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## 硕士学位论文

### 文化身份对抗与黏合的路径研究 ——以华裔戏剧《蝴蝶君》为例

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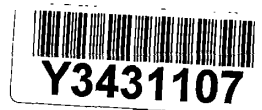


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## Dissertation for the Master Degree

# **On the Path of Cultural Identity Confrontation and Adhesion—A Case Study of Chinese American Drama *M. Butterfly***

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## 摘要

华裔剧作家黄哲伦在美国剧坛享有盛誉，他在其代表作《蝴蝶君》中，通过塑造宋丽玲含混的性别身份，颠覆了美国人心目中固有的中国人形象，对“东方主义”提出挑战，打破了西方帝国主义主宰、控制、侵吞东方的美梦，彻底颠覆了西方帝国主义殖民话语，对西方社会种族歧视、文化霸权和强权政治进行了有力抨击。

本研究通过对戏剧文本《蝴蝶君》的细读，从文化身份的角度入手，结合文化研究的方法，试图探讨该剧中主要人物的文化身份对抗与黏合的途径。首先，笔者追溯美国华裔戏剧产生和发展，简要介绍黄哲伦、《蝴蝶君》以及文化身份的理论建构，梳理了《蝴蝶君》的国内外研究状况。其次，通过分析文本中两位主角的形象，阐述中美两国异质文化冲突，人物文化身份的对抗。同时，笔者解构人物文化身份构成中的性别和种族元素，并结合戏剧理论分析服饰的表征作用，重建华裔文化身份。最后，重点分析了黄哲伦在《蝴蝶君》中对于华裔文化身份问题的突破。本研究通过《蝴蝶君》的文本分析，探究了宋丽玲和伽利马的文化身份对抗到黏合的路径，认为文化身份不是一成不变的，既是一种先天性的选择，更是一种后天性的习得。因此，文化身份是可以自由流动的。特别是在当今全球化不可逆转的趋势中，少数族裔的民族身份以及文化认同感可能是双重的，甚至是多元的。更重要的是，《蝴蝶君》启发了人们对跨文化事件以及对美国华裔文化身份的思考与讨论。

**关键词：**文化身份；刻板形象；东方主义；对抗；黏合

# On the Path of Cultural Identity Confrontation and Adhesion—A Case Study of Chinese American Drama *M. Butterfly*

## Abstract

As a Chinese American playwright, David Henry Hwang has already well established his own reputation in the American theatre circles, and in his masterpiece, *M. Butterfly*, he has challenged “Orientalism” by shaping Song Liling’s vague gender identity, subverting the image of the stereotyped Chinese people in Americans’ mind. In addition, as a severe attack on racial discrimination, cultural hegemony, and power politics in Western society, it shatters the dream of Western imperialists to dominate, control, and invade the East, and thoroughly overthrows the colonial discourse of the Western imperialists.

This thesis attempts to discuss the path of cultural identity confrontation of those main characters and their adhesion, through a close reading of the play text, *M. Butterfly*, together with cultural research procedures. First and foremost, the author traces the roots of Chinese American literature and its development, and makes a brief introduction of David Henry Hwang and his play, *M. Butterfly*. Also, the constructing of the theory of cultural identity is introduced and the domestic and overseas study on *M. Butterfly* is stated in a well-planned way in this chapter. Next, the author illuminates the conflicts between the different cultures of Chinese and Americans, and confrontation in terms of cultural identity by analyzing the images of the heroes in the text. In the meantime, gender and race, two significant elements of cultural identity, are well deconstructed, and the cultural identity of Chinese Americans is reestablished with the analysis of costumes’ characterization in play theories. Last but not least, the author discusses and analyzes in chapter four, how David Henry Hwang worked to see breakthroughs in Chinese Americans’ cultural identity in *M. Butterfly*. This study, based on the analysis of the text of *M. Butterfly*, aims to delve into how cultural identity, epitomized by Song Liling and Gallimard respectively, has evolved from confrontation into adhesion, and draws a conclusion that cultural identity is not just unchangeable, but also it is a combination of innate choice and acquisition. Cultural identity, in this sense, could be mobile under certain circumstances. Particularly in the irreversible trend of globalization, the national identity and cultural identification of the dispersed ethnic groups may be dual, or even multiple. Most significantly, *M. Butterfly* has opened a way for people to think and discuss about cross-cultural issues and cultural identity of Chinese Americans.

