

东北师范大学

硕士学位论文

反抗霸权话语的他者声音：论黄哲伦《蝴蝶君》对传统东西方
关系的颠覆

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中文摘要

1988年3月20日，百老汇的尤金·奥尼尔剧场成功上演了华裔美国作家黄哲伦的新戏《蝴蝶君》，黄哲伦也因此剧成为第一位获得托尼最佳戏剧奖美誉的亚裔剧作家。黄哲伦的剧作改编于《纽约时报》上有关法国一起间谍审判案的新闻故事。案件涉及两个恋爱的人——一位法国外交官和一个京剧演员。在20年的密切交往中，这位法国外交官竟然不知他爱的中国旦角演员实际上是个男人。从这段新闻梗概出发，黄哲伦编写了一出有趣但又发人深思的戏剧。

《蝴蝶君》是对百老汇的一出有名戏剧《蝴蝶夫人》的模仿与嘲弄。《蝴蝶夫人》讲述了屈从而忍辱负重的东方女子，爱上了残忍而薄情的西方男子，忠诚等待他三年最后还是被无情地抛弃，绝望地自杀。

《蝴蝶夫人》故事中有深深的种族主义与殖民主义痕迹，反映了西方对东方的主宰。黄哲伦的《蝴蝶君》打破了西方支配并主宰东方这一模式，将东西方关系进行了颠倒，成为与西方中心主义相对立的他者的声音，对原有的东西方关系中潜在运作的文化霸权与权力关系进行了一次惊人的倒置。

西方与东方的传统关系犹如男人对女人的关系。西方殖民者用男性来描述自己，被殖民者则是女性化的。他们将对被殖民者的征服比喻成男人征服女人。西方人一向认为东方人偏女性化、温柔、顺从，这种偏见反复出现在西方文学之中。东方人一般都被刻画成被动、软弱、诱人、堕落、无精打采的形象，同西方刚健的男子气概相比他们都显得女里女气，东方女性是西方男性权力幻想的产物。通过击碎西方男子头脑中关于东方女子是蝴蝶夫人这一刻板的印象以及倒置原有的无怨无悔的东方女子和残忍薄情的西方男子的角色，黄哲伦实现了这一惊人的倒置。本文第一章介绍作者和剧作，阐述后殖民主义理论。第二章论述蝴蝶夫人刻板印象的形成及黄哲伦颠覆这一印象的方法。第三章侧重于角色的倒置和权力关系的转换。第四章探讨《蝴蝶君》

出台前后的国际形势，东西方强弱优劣的力量变化以及美国国内一些影响黄哲伦创作该剧的因素。

黄哲伦在《蝴蝶君》一剧中将东西方关系倒置，东方并不总是女性化的，西方也不总是男性化的，不管西方要支配东方的愿望有如何强烈，也有轮到西方被东方愚弄的时候。男性化的西方与女性化的东方的关系不再是正确的了。黄哲伦在该剧中希望在今天这个越来越多元的全球化时代，东西双方能反省自我，丰富自我，彼此坦诚相待，抛弃旧有的刻板印象，由对立、对抗，转为交流、合作，这对于我们更好地理解 and 促进当今世界的发展无疑有很强的现实意义。

关键词： 东方主义 角色倒置 东西方关系

霸权话语 刻板印象

Abstract

M. Butterfly opened successfully on Broadway on March 20, 1988, at the Eugene O'Neill Theater, and its author David Henry Hwang became the first Asian-American dramatist to earn the coveted Tony Award. *M. Butterfly* is based on an actual episode in 1964, an affair between a French diplomat and a Chinese Peking Opera actor. After being together for more than twenty years, did the diplomat find out that his lover was actually a man. David Henry Hwang also incorporates the plot of Puccini's famous opera *Madame Butterfly* into this play. Puccini's *Madame Butterfly* describes how a submissive Oriental girl loves a white cruel man unconditionally, but is abandoned and commits suicide finally. *Madame Butterfly*, as a cultural product, tends to perpetuate the misconceptions it contains and shows a sense of racial supremacy and imperialist mentality, which reflect the West's dominance over the East. David Henry Hwang's *M. Butterfly* is a countering play, tries to deconstruct the cultural image of *Madame Butterfly* by reversing the role, and thus subverts the traditional relationship between the East and the West.

Chapter one is an introduction to David Henry Hwang and his Broadway hit *M. Butterfly*, and the critical theory Post-colonialism is illustrated. Chapter two discusses the production of the cultural image of *Madame Butterfly* and explores the way in which David Henry Hwang subverts *Madame Butterfly*. Chapter three addresses David Henry Hwang's

strategy of role reversal in *M. Butterfly*, by which the power relation between the East and the West is subverted. Chapter four discusses the international condition and America domestic condition, under what kind of premise can *M. Butterfly* be composed and the reversed relationship between the East and the West be achieved. The last chapter attempts to suggest that the East and the West should cut through respective layers of cultural and sexual misconception to deal with one other truthfully.

In *Madame Butterfly*, the Oriental is in a submissive position, while in *M. Butterfly* the condition is reversed. Such an imbalance between the East and West is obviously a function of changing historical patterns. And the resurgence of political and cultural strength in the East furnishes David Henry Hwang with some important background to compose *M. Butterfly*. In the age of globalization, the East and the West will have more and more chances to contact with each other in the future. To live peacefully on the earth, people of different civilization have to resist racial misconceptions and learn about the language and cultural backgrounds of one another for our mutual good from the common and equal ground we share as human beings.

Key Words: Orientalism role reversal East-West relations

hegemonic discourse stereotype

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Chapter One Introduction

The intention of writing this paper is a little bit pragmatic. It is not only just an aesthetic analysis of a famous Broadway play, but also more an effort of trying to dig out some constructive ideas in understanding people of different culture.

As a preeminent theatrical talent among Asian American artists, David Henry Hwang has presented his unique views in his Tony Award-winning play *M. Butterfly*, which is based on an actual episode in 1964, an affair between a French diplomat and a Chinese Peking Opera actor. David Henry Hwang incorporates the plot of Puccini's famous opera *Madame Butterfly* into this play. *Madame Butterfly*, as a cultural product, tends to perpetuate the misconceptions it contains and shows a sense of racial supremacy and imperialist mentality, which reflect the West's dominance over the East. David Henry Hwang's *M. Butterfly* is a countering play, tries to deconstruct the cultural image of *Madame Butterfly* by reversing the role, and thus subverts the traditional relationship between the East and the West.

To some extent, *M. Butterfly* is the reinscription of *Madame Butterfly*, aiming not only deconstructing *Madame Butterfly*, breaking through the most persistent Western misconceptions and deceptions regarding the East, but subverting *Madame Butterfly* opera as a paradigm of traditional

East-West relation--- a relation “ of power, of domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony.”¹

In this paper the focus will be on the analysis of David Henry Hwang’s subversion ideas, strategies and premise by applying post-colonial theories. Firstly, a brief introduction of the writer and his work is provided to ensure good clarity. Then I illustrate some related terms “Orientalism” and “hegemonic discourse” in the approach of Post-colonialism, which I believe is an inevitable theory to understand this thesis.

