, the conclusion challenges the strong connection between female masculinity and same-sex desire, providing more diverse interpretations of female masculinity, which may be more importantly present in some non-western contexts. Related studies in mainland China are relatively fewer. In a study on the butch-femme identity of lesbian and bisexual women from different cities in China, Lijun Zheng and Yong Zheng also link female masculinity to the same-sex relation. They conclude that “[m]asculinity is a critical factor in butch–femme lesbian identity,” and “[i]ndividuals with higher masculinity may be expected to self-label as butch,” who tend to show “a masculine profile in appearance, personality, and partner preference” (955). Jing, on the other hand, addresses female masculinity more directly and in a quite different way. She investigates “an unusual female masculinity that directly takes on male domination” (238), which is “an extreme form of female subjectivity” (243), in both the 1930s’ and 1980s’ China through two films: *The New Woman* and *The Price of Madness*. Throughout the analysis of these two films, Jing engages “heated cultural debates on ‘modern women’ centered on a struggle to identify female subjectivity” (226), and by linking this subjectivity to female masculinity, she contextualizes masculinity in a sense that highlights powerful traits and qualities, especially mentally and behaviorally. For example, in *The new woman*, female masculinity is viewed as “an indication of resistance, a signal for change and a symbol of gender equality” (247).

As with *tomboy, butch, drag king* and other terms used in the U.S., female masculinity in
the Chinese context is also represented in language. Some common terms include *jia xiaozi* (pseudo boy), *nanren po* (literally man woman, focusing more on appearance and is often used with a negative connotation) and *nü qiangren* (strong woman, often referring to women with high career achievements). In recent years, another term *nü hanzi* (tough girl/lady, manly woman) becomes very popular in the Chinese media and widely used in people’s daily life. In an effort to translate this term, Chinese netizens and scholars have come up with varied versions. For example, as Zeng summarizes, *nü hanzi* is often translated into superwoman, wo-man (to emphasize the traits of “man”), women-man, tough girl/lady, cowgirl, iron lady and fe-male (“Fe” refers to the chemical symbol iron). Other translations include manly woman, girl man and *tomboy*, etc. However, I am aware of the risk of such translations, which may undermine or distort the complex meanings to varying extents. Aiming to study this term in the Chinese context, I prefer to keep its original expression and unpack it in the process based on the Chinese language system. Literally, *nü hanzi* is composed of two linguistic elements: *nü*, which means “female,” “woman” in Chinese, and *hanzi*, broadly referring to “male” and “man.” Based on researchers’ summary of the word *hanzi* (e.g. M. Gao; Zheng and Lu), it historically denoted *Han men* (*Han* is the main ethnic group in China) in a derogatory sense, but later the meaning extended to all male adults and leaned towards a positive end -- connoting “bravery,” “strength,” and “integrity.” It has also been used as “husband” in some dialects (ibid.).

The ostensibly contradictory combination of *nü* and *hanzi* is widely circulated as a description of young masculine women. Some scholars have accredited the origin of *nü hanzi* to Lu’s 1992 piece about the notorious Cultural Revolution, in which he used *hanzi* to depict ferocious women (see Cai and Bo 8). Although the original connection is negative, the term has gained some positive connotations in its reproduction (e.g. Q. Gao; Tan). It is generally believed that the popularization of the term starts from April 30th 2013 with a micro-blog post titled “The self-cultivation of *nü hanzi*” (my translation) by Ai Li, a Chinese hostess and model. Ever since this positive and proud articulation of *nü hanzi* as a hard-working and strong lady, the usage of the term has been constantly constructed in shifting contexts by heated discussion and media reproduction. At the same time, scholars have attempted to examine this term from different perspectives.

First and foremost, the definition of *nü hanzi* is interrogated. In fact, *nü hanzi* may be
viewed as a renewed, restructured and recontextualized term, deriving from its discursive field. As Wei Wang illustrates, its ambiguous meaning construction may be closely related to other descriptive terms about female image, for instance, nüxia 女侠 (chivalrous woman, heroine)\textsuperscript{12} mostly pictured in legendary novels of the Tang Dynasty (618-907), tie guniang 铁姑娘 (iron lady) politically originating from the 1960s’ “Great Leap Forward” movement,\textsuperscript{13} nü tewu 女特务 (female secret agent) that are popular in action movies, and diaosi 屌丝 -- a recent sarcastic internet slang stereotypically referring to people who have less advantages in appearance, relationship, and economic as well as other resources. These different images coincide with nü hanzi occasionally, and partly account for the complexity of this recent term. Although without a unified definition, combining the online description with interpretations in the existing scholarship, nü hanzi\textsuperscript{14} can be mainly unpacked in four aspects: appearance, behavior, personality, and spirit. In appearance, nü hanzi is used to describe young women who are physically strong and careless about their looks; in terms of behavior, they may be deemed unladylike and rude in many cases; as for personality, nü hanzi entails traits such as casual, easy going, frank, bold and forthright; while in the spiritual level, it symbolizes positive female qualities such as modern, authentic, wise, rational, independent, decisive and confident (Feng; M. Gao; Q. Gao; Sun). One may be identified as a nü hanzi because of one dominant aspect, not necessarily all of them. From another perspective, Peng probes into the language used by the nü hanzi group, concluding that they tend to use metaphor, comparison, historical words as well as curse words to express thoughts and feelings in a straightforward and humorous way, which is a result of women’s enhanced discursive power and self-consciousness. With the increasing use of this term, the meaning keeps expanding and gradually focuses more on positive personalities and qualities (M. Gao; Q. Gao; Jia; Li and Lu; Tan; Zeng; Zheng and Lu), distinguishing from nanren po 男人婆, an earlier term that contains more negative connotations of unladylike appearance and behaviors (e.g. Zheng and Lu 161). It is also different from nü qiangren 女强人, which sounds more professional and unapproachable. In general, nü hanzi begets power and

\textsuperscript{12} It is usually regarded as an influence from the northern customs featured by horsemanship and archery. The Disney movie heroine Mulan who joins the army for her father can be an example.

\textsuperscript{13} An economic and social campaign in China from 1958 to 1961 aiming to achieve rapid economic growth but is widely considered impractical and detrimental.

\textsuperscript{14} Depending on the context, nü hanzi is used as a term of female masculinity or refers to female subjects performing such female masculinity throughout the thesis.
agency to reflect on and even refuse the stereotyped gender assumption or expectation.

Besides, scholars are interested in the multidimensional reasons that prompt the production of *nü hanzi*. A common belief is that it is a socially grounded phenomenon, triggered by the fierce competition in the modern society and the increasingly demanding expectations of women’s multiple roles in work and family (Cai and Bo; M. Gao; Q. Gao; Jia; Sun; Zou). It can also be associated with the one-child policy in China (Alia) and early gender education (e.g. Zheng and Lu; Zou), which cultivate more flexible traits in girlhood. Other external factors include the impact of post-structuralism, women’s movement, changing social and aesthetic values, the gender-neutral fashion, the *sheng nü* 剩女 (“leftover women”)\(^\text{15}\) phenomenon and media reproduction including music, TV shows, and commodities that boost the *nü hanzi* symbol, so on and so forth (e.g. Alia; Q. Gao; Jia; Zheng and Lu). At an internal level, the *nü hanzi* phenomenon is viewed as a kind of self-consciousness and psychological protection mechanism in response to the social environment (Zou 285), either positively/actively or negatively/passively (Zeng 36). Self-identified as a *nü hanzi* is a strategy to cope with peer pressure for young women, while for their male counterparts, *nü hanzi* is an evaluative term that can to some degree dispel the threat from distinguished female peers (e.g. Wang and Ran 283).

There are also some linguistic factors accounting for the invention of this particular term. The common structure of “adjective + noun,” specifically, “nü + noun” and “adjective + hanzi” lay the ground for this term (Cai and Bo; M. Gao; Tan). Importantly, in the word *hanzi*, the strengthened sememe of attribute comes with the weakened sememe of gender. That is, it is not confined to men but can be used to describe women, and by extension, foregrounding the attributes it connotes (ibid.). It is also notable that the oxymoron in *nü hanzi* further attracts attention and contributes to its popularity.

