

*The Reflection of Justice in Performing Arts;  
A Case Study of Contemporary Performing Arts “Mae-Dok-Bhu-Son”*

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**Abstract**

The Lady of the Camellias (La Dame aux camélias) by Alexandre Dumas, Fils, is the most famous French novel, firstly published in 1848. It was translated and published in Thai language, titled as “Mae-Dok-Bhu-Son by Sangworn Krileak (first publication in 1981).

The literature illustrated the social problems related with French morality during the middle of 1800s. It presents sentimentality and emotion through magnificent literature.

The researcher has adapted and presented such translated literature through the vision and forms of contemporary performing arts creature, in Thai society context. The theme of the performance is still emphasizes on the social problems related with morality, which are the global general problem.

This creative research is the literature development to a contemporary playwright, which retains the value to the original literature, leads to the justice reflection that presents through the performing arts.

Keywords: Performing Arts, Contemporary Performance, Playwright

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## **Introduction**

The Lady of the Camellias (*La Dame aux camélias*) by Alexandre Dumas, Fils, is a tragic love story between Marguerite Gautier, the most beautiful, brazen, and expensive Parisian courtesan whom suffering from tuberculosis, and a young provincial bourgeois, Armand Duval. The narration of the love story is told by Duval himself as a (unnamed) narrator of the book. Marguerite is named as the Lady of the Camellias because she is never seen without her favorite flowers she wears a white camellia when she is available to her lovers and a red one when her delicate condition precludes making love.

Armand Duval falls in love with Marguerite and ultimately becomes her lover, convincing her to turn her back on her life as a courtesan and live with him in the countryside. This idyllic existence is broken by the father of Armand, who, concerned by the scandal created by the illicit relationship and fearful that it will destroy a chance of Armand's sister for marriage. He convinces Marguerite to leave Armand.

Until the death of Marguerite, which is described as an unending agony, she has been abandoned by everyone and passes away with sympathetic.

The main plot of the story is that their love can really never be allowed because of society's strict standards.

The Lady of the Camellias was translated and published in Thai language, titled as “Mae-Dok-Bhu-Son by Sangworn Krileak (first publication in 1981).

Since 1981, “Mae-Dok-Bhu-Son” by Sangworn Krileak has become a famous translated novel. Even more, it also had inspiration for other novels, television plays, films and stage performances in Thailand.

In 2014, as a researcher, I have a question about the reflection of the justice behind the story of Mae-Dok-Bhu-Son, then, I has adapted and presented such translated literature through the vision and forms of contemporary performing arts creature, in Thai society context. The theme of the performance is still emphasizes on the social problems related with morality, which are the global general problem.

The contemporary performance staged on 25-27 August, 2014 at Songpon Theatre (DD Auditorium), Faculty of Arts, Silpakorn University, Sanamchandara Palace Campus, Nakornpathom, Thailand.



Figure 1. Poster of the contemporary performing arts, “Mae-Dok-Bhu-Son” ( from Gan Phittayakornsilp, 2014.)

### Background of Social construction in Thailand

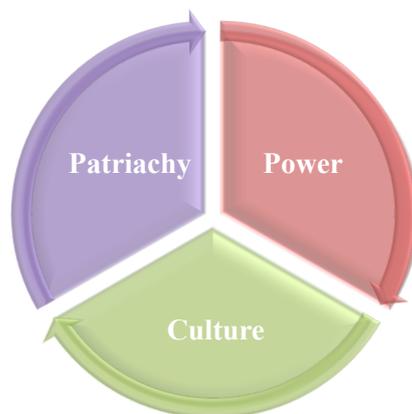


Figure 2. The chart of the background of social construction in Thailand. ( from Mutjarin Ittiphong, 2016).

From the chart (Figure 2) above, patriarchy is a social system in which males hold primary power, predominate in roles of political leadership, moral authority, social privilege and control of property. In the domain of the family, fathers or father - figures hold authority over women and children.