1.1 The Writer and the Work

Born on August 11, 1957, David Henry Hwang was the only son of a Shanghai-born banker who founded the first Asian American-owned national bank in the United States and of a Chinese pianist raised in the Philippines. Growing up in San Gabriel, California, Hwang attended Stanford University, where he started going to the theater, particularly San Francisco’s Magic Theatre, where Sam Shepard was bringing out his new work. On a lark, in 1978, Hwang attended the first Padua Hills Playwrights Festival in Claremont, California---a workshop that became a major playwrights’ retreat---where Shepard, Maria Irene Fornes and others worked with fledgling writers. Hwang’s playwriting career began in 1979, with the Obie-winning *FOB*.² Based on a night out Hwang had with a Chinese American cousin who was dating a boy from Hong Kong, *FOB* tells the story of the cultural clash between the new immigrant and the Westernized Asian American. Hwang’s second play, *Dance and the*

¹ Edward W. Said. *Orientalism*. (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), P.5

² *FOB*: Fresh Off the Boat

Railroad (1981), was inspired by the experiences of Chinese railroad workers in the United States in 1867. He then wrote *Family Devotions* (1981), a semi-autobiographical play in which Hwang questioned the Christian tradition that had obstructed his journey into his cultural past. His later play *The House of Sleeping Beauties* (1983) was inspired by a short story of the same name by a Japanese novelist. *The Sound of a Voice* is about a samurai³ who intended to kill an old witch but instead fell in love with her as she rejuvenated into a beautiful woman. Hwang also composed *Rich Relations* (1986), which he called his first flop, and the most liberating thing that happened since the phenomenal success of *FOB*. He finished *1000 Airplanes on the Roof* in 1988. Most of Hwang's plays premiered at the Public Theater in New York, and have gone on to subsequent productions in the U.S., Europe and Asia. His many awards included a CINE Golden Eagle for the cable-television version of *The Dance and the Railroad*, and playwriting fellowships from the Rockefeller Foundation, the Guggenheim Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts.⁴

Hwang is a dramatist whose work is distinguished by his skillful blending of Eastern and Western subjects and theatrical styles. Hwang is best known for his Tony Award-winning play, *M. Butterfly* (1988), which debuted on Broadway in March 1988, and eventually was produced in three dozen countries around the world and grossed more than \$35 million. Combining elements from a modern-day political scandal with Giacomo Puccini's opera *Madame Butterfly*, Hwang's play received international

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⁴ Misha Berson. *Between Worlds---Contemporary Asian American Plays*. (New York: Theatre Communications Group, 1990), P.95

acclaim and established him as the most renowned Asian American dramatist of the twentieth century, an important voice among Asian American artists and a preeminent theatrical talent. Although critics have described Hwang as an ethnic playwright, he has objected to that categorization, stating: “Really all American theatre is ethnic theater to some degree...a lot of writers derive their authenticity from focusing on a particular group and then drawing the universality from those particular specifics.”⁵ In addition to the Tony Award for the best play,⁶ *M. Butterfly* received an Outer Critics Circle Award,⁷ a John Gassner Award,⁸ and a Pulitzer Prize nomination, followed by a 1991 L.A. Drama Critics Circle Award. The off-Broadway production of Hwang’s most recent work, *Golden Child* (1997) received an Obie Award, and the Broadway staging earned three Tony Award nominations.⁹

For the time being, Hwang is spending his time on “non-Asian projects.” In 1995, Hwang has assumed a new role as a director. Hwang has already been a director of sorts ever since the phenomenal success of his early plays thrust him into the role of spokesperson for the Asian American community, directing the public’s perception of Asian Americans through his writings.

M. Butterfly is based on an actual episode in 1964, an affair between Bernard Bouriscot, a French diplomat stationed in Beijing and a beautiful

⁵ DiGaetani, John Louis. “*M. Butterfly: An Interview with David Henry Hwang*”. *The Drama Review: A Journey of Performing Studies*. 1989, Fall.

⁶ 托尼最佳戏剧奖

⁷ 外评论界最佳百老汇戏剧奖

⁸ 约翰·加斯纳全美最佳戏剧奖

⁹ 都文伟,《百老汇的中国题材与中国戏剧》, (上海: 三联书店, 2002), P.7

Chinese opera star---Shi Pei-pu. After being together for more than twenty years---when both of them were arrested in Paris and charged with being spies for Communist China---did he find out that “she” was actually a man.

M. Butterfly

Rene Gallimard, a junior French diplomat in Beijing in 1960, meets the opera singer Song Liling at a diplomatic reception where she fascinates him by singing Puccini; she invites him to see her perform in Chinese opera, a hesitant courtship ensues in which first Song and then Gallimard himself plays hard to get; this culminates in their becoming lovers at the end of Act 1.

In Act 2, Gallimard has set up his mistress in an apartment, and she has begun to extract diplomatic intelligence from him. It is the early days of U.S. military involvement in Vietnam; Gallimard has been promoted on the strength of his envied ability to “get along with the Chinese”. Gallimard starts another affair, with a European girl, but her sexual frankness repels him; he returns to Song, who announces she is pregnant and after going away for some months to the country, presents him with a child. But things start to go wrong: Gallimard is posted back to France, demoted and demoralized, Song suffers in the Cultural Revolution, and four years later is sent by his political masters penniless to France, to live off Gallimard and carry on spying.

Act 3, fifteen years later, they are arrested and found guilty by a French court and sentenced to six years in jail for spying for China. The trial reveals to the apparent surprise of the diplomat, that the presumed mother

of his child is in fact a man. Gallimard alone in prison, with his memories and fantasies, laments about the sexual mistake he has committed. Making up his face and putting on the kimono¹⁰ and the Butterfly wig, Gallimard commits ritual suicide.

David Henry Hwang incorporates the plot of Puccini's famous opera *Madame Butterfly* into this play. To some extent, *M. Butterfly* is the reinscription of *Madame Butterfly*, aiming not only deconstructing *Madame Butterfly*, breaking through the most persistent Western misconceptions and deceptions regarding the East, but subverting *Madame Butterfly* opera as a paradigm of traditional East-West relations. Therefore, post-colonial theories can be applied to the analysis of the opera, and a brief illumination about Post-colonialism is necessary.

1.2 Post-colonial Theories

Post-colonialism is continuation of decolonization in Western academy. As a branch of humanities, it denotes a collection of theoretical and critical strategies used to examine the culture of former colonies of the European empires, and their relation to the rest of the world. The study is concerned with both the material effects of colonization and the huge diversity of everyday and sometimes hidden responses to it throughout the world.¹¹

1.2.1 Orientalism

Said's world-famous book *Orientalism* construes the long history of

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¹¹朱刚,《二十世纪西方文艺批评理论》,(上海:上海外语教育出版社,2001),P.284

Franco-British-American writings on the Near Eastern Orient as a massive, systematic, disciplinary discourse engaged not merely in depicting but also in structuring and ruling over the Orient in a consistently racist, sexist, and imperialistic manner. The Orient is almost a European invention, and has been since antiquity a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences. The Orient is not only adjacent to Europe; it is also the place of Europe's greatest and richest and oldest colonies, the source of its civilizations and languages, its cultural contestant, and one of its deepest and most recurring images of the Other. In addition, the Orient has helped to define Europe as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience. Yet none of this Orient is merely imaginative. The Orient is an integral part of European material civilization and culture. Orientalism expresses and represents that part culturally and even ideologically as a mode of discourse.