When it comes to evaluating this socioculturally, psychologically, and linguistically constructed term, different voices emerge. On the one hand, some scholars hold a relatively positive attitude. For example, M. Gao and Jia point out that *nü hanzi* is semantically positive and the positive connotation will be gradually reinforced in its circulation, contributing to removing gender stereotypes (Q. Gao) and promoting women’s development as well as social progress in the long run (Jia). On the other hand, other scholars believe that the term is rooted in the dominant masculine language system as a subtle way to consolidate male power and gender

\(^{15}\) This term presupposes the expected heterosexual reproduction by a certain age.
convention (Feng; Sun; Wang and Ran; Zheng and Lu; Zou). For example, *hanzi*, along with the stereotyped masculine traits, is borrowed to modify female image. Also, the identity of *nü hanzi* group is much concerned. Zeng insists that we pay attention to gender difference and women’s instincts, and Lao and Zou caution the potential gender disorder, marginalization, and identity crisis coming along with *nü hanzi*.

As *nü hanzi* becomes popular and arouses heated discussion in China, it has also been introduced in the international venue. For example, among others, a blog post titled “The rise of *nü hanzi* in China: Manly ladies who challenge China’s traditional female image” in Offbeat China -- a website aiming to introduce the heated issues and stories on the Chinese Internet to foreign audience, is one of the earliest and representative attempts. The short post, composed by Alia on September 4th 2013, briefly describes the characteristics of *nü hanzi*, analyzes some of the main reasons that give rise to it, and illustrates it with the heated online discussion at that time including pictures and cartoons. Given that the blog genre allows for digital circulation and transformation, constituting a multidimensional and mobile process as well as creating a space of encounter, the related responses, comments, and embedded links are also important discursive practices in relation to the body text. Investigating these texts altogether, several issues come to light. The author depicts *nü hanzi* as “firm, decisive and open-minded,” “independent and responsible,” in contrast to “a cute, submissive and clinging lady.” This has been cited, circulated and reinforced by other websites in which such positive profile is exemplified and advocated. However, the picture posted along with such description is a Korean woman with muscle, which, though “meant to be funny,” is criticized by audience as misleading and “has nothing to do with this issue.” Besides, some comments question that the use of funny pictures and cartoons as well as the popular twenty-point checklist for *nü hanzi* -- judging whether someone is a *nü hanzi* based on some funny habits -- should not serve as “data” or proofs. In fact, the picture, checklist, and cartoon seem to make fun of *nü hanzi* to some degree. Relatedly, the post indicates that although *nü hanzi* is regarded as a term that “many Chinese young ladies now proudly label themselves,” it is not feminist under the western view, nor is it necessarily linked to feminism in the Chinese context. Overall, it can be noticed from the comments that foreign audience expects more serious or persuasive proofs and perhaps feminist accounts when the author introduces the

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topic without such intentions.

In another case, *nü hanzi* is associated with an unemployed, overweight, and unmarried female character (*sheng nü* 剩女, “leftover women”) in the comedy skit *Joy Street* in China’s 2015 Lunar New Year Gala, a national event that also drew attention from international audience. The sketch contrasts *nü hanzi* with *nü shen* 女神 (literally “goddess,” referring to an ideal female image) under the domination of male characters, and with an intention to win laughter and applause from audience, it inevitably seems to depreciate *nü hanzi*. In other words, the cost behind this comedy is the mockery of *nü hanzi*. Presenting on an eventful and influential stage that highly performs national ideology and social cognition, the show triggered anger, criticism, and protest from foreign presses and feminists home and abroad for being discriminating. Nevertheless, as Yi Wang and Lei Wang conclude from an online survey targeting college students about this sketch, many audiences were not aware of the gender issue and female audience showed uncertainty and hesitance about their rights, reflecting “a collective unconsciousness of media gender violence, as well as the legalization of patriarchal ideology” (50).

These earlier representations of *nü hanzi* in the global venue, along with audience’s responses, indicate that there is a dissonance in understanding, which, I assume, is caused by two major reasons. On the one hand, *nü hanzi* is itself an intricate gendered term, involving multiple meanings that can be incongruous. Although it may be employed to construct a new or positive female image, it is often trapped in or even naturalized as a kind of mockery, which betrays the feminist expectation. Inadequate comprehension of *nü hanzi*’s complexity can lead to partial or biased representation and understanding. On the other hand, the alien viewpoints and ideologies may give rise to “etic” assumptions and perceptions, which could impose a violent act of decontextualization. *nü hanzi* as an artifact can only be better understood based on “emic” studies in its Chinese context.

However, despite the heated discussions, the empirical study on *nü hanzi* is underdeveloped. It is something that we broadly talk about rather than carefully listen to. For example, the discourse of *nü hanzi* is seldom studied systematically and intensively. Yang makes her contribution in a study on the construction of female androgyny in mass media, concluding that the term not only indicates gender binary and becomes ideologized in the national discourse, but is also commercialized, overused, and even distorted or degraded in its dissemination. Her
findings are insightful, but the examples are inadequate and quite unsystematic, mainly extracted out of the need for analysis. Therefore, one of the goals in this thesis is to examine and elaborate on Yang’s findings by conducting a corpus-based critical discourse analysis, laying a foundation for a more “emic” rhetorical interpretation.

Compared to *tomboy*, a long-standing term involving multiple meanings, various factors, and a close connection to queer sexuality and racial ideology, the term *nü hanzi*, which also has complex meanings, causes as well as implications, is more recent and born in a digital arena, perhaps bringing with it more instability, uncertainty, and no less complexity. How can these terms be viewed as tropes to inform female masculinity, and on top of that, how can they speak to each other through trans-rhetorical dialogues and unveil the rhetorical construction of gender expression and representation in each context? To search for or create a dialogic space, we need to not only revisit what is known but also keep pursuing what is yet to be known. Considering the knowledge gap in the case of *nü hanzi*, the following chapter is designed to enact a critical discourse analysis approach for further study.
Chapter Three: Nü Hanzi in Chinese News Media

To gain an overview and better understanding of the usage of nü hanzi, I utilize a CDA approach to explore its construction and representation in the media venue, focusing on the news discourse. Specifically, I conduct transitivity analysis, which will be introduced shortly, to help encode the discourse, unpack the semantic relations and reveal the contextualized meanings of nü hanzi. In what follows, data collection, coding scheme, data analysis, and discussion are addressed respectively.

Data Collection

The dataset for my study is composed of the headlines of news and editorials about nü hanzi released by the China News Service (CNS) from April 30th 2013 to October 30th 2016. To better analyze how the term is used and contextualized in headlines, only headlines containing the term are included. A total of 302 entries are taken from the online database WiseSearch. The data is selected considering the following factors. First, as one of the popular genres in CDA, news headline is viewed as the rhetorical summary and recontextualization of events, which is often ideology-laden (Bell; Van Dijk, News). Second, founded in 1952, CNS is the second largest state-owned news agency and mainly aims at providing news reports for Chinese citizens residing abroad and residents of Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan. Thus, the news extracted can be viewed as representative to some degree. Third, my general search shows that CNS provides most available reports about nü hanzi. Finally, since the popularization of nü hanzi starts from Ai Li’s microblog post on April 30th 2013, the timeline is set with the date as the beginning.

Coding Scheme

Two constructs of interest are the focus in this study: news context and the meaning of nü hanzi within each recorded clause.

News Context

In this case, news context can be informed by the type of news. Based on the observation of data, the news headlines collected can be mainly divided into four categories: entertainment news (abbreviated as E in tables), daily social reports (S in tables), reviews (R in tables), and
national news (N in tables). National news is separated from social news in that it provides a concrete context of serious national events, military as well as public work that are more directly tethered to national values. Headlines are grouped and counted based on this classification. Since each headline contains several clauses that are the major analytic units, the number of clause is also calculated. Table 2 provides an overview of the dataset, and Table 3 further charts the headline number in each year from 2013 to 2016.