Patriarchy is about the social relations of power between men and women, women and women, and men and men. It is a system for maintaining class, gender, racial, and heterosexual privilege and the status quo of power - relying both on crude forms of oppression, like violence; and subtle ones, like laws; to perpetuate inequality. Patriarchal beliefs of male, heterosexual dominance lie at the root of gender - based violence. Patriarchy is a structural force that influences power relations, whether they are abusive or not.

Power sets the agenda for patriarchy. But, conflating it with abuse or masculinity is problematic and we need a more complex analysis of the typical power and control explanations.

Feminism, which is about women claiming their rights to self - determination and equality, confronts gender conformity and aims to replace relationships of power with relationships of meaning.

Culture is used to justify gender inequality and violence by evoking traditional cultural beliefs about how women should be treated. The defense of the culture of a place, country, religion, etc., is in fact a defense of the culture of patriarchy in that country, religion, identity; and the culture of violence everywhere. The culture of patriarchy is not static. Its manifestation on an army base differs from that in a rural town; just as the culture of patriarchy in Chicago differs from that of Bangkok, or other zone in Thailand.

### **The Gender-Disaggregated Database**

(Gender issues, policy-making and programme targeting towards gender equality.)

#### 1. Women and Poverty

- Poverty incidence was slightly lower among women, compared with men. But in the South, it was on the rise among women and poverty incidence was higher among women than men.
- Female-headed households scored better than male-headed households. But the male-headed households fared better in Bangkok and the North.
- But average income of female-headed households was lower than that of male-headed households in every region, with the largest gap in the South. An encouraging sign is that the gap became smaller.

#### 2. Education and Training of Women

- Men's mean year of schooling was more than women. But the largest gap was between the urban and rural areas. Bangkok had the most years of schooling, and women had more years in school than men. The Northeast lagged behind other regions
- The enrolment rates for both sexes at the primary and lower secondary levels were very high. The rates dropped off at the upper secondary and tertiary levels, where women scored higher enrolment rates.
- Among the youth, women posed higher computer and internet literacy rate than men throughout the country. In the South, more women than men used computer.
- In so far as literacy is concerned, men fared better than women in all regions. The largest gender gap was observed in the North.

- In the 6-29 age group, woman has ability to read more or as much as men. But after the age of 30, men surpassed women in both urban and rural areas.

### 3. Women and Health

- The South had the lowest coverage of standard pregnancy check-ups and birth attended by health personnel, and the highest maternal mortality rate.
- Most women practiced birth control. Most popular contraceptive methods were oral pills, female sterilization, and injection. Male sterilization accounted for only 1.1%.
- In the past ten years, smoking among population dropped, but women's smoking rate increased. It is also women's alcohol drinking rate increased.
- Women's illness rate was higher than men, but women had longer life expectancy at birth. The Northerners, men and women, had the highest illness rate and the shortest life span.
- Elderly women outnumbered men in all areas and regions, and a large number lived alone.

### 4. Violence against Women

- Twenty One Stop Crisis Centers – OSCCs were established in 2002. The number increased to 171 in 2006. Various types of shelter under the MSDHS expanded from 35 to 66.
- Number of women and children seeking assistance at the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security's shelters and assistance centers more than double in the last three years, largely due to sexual violence.
- Closed court cases related to rape and other sexual violence against women rose steadily from 4,896 to 9,653 during 2002-2006.

### 5. Women and Armed Conflicts

- Women made up only 16.7% of the National Reconciliation Committee, appointed by the Cabinet to provide advice on peaceful solution to the violence in the Southernmost provinces

### 6. Women and the Economy

- Women's labour participation rate was lower than men, but unemployment rate was lower among women, especially urban women.
- Women were outnumbered by men in non-agricultural employment and women's income was 94% of men's.
- On average, women spent 2.7 hours per day on unpaid household maintenance and 3.3 hours per day on unpaid care for own household members, compared with 1.5 hours, and 2 hours, respectively by men. The largest gender gap was in the rural North.