The term, Orientalism, carries with it three independent meanings: first, it has something to do with academic study; second, it is "a style based upon a ontological and epistemological distinction between "the Orient" and (most of the time) "the Occident"; third, it is " a Western style for dominating, constructing and having the authority over the Orient."¹² In Orientalism, sporadic observations quickly become generalizations and criteria for value judgments. Orientalism, therefore, is not an airy European fantasy about the Orient, but a created body of theory and practice in which, for many generations, there has been a considerable investment. Continued investment made Orientalism, as a system of knowledge about the Orient, an accepted grid for filtering through the Orient into Western consciousness. Orientalism as power is not a lie that

¹² Edward W. Said. *Orientalism*. (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), P.3

be disproved. It creates the Orient for the imperialist political ambitions and administrations. Therefore, Asians are inferior to and deformations of Europeans. That colonization is an engendered subordination, by which European men arouse, penetrate, and possess a passive, dark, and vacuous "Eastern Bride," imposing movement and giving definition to the "inscrutable Orient," full of secrecy and sexual promise. Orientalism is ultimately a political vision of reality whose structure promotes the difference between familiar (Europe, the West, "us") and the strange (the Orient, the East, "them"). Of course the difference is based on "Western superiority and Oriental inferiority". The inferiority serves as a foil to the superiority of the West; therefore all things of the subject race, including its people and culture, are inferior to those of the West. Thus, the Westerners neither need to care about the feelings of the people in the East, nor to learn about their culture.

1.2.2 Hegemonic Discourse

The concept, hegemony, originates from Gramsci, a political activist and writer, and later the leader of the Italian Communist Party. According to Gramsci, in any society not totalitarian, certain cultural forms predominate over others, just as certain ideas are more influential than others; the form of this cultural leadership is hegemony, which is an indispensable concept for any understanding of cultural life in the industrial West. Hegemony is the process by which dominant culture maintains its dominant position, for example, the use of institutions to formalize power; the employment of a bureaucracy to make power seem abstract and, therefore, not attached to any individual; the inculcation of the populace in the ideals of the hegemonic group through education, advertising, publication, etc.; the mobilization of a police force as well as military personnel to subdue

opposition.

“Discourse,” according to Foucault, is a set of “rules” which determines the sorts of statements that can be made, “a system that defines the possibilities for knowledge,” or the criteria for truth. This determination is “power,” which produces classifications of knowledge and defines our understanding.¹³ Any discourse is restricted by certain power. The network of the relationship of power, through working of the instrument of knowledge, permeates every field of human existence such as socio-politics, economy, ideology, ethnic, history, culture, institution, and structure of class, sex, emotion and etc. Starting from this theory, Foucault has initiated a discourse politics. It calls for the marginalized individuals and groups to unite together to revolt against the hegemony of dominant discourse, to disrupt the discursive structure, which is to unify the individuals into the regulated wholeness, to encourage the liberal development. In any society, discourse has its power mechanism. The order of discourse will decide what kind of speech and act is reasonable and legitimate. If the practice of discourse is antagonistic, then it will either be refused, or at least will be marginalized. In result, the discursive politics encourages those marginalized counter-discourse to disintegrate the monopoly of dominant discourse.

Thus, to combat Orientalism and hegemonic discourse, people in the East, Said advises, should engage in reinscription---a kind of resistance writing. They have to rewrite what has been wrongly inscribed in cultural products and dominant culture. Only by this type of writing can they correct the Westerners’ view of them and get their voice heard.

¹³朱刚,《二十世纪西方文艺批评理论》,(上海:上海外语教育出版社,2001),P.286

Chapter Two Image of Madame Butterfly

2.1 Production of Madame Butterfly

Puccini's masterpiece *Madame Butterfly* has pleased thousands of Westerners for nearly a century. *Madame Butterfly* is the most recognizable image in all Western operas, and one that comes freighted with meaning even for those who have never seen or heard the opera, and have the vaguest idea of the story. It now becomes one of the Top 10 Operas in the world. *Madame Butterfly* is a sad love story about a cruel Caucasian man and a submissive Oriental woman.

In Act 1, the American Lt. Pinkerton married a fifteen-year-old Japanese girl Cio-Cio-San who he has bought at one hundred Yen, in Nagasaki, 1904. From the very beginning, Pinkerton is not serious about this marriage. He says, "The whole world over, the Yankee travels, casting his anchor whenever he wants. Life is not worth living unless he can win the hearts of the fairest maidens, then hotfoot it off the premises ASAP."¹⁴ Both the consul and the marriage broker know the truth, but no one could tell Madame Butterfly. She "arrives with all her possessions in her folds of her sleeves, lays them all out, for her man to do with as he pleases."¹⁵ To be with Pinkerton, she gives up her friends, her family, even her religion. She makes him the whole world and thinks she is the happiest and luckiest woman in the world.

Acts 2, three years have passed, and Pinkerton has been called back to sea

¹⁴ David Henry Hwang. *M. Butterfly*. (New York: Plume Books, 1989), P.6

¹⁵ *ibid.* P.10

duty. Waiting in their house for him, Butterfly expresses her complete confidence in his return, even though her maid Suzuki has real doubts about it. Pinkerton has told Butterfly that he would come back when the robins rebuild their nests. During this period, Butterfly gives birth to a child and turns down the proposal of a Japanese man Yamadori, who “is rich and handsome”, and will die for her if she does not marry him. A cannon shot is heard announcing the arrival of a ship, believing her man’s ship enter the harbor; Butterfly proceeds to decorate the house with all the flowers in the garden. She even wears her wedding dress. The kneeling child and her servant fall asleep in the dimming light while Madame Butterfly stands before the door “as rigid as a stature”. Finally, Pinkerton arrives, but she is shaken to find an American woman in the garden, and horrified to learn that she is Pinkerton’s wife and they have come for the child. With a powerful effort at self-control, she tells them to return in half an hour for the child. When they leave, Butterfly collapses in broken sobs. She takes an agonizing farewell of the child, blindfolds him, and gives him an American flag to wave. Then behind a screen, she commits ritual suicide hari-kiri¹⁶ with her father’s dagger and, with a final effort, struggles to crawl toward the child. Pinkerton rushes in, too late.

Many Westerners tend to think of the East as a pretty Madame Butterfly. There is no doubt that the Westerners perceive Madame Butterfly as a cultural product, try to perpetuate the racism and imperialism it contains. From an Oriental point of view, Madame Butterfly is a woman with neither much personality nor many principles except dignity. It cannot be denied that Butterfly is clearly a wish-projection of what a Western male imagination supposed an Oriental woman might be like--beautiful, exotic, loving, yielding and not binding, giving all and demanding nothing. But a

¹⁶ 剖腹自杀

deep scrutiny into this opera we may find that Madame Butterfly comes closer to a woman of self-abdication. She thinks she is not worth the one hundred-Yen Pinkerton paid for her. She betrays her own religion to convert to her husband's one---Christianity, which makes her renounced by her friends and family. She makes Pinkerton her whole world. After Pinkerton's leave she waits for him faithfully. After knowing Pinkerton abandons her, she commits suicide. This kind of woman is, though young, fresh, lovely and charming, too submissive and doesn't realize the horrible consequence of being colonized, and that is been deserted.