Table 2. Data Profile of *Nü Hanzi* in News Headlines

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<th>Category</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<td>51</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>302</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>87</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>550</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. Number of Headlines from 2013 to 2016

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<th></th>
<th>E</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td>17.9%</td>
<td>9</td>
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<td>2014</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>41.2%</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>23.5%</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
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<td>14</td>
<td>45.2%</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>22.6%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
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<td>38.5%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>38.5%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>60</td>
<td>19.9%</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As can be seen from the tables, entertainment news (E) and daily social reports (S) are the major categories as a whole and in each year period. Notably, the year of 2013 witnessed a boost in the use of *nü hanzi*, contributing to most news headlines (224/302). After that, the number of related headlines has fallen off gradually and considerably. This year, up to October 30th, there are only 13 entries. However, there is an overall increase in the percentage of daily social news and national news (N), which has become the main discourse in 2016. Therefore, we may see a trend that the viral use of *nü hanzi* especially in terms of entertainment, which is apparent in 2013, has gradually cooled down and the focus has been moving towards social and national contexts.

**Locating Meaning in Nü Hanzi**

To identify the meaning and evaluation of *nü hanzi* in each clause, I conduct transitivity analysis to examine the concrete linguistic patterns of the news headlines. Transitivity analysis is
grounded in SFL and frequently practiced in CDA.\(^{17}\) As an important analytic component of language’s experiential metafunction, transitivity deals with how the representation of meaning is achieved in the clause using a set of process types (Halliday and Matthiessen). It focuses on “content meanings of ‘what/who did what to what/whom’” (Thompson 91), or in other words, “entities in the world and the ways in which those entities act on or relate to each other” (92). That is to say, transitivity unpacks how meanings are represented and how semantic relations are constructed. The choices made to represent the states of being, actions, events and situations can indicate “bias and manipulation” (Li), and can therefore further unveil the power relations and ideologies.

According to Halliday and Matthiessen, three basic components in the clause are considered within the transitivity system: the process (typically realized by verbal group), the participant (nominal group), and the circumstance (adverbial group or prepositional phrase). Furthermore, as Thompson, Halliday and Matthiessen map out, there are basically six types of processes: material (doing or happening), mental (sensing), relational (identifying and attributing/being and having), verbal (saying), behavioral (behaving) and existential (existing). Based on Thompson’s illustration of the process types, examples of the most basic patterns are provided as a reference.

Table 4. Transitivity Process Patterns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Material</th>
<th>Actor</th>
<th>Process:</th>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>Circumstance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Her mother</td>
<td>smashed</td>
<td>the glass.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The young girl</td>
<td>bounded</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>out of the gate.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mental</th>
<th>She</th>
<th>could hear</th>
<th>his voice.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sensor</td>
<td>Process: mental</td>
<td>Phenomenon</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relational</th>
<th>This bread</th>
<th>is</th>
<th>stale.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Carrier</td>
<td>Process: rel, attrib</td>
<td>Attributive</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The speech</td>
<td>was followed</td>
<td>by polite applause.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value/Identified</td>
<td>Process: rel, ident</td>
<td>Token/Identifier</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verbal</th>
<th>I</th>
<th>explained</th>
<th>to her</th>
<th>what it meant.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sayer</td>
<td>Process: verbal</td>
<td>Receiver</td>
<td>Verbiage</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{17}\) Transitivity in SFL is different from the grammatical term transitivity. Also see note 2 about Systemic Functional Linguistics.
The report sharply criticizes Lilly’s quality-control procedures.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sayer</th>
<th>Circumstance</th>
<th>Process: verbal</th>
<th>Target</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Behavioral</td>
<td>She</td>
<td>gave</td>
<td>a faint sign.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behaver</td>
<td>Process: behavioral</td>
<td>Behavior</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Existential</th>
<th>Process: existential</th>
<th>Existent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maybe</td>
<td>there</td>
<td>’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>some other darker pattern.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The identification of the three basic elements and six process types facilitates our understanding of semantic relations, which also makes transitivity analysis viable in other languages, and widely applicable to the Chinese discourse analysis. Grounded in the transitivity system, the processes along with participants and circumstances in the clauses are identified within each news categories. Table 5 summarizes the number and frequency of each process types in the four major news contexts.

Table 5. Frequency of Transitivity Processes in News Headlines

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Material</th>
<th>Mental</th>
<th>Relational</th>
<th>Verbal</th>
<th>Behavioral</th>
<th>Existential</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>37.6%</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>29.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>41.4%</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12.1%</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>21.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>78.8%</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>55.3%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>339</td>
<td>47.9%</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>7.2%</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>21.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As is shown in the table, the major process types center on material, relational, verbal and mental. The material process, which deals with “doing” and “happening,” is the most frequent type, especially in the social news. The verbal process, primarily involved in commenting and evaluating activities, is another major type contained in the headlines. Compared to other news categories, social news has fewer verbal processes; entertainment news and reviews share similar proportion, slightly outweighed by national news. The relational process of “being” and the mental process of “sensing,” on the other hand, are mainly included in the entertainment news and reviews. The following section will examine the major processes in each news context and probe into the semantic relationship as well as the embedded power dynamics, etc.
Data Analysis

Based on the frequency of the transitivity processes, my data analysis will mainly focus on the most frequent process types in every news categories as a way to uncover the common pattern in each context. Considering the difference in language structure between English and Chinese, I provide some translated examples with a careful intention to preserve the process types in its original language.

Processes in Entertainment News

Entertainment news is the major context where the term nü hanzi is used. Altogether 169 headlines and 315 clauses can be placed in this category. Although the material process is the major process type engaged in the headlines as a whole, it does not significantly or directly contribute to the entertainment news compared to other categories, mainly confined to the broadcast of movies and TV shows related to nü hanzi. Instead, the relational and verbal processes are prominent in this category, constituting the largest part in headlines involving pop stars, movies, TV shows, and other activities. Some typically used verbs in the relational processes include “play,” “portray,” “be” and “become,” etc., which serve to identify relationships and attributes. See the following examples:


Nü hanzi in these examples refers to young women figures on the screen rather than in real life. With the popularity of related TV shows and movies, it becomes more of a media symbol, a cultural and social token to entertain audience through the actresses’ performances. Accordingly, more and more pop stars tend to be associated with nü hanzi in real life, either actively or passively. On the one hand, they may actively identify themselves as nü hanzi; on the
other hand, they may be commented as nü hanzi by audience based on their appearances, behaviors, or life experiences. In this case, the relational and mental processes are also embedded in such verbal processes, as the following examples demonstrate.


Example 3 is a typical example of self-identification. In this case, nü hanzi is a label that young women proudly attach to themselves, often with a connotation of being mentally strong and independent. In example 4, it becomes a term of evaluation attributed by audience, which is also a common pattern. The joint engagement in this verbal process further stimulates the popularity of the term. Example 5 also involves mental processes indicating the negative attitude toward nü hanzi from the perspective of men, which quite explicitly foregrounds gender stereotypes and the contradiction between women’s new ways of being and men’s expectation.
Processes in Reviews

*Nü hanzi* in reviews containing cultural reflections, surveys and studies is more situated in the real social context and associated with a certain female group. The four major process types are relatively more balanced in this news context. The material process is the major type (41.4%), while the relational and verbal processes take up a similar portion (21.6% and 23.3% respectively), with the mental process lagging behind (12.1%).

The following examples to some extent reveal the unfavorable situation of *nü hanzi* in the material process.


It’s hard for *[Actor]* *nü hanzi* and womanish man [Pr: material] to find [Goal] a lover

In example 1, *nü hanzi* serves as a “beneficiary,” referring to unladylike women who betray the gender expectation and therefore need to be educated to “become ladies.” As an “actor” in example 2, which generally occupies an active position, it is still attached to a negative context and passivized under the gender ideology and power relations.

The concern about *nü hanzi* is further represented in the verbal process featuring surveys, reports, and remarks from experts and celebrities. In this case, it is addressed more as a problematic social phenomenon, of which the cause and effect are seriously discussed.


Example 4 concerns the reasons prompting this phenomenon, and advice is offered in example 3. The voices of experts and authors as well as other celebrities assert authority and demonstrate certain stances, indicating that nü hanzi is a phenomenon to be taken seriously, if not a problem to be solved.