**Key words:** cultural identity; stereotypes; Orientalism; confrontation; adhesion

**Candidate:** Tu Mengke

**Speciality:** English Language and Literature

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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 An Overview of Chinese American Drama

The development of Asian American drama is closely related to the growth of Asian American population. According to the U.S. Census, Asian Americans in the first half of the 20th century were a rather small population. From 1980 to 2000, the number of Asian Americans in the two decades increased by more than 8.4 million and the Asian population was on the rise. With the growth of the Asian American population in the United States, it is the increasingly prominent Asian population advantage and the survival history in the United States that have gradually led them to realize the political discrimination and economic hardships brought by ethnic inequality. Realize it or not, the fate of Asian Americans needs to rely on Asian American dramas to describe and show. The target audience increases with the growth of population, which provides the possibility and guarantee for the staging of Asian American dramas. According to Xu Yingguo, "The efforts of converse Chinese stereotyped image are the important factors that contribute to the generation and development of Chinese American drama"<sup>①</sup>.

The study of Chinese American dramas generally focuses on the dramas written in English by Chinese American dramatists. In fact, Chinese American ancestors first developed drama in the United States. As early as the 1920s, Chinese American dramatists in the United States began to create and publish English plays and performed them on stage. In the first development of Chinese American drama, Asian American students in Hawaii which has always had the characteristics of multi-ethnic cultures, started to publish scripts in the early 1920s. Most of these works are melodrama, most of which have not been staged. Even if the performance was staged by amateur actors on a university campus, there was basically no impact on the native society of the United States.

During this period, representatives of Chinese American dramatists came to appear. Ling - ai Li, the earliest Asian American student to work on creating drama, started to write plays in Hawaii, becoming a pioneer of Chinese American drama. During her time at college, she created three plays, *The Submission of Rose Mod*, *The Law of Wu Wei* and *The White Serpent*. Of the three plays, *The Submission of Rose Mod* got its premiere show in Hawaii in 1925. Three years later, this play was published. *The Submission of Rose Mod* is a work that must be mentioned in the study of Chinese American drama, not only because it is a Chinese American drama that comes out earlier, but more importantly, because its concerns are still existing in contemporary Chinese American and other ethnic minority theaters, that is, the conflicts between tradition and modernity, different cultural values, feminist ideals, patriarchy and so on. From 1920 to 1925,

①徐颖果. 角色与现实: 1850年—1950年美国戏剧舞台上的华人形象[J]. 邵阳学院学报(社会科学版), 2013, 12(05): 81.

the American literary quarterly *Poet Lore* published the first English dramas written by several Chinese American writers. The first script written by a Chinese dramatist in English is Hong Shen's *The Wedded Husband*, published in the *Poetics* in spring of 1921. The play influenced by Chinese culture misappropriated Chinese opera and infiltrated the values of Chinese culture.

Before the 1960s, ethnic theaters were marginalized in America. After that, the Chinese American drama began to take shape and formed the mainstream of Asian American drama. It began to come up in the mainstream of American theater and was accepted by the mainstream of American society. The ethnic equality consciousness triggered by the Civil Rights Movement has greatly inspired Chinese Americans. During the decade of the 1960s and 1970s, political and cultural movements such as the Anti-Vietnam War, the Feminist Movement and the Multiculturalism surged on the Chinese American dramatists. All mentioned above contributed to the profound impact of the Asian American dramatists and the Asian American movement. Since then Chinese American drama had entered an important stage of development. The independent performances of Chinese American dramas won increasing popularity with the general public and became an integral part of Asian American culture. Chinese American dramas in the 1970s mostly adopted the form of western dramas, roles of which used dialogues accepted by Chinese Americans. The perspective of drama was a cross-cultural view of Chinese Americans. They differed from the early dramas influenced by Chinese culture and from the mainstream of the American dramas. They presented a new image of Chinese Americans.

In 1972, it was the prestigious American Place Theater that first welcomed *The Chickencoop Chinaman* written by Frank Chin. In 1974, his drama *The Year of the Dragon* appeared again in the same theater and achieved debut success. *The Chickencoop Chinaman* showed the living situations of ethnic minorities in a multi-perspective way on the basis of ethnic relations. *The Year of the Dragon* explored how the second generation immigrants were greatly affected when facing the mainstream society, relations between individuals and their families, relations between individuals and communities, and the traditions in Chinatown. Frank Chin achieved the goal of reshaping the positive image of Chinese ethnic groups by writing dramas in English. His play ended the history of lacking comments of Chinese American dramas in the mainstream theater in the United States and opened a door for American mainstream society to comment on Chinese American dramas.

Merle Woo is another prominent Chinese American playwright in the 1970s. In 1979 she published the script *Home Movies: A Dramatic Monologue* and published the script *Balancing* next year. The first script made a voice against sexual and racial discrimination. The second one told a story between a mother and her daughter, another manifestation of the motif of "mother-daughter relationship" of Chinese American literature.

In short, the dramas of these 70s Chinese American focused on political issues or on aesthetics issues in order to arouse Chinese American ethnic group awareness. They had clear and concrete realistic goals and were dedicated to sending Chinese American ethnic voices on the stage of the American theater. The performances raised the ethnic awareness and improved

the social status of Chinese Americans. In a word, they had obvious ethnic characteristics and attracted nationwide attention.