### 7. Women in Power and Decision making

- In the 2005 general election, women made up 11.4% of the House of Representatives. The representation was lowest in the South and the Northeast. The highest representation 21.6% was in Bangkok.
- During 2001-2006, Thailand had 3 Cabinets, with a very low but rising women representation; it was 8.6% in 2006.
- In 2007, women accounted for 11.3% of the executives of major political parties, an increase from 8.4% in 2005

- During 2002-2005, the proportion of female executives in the civil service increased to 23.1%. The increase took place at all levels, except at the highest level - C 11.

- In 2006, women outnumbered men as eligible voters. Women's and men's vote turnout rates were very close, at 65.9% and 65% respectively.

#### 8. Institutional Mechanism for the Advancement of Women

- In 2006, there were 129 Gender Focal Points, and the ratio of Gender Focal Points to government agencies at department-level and higher was 0.84.

#### 9. Human Rights of Women

- The first National Human Rights Commission of Thailand consisted of 11 commissioners, 5 men and 6 women.

#### 10. Women and the Media

- The proportion of women in the media reached 38.4% in 2006. In general, women were slightly more active in the broadcast media than the print media.

#### 11. Women and the Environment

- The proportion of women attending the natural resources and environmental training organized by the Environment Research and Training Center, Ministry of Natural Resources and the Environment dropped from 58.6% in 2002 to 45.7% in 2006.

#### 12. the Girl-Child.

- Males outnumbered females at birth. Sex ratio at birth was approximately 0.94 in every part of the country.

- While low birth weight was higher among female newborns, especially in the North, infant mortality rate and under 5 mortality rate were higher among males, especially in the South. Among children 5 years and under, the underweight rate was higher among boys, especially in the Northeast and the South.

(the Bureau of Gender Equality Promotion, Office of Women and Family Development, Ministry of Social Development and Human Security (BGEP/OWAFD/MSDHS) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (2006) : 5 - 9)

From the data above, since 2006, it can assume that there are still have gender gaps in Thai society. The gender gap also infer to the equality which is reflect to the Justice in Thailand.

## **From Translated Literature to a Contemporary Performing Arts**

### **The Similitude of Plot to Romantic Tragedy**

Refer to Plot and Romantic Tragedy,

The Lady of the Camellias (*La Dame aux camélias*) by Alexandre Dumas, Fils, the plot is about a story about the sometimes tragic and scandalous and sometimes joyous life and fortunes of Marguerite Gautier, the most beautiful, brazen, and expensive Parisian courtesan, and her tragic love.

Known to all as “the Lady of the Camellias” because she is never seen without her favorite flowers, she leads a glittering life of endless parties and aristocratic balls, with the richest men in France flocking to her boudoir to lay their fortunes at her feet. But despite having many lovers, she has never really loved, until she meets Armand Duval, young, handsome, and recklessly headstrong from a lower social class, and hopelessly in love with Marguerite, but not nearly rich enough.

Armand is Marguerite’s first true love, and against her better judgment, she throws away her upper-class lifestyle for him. But as intense as their love for each other is, it challenges a reality that cannot be denied.

In the translated novel, *Mae-Dok-Bhu-Son* by Sangworn Krileak (first publication in 1981), because it is the translated version, the translator still keep the same structure and the same plot of the novel.

The only one thing which is different from the original version, Sangworn Krileak uses flower named Bhu-Son (*Gardenia Jasminoides* J.Ellis) instead of Camellia, to communicate to the reader because camellia cannot grow up in tropical zone or in Thailand.

For adaptation to a playwright and the contemporary performing arts, as a researcher, on the analysis, the play relates to love and loving relationship, exciting, mysterious and having a strong effect on emotions. Moreover in the form of tragedy which is definition/meaning by Aristotle (384–322 BC.) as, “Tragedy, then, is an imitation of an action that is serious, complete, and of a certain magnitude; in language embellished with each kind of artistic ornament, the several kinds being found in separate parts of the play; in the form of action, not of narrative; with incidents arousing pity and fear, wherewith to accomplish its katharsis of such emotions. . . . Every Tragedy, therefore, must have six parts, which parts determine its quality—namely, Plot, Characters, Diction, Thought, Spectacle, Melody.” (translation by S. H. Butche)

The contemporary performing arts “*Mae-Dok-Bhu-Son*”, its theme due to an excess of love or passion, then, the performance perform in romantic tragedy style.