The mental process expressing cognition and affection is also noteworthy in the reviews, taking up the largest percentage compared to those in other news contexts. In example 5, girls’ cognition departs from men’s preference, proving that the nü hanzi identity is often faced with dilemma. The relational process undertakes similar function as in the entertainment news, but also plays a part in projecting the cause of this phenomenon, as illustrated in example 6.
Processes in Social News

Social news often involves daily stories in various aspects of social life. As shown in Table 5, the material process overwhelms other types, accounting for 78.8% out of 151 recorded processes. In this context, specifically, *nü hanzi* is endowed with a more active status and associated with actions and behaviors. Some examples of the material process are listed below:


Verbs play a significant role in depicting the image of *nü hanzi*. As the examples above indicate, the actor *nü hanzi* is associated with aggressive verbs such as “smash,” “wield” and “burn,” etc. Therefore, *nü hanzi* is pictured as a threatening, rude and irrational figure. The participants involved further consolidate this image. In example 1, *nü hanzi* performs more power over men by “protecting her husband” and “attacking a policeman.” Similar to example 2, in which *nü hanzi* poses dangers to others, the term is adopted to describe irrational female citizens by setting them against social order and authority. This is regarded as abnormal and unaccepted considering the negative verbs used here. Interestingly, in most cases, even when *nü hanzi* encounters the undesirables such as thieves in example 3, there is no apparent clue
showing that the female subject is approved or praised for stopping unlawful acts or protecting herself. Rather, the word choices in headlines still connote a negative evaluation regardless of a possible attempt to sound neutral.

Other processes are comparatively rare and without remarkable characteristics in constructing nü hanzi in the social news. The verbal process, for instance, only appears sparsely in remarks from netizens or in situations when a scoundrel is begging for mercy, which again links to nü hanzi as an evaluation by the other and foregrounds the power of masculine women.

**Processes in National News**

As mentioned earlier, news headlines categorized into the national context often deal with important events, military and public work. Although these headlines are fewer in the corpus, they are more explicitly tethered to national values and ideologies. More than half of the process types fall into the material process (55.3%), in which nü hanzi also takes an active role. Nevertheless, it is drastically different from the image shaped in the social news. In the context of national events such as Olympics, military reports and other issues in public work, the threatening, rude and irrational image is replaced by the intelligent, courageous and persistent female character.


Likewise, verbs help to build the image of nü hanzi in the material process. Unlike verbs used in the social news, more positive verbs such as “rescue” and “work out” are adopted.
“Goals” in the clauses also play a part in highlighting the qualities of *nü hanzi*. Instead of “wielding a kitchen knife” to harm others and acting against the police as described in the social news, *nü hanzi* now “wrestles the knife” from the ruffian and “convinces specialists.” Therefore, it is portrayed as brave, righteous and intelligent, serving as a compliment for women who share the merits that are stereotypically viewed masculine and who are able to accomplish tasks that are conventionally conducted by men.

Another major process type is the verbal process. In accordance to the material process, the verbal process is also and perhaps more explicitly endowed with a positive bias, in which *nü hanzi* is praised and valued by audience for contributing to the national and societal welfare. As is shown in the following examples, *nü hanzi* is associated with excellent female characters who realize their worth by working for the nation and society. Thus, in the national context, the depiction and evaluation of *nü hanzi* jointly contribute to constructing a positive identity.


[Receiver] A beautiful special policewoman [Circumstance, location] in Hangzhou [Pr: verbal] is praised [Verbiage] as *nü hanzi*

**Discussion**

As my data analysis demonstrates, *nü hanzi* has different connotations, constructed in different contexts and semantic relations with the “other.” To briefly summarize, it is (a) a social phenomenon and cultural token, primarily contextualized in the entertainment news and reviews; (b) a derogation of female subjects in social behaviors; (c) a compliment for female model workers in the national discourse. Notably, though the connotations of derogation and compliment seem contradictory, they are much dependent on contexts, to some degree echoing
Yang’s earlier argument. In what follows, the meaning-making of nü hanzi is discussed in relation to its multiple contexts.

**A social phenomenon and cultural token.** The entertainment news and reviews reveal that nü hanzi is more of an “identified,” “attribute,” “verbiage” and “phenomenon,” prominently engaged in the relational, verbal, and mental processes. In the entertainment news, nü hanzi is widely used as a symbol to identify pop stars in movies or TV shows and further expanded to characters in the real life. In this case, nü hanzi is virally circulated and mediated by cultural production and consumption. The reviews, on the other hand, aside from cultural reflections, address nü hanzi more as a serious social phenomenon, with it serving as a target or “goal” from men’s viewpoints. The causes, effects, and solutions are discussed in surveys and comments from celebrities. Nü hanzi thus is placed in a position to be judged and evaluated, and is associated with an abnormal and problematic nature.

**A derogation of female subjects in social behaviors.** The derogation of nü hanzi is quite explicit in the social news, a news type that employs a substantial amount of material process. In the material process, nü hanzi is often addressed as an “actor” with more agency. Taking the clause as a semantic unit, verbs and participants in the material process are crucial in depicting the image of nü hanzi. Analysis reveals that by adopting negative verbs that connote aggressiveness and setting nü hanzi against male objects and people of authority, the headlines of social news portray nü hanzi as aggressive, rude, and irrational female subjects. It can also be noted that nü hanzi triumphs literally in such discourse in that it becomes the one with power and challenges men’s dominance. This, however, runs counter to the conventionally gentle and submissive female image and betrays the ideal power relationship between the two sexes on men’s part. Henceforth, it is deemed abnormal and threatening, accounting for the debasement of the term.

**A compliment for female model workers in the national discourse.** When it comes to the national news, the usage of nü hanzi becomes much different -- it is valued, praised, and pictured positively. The image of nü hanzi is transformed into an intelligent, courageous and persistent female model, contrary to the one constructed in the social news. Verbs in the material and verbal processes connote positively and contribute to perfecting nü hanzi, proving Yang’s point about the positive bias of nü hanzi in the national discourse. However, several points should be kept in mind in this case. First, as noted earlier, the national news offers a context in which
national values and ideologies can be consciously reflected, shaped, and reinforced. Therefore, the positive evaluation of ndefi may underlie an intention to encourage and advocate virtues and merits that are beneficial to social harmony and national development. Second, those virtues and merits valued in the discourse are viewed as masculine traits, considering the use of ndefi (men, male). As a result, speaking highly of females who embrace such merits actually implies male superiority to some degree. Finally, while foregrounding such masculine traits in the national context, the traditional female qualities and gender stereotypes such as patient, gentle, and elegant as indicated in “young nurses” and “beautiful policewoman” are also emphasized. That is to say, the commended female model workers should meet the gender expectation first and further stand out with “masculine” merits, which are believed to benefit the nation and society.

The different connotations of ndefi in this case study suggest that its meaning-making resides in flux and flow and depends on contexts, which are socially, culturally, and rhetorically constructed. From the perspective of comparative rhetoric, these different meanings and contexts should be further connected, interrogated, and recontextualized. For example, the ostensibly contradictory construction of ndefi in the social news and the national news is worth examining. In the social news, the negative connotation in appearance and behavior is importantly present, while the positive characteristic or spiritual connotation is nearly invisible. In the national discourse, however, the meaning of ndefi is heightened to a spiritual level, symbolizing the “masculine” traits that are nationally and ideologically valued. The derogation of ndefi in the social news, mostly related to social behaviors, may not be surprising in a patriarchal society, while the compliment for women showing masculine traits in the national discourse, on the other hand, serves as an ideological device. With this in mind, I argue that the two dramatically different images of ndefi constructed in the social and national contexts should not be viewed in isolation, nor should they be regarded as completely contradictory. Rather, considering the rhetorical contextualization of ndefi, even though it is valued in the national context, it doesn’t contribute much to challenging the conventional gender ideology and power relationship between the sexes, but rather sticks to the traditional beliefs subtly, if not

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18 This point may not seem explicit if merely based on the headlines but can be better supported by more detailed news contents.