The tremendous success of David Henry Hwang, a pioneer of Chinese American drama in the 1980s, marks a new height in the development of Chinese American drama. To speak of David Henry Hwang and his works, the author will give a brief introduction in the next section. After the 1980s, a new batch of Chinese American playwrights emerged. On the one hand, their themes and forms of creation are more extensive and more diversified, and on the other hand the ways of performance are varied, which exhibit characteristics of inter-ethnic and cross-cultural works.

During this period, Ping Chong, a Chinese American dramatist, performance artist and director, makes great contributions to the prosperity of Chinese American Dramas. His works have been widely exhibited in major cities in the United States, North America, Europe and Asia. His plays *Kind Ness*, *Snow* and *Nuit Blanche* have been published. One of his unpublished plays, *Undesirable Elements*, has already become widespread. The main concerns of Ping Chong's plays are living conditions of mankind, devastating destruction of culture by colonialism and imperialism, and exploring the evolution of humanity in the complex nature and cultural differences.

Chinese American dramas created in the 1980s and 1990s are enriched and diversified in terms of content and art form, showing cross-ethnic and cross-cultural characteristics. At the beginning of the 21st century, Chinese Americans dramas paid more attention to non-ethnic themes and expanding creative contents based on the forms of intercultural theater to broaden their horizons.

In the course of nearly one hundred years of development, Chinese American dramas have undergone massive changes in terms of themes, dramatic forms, and scope of influence. Many excellent dramatists and works have sprung up. It is of great importance and significance to study the influence of Chinese American dramas on the constructing of the overseas Chinese drama traditions, to explore the influence of Chinese culture and literature on the overseas Chinese dramas, to understand the native acceptance of Chinese American dramas, to have a good understanding of the overall Chinese American literature and to explore the Sino-American cultural confrontation and adhesion.

## 1.2 David Henry Hwang and *M. Butterfly*

Since winning wide acclaim and a Tony Award for his play *M. Butterfly* in 1988, David Henry Hwang has remained one of the brightest luminaries in American theatre. A playwright, screenwriter, and librettist, he regularly tells stories that center on complex characters and reveal their experiences with Western imperialism, American racism, and cross-generational family differences. His works include the plays *FOB*, *Golden Child*, *Yellow Face*, *Chinglish*, and *Kung Fu*; the revised book for the 2002 Broadway revival of the Rodgers and

Hammerstein's musical *Flower Drum Song*; and, most recently, episodes of the television series *The Affair*. Hwang, as the only Asian American playwright to achieve Broadway status, "occupies the position of mainstream theater's representative Asian American voice"<sup>①</sup>.

The tremendous success of David Henry Hwang, a leader of Chinese American drama in the 1980s, marked a new height in the development of Chinese American drama. David Henry Hwang was born in 1957, graduated from Stanford University in 1979, an English major, and once studied on drama at Yale University.

When David Henry Hwang was a student at Stanford University, he and fellow residents of "Asian-American theme dorm" used to refer derisively to any female peers who seemed overly deferential, too traditionally feminine, as "doing a Butterfly". Hwang, for one, had no actual complaint against Puccini's opera *Madame Butterfly*. In fact, he had never seen or even heard of it. But what he had gleaned of the plot: about a Japanese girl who killed herself for love of a faithless American sailor—summed up for him many of the stereotypes that Westerners imposed on Orientals. He and his peers were reckoned to be submissive and fawning and showed scant regard for human lives, especially their own lives. Hwang had not always been so sensitive, so ready to take offense. Based on the intention, he created the amazing drama—*M. Butterfly*.

In 1988, Chinese American writer David Henry Hwang's drama *M. Butterfly* won the Tony Award and was immediately staged by various theaters in many places and countries and became one of the most prevalent contemporary plays all over the world. His masterpiece *M. Butterfly* drew the close attention from many critics. Nonetheless, in general people were only attracted by the peculiar theme of the play, namely a spy with gender confusion and its exotic feature, and seldom paid any attention to the significance of its form in drama.

Of Hwang's dramas, *M. Butterfly* was the most famous one which not only helped him lay the foundation of the status in the Chinese American literary world, but also earned him a place in the history of American theater. Hwang used both Chinese and western drama forms and super-theater performance patterns in *M. Butterfly* and explored the contradiction of gender, sexual attributes and the contradiction between the surface and essence of Orientalism. Roughly speaking, it was dynamic interaction between perception and deception that had made *M. Butterfly* one of the most significant plays of the United States in the twentieth century. Additionally, *M. Butterfly* also became the longest non-musical drama staging at Broadway after *Amadeus* created by Peter Shaffer.