Madame Butterfly shows a sense of racial supremacy and imperialist mentality. The Westerners perceive the East as a sexual domain. The relationship between the West and the Orient is a relationship "of power, of domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony." The imperialists feel that it is the white man's burden to civilize the colored, yet they have the duty to bring progress to the uncivilized. The Westerner is an emissary of pity, and science, and progress. The West, having had the advantage of being the colonial power and of being the more powerful of the two over the past couple of hundred years, has an attitude of condescension toward the East, which is mysterious, inscrutable, and therefore ultimately inferior. This notion is something that definitely consistent with themes in Puccini's *Madame Butterfly*. Therefore, the white man thinks he is a member of a super and masculine culture, which endows him with privilege rights. Even he is not good-looking, not brave, he thinks he deserves a Madame Butterfly. He can let her laugh and cry at his will, and he can treat her cruelly because she is from a subject race thus it is her destiny to be treated badly by a Caucasian man.

The Westerners love the sad ending, and regard it as "a very beautiful

story". Why is it that we find that an Oriental woman committing suicide for a Caucasian villain tragically "beautiful"? What would the Westerners say if "a blonde homecoming queen fell in love with a short Japanese businessman? He treats her cruelly, and then he goes home for three years, during which time she prays to his picture and turns down marriage from a young Kennedy. Then, when she learns he has married, she kills herself"?¹⁷ Absolutely they will consider her as an idiot. Why is it ridiculous to most Westerners that a blonde Caucasian woman dies for a short Japanese?

The cultural producer of *Madame Butterfly* shows unconsciously both racism and imperialism in the fact that Pinkerton doesn't take an Oriental woman's love and life seriously. Madame Butterfly waits for him and sacrifices her life for dignity, and for the benefit of their child and primarily for Pinkerton---saving him from dilemma. Although many Westerners may all want to give Pinkerton a kick, very few of them would miss the chance to be Pinkerton. There is no doubt that the Oriental woman holds a certain fantasy for the Caucasian man. "We who are not handsome, not brave, not powerful, yet somehow believe, like Pinkerton, that we deserve a Butterfly."¹⁸ They think it is the Oriental woman's destiny to surrender to the Caucasian man, and it is "pure sacrifice" for the Oriental woman to die for the Caucasian villain.

2.2 Subversion of Madame Butterfly

M. Butterfly is itself a play about stereotypes dealing directly with the dual

¹⁷ David Henry Hwang. *M. Butterfly*. (New York: Plume Books, 1989), P.17

¹⁸ *ibid.* P.10

form of cultural misconception and stereotypes about how the West misperceives the East and vice versa. As Hwang has pointed out, Gallimard has fallen in love, “not with a person, but with a fantasy stereotype.” Madame Butterfly has become the stereotype and icon for the Oriental woman---beautiful, innocent and submissive. She wants to be treated badly and it is her destiny to surrender to the Westerners. She is an aspect of a stereotype, fashioned in an age of colonial adventure, a Western myth of the Oriental female.

The American stereotypes of Chinese originate from Western Orientalism, which, inventing the Orient as its Other in order to consolidate the Self, is part of the European global conquest and colonization in the age of colonialism and imperialism. Asian women enter into the European American historical consciousness long before the mid-nineteenth-century Chinese migration to “Gold Mountain”. Stereotypes of Asians originate in the age of empire. A prominent part of the image of Asia is the exotic and erotic, highlighted in late-thirteenth-century account of Asia by Venetian Marco Polo’s ample accounts of prostitutes, sex, and women. He wrote of the Chinese that “their ladies and wives are also most delicate and angelique things, and raised gently, and with great delicacy, and they clothe themselves with so many ornaments and of silk and of jewels, that the value of them cannot be estimated.”¹⁹ Polo’s views of Eastern women have set the tone of the traditional Western thoughts about the Oriental women.

Racial stereotypes are intertwined with sexual fantasies. In the racist

¹⁹ Wu, Jean and Song, Min, ed. *Asian American Studies: A Reader*. (Rutgers: Rutgers University Press, 2000), P.9

economy of the American imaginary, the Chinese race is feminized, with the Chinaman as a sexual joke to highlight white male virility. In contrast, Chinese women are cast in the roles of either the Shy Lotus Blossom or the Dragon Lady and China Doll. The Lotus Blossom represents the submissive Asian female. Such characters personify the entirety of the female gender in Asia. It is the yielding, prudent, and exotic nature, which the West looks upon to conquer and own. Characterized by Butterfly in Puccini's opera, this packaged perception extends beyond just women. It is an ideal personality parcel, and whether the part is played by a man (as in David Henry Hwang's *M. Butterfly*) or by an actual woman, it is the shell, the epidermal representation to which the Western masculinity is attracted. The Dragon Lady is the seductive Asian female. In part, this character is also a Blossom, perhaps more of an orchid than a lotus. She is capable of psychologically traumatizing the male, at times connotating witchery. Physically she is like the Lotus Blossom, petite, slender, attractive and exotic.

Puccini presents to the Western world the most famous geisha of all: Cio-Cio-San, also known as Madame Butterfly. The image of geisha is formed during Japan feudal past. Geisha is traditionally man and serves as physical and mental relief to battle warriors. The role of geisha has been dominated by women for the past 250 years and has served relief to career-driven businessmen. They are helped to dress in their traditional kimonos and spending long hours powdering their face white with kabuki²⁰ makeup and appleblood-red lipstick. Geishas are revered not only in Japan but also fascinated in Western culture. Their image in the West as an exotic seductress skilled in pleasing men is part of Euro-American cultural stereotype of the Oriental perpetuated by colonial expeditions.

²⁰ 歌舞伎

Madame Butterfly portrays Cio-Cio-San as a tragic figure whose art to please Pinkerton results in the self-sacrifice of her life. Most Caucasian men, including Gallimard, have a strong fascination toward Madame Butterfly because it satisfies the Westerners' fantasy of being a powerful exploiter who can abuse an Oriental woman's love cruelly. In another word, by dominating the Oriental women, the Westerners feel the power of being a man.

When Gallimard first sees Song singing the lines of the death scene from *Madame Butterfly*, he says, "I believed this girl. I believed her suffering. I wanted to take her in my arms---so delicate, even I could protect her, take her home, and pamper her until she smiled."²¹ Gallimard feels Madame Butterfly played by Song, an Oriental woman, is more convincing than that played by the Western huge woman with "bad makeup". He thinks that Song lets him for the first time see "the beauty of the story". It is obvious that Gallimard is greatly attracted by Madame Butterfly performed by Song. He is beginning to fantasize him to be Pinkerton and model Song on his Butterfly.

Song seizes that she holds a certain fantasy for Gallimard. As an actor in Peking Opera, Gallimard is his greatest acting challenge. Therefore, Song takes advantage of Gallimard's mentality and creates the character and information that Gallimard wants to read into his fantasy of dominance. In later meetings, when Song pretends to be inferior to Gallimard, he feels great delight. However, Gallimard contains his urge to visit Song and begins to work "like a dynamo". Such a stoic attitude creates illusions, as in most male fantasies of power. "I feel for the first time that rush of

²¹ David Henry Hwang. *M. Butterfly*. (New York: Plume Books, 1989), P.16

power---the absolute power of being a man.”²²

The power of being a man is associated with sexual dominance. However, Gallimard’s power and authority are a delusion. Gallimard is not a “stright” man who can exhibit his masculine power over Song, his “Perfect Woman”, he is most likely infertile.

