“Queer”, once an abusive and insulting term towards gay and lesbian, has recently been a marker for the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community. It was even quite a “queer year” around the globe in 2013 as there were several debates or protests on legalization of same-sex marriage in different countries. Taiwan is one of the countries and the only one in the East-Asian region making its hard steps towards marriage equality\(^1\). Throughout the world, there is also an increasing visibility of queer representation being perceived in mass media and popular culture. However, what exactly “queer” actually is goes beyond the context of liberation and identity of gay and lesbian, as the term is not a fixed ideology. Queer theorists in academic disciplines embrace the term for its fluidity, not simply as a fixed and demarcated category (Raymond 2003). In general, “queer” can function as a noun, an adjective or a verb, but in each case is defined against the “normal” or normalizing, particularly the “heteronormativity” the society has constructed. Queer theory itself is a collection of intellectual engagements with the relations between sex, gender and

\(^1\) Executive Yuan of Taiwan government proposed legislation granting same-sex marriage under Human Rights Law in 2013. However, this action has arisen large controversies and debates in the country.
sexual desire (Spargo 1999: 8-9). That is, the Queer theory is what is against the norm and the analyses of the power relations in the gender system and sexuality construction.

Queer theory employs a number of ideas from poststructuralist ideologies, including Jacques Lacan’s psychoanalytic models of decentered and unstable identity. Jacques Derrida’s deconstruction of binary conceptual and linguistic structures and Foucault’s model of discourse, knowledge and power also contribute to the knowledge of Queer theory (Spargo 1999: 40-1). Judith Butler suggested that there is a compulsory order of sex, gender and desire (1990). The distinction between sex and gender is that sex is to be fixed based on biological and scientific discourse. One is a male is because he is given a phallus, and that the other lacking of it, hence, to be a female. Whereas, gender is culturally constructed from what the sexed body is assumed. Gender is a performativity experienced by the individual as a naturally identity (Spargo 1999: 53). By given a male sex body, one performs or practises masculinity to be identified as a man. This duality of sex and the cultural construction of gender become problematic when it comes to intersex and transgender practices. If gender is the cultural extension of chromosomal sex, then the existence of XXY body² and man performing femininity body just prove that sex/gender construction is more ambiguous and complicated than the simple binary concepts and identification of sexuality.

² XXY body, known as Klinefelter Syndrome, is a genetic disorder resulting from additional X genetic material in males.
The ambiguity and complexity have greater potential in arguing on sexual desires. Under heterosexual matrix and in hegemonic society, sexuality is always constructed within the terms of discourse and power, where power is partially understood in terms of heterosexual and phallic cultural conventions (Butler 1990: 40). This power relations and hegemony notion are about men performing hegemonic masculinity to hold a certain power and control over the others who lack the phallic signifier. Heterosexuality and homophobia are the bedrock of hegemonic masculinity and any understanding of its meaning. The fundamental idea of the power relations in this heterosexual norm is treating women as sexual objects for men (Donaldson 1993: 645). In phallic cultural convention, performing a masculine body signifies a desire for social power, wealth and dominance.

This paper focuses on how queer representation can be read in popular culture and media context especially in recent television and drama series from Japan and Taiwan. The case studies for examination include *Hanazakari no Kimitachi e: Ikemen Paradise* (2007), a Japanese drama based on the same-titled manga produced by Fuji Television (it is so popular that it has both Taiwanese and Korean adaptation and a remake in Japan in 2011) and *Two Fathers* (2012), a Taiwanese drama produced by SET Television. It is interesting to see how these two television products employ queer ideology under different cultural contexts and themes, including gender bender and homosociality concepts.

*Hanazakari no Kimitachi e: Ikemen Paradise* is based on *Hana-Kimi*, a popular manga written by Hisaya Nakajo that has huge reception around the world. The
storyline in *Hana-Kimi* is about how the protagonist, Mizuki Ashiya, cross-dressed as a boy in order to attend a all-boys’ boarding school so that she can approach to her athletic idol, Izumi Sano. Mizuki and Izumi then room together in the dorm and develop a deep relationship, and eventually to a romance as the narrative goes when Izumi discovers her true gender. This cross-dressing practice is quite queer in a sense that throughout the narrative, some other male characters are even attracted to the feminine side of Mizuki. So even in the heterosexual narrative, gender bender still implicitly portrays homosexual relationship. However, this kind of relationship is again a trouble that makes the gender system more complicated.

*Two Fathers* is a typical “idol drama” series that casts popular actors in the entertainment industry in Taiwan as one of the production and promotion strategy. The storyline is about two single men forming a family and raising a daughter together. Even thought there is no apparent gay or same-sex oriented content in the plot, the series still raise several discussions towards family unit constitutes two fathers and how traditional Taiwan society respond to it. In a wider concept, this could also reflect on the homosociality ideology as mainstream media playing along with “bromance” context either in the West or East culture. Interesting phenomena can also be seen in the fan-art creation or remake of the *Two Fathers*. Some of the fans have ideolised two main characters as real gay couple although this didn’t appear in the original storyline.

In both Japan and Taiwan mainstream television media, Queer theory representations can be depicted in different contexts and contents. Both have their
own historical cultural backgrounds that they follow. Different cultural construct and 
media strategy have assisted this evolution to make the queer ideology present in the 
mainstream. Whether it is gender performativity or same-sex family structure debate, 
mainstream television provides the opportunity for the society to discuss and pay 
some awareness to the diversity of sex and gender identity.

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