19 Ibid.
consolidates them. Connecting different contexts and their corresponding connotations together lessens the danger of interpreting nü hanzi partially, and enables us to integrate it into its “field” with an awareness of rhetorical representation and contextualization. With this understanding and the intention to continue exploring the self and engaging the other, the next chapter will take a step further to open up dialogues about female masculinity between the U.S. and China, specifically concerning tomboy and nü hanzi.
Chapter Four: Dialogues in Recontextualization: *Tomboy* and *Nü hanzi*

As mentioned at the beginning, *tomboy* and *nü hanzi* serve as representative examples of female masculinity in the U.S. and China in my thesis, providing rhetorical underpinnings of how female masculinity is performed, represented, and constructed across time and space. Based on my earlier review and critical discourse analysis, I attempt to recontextualize *tomboy* and *nü hanzi* in trans-rhetorical and cross-cultural dialogues through the juxtapositional comparison and highlight some of the issues in this rhetorical encounter. Grounded in my methodological mapping in Chapter One, the juxtaposition of *tomboy* and *nü hanzi* is prompted by and situated in the interactive etic/emic dynamics, which engages the two in a recursive and reciprocal process of going in and out, learning from and learning with. At the same time, this engagement allows *tomboy* and *nü hanzi* to remain innate and keep their complexity in their indigenous and diverse contexts. Put otherwise, the juxtapositional comparison underscores, first and foremost, a more comprehensive and critical understanding of the two subjects, which deals with multiple foci and fields that jointly construe, in Mao’s words, historicity, specificity, and incongruity. Furthermore, the mobility of juxtaposition also begets a productive etic position, which may help release self-bondages and shed new light on the enterprise of exploring the facts of nonusage. To briefly summarize, the juxtaposition of the two facilitates yet also complicates the process of their recontextualization by creating an in-between space where both self and other can be better and mutually informed. The telos behind this act therefore centers on the mutuality and joint creation of the reflective encounter rather than the conclusion of their similarities or disparities. In what follows, I tentatively open up the dialogue by providing some preliminary reflections.

**Complexity, Contingency, Temporality**

Building on the literature review and discourse analysis, we may start by acknowledging the complexity, contingency, and temporality contained in *tomboy* and *nü hanzi*.

As explained in Chapter Two, *tomboy* has diverse and dynamic meanings, among which two basic usages can be identified: a common, acceptable, and sometimes encouraged childhood stage, and a physically and psychologically subversive way of being that connotes non-normative gender and sexual performance. These usages are contingent rather than static, much subject to the social, cultural, political and historical contexts or moments. The shifting focus on
tomboy as a common and productive childhood stage on the one hand and as an indicator of non-normative gender and sexual performance on the other largely perpetuates the rise and fall of tomboyism. In fact, as the existing discussion demonstrates, the gender and especially sexual “perversion” has been a persistent concern attached to tomboyism, which is more importantly present when the benefits of tomboyism are not considered significant enough to successfully outweigh its potential disadvantages. Such contingency or instability can also be related to its temporality, in terms of the historical moments and age stages when tomboyism can be embraced or tolerated and when it is supposed to be ruled out as nonusage. That is to say, tomboyism is conditioned and subject to different exigencies, and its conditioned usages also beget nonusages on the move.

As with tomboy, nü hanzi is a complex term, illustrating female masculinity with regard to appearance, behaviors, personalities, and the more abstract spirits. Concerning these attributes, it is also often set in comparison with earlier Chinese terms of female masculinity and other new female images as introduced in Chapter Two, which constitute the discursive complexity of nü hanzi. Although it is more commonly used to describe young masculine women in the current competitive and demanding social environment, it is not confined to a specific age range and has been extended to address “tough girl” and “manly lady” in a broader sense. The critical discourse analysis on nü hanzi in the Chinese news media further unveils its complicated usages in different news contexts, namely, as a social and cultural token and a term of derogation or compliment for female subjects. Notably, nü hanzi is a vibrant term that has been widely circulated by media production, reproduction, and consumption. Largely impacted by and constructed in the ever-changing media venue, nü hanzi is almost inevitably unstable and always under various ways of discursive construction. The heated discussion along with the dissemination of the term therefore is set in a ground that is much likely contingent and temporary. In fact, from the case study of nü hanzi in the Chinese news media, it can be seen that ever since 2013 when the term became very popular, recent years has witnessed a considerable decline in its usages in the news, especially the entertainment news. This also indicates that the boost of nü hanzi is contingent, subject to time, place and actants, and may easily fade out or be replaced in the media arena. Although it remains as a signifier in the social and national news contexts, the trend of nü hanzi is inconclusive.

Nü hanzi is sometimes translated into tomboy; however, as we may conclude, such
translation is ambiguous, inaccurate, and even misleading considering their distinct and particular complexities. Their definitions are by no means fixed but rather open-ended, and it can be expected that our further interrogation of their usages in other venues will disclose more illuminating aspects. Considering female masculinity in general, both tomboy and nü hanzi are liminal identities and symbols, enacting fluidity and ambiguity.

Ties to Nation

One thing that becomes clear through the juxtaposition of tomboy and nü hanzi is their ties to nation. That is, the phenomenon of female masculinity contextualized in tomboy and nü hanzi are situated in and driven by the national discourse, which traverses the boundaries of private/public and sub-culture/main-stream, adding to their complexities.

Tomboy, as Abate’s intensive project suggests, is a historical and racial construct. It is closely tied to the historical moments of national development as well as the racial ideology (refer to Table 1 in Chapter Two). At one level, tomboyism is encouraged and valued whenever national exigencies emerge, typically in war eras. For example, during the Civil War and the Second World War period, the state was faced with a lack of labor force since most men were involved in the war. Therefore, women were expected to be strong and capable of working outside to protect the national unity and western democracy. Tomboyish toughness and independence as conveyed in the famous icon Rosie the Riveter during the Second World War were much emphasized. At another level, tomboyism as a code of conduct is greatly driven by the racial ideology, specifically, the white supremacy. Emerged as a eugenic practice for middle and upper class white women in the 1840s, tomboyism responded directly to the effort to eradicate slavery which raised concerns over white racial supremacy. In the early 20th century, as a result of the increasing non-white immigration, tomboyism prevailed along with nativism and xenophobia to improve white women’s reproductive capabilities, paradoxically through the embodiment of non-white traits like darker skin as a sign of a healthier body. In general, tomboy in the U.S. is prompted and constructed within multifaceted conflicts between domestic and global forces, white people and other races.

The connection to nation is also importantly present in the case of nü hanzi, as my earlier discourse analysis suggests. In the Chinese context, within the ideological framework of collectivism and socialism, Chinese women have been closely tied to the nation, who become
important embodiments of the Chinese culture and national ideology, bound by the cultural
conventions and linked to the fate of the country (Gilmartin et al.). Historically, in the Maoist
period, specifically in the 1950s and 1960s when the country was in need of labors, the neutral or
masculine images of women such as tie guliang 铁姑娘 (iron ladies) were most preferred by the
nation; and biological sex difference was considered meaningless (Chen 100). The media
portrayals of women were those “dressed in plain working clothes and engaged in various types
of socially productive work” (100), which also prevailed in films and literatures. In today’s
modern society, women play an increasingly important part in the labor market and undertake
multiple roles. As Chen points out, “the female models praised by the media maintain similar
characteristics to those disseminated in the Maoist period who are proud of their achievements in
socially productive work, pay no attention to their family, and sacrifice family life for work
when necessary” (101). The dominant collectivism and socialism in China encourage individuals
to prioritize the needs and interests of the nation and contribute to the national development as
well as social progress and harmony. Henceforth, nü hanzi who serve the army and the public,
undertake men’s work and “sacrifice” their refined images in some sense are valorized. It also
comes as no surprise that female model workers who contribute to the country are praised while
those who disrupt social harmony as in some social news are reproached. In fact, these two kinds
of images, both addressed as nü hanzi, are constructing “masculinity” in different ways, and the
favored type is the one that adheres to and consolidates national values and ideologies.