As a boy of twelve, he has become excited by his uncle’s girlie magazines. There’s the conversation between Gallimard and a picture girl on the cover.

Gallimard: ...I first discovered these magazines at my uncle’s house. One day, as a boy of twelve. The first time I saw them in his closet...all lined up---my body shook. Not with lust---no, with power. Here were women---a shelfful---who would do exactly what I wanted.

Girl: I know you’re watching me.

Gallimard: My throat...it’s dry.

Girl: I leave my blinds open the lights on.

Gallimard: I can’t move.

Girl: I leave my blinds open and the lights on.

Gallimard: I’m shaking. My skin is hot, but my penis is soft. Why? ...

Girl: I can’t see you. You can do whatever you want.

Gallimard: I can’t do a thing. Why? (10)

During a replay of a scene from his student years, Marc invites him to a swim party. Gallimard dismisses his invitation.

Mark: Rene, we’re a buncha of university guys goin’s up to the woods.

What are we going to do---talk philosophy?

Gallimard: Girls? Who said anything about girls?

²² David Henry Hwang. *M. Butterfly*. (New York: Plume Books, 1989), P.32

Marc: Who cares? The point is, they come. On trucks. Packed in like sardines. The back flips open, babes hop out, we're ready to roll.

Gallimard: You mean, they just---

Marc: Before you know it, every last one of them---they're stripped and splashing around my pool. There's no moon out, they can't see what going on, and their boobs are flapping, right? You close your eyes, reach out---it's grab bag, get it? Doesn't matter whose ass is between whose legs, whose teeth are sinking into who. You're just in there, going at it, eyes closed, on and on for as long as you can stand. (Pause) Some fun, huh?

Gallimard: What happens in the morning?

Marc: In the morning, you're ready to talk some philosophy. (Beat) So how about it?

Gallimard: Marc, I can't...I'm afraid they'll say no---the girls. So I never ask.

Marc: You don't have to ask! That's the beauty---don't you see? They don't have to say yes. It's perfect for a guy like you, really.

Gallimard: You go ahead...I may come later. (8)

Gallimard could never feel the power of being a man from his wife--- Helga, who asks him to go to a doctor, because she wants to have a baby but the doctor says there is nothing wrong with her. Absolutely her persuasion greatly hurts Gallimard's self-dignity and a threat to his fragile manhood. Neither could he find much power from his Western lover. His first sexual experience with Isabella, he is actually raped even though he says he enjoys it. The Danish student, Renee, who meditates on "this little ...flap of flesh", is completely in charge--- in bed.

After meeting Song, he begins to model Song on his Madame Butterfly. He "seems obvious that he is inventing a character" for her. To some

extent, Gallimard fantasizes him to be the white cruel man while his Chinese lover to be his Madame Butterfly. Song recognizes this fantasy and tactfully surrenders to Gallimard by several letters, which announce Gallimard's "victory".

Song: Six weeks have past since last we met---is this your practice---to leave friend in the lurch? Sometimes I hate myself, but I always miss you.

Song: Your rudeness is beyond belief. I don't deserve this cruelty. Don't bother to call. I'll have you turned down at the door.

Song: I am out of words. I can hide behind dignity no longer. What do you want? I have already given you my shame.(35)

The deception of Song's words emerges precisely from the way her words are said; "I don't deserve this cruelty" recalls the myth of "the cruel white man". Song's claim that she hates Gallimard yet misses him recalls Gallimard of Madame Butterfly, who makes Pinkerton her whole world. Song's letters let Gallimard feel that he has "gained power over a beautiful Oriental woman." One of the most brilliant elements of Song's deception occurs when she presents Gallimard with a child, thus enforcing his fantasy of being a powerful, fertile male. After he has gained power over Song, he begins to "treat her cruelly". His love affair with Renee makes him doubt, "It is possible for a woman to be uninhabited, so as to seem almost too---masculine?" Renee, the liberated Western woman serves a foil to Song as the Oriental submissive woman. Song's existence reinforces Gallimard's dignity as a man. She knows more or less his affair with another woman, but she doesn't quarrel with him directly. Gallimard imagines Song's sufferings in the same way Madame Butterfly feels Pinkerton's unfaithfulness. "She would cry, alone in those widely soft

sleeves, once full of possessions, now empty to collect her tears. It was her tears and silence that excited me, every time I visited Renee."²³ Gallimard would never treat his wife and girlfriend in such abusive way---perhaps because he knows he could never make them suffer as he imagines Song suffers. He is greatly caught up in his fantasy of being Pinkerton; he never thinks his myth of Madame Butterfly results in ruins when Song exposes his physical body in the court. Gallimard says in despair, "No! Stop! I don't want to see!"²⁴ He loves a woman created by a man.

The only explanation for the diplomat's not knowing that Song is actually a man is that he chooses not to know anything that would interfere with his image of the ideal woman who loves him completely. Gallimard chooses to go on believing "she" is a woman, but that he thinks his lover's reluctance is typically Chinese. What lies behind stereotyping is a particular belief flatters Westerners own vanity and gives them a sense of power. The more the racial or sexual stereotype becomes two-dimensional, the more real and superior they feel.

M. Butterfly announces the subversion of Puccini's opera while at the same time expanding its gender reference *M.* (for Monsieur) points to the change in gender, which the Frenchman Gallimard achieves in his final moment of terminal eroticism, and we note that it is primarily a visual joke. Spoken in English as "Em Butterfly," the play is both revealed and hidden in the confused gender of its protagonist. This kind of linguistic joke occurs again in the identically sounding first names given to Gallimard and the female French student who seduces him. They are named Rene and Renee,

²³ David Henry Hwang. *M. Butterfly*. (New York: Plume Books, 1989), P.46

²⁴ *ibid.* P.87

which, if we only hear the names, would keep their gender and gender preference indeterminate. Gallimard assumes that Song is a woman because to Western eyes he is wearing women's clothing and displaying "feminine" characteristics. His intoxication with "her" image is really love for the image he has created of "her" as much as the one Song has created for him. Much of the strength of Song's "character" derives from his expertise in playing his role so brilliantly that Gallimard, even after repeated social humiliation concerning Song's masquerade, still reveres its beauty even to die to preserve it.

Many Westerners are fascinated about the myth of Madame Butterfly and wrongly assume that Oriental woman is born and raised to be Perfect Woman. This myth is always stronger than the reality and become one integral part of American dominant culture. David Henry Hwang's *M. Butterfly* lays bare the connection between the Western ideas of masculinity and rationale for imperialism by situating his critique in a rewriting of Puccini's *Madame Butterfly*, thus greatly breaks this myth, and becomes a resistance writing to the hegemonic discourse in America.