However, the adaptation from the translated literature to the contemporary performing arts remain the question in the creative research as how the justice reflect through the performing arts and how the audience, specially the youth generation, perceive it.



Figure 3. Marguerite Gautier and Armand Duval fall in love with each other. ( from Gan Phittayakornsilp, 2014)

### Conclusion

The contemporary performing arts “Mae-Dok-Bhu-Son” staged on 25-27 August, 2014 in Songpon Arts Center Project, at Songpon Theatre (DD Auditorium), Faculty of Arts, Silpakorn University, Sanamchandara Palace Campus, Nakornpathom, Thailand.

The audience data collection by questionnaire as following;

Table 1. The audience data

D/M/Y	Audience									
	Amount	Gender		Age				Occupation		
		F	M	18-22	23-30	30-40	40(above)	Student	Teacher	-
25 <sup>th</sup> August,2014.	324	302	22	312	1	6	5	315	7	2
26 <sup>th</sup> August,2014.	211	198	13	196	4	2	9	199	11	1
27 <sup>th</sup> August,2014.	189	166	23	178	1	3	7	180	5	4
<b>Total</b>	724	666	58	686	6	11	21	694	23	7

From the above table (table 1), the total of the audiences is 724; 666 females and 58 males. There are 4 groups of age and 3 groups of occupation. The majority of age is 18-22 and most of occupation is student. Hence, the result and discussion indicate to the ideal of youth generation in Thailand.

The result evaluated by questionnaire, observation and discussion as following:

1. By questionnaire.

Table 2. The evaluation from questionnaire

<b>Indication</b>	<b>Unit of Measure</b>	<b>Target</b>	<b>Result</b>
<b>Outcome</b>			
Quantity Indication - Utilization	Percent	75	96.02
Quality Indication - Expectation	Average	3.5	4.1
<b>Output</b>			
Quantity Indication - Audience Amount	People	500	724
Quality Indication - Utilization	Average	3.5	4.56
- Knowledge Improvement	Percent	75	82
Timeliness Indication - Time Management	Yes/No	Yes	Yes
Cost Effectiveness - Budget	Thai Baht	50,000	50,000
<b>The Evaluation of the Integration (if any)</b>			
The Success of Integration - The suitable of the result to applied with research.(if integrated with research)	Average	3.5	4.4
- The result cans analysis and use for academy research. (if integrated with research.)	Average	3.5	4.6
- The result can use for develop capability learning management. (if integrated with learning management.)	Average	3.5	4.2

2. By observation.

The audience felt sentimental and pity for Marguerite Gautier and Armand Duval destiny.

3. From discussion

Mostly of the audience believe all situations in Mae-Dok-Bhu-Son happened by their fates/the Karma. Even they felt sorry with the characters but they strongly believe that is a reasonable acceptation. Whatever happens to the characters, Marguerite Gautier and Armand Duval, it has its own reason. Marguerite Gautier is not a good character because she is difference from ideal girl/women/lady in Thai society, so she deserved to be abandoned by everyone even she has true love with Armand Duval.

Unfortunately, a few of the audience can receive the massage of unrequited love which is happened by inequality and gap in social.

From all of data analysis, this creative research, finally, found that because of the consistently acceptance of social construction in Thailand which is included patriarchy, power and culture. This construction has strongly effect to gender gap, which is indicated to inequality and reflect to justice in social.

To create a contemporary performing arts “Mae-Dok-Bhu-Son”, as a tool to evaluated and indicated the ideal of justice in new generation, youth/ students in university. The awareness of justice, which is related equality and humanities still rarely in Thailand.

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