These ties to nation therefore remind us that women’s gender identities are constructed
within the national discourse and subject to national ideologies. Female masculinity, in this case,
becomes a means to engage or remodel women in the national development, not only in terms of
their participation in social work but also their reproductive abilities as explicitly show in the
example of tomboy. On the one hand, women can enjoy more gender flexibility and opportunities
as they are included in social production; on the other hand, this process is achieved through the
“masculinization” of women. On China’s part at least, women’s emancipation has been regarded
as an integral part in the national development, but such strengthened connection can often times
reduce women to their collective identities without altering gender relations. A typical example
is the Maoist era, which is often accused of the state feminism that in effect overlooked gender
differences and reshaped women based on the male standards (Leung 366). Even today, from the
case of nü hanzi, we may see that within the state-and-male dominated media arena in China,
such female masculinity is more of a promotion of socialism and collectivism, while feminism seldom makes successful presence. Further questions remain about the way to represent women as productive social agents, and more importantly, subjective individuals, without referring to the terms of masculinity.

**Feminism and Gender Traditions**

Built on the above discussion, are such terms associated with feminism or do they enact feminist concerns and perspectives? As Abate’s historical study reveals, the usages of *tomboy* have developed along feminist movements that shed new light on women’s gender and sexual identities. And as it becomes popularized as a fashion trend, there are growing concerns over its superficialness that may jeopardize the feminist progress. In the discussion of *nü hanzi*, Chinese scholars also acknowledge the impact of women’s movement, frequently referring to the May Fourth Movement (1915-1921), which is considered the first women’s movement influenced by foreign thinking. In the globalizing era, with the development of postsocialism and neoliberalism and the increasing impact of individualism and consumerism, women nowadays have gained more freedom in identity exhibition and self-expression. For instance, *nü hanzi* in the entertainment news demonstrates more diverse representations of women, projecting “modern” and “new” women images. Nonetheless, it is dangerous to simply associate *nü hanzi* with feminism. Such a concern derives from the two cases about *nü hanzi* in Chapter Two, which I will bring up again to draw attention to the topic. The first example is the blog post introducing *nü hanzi* to foreign audience, which indicates that *nü hanzi* is not considered feminist nor is it intentionally linked to feminism. Another case concerns a skit in China’s 2015 Lunar New Year Gala that compares *nü hanzi* with an ideal female image and defines it as less attractive and unsuccessful, which aroused criticism from feminists but failed to draw such attention from most domestic audience. Both cases attempt to represent *nü hanzi* in a humorous way that to some degree depart from the feminist expectation. In other words, the case of *nü hanzi* in China celebrates its humor, if not the naturalized mockery, more than feminist implications. Therefore, we may tentatively conclude that feminist concerns in *tomboy* do not fully manifest themselves in *nü hanzi*.

Turning to *tomboy*, many empirical studies are grounded in gender theories and addressed from feminist and queer perspectives. As my earlier review summarizes, *tomboy* is an
important social identity under study. For example, the attributes of *tomboy* are heavily theorized and measured (e.g. Ahlqvist et al.; Burn et al.; Farr; Hall), the reasons for adopting or abandoning *tomboy* identity are outlined and discussed (e.g. Carr, “Tomboy,” “Where”; Craig and LaCroix), and these studies are mostly based on stories of those who recall themselves as *tomboys*. Unlike the retrospective *tomboy* stories, *nü hanzi* is a current label claimed by or assigned to young women for different and perhaps contradictory reasons, entailing the agency to self-identify and the passivized position under the gaze of others. More importantly, the popularity of this term also conjures up overuse and randomness. It is involved in heated discussion but without careful listening, and may be distracted by its intended humor. Not enough attention has been paid to more aspects of the *nü hanzi* stories. Consequently, empirical studies on *nü hanzi* as a social identity remain underdeveloped.

A more explicit point may be that queer sexuality, which is one of the core discourses of *tomboy*, is probably a fact of nonusage in the case of *nü hanzi*. Such nonusage reveals itself through the juxtaposition with *tomboy*. As I have suggested in the introduction, queer sexuality is importantly, if not dominantly, present in the discourse of female masculinity that is much influenced by the U.S. model. *Tomboy*, while paying fair attention to heterosexual female masculinity that is more of an alternative to conventional femininity, is indeed constantly linked with non-normative sexuality, as queer theory and LGBTQ movements thrive. However, the terms of female masculinity in China, including earlier terms such as *jia xiaozi* 假小子 (pseudo boy), *nanren po* 男人婆 (literally man woman), are seldom, if ever, linked to queer sexuality. In other words, based on the existing discussion about *nü hanzi* and my discourse analysis on this term, queer sexuality is not an important focus in the discursive field of *nü hanzi*, or is at best merely present.

The absence or mere presence of the attention to queer sexuality as well as feminist empirical studies, from a western position, may again serve as a proof of China’s underdevelopment of feminism or overall gender liberation. But before resorting to such a claim, let us take a deeper look into the Chinese gender tradition. As is acknowledged by rhetoricians, Confucianism can be viewed as the dominant and most influential rhetorical tradition in China, which also exerts great shaping force on gender ideology. For instance, with an emphasis on *li* 禮 (ritual), Confucianism also underscores women’s expected roles and proper acts in the patriarchal system, which can account for the derogation of *nü hanzi* in the social news. It is
argued that the ingrained Confucian values result in the difficult path of feminism in China. Probing into a feminism with Chinese characteristics, Peterman argues that Confucianism contains some common Chinese motifs such as (a) the relationality of the self; (b) social holism (groups are prior to individuals) and (c) the necessity for hierarchy as a means to promote harmony in groups; and the first two are incompatible with the western concepts of gender and gender liberation (153). Consistent to what Hall and Ames highlight, relationship and the notion of family play a vital part in the Chinese culture. A Confucian notion of selfhood relies much on the relations with multiple others, that is, selfhood is situated in social holism, with family as a basic, central unit. What is implicitly embedded here is the patriarchal and heterosexual principle. Through the practice of ritual, one’s identity is determined and constructed by the web of relationships. Peterman suggests that in the Chinese culture, “one’s primary responsibility as a person is ‘to achieve’ those unchosen relationships that define one’s unique identity,” and “[c]hoice against those relationships not ‘compelled biologically’ violates one’s primary responsibility, which is to control oneself so as to be able to ‘achieve’ those relationships” (161). A queer lifestyle therefore can potentially violate one’s moral obligations, involving many family concerns, for example, facing challenges from traditional beliefs, dealing with pressure from public opinion on the whole family, and seeking tolerance of individual difference and a place in the family, etc. This is quite different from the western view on selfhood, which generally treats individuals as central characters involved in the Freudian struggle between desires and repressions. To liberate individuals from the gendered system, Gayle Rubin proposes that “individuals are permitted to become more whole as a person and achieve a more expansive and free expression of their sexuality” (qtd. in Peterman, 153). Consequently, feminism and queer bodies that are most discussed by Butler, Halberstam, and many other feminist scholars in the U.S are not significantly present in the nü hanzi discourse, which, rooted in the Chinese cultural and rhetorical system, is largely heterosexual by default. Unlike the U.S. pattern of female masculinity that is linked to same-sex desire and discussed under feminist and queer theories, the Chinese terms of female masculinity, exemplified by nü hanzi in this case, although implying a potential deviation from heterosexual reproduction, is not that much associated with

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20 Peterman draws on Yiyun Chen of Beijing’s Jinglun Family Center, who argues that unless one is a lesbian biologically, lesbianism as a personal choice is pointless. However, since there is no clear distinction between biological lesbianism and a pure choice of lesbian lifestyle, the acceptance of lesbianism remains a problem.

21 Women who are regarded as nü hanzi are mostly single, which raises concerns over their marriages.
same-sex desire other than symbolizing masculine behaviors and traits.22

**Enacting Yin-Yang: Mind and Body, Masculinity and Femininity**

Following the discussion about gender tradition, it may be helpful to rethink female masculinity with more rhetorical underpinnings and steer it towards a new way of understanding. For example, why does the U.S. model of female masculinity tend to focus on bodily expressions such as sexual queerness? And why does female masculinity in the Chinese context generally connote more abstract “masculine” personalities and spirits? These different foci may be linked to the mind and body relation.23 In Western philosophy, the body is conventionally associated with the feminine, which is viewed inferior to the mind (masculine). Relatedly, the female body is perceived as a lack and a formless threat that has no place in the preset masculine system but at the same time obstructs reason and rationality ascribed to the mind, or masculinity. Feminist scholars, aware of the hierarchal binary of mind and body, propose some alternative conceptual models,24 foregrounding the body’s materiality or ontologically basic position. As Eva Kit Wah Man contends, feminists often start with reexamining the mind-body model, and the body has been an important site to upset the dichotomy and build feminist and queer theories (e.g. Butler, *Bodies, Gender*; Halberstam). In the Chinese context, Mencius’ ideas,25 among others, may provide a case to review how mind and body are theorized in the Chinese philosophy. Holding that human beings are inherently good in nature and are endowed with innate moral qualities that need to be further nurtured,26 Mencius seems to enact a moral metaphysics (Man 163), viewing

22 Such encounter also poses questions about how to better understand and practice feminism as well as queer theories in China. Although it is beyond the scope of the current discussion to detail the development of feminist and queer theories in China, we can envision that an awareness of the local cultural and rhetorical tradition will not only be productive but also indispensable for such enterprise, especially under the globalizing and transnational background.