Chapter Three

The Reversed Relations between the East and the West

3.1 Traditional Relationship between the East and the West

As a play intended to “link imperialism, racism and sexism”, David Henry Hwang successfully enacts a process of gendering imperialism by combining two systems of domination: the West over the East and the man over woman. Song says in the French court, “The West thinks itself as masculine---big guns, big industry, big money---so the East is feminine---weak, delicate, poor...”²⁵ Obviously, the West describes the East as a woman and itself a man. Therefore, the relation between the East and the West is simply like the one between the woman and the man. As Song says, “You expect Oriental countries to submit to your guns, and you expect Oriental woman to be submissive to your men.”²⁶ The metaphor of using the man as the imperial powers and of the woman as the colonized countries is clearly presented here. Therefore, the traditional relation between the East and the West is that the East, as a woman, should surrender to her man, the West, and the Oriental woman should like Madame Butterfly die for her cruel white man.

As Homi Bhabha suggests, stereotyping, as a fixed form of difference, exists for the production of the colonized as a fixed reality that is at once other and yet entirely knowable. The metaphor of using the man as the West and the woman as the East comes from the Westerners’ intense need

²⁵ David Henry Hwang. *M. Butterfly*. (New York: Plume Books, 1989), P.83

²⁶ *ibid.* P.83

to establish difference between the East and the West. In their mind, conquering people in the East is similar to the domination of the man over the woman. As it is known to all, man and woman are born different. Therefore the Westerners use the metaphor of the man as the West and of woman as the East in order to establish the difference between the West and the East. The East has all the characters of the woman, and the West is endowed with all the characters of the man. It is the traditional relationship between the East and the West.

The Westerners' masculinity is associated the dominance of the Oriental woman. Their sense of entitlement to a submissive Oriental Butterfly comes from their membership in the governing class of a Western imperial power. Thus, the Westerners may specially deny their personal qualification, "We, who are not handsome, nor brave, nor powerful, yet somehow believe, like Pinkerton, that we deserve a Butterfly." Just like Gallimard admits, "while we men may all want to kick Pinkerton, very few of us would pass up the opportunity to be Pinkerton."²⁷ Being Pinkerton to most Westerners means that they gain some power over Oriental Madame Butterfly.

Gallimard's life in the West has been a disappointment. After several encounters with Song, he says, "I felt for the first time that rush of power--the absolute power of a man." Yet when the Westerners gain the power over the Oriental woman, those Caucasian men, like Pinkerton, just "abuse it cruelly". The fact that they don't take the Oriental woman's love seriously shows "the West superiority and the East inferiority." The Oriental woman "take whatever punishment" the cruel white man give them, and "bounce back, strengthened by love, unconditionally" because

²⁷ David Henry Hwang. *M. Butterfly*.(New York: Plume Books, 1989)P.43

the Oriental woman “want to be treated bad”.

On one hand, the Westerners feel masculinity by dominating and abusing the Oriental woman’s love; on the other hand, they refuse to regard the Oriental man as man, which is a kind of castration, through which the Westerners also feel masculinity. Song says in the court, “Being an Oriental, I could never be completely a man.” At the every beginning, the ignorance of Chinese culture lets Gallimard regard Song as a woman because he doesn’t know it is a time-honored convention of using male actors to play the female characters in Peking Opera. When he knows Song’s biological gender, he refuses to speak out and break off his relationship with Song. In fact, he doesn’t want to lose “the rare happiness”, because he may lose the dignity and power of being a man. Thus we may know that the Westerners’ masculinity is achieved through dominating the Oriental woman and feminizing the man, by which the traditional relationship between the East and the West is reinforced.

3.2 Role Reversal

Hwang initiates his deconstruction by a gender reversal, casting his female lead with a male actor from the Peking Opera. This man, Song Liling, acts as other for Rene Gallimard, who projects on his lover a fantasy of femininity reflecting his own self-image---an image of the man he thinks appropriate for his class, race, and nationality. Gallimard identifies with Lt. Pinkerton in his longing for the perfect and perfectly submissive woman. Song Liling identifies the roles in Gallimard’s “favorite fantasy” as “the submissive Oriental woman and the cruel white man.” Gallimard, says Hwang in the Afterword, “fantasizes that he is Pinkerton and his lover is Butterfly. By the end of the piece, he realizes that he had been Butterfly,

in that the Frenchman has been duped by love; the Chinese spy, who exploited the love, is therefore the real Pinkerton” The role identified as feminine and “Oriental” in Puccini can be played by a white Frenchman; the “dominant man” can be played by a Chinese.

Gallimard is the parody and a reversal of the story of Pinkerton. Through the first act, Gallimard gives a sort of caricature or cartoon version of the story of *Madame Butterfly*, his favorite opera, with himself in the role of Pinkerton, an American stereotype, the coarsest kind of sailor on the sea.

Here is Gallimard/Pinkerton telling the consul about his bride.

Pinkerton: Cio-Cio-San. Her friends call her Butterfly. Sharpless, she eats out of my hand!

Sharpless: She's probably very hungry.

Pinkerton: Not like American girls. It's true what they say about Oriental girls. They want to be treated bad!

Sharpless: Oh, please!

Pinkerton: It's true!

Sharpless: Are you serious about this girl?

Pinkerton: I'm marrying her, aren't I?

Sharpless: Yes---with generous trade-in terms.

Pinkerton: when I leave, she'll know what it's like to have loved a real man. And I'll even buy her a few nylons.

Sharpless: You aren't planning to take her with you?

Pinkerton: Huh? Where?

Sharpless: Home!

Pinkerton: You mean, America? Are you crazy? Can you see her trying to buy rice in St. Louis? (6)

It also has a certain brutal self-confidence, apt for the speech of a latter-day Pinkerton, but actually ill-suited to Gallimard himself. For though he may have his dreams of sexual conquest and power, Gallimard is a timid man, gauche and mild-mannered, and he is at first at a loss when his fantasies become actual in the alluring shape of the “Chinese diva” singing the role of Butterfly. Though not one of nature’s Pinkertons, Gallimard is enthralled by the myth, and drawn into it; he creates himself as Pinkerton, just as he creates Song Liling as Butterfly.

Song himself is first seen in the play of Oriental mystique, costumed for Peking Opera, and is last seen demystified, as a naked man. Song is given the role of exposing the desires and interests that underlie Western conceptions of the “Orient” and “Oriental”, and recycle these misconceptions to control and manipulate the prototypical Euroamerican character, Rene Gallimard. For unlike the guileless Butterfly, Song is an actor. “Only a man knows how a woman is supposed to act” and Song has captivated Gallimard by telling him just what he wants to hear.

Song: Please. Hard as I try to be modern, to speak like a man, to hold a Western woman's strong face up to my own ...in the end, I fail. A small, frightened heart beats too quickly and gives me away. Monsieur Gallimard, I'm a Chinese girl. I've never ...never invited a man up to my flat before. The forwardness of my actions makes my skin burn. (30)

It is recognizably the voice of Butterfly---diminutive, meek, feminine, culturally quaint but backward, pathetically anxious to be Western. But of course the helplessness that doomed Puccini’s Butterfly is a gambit for Song. Song’s submissiveness makes a conquest of Gallimard: it is an

instrument of power.

Gallimard believes the Chinese singer has assumed the form of his desire, as a romance embodied. And so the demystification of Song, when it comes, is stark and brutal. Song, standing in the witness-box, reveals as cynical, arrogant and unfeeling, proud of his powers as actor, lover and spy. This is what the voice of Butterfly has come to: it speaks now in a register, and manner that recalls the boastful and racist vulgarities of Pinkerton in Act 1. And Gallimard ---humiliated, betrayed and helpless---is forced to listen.

It is a dramatic discovery and reversal that turns *Madame Butterfly* story inside out. Gallimard understands at last that he has been telling the wrong story, or rather telling the right story from the wrong point of view. The fantasy of Butterfly has been turned against the fantasist: Gallimard's dream of power is the weakness that enables Song to use him. It is Gallimard who has been tricked into submission, exploited, deluded and lied to---he who is the last to know, ruined, and now abandoned.

Gallimard: ... Yes---love. Why not admit it all? That was my undoing, wasn't it? Love warped my judgment, blinded my eyes, rearranged the very lines on my face...until I could look in the mirror and see nothing but... a woman. (92)

He is Butterfly; and in the last moments of the play he enacts Butterfly's death, and Song, now the repentant male, is brought onstage (like Puccini's Pinkerton) in time to witness.

3.3 Subversion of Power Relations

Foucault points out that power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth. The individual and the knowledge that may be gained of him belong to this production. For Gallimard, masculine power has always been primarily associated with sexual dominance. As a French diplomat in China, Gallimard's initial mistaken understanding of power follows the liberal interpretation: he thinks that, because he adopts the Western, white male position, he has the power. As Edward Said points out that the Orient is one of the West's most persistent image of the Other, has demonstrated the historical growth of the discourse of Orientalism, which he sees as "a Western style for dominating, reconstructing, and having authority over the Orient." Further, he maintains that "European culture gained in strength and identity by setting itself off against the Orient as a sort of surrogate and even underground self".²⁸ The long tradition of Orientalism that the French and British in particular have enjoyed allows Gallimard, unchallenged, to make pronouncements like "Orientals will always submit to a greater force".²⁹ This dominance is not accorded to him as an individual but as a function of group entitlement. His sense of entitlement to a submissive Oriental Butterfly comes from his membership in the governing class of a Western imperial power.

Gallimard is so caught up in his fantasy of being a powerful exploiter, which depends on this basic and inadequate view of power, that he does not acknowledge any information that may challenge these beliefs. A Butterfly requires a Pinkerton; and in his pursuit of Song, Gallimard becomes calculating and commanding, aggressive and confident. He acquires authority, in both senses, of knowledge and power. He is promoted, and

²⁸ Edward W. Said. *Orientalism*. (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), P.18

²⁹ David Henry Hwang. *M. Butterfly*. (New York: Plume Books, 1989), P.46

consulted by his ambassador as an expert on the East, a man with “inside knowledge” whose advice is passed on to the Americans. Pinkerton has possessed his Butterfly.

His affairs with Song Liling makes Gallimard accede into a race privilege and exalts his position over all the others. He inhabits a colonial world in which the power privileges of white males are absolute. The “power” of white masculine control over women, for Gallimard, is the power to make “women...do exactly as I wanted.” He feels “for the first time that rush of power---the absolute power of a man.” The diplomat’s practices of race privilege is, most strongly reinforced by the French ambassador Manuel Toulon’s recognition of his affair with Butterfly.

Toulon: Humility won't be part of the job. You're going to coordinate the revamped intelligence division. Want to know a secret? A year ago, you would've been out. But the past few months, I don't know how it happened; you've become this new aggressive confident...thing. And they also tell me you get along with the Chinese. So I think you're a lucky man, Gallimar. Congratulations.

They shake hands. Toulon exits. Party noises out. Gallimard stumbles across a darkened stage.

Gallimard: Vice-consul? Impossible! As I stumbled out of the party, I saw it written across the sky: There is no God. Or, no---say that there is a God. But that God...understands. Of course! God who creates Eve to serve Adam, who blesses Solomon with his harem but ties Jezebel to a burning bed---that God is a man. And he understands! At age thirty-nine, I was suddenly initiated into the way of the world. (37)

Song Liling has a clear knowledge of Foucauldian power from the moment she begins her deception. She understands that lying is the best form of resistance to a power intent on fact-collecting: by supplying that power with false facts, with lies that the observer would prefer to believe, Song changes the rules of the game. Song justifies her lies by explaining that Western eyes will never accept her Oriental male body as a body with any power: “being an Oriental, I could never be completely a man”. By assuming another identity, she creates the character and information that Gallimard wants to read into his fantasy of dominance. She creates a body that is a lie and Gallimard falls in love with this body, not with the physical body underneath the lies.

Gallimard’s ignorance helps to make Song’s lies more effective. Gallimard would have known that Song is a man if he has known some details about Chinese culture. In a particularly effective scene between Song and Comrade Chin, Song asks and answers her own question about “Why, in the Peking Opera, are all women’s roles played by men?...only a man knows how a woman is supposed to act”.³⁰ Song recognizes what Gallimard wants to see and, as an experienced actor, carries out the lie. Song’s lies are so powerful as to make physical information virtually insignificant. While on trial, Song explains her sexual relationship with Gallimard: “he never saw me completely naked...I did all the work...I suppose he might have wondered why I was always on my stomach...it was my job to make him think I was a woman.”³¹ Only at the end of the play does Gallimard recognize Song’s “job” and realizes that he has loved and been manipulated by an impersonation, a collection of carefully

³⁰ David Henry Hwang. *M. Butterfly*. (New York: Plume Books, 1989), P.60

³¹ *ibid.* P.82

coordinated lies. Finally, elegant in western clothes, when Song strips before Gallimard and forces him to see the physical body, he responds by saying: "You showed me your true self. When all I loved was the lie".³²

Puccini identifies the pathos of the betrayed victim as the dramatic center of gravity of the Butterfly story. When David Henry Hwang undertakes Butterfly's revenge and turns the story upside down, that center of gravity remains fixed, though the victim is now not the Oriental woman but the Western man. Song triumphs over Gallimard.

M. Butterfly is a political play precisely because it is so thoroughly subversive on so many levels and of so many issues. Hwang's inquiry into the paradigm of East-West relations provides a political investigation.

³² David Henry Hwang. *M. Butterfly*. (New York: Plume Books, 1989), P.89

Chapter Four The Premise and Condition of Subversion

The imbalance between the East and West is obviously a function of changing historical patterns. And the resurgence of political and cultural strength in the East furnishes David Henry Hwang with some important background to compose *M. Butterfly*.

4.1 International Conditions

To understand the complex nature of the East-West relations, one must go back to the historical conditions that allowed Western European nations to benefit fully from the Industrial Revolution and to acquire vast colonial empires. Colonialism started at least as early as 15th century, with the emerging European nations (England, France, Portugal, Spain), and by the late 19th century and early 20th centuries, the old empires and new expansionist powers (Germany, the US, Belgium, Italy) had colonized as much as 85% of Africa, America and Asia.

However, after the Second World War, Europe no longer plays the predominant role in world affairs as in past centuries and the U.S. gradually begins to relinquish its position and social prime molder of the political and social structure of East Asia. Asian region is dominated by the two countries---China and Japan. These two countries continue to prosper economically and socially. They continue to increase their influence on the nations of Indochina and Southeast Asia---the Japanese through continued capital investment and technical assistance and the Chinese through a new cycle of foreign aid and skillful diplomacy.