23 Briefly speaking, the binary between mind and body is originated early from Plato and theorized or altered by many later scholars. Plato’s dualism of form and matter, body and mind relates body, especially female body to irrationality (Gatens). By the same token, Descartes made a distinction between two sorts of substances, thinking and extended, which correspond to mind and body, prioritizing the former over the latter.

24 For example, Spinoza came up with a monistic supposition that unites mind and body, which is sometimes employed to justify the body’s indispensable position in human action. Also, Merleau-Ponty’s paradigm of seeing mind and body as interrelated plays an important part in feminist thoughts.

25 Mencius is a great philosopher of the Confucian school after Confucius. For the sake of conciseness, the following discussion is based on Man’s feminist discussion and interpretation of Mencius’ ideas on mind and body. For details, see Chan, Wing-tsit. *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*.

26 The innate moral qualities are basically regulated by 四端 siduan (the “Four Beginnings”) -- basic feelings and sentiments referring to “compassion, shame, modesty or reverence, including the distinction between right and wrong” (Man 162). They are embedded in the moral knowledge, or the liang-chih 良知.
the moral mind as a derivative, or a result of human beings’ ontological ground t’ien 天 (translated as Heaven), which connotes the Confucian cosmological belief of a holistic unity and harmony. Paired with the moral mind, or moral will, is Ch’i 氣, the vital force that refers to “bodily substance, matter and desire” (ibid.). Within Mencius’ framework, the mind is the greatest component, while the embodied vital force constitutes the small components, which, similar to the western reason/passion binary, should be guided by the former in order to transform a person into a “sage.” The emphasis on the cultivation of mind for self-actualization,27 grounded in the Confucian tradition, still exerts great impact on the modern society, foregrounding the merits and spirits that enable individuals to realize self-worth under the impetus to achieve social harmony. Consistently, as mentioned earlier, the connotation of mental strength and modern spirits in the term nü hanzi is gradually reinforced.

As indicated in Man’s piece, although Mencius’ theory seems to accord a superior status to mind, the mind and body are actually placed in relation to each other as a unity based on the Confucian principle of balance, harmony, and holistic unity. They rise from oneness and interact with each other, and “the superior relation of the mind over the body is simply a symbolic and dynamic phase within the general movement toward (human) harmony” (167-68). Insights like this have been suggested and integrated in contemporary western feminist thinking. For instance, such mind-body relation is also associated with the relationship between masculinity and femininity, providing a way to rethink and reinterpret the boundary between the two. Here the Yin-Yang rhetoric and the complementarity of opposite pairs in Daoism28 can facilitate our understanding. The Yin and Yang, united in 道 Dao (the Way), respectively refer to the female

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27 This point can also be linked to the Wen-Wu model of Chinese masculinity. According to Kwai-Cheung Lo’s book review of Theorizing Chinese Masculinity: Society and Gender in China (Louie), Wen (literary attainment, the mental) and Wu (martial valor, the physical) are two poles of the fundamental structure of masculinity, and the Wen polarity, exemplified by Confucius, has been traditionally prioritized.

28 The Daodejing, a Chinese classic canon of Daoism, encompasses some discussions of female and femininity. Articulating an alternative worldview to the Confucian ideal, Daodejing seems more skeptical about norms and in general, language and values (Hansen). Attributes originally considered as inferior, for example, female, weak, and ugly, are placed in a primary position. However, the importance or function accredited to female and femininity may not meet the needs of feminists. Karyn Lai, for example, argues that the Daoist notion of femininity is basically associated with nonassertion and submissiveness contextualized in concepts such as buzhen 不争 (noncontending or nonassertive), ruo 弱 (weak) and rou 柔 (soft), which does not generate feminist thinking. Based on both linguistic and ethico-political analyses, she suggests that “the Daoist preference for a model of the feminine over that of the masculine is not rooted in feminist concerns” (136). It is the Yin-Yang rhetoric and the complementarity of opposite pairs in Daoism that sheds light on the reconfigured masculinity/femininity relation.
(the receptive) and male (the creative) aspects (Cheng). Interpreting the two concepts based on the philosophy of *I-Ching*, Chung-ying Cheng writes,

> The so-called *yin-yang* represents two moments or two aspects of the process of transformation or change, which are to be understood in an extensive context of contrastive and correlative understandings of qualities and movements of things and their relationships -- qualities and movements such as feminine and masculine, dark and bright, closed and open, coming and going. (363)

As exemplified by dark and bright, coming and going, they formulate two opposite yet complementary forces in a dynamic process of becoming. In this changing process, the *Yin* and *Yang* are opposite not in the sense that they are antagonistic, but that they are complementary to each other. That is to say, they are interdependent and mutually informed by their correlation. Drawing on such complementarity, Lai concludes that masculinity and femininity are (a) interdependent; (b) not static; (c) not mutually exclusive; (d) nonreducible each to the other; and (e) must remain distinct (146-47). Such reconfigured relation not only discards the dichotomy and hierarchy between masculinity and femininity, but also rejects to resort to androgyny as a stable form of human excellence. Rather, it recognizes and values the “healthy tension between the two” (146), which informs “the openness and responsivity of each to the other,” and “the richness and complexities of their interaction and interdependence” (149). In this case, the contingency and fluidity of masculinity and femininity are also foregrounded, which allows for their different ways of embodiment.

In this masculinity-femininity interactive dynamic, the term female masculinity seems more intricate. On the one hand, we might say that it challenges the dichotomy and is situated in the masculinity-femininity continuum, which can yield rich and complex interactions. On the other hand, referring back to Paechter’s critique of the term for placing “masculinity” as the keyword and “female” as a qualifier, a *Yin-Yang* perspective urges us to reconsider the place and implication of female masculinity in the continuum. For example, how is female masculinity differed from other terms of interaction, say, masculine femininity? What is the imperative of using this particular term? Halberstam kind of justifies it by emphasizing its constructive impact

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29 *I-Ching, or Classic of Changes*, is one of the oldest Chinese classics. Originally an ancient divination manual, it is transformed into a cosmological text, exerting great impact on the Chinese philosophy and other fields.
on a more inclusive and subversive notion of masculinity, given that the term indicates the separation of masculinity from the male body. Beyond this, positioning female masculinity in a *Yin-Yang* pattern of femininity and masculinity as a site of interaction can help us reinterpret it in a way that it not only complicates masculinity but also reconstructs femininity. That is to say, it also raises questions in terms of how it constructs accepted femininity and hence redefines the notion of femininity. Both *tomboy* and *nü hanzi* challenge normative femininity featuring stereotyped feminine traits, and by troubling the boundary of femininity and masculinity, they play a part in reconstructing each spheres.

In sum, going back and forth in between *tomboy* and *nü hanzi* while being conscious of the indigenousness of each helps open up the conversation, in which both are mutually engaged. The juxtaposition of *tomboy* and *nü hanzi* as a way of recontextualization further unveils the complex, contingent, and temporal nature of female masculinity, its national and feminist linkages as well as gender and rhetorical traditions, which generates a more comprehensive understanding of the term.
Chapter Five: Thinking Back and Looking Forward

In this thesis, I have attempted to enact a comparative rhetorical and cross-cultural perspective to study female masculinity as a rhetorical artifact in the U.S and China, taking *tomboy* and *nü hanzi* as examples. To do so, I utilized what Susan Friedman proposes as the juxtapositional comparison and practiced LuMing Mao’s “art of recontextualization” with an attention to the etic/emic dynamics, the interdependence among meanings and contexts as well as their indigenousness, multiplicity and complexity, and the facts of usage/nonusage. With such rhetorical and reflective awareness, I firstly reviewed the phenomenon of female masculinity and how it is contextualized in *tomboy* and *nü hanzi*, probing into their complex and dynamic meanings, factors and backgrounds, and multidimensional impacts as well as implications.

Spurred by the current gap and potential misunderstandings in the case of *nü hanzi*, I conducted a critical discourse analysis on the term in order to gain a better understanding of how *nü hanzi* is constructed and represented in the Chinese media arena. Based on the research result which demonstrates that *nü hanzi* is granted different meanings in various news contexts, along with the earlier review, I further opened up a series of dialogues between *tomboy* and *nü hanzi* as a way of mutual recontextualization, through which female masculinity can be productively engaged in rhetorical encounters.

*Tomboy*, as a popular subject in literary and empirical studies, is constructed culturally, historically, and racially. A close analysis on *tomboy* implies that it is a process of “doing” and “undoing,” “making” and “unmaking,” complicated by dynamic meanings and multifaceted macro and micro factors. It moves across the boundaries between masculinity/femininity, heterosexuality/homosexuality, childhood/adulthood, and whiteness/blackness, so on and so forth. In another venue, the widely-circulated Chinese term *nü hanzi*, used to address young masculine women, also involves multiple meanings in diverse contexts and various prompting elements from different perspectives. Prominently, *nü hanzi* is greatly affected by media production, reproduction, and consumption, conjuring up mockery, over-generalization, and the incongruities between derogation and compliment, as is shown in various media representations. Such usages, along with the strengthened connotations in personalities and spirits, symbolize a kind of female masculinity that departs from the focus on queer sexuality and overall feminist concerns that are often more explicit in the U.S. pattern.
From a dynamic etic/emic perspective, the juxtaposition of *tomboy* and *nü hanzi* reaffirms the complexity, contingency, and temporality of the embodied female masculinity. They jointly unveil the impact of national exigencies and ideologies on the discourse of female masculinity, indicating that such phenomenon can be significantly tied to or regulated by the nation. Also, *tomboy* and *nü hanzi* reflect different layers of attention to feminism and sexual as well as mental implications, which to some extent informs different gender and in general, cultural conventions. Finally, female masculinity leads us to revisit the relation between femininity and masculinity. Drawing on different philosophical constructions of mind/body, we can further enact a *Yin-Yang* perspective on masculinity and femininity, reunderstanding the two as dynamic, interdependent, and interactive. Such relation can also reinterpret female masculinity as an example of interaction in the masculinity-femininity continuum, deconstructing and reconstructing it in a way that does not essentialize masculinity but reshapes both masculinity and femininity.

In the meantime, it is important to note that following the “art of recontextualization,” any acts of representation and interpretation are limited in the sense that they are not fixed nor definite but open to reflections, critiques, and reconfigurations. With an intention to avoid piecemeal analysis and also due to the limits of theoretical insights, time, and space, the current study is preliminary and far from adequate. More research needs to be done to interrogate the usages/nonusages of *tomboy* and *nü hanzi* in different arenas, and by extension, related artifacts of female masculinity and other terms of diverse gender performances and identities. The significance of my preliminary inquiry lies more in the uptake from and beyond such attempt. In other words, what implications can the comparative rhetorical inquiries of female masculinity bring to our field? Thinking back and looking forward, I tentatively provide the following.

Methodologically, as indicated at the beginning, since there exists a reciprocal relationship between the subject under study and the methodology employed in that study, taking female masculinity as a rhetorical artifact and exploring it through a comparative rhetorical lens can complicate our understanding of rhetoric in general and comparative rhetoric in particular. It draws our attention to rhetorical artifacts and practices in everyday life that may probably fall into the category of “facts of nonusage” previously, illustrating rhetoric as a contingent, selective, contextualized, and performative process of meaning-making. More importantly, it serves to examine and potentially enrich the methodologies in our comparative rhetoric enterprise, in this
case, a combination of juxtapositional comparison and multidimensional recontextualization that foreground a dynamic etic/emic position and an awareness of multifaceted interdependence, interconnectivity, and dialogism.

Politically, the topic is closely connected to gender studies and the growth and practice of feminism. Under the background of globalization and transnationalization, there are more interactions and mutual influences between and among different loci. The study reminds us that disparities and incongruities can exist in similar concepts or phenomena due to different cultural heritages and rhetorical situations, and that our comparative interrogation should not only be aware of such differences but also understand them not in a way of claiming hierarchy and deficiency but establishing mutuality in distinctiveness. Specifically, the rhetorical and cultural analysis of female masculinity in the U.S. and Chinese context indicates that a lens of comparative rhetoric can be significant and productive for intercultural gender studies, and related to this, feminist analyses and practices that are more aware of the indigenous cultural, social, and political contexts rather than EuroAmerican-centric. Moreover, the two can be juxtaposed to communicate with each other and create a place of mutual engagement and development. For example, we may learn from the previous chapter that as Chinese feminism benefits from the insights of western gender theories and feminist movements, contemporary western feminist thinking may also be nourished by Chinese rhetorical traditions such as the Yin-Yang perspective.

Related to this political point is its significant place in the composition classroom. As Jonathan Alexander implies, the composition classroom is never value-free or neutral but can be highly political and ideological, which becomes a significant site to reflect, rethink and critique social ideologies and initiate social actions. Gender and feminist perspectives are significantly pertaining to composition studies (e.g. Kirsch et al.; Stenberg). From a feminist perspective, the composition classroom can be an arena to perform and construct gender identity, especially when related topics are addressed. For instance, with a specific focus on gender identity, Perry proposes the use of “location” concept as a useful way to evoke students’ rhetorical and critical thinking in the composition class, maintaining that “[m]ales and females are located physically, ideologically and rhetorically within the framework of culture and its gendered expectations.” Female masculinity as a case in point may enrich the conversation. Potentially, the composition class provides a platform in which different layers of female masculinity can be interrogated,
reconstructed, and performed. This issue may be further complicated with the involvement of international students. Since gender is constantly shaped in different community practices, entering a new environment may bring great impact on one’s gender identity. Take Chinese female students as an example, faced with the challenge of adjusting to the host culture and the stress from academic work (e.g. Bang et al.; Lee et al.), many claim themselves as nü hanzi in the sense that they have to be tough and independent. The composition class may be an outlet where one can, through writing, become more conscious of the reconstruction and meaning-making of self-identity. With the critical self-reflection as gendered individuals, students can develop more awareness of gender ideologies and power, seeking ways to change.

Pedagogically, we may envision more productive conversations and reflections with an open-minded and communicative attitude in the multilingual and multicultural setting. As Piller and Pavlenko contend, “If gender is viewed as a social, historical and cultural construct, then it comes as no surprise that normative masculinities and femininities, as well as beliefs and ideas about relations between sexes, may vary across cultures as well as over time within a culture” (22). Students from diverse backgrounds bring with them different experiences and can contribute to the issue by participating in translingual and transcultural dialogues to revisit gender, culture, reality, and pedagogy. To encourage such conversations and remake the composition class as a “contact zone,” we may practice what bell hooks proposes as the “engaged pedagogy,” which is believed to be anti-colonialist, multicultural, passionate, and meaningful in a way to “stimulate[s] true reflection and action upon reality” (84). At the same time, for instructors teaching in a multilingual and multicultural class, it becomes more challenging and pressing to address issues such as gender, class, and race (e.g. Kubota). Specifically concerning female writers and teachers, Kubota further calls for teachers and student writers to jointly “create and invent new ways of writing that are congruent with L2 women learners’ identities” and “work together across racial and class boundaries” in a feminist framework (Kubota 40). As can be learnt from the comparative study on female masculinity, a cultural and rhetorical perspective will be necessary for a better understanding of foreign students’ cultural models and relatedly, writing conventions. We are always on the way to embrace new differences and possibilities, which urge us to challenge not only the authority of language norms and the host culture model, but also the unequal power relationships and ideologies both in and outside the classroom.
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