Since the late 1970s, China has been undergoing one of the most rapid and dramatic economic and social transformations in history. Its national economy is growing more rapidly than any other in the world, and its Gross National Product ranks third in the world in the early 1980s. Because of its economic dynamism, it is emerging as a new world economic power, with growing international involvements outreach, and influence. Since the start of this period, China's highest priorities have been economic growth and reform. Because of these trends, as well as its size, history and central geopolitical location, China is destined to play an increasingly important international role in the decades ahead---a role unprecedented in the modern era---which will help to determine the future of East Asia. And China's global influence also grows steadily.

From a geopolitical point of view, President Nixon deplaned in Beijing on February 21, 1972. On 27, as the weeklong presidential visit reared its end, Chinese and American leaders issued the "Shanghai Communiqué", which articulates the new contours of the Sino-American relationship. President Nixon's visit ended decades of estrangement and confront, centuries of suspicion. Both governments expressed the hope for the further improvement of their relationship. The normalizing of the relations between two countries, the end of the Cultural Revolution and gradual opening up of China's economy made American people's public opinion toward China begin to normalize, and become positive.

4.2 America Domestic Conditions

The Second World War affected the lives of all Asian Americans. During the war, the Chinese actively participated in military service and war efforts. Between 15000 and 20000 Chinese men and women served in all branches

of the military, 70percent of them in the army, with an additional 25percent in the Army Air Force. According to a survey of Chinese American veterans done in the late 1970s, 18percent of them had been wounded in action. Respondents characterized the Chinese as “hardworking, honest, brave, religious, intelligent, and practical”, these values influenced policy maker as they considered the world. Chinese American’s contribution during the war helped to induce the U.S. Congress to repeal the Chinese Exclusion Acts in 1943, set a quota to allow 105 Chinese immigrants to be admitted each year, and granted Chinese the right of naturalization.³³ Act of 1965 replaced the national-origin quota system (much biased against Asians) with hemispheric quotas at 170000 for the Eastern Hemisphere and 20000 annual maximum per country. The renewed immigration law has made Asian Americans the fastest growing segment of the U.S. population.

In the mid-1960s, American scholars have begun to picture of Asian Americans as a “Model Minority”, when journalists began publicizing the high educational attainment levels, high median family incomes, and low mental health problems among Asian Americans.³⁴ Although “Model Minority Thesis” serves an important political purpose at the height of the Civil Rights Movement, the thesis has marked the most important improvements in the socioeconomic status of Asian Americans, the increasing willingness of Asian Americans to participate in politics, and the much-publicized academic achievement of Asian American students. These facts lead to the greater group self-esteem and pride among Asian Americans.

³³ Sucheng Chan. *Asian Americans: An Interpretive History*. (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1991), P.122

³⁴ *ibid.* P.167

The era of the Vietnam War and the Civil Rights Movement in America was marked by increased awareness of racial and cultural identity. It was the era in which minority students seized buildings on campuses and established black studies programs, while, on the larger scene of cultural production, antiracist movements and assertion of ethnic pride posed a threat to the cultural dominance of white Anglo-Saxon America. Amid this politicized atmosphere of intense cultural and racial sensitivity grew various organizations and movements seeking to claim Asian America as a new ethnic identity, whose very name bears the traces of racist history that had thrown all Asians under one racial category. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, Asian American studies courses and programs were given a new lease on life when students at an increasing number of colleges around America began demanding a more multiethnic curriculum. A new cultural awakening has occurred.

Since 1970s, Asian American artistic sensibility began to emerge. In 1980s, Asian American writers have flourished and tried to write about their own ethnic history and culture. This period of time has been called "Renaissance of Asian American Literature", resulted from a general concerted effort of minority writers. The cultural conflicts between the East and West had a profound influence on Asian American writers, and Asian American themes found their way into the novels, short stories, poems and plays. These works refuted dehumanizing and degrading racial stereotypes, articulated suppressed sensibilities and challenged the hegemonic discourse contained by the dominant Euro-American literature, in which European Americans have been considered physically, morally and sexually superior. Therefore, Asian American writers created a counterculture that reflected their values and experiences, and instilled pride and self-esteem in their generation, enriched American

multiculturalism.

Under such social environment, David Henry Hwang has composed *M. Butterfly*. The troubled relationship of East and West obsesses him. The son of affluent Chinese Americans, he has scores to settle with both America and the new China, the former for making him embarrassed about his ethnicity, the latter for repudiating his bourgeois status and Armani suits. Not quite in tune with either culture, he lets loose genuine indignation which gives the play what life it has.

Song Liling is a Chinese opera star who plays a Japanese role and draws analogies with the situation of the Vietnamese; Gallimard is a French diplomat whose language and adolescent experiences are more commonly found in American high school locker rooms and college dormitories. They represent the East and the West respectively. The relationship between man and woman enacted between Gallimard and Song Liling comes to represent the relations between the decolonized and the imperial nations. Colonization thus entails feminization of the colonized, enforced by the masculine imperialist. This mechanism is underscored by Gallimard's feminization of Song Liling. The more the Western imperialists have "feminized" the Third World, the better to exploit it.

With the rapid changes of the postwar world, the relationship between the East and the West has altered a lot. Therefore, David Henry Hwang uses the lovers' relationship in which the Western man entertains fantasies of power and lust, to symbolize the East-West conflict. Gallimard and Song Liling keep reversing roles, with the passive Song often in active ascendance, exploiting Gallimard. Ultimately in Hwang's play, it is the Western world which is duped and conquered by the older, wiser culture.

David Henry Hwang successfully subverts the paradigm of East-West relations, thus forms a strong resistance to the hegemonic discourse of Puccini's opera.

Chapter Five Conclusion

The relationship between the West and the East is a relationship “of power, of domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony.” In order to subvert the traditional relations between the East and the West, David Henry Hwang wrote a deconstructive play *M. Butterfly*. The role identified as feminine and “Oriental” in Puccini can be played by a white Frenchman; the “dominate man” can be played by a Chinese. By the role reversal, the traditional relation of the East and West is totally subverted. The hegemonic discourse of the entrenched stereotypes of the East for the West collapsed.

Gallimard dies for his own vision and fantasy---the Oriental and Oriental woman, which the West has created and imaged for centuries. The suicide of Gallimard at the end of *M. Butterfly* can be seen as a warning. This tragic ending, on the symbolic level, advises the people in the West should have a basic and correct cultural understanding and adjust their views of the Orient; otherwise they, like Gallimard, may come to a dead end when dealing with people in the East.

From *M. Butterfly* we learn that the East and the West have to treat each other sincerely; only on that basis can they become real friends. In *Madame Butterfly*, the Oriental is in a submissive position and at last sacrifice for love. In *M. Butterfly* the condition is reversed. Both of the cases go to the extremes. The East and the West will have more and more chances to contact with each other in the future. To live peacefully on the earth, people of different civilization have to resist racial misconceptions,

learn about the language and cultural backgrounds of one another. *M. Butterfly* can be regarded as a plea to all sides to cut through our respective layers of cultural and sexual misconception, to deal with one other truthfully for our mutual good, from the common and equal ground we share as human beings.

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