The *M. Butterfly* subverts the original image of the East in the eyes of Westerners: ancient, mysterious, backward, and weak. It is replaced with the vitality, wisdom, forge ahead, and strength of the East. The trade-offs between Eastern and Western discourse powers, Western deconstruction of the inherent image of the East and Song Liling's destruction of Gallimard's love, all these asymmetrical elements created a legend—*asymmetrical M. Butterfly*.

①Kim, Soon Ja. *A Study on the Racial Identity in David Henry Hwang's Yellow Face*[J]. The Journal of Modern British & American Language & Literature, Vol.31, 2013(02).

### 1.3 Constructing the Theory of Cultural Identity

The definition of culture varies from person to person. Likewise, the definition of cultural studies observes the same problems. Unlike traditional subjects, cultural studies so far haven't been clearly defined, nor had a relatively fixed research sphere. Cultural studies, for instance, remain independent from traditional disciplines, with a particularly close link to literary studies, sociology, and history. Among others, linguistics, anthropology, psychology, are also their backups. In terms of cultural studies resisting hegemonic discourse, it naturally has a solid philosophical foundation. The focus of cultural studies is the production and reproduction of social relations, social meaning, and social power inequality. It will show that such words as class, gender, and race are far from neutral in cultural traditions; instead, their unequal status in cultural relations tightly sustains their inequality in economic and political relations. In this sense, cultural studies are of an interdisciplinary nature.

Cultural studies particularly refer to the research orientation and the academic fruits of the Centre for Contemporary cultural studies at the University of Birmingham, which can be traced back to the 1960s and 1970s. There were two important developments in cultural studies in the 1970s: one is gender studies, in which feminism has become the core of cultural studies; the other is the study of African Americans, immigrants and "post-colonial culture", triggered by capitalist racism, namely, the New Right. It was since then that cultural studies have paid more attention to gender and ethnicity than class. If the founding of the Birmingham Center can be received as the birth of cultural studies, an emerging scientific school, it began to thrive in the 1980s. Its early keywords were alienation, ideology, and hegemony, while now it has made its own way between humanities and social sciences—an alliance with most of the disciplines of the humanities and social sciences. Historically, the origin of cultural studies has been closely tied to philosophy and anthropology<sup>①</sup>. The issues of identity politics, diaspora, homosexuality research, and globalization theory since the 1980s and 1990s are basically the continuing development of cultural studies in the 1970s. The interest in cultural studies has shifted its focus from the mass culture and the media to such issues as ideology, power, gender, race, and ethnicity. Currently, its major topics include those theoretical issues like cultural identity networks, and cultural expressions. In addition to this, cultural studies have used and adopted many terminology and concepts of other fields.

Recalling the short history of cultural studies, it can be appropriately said that it has been established as a relatively independent emerging science school while in the meantime they have been received as research methods and strategies. As a research method, however, they are diversely different from each other. Since cultural studies are related to the production, circulation, and consumption of social meaning, they also have something to do with power, representation, and identity. Stuart Hall emphasized that culture is both experience and practice,

<sup>①</sup>Geertz, Clifford. *The Interpretation of Cultures*[M]. New York: Basic Books, 1973.p.89.

and that society was driven forward by the conflicts of gender, race, religion, and regions and classes. Therefore, like the economy, culture also constitutes an integral part in people's identity. In summary, the cultural studies spearheaded by the Birmingham School identify new theoretical ideas for the study of contemporary life and cultural phenomena in industrialized capitalist societies during a specific historical period, and also provides a completely new research model for cultural studies worldwide. Text interpretation is an important tool for cultural studies.

The object of cultural studies is the relationship between cultural practice and power, which aims to expose power relations and to study how these relationships influence cultural practices. In this way, Cultural studies are more than the research of cultures; moreover, it attempts to understand culture from the complex form of cultures and analyze the social and cultural background of cultural practices themselves. By doing so, culture in cultural studies serves as the object of research and the platform of political criticism.

The four major areas involved in the struggle and negotiation of cultural studies are centered on the concepts of gender, race, class, and age. According to Robert Lee, "race is a mode of placing cultural meaning on the body."<sup>①</sup> Many people have already recognized that "class", "ethnicity" and "gender", on the one hand, are three core categories in the analysis of cultural studies. On the other hand, due to the rise of the feminist movement, gender has also gradually become an important perspective of cultural studies. In today's cultural studies, the gender relations have already intricately intertwined with class relations and racial relations, which required a detailed analysis.

In cultural studies, identities are used to describe self-consciousness that exists in modern individuals. To be precise, the modern self can be considered autonomous and self-reflective. For Chinese Americans, on the one hand, they have to agree with the mainstream culture in order to survive and be accepted by the cultural mainstream in their country. On the other hand, national cultural memories hidden in the depths of their inner consciousness are always in conflict with their newly established cultural identity. Such a process of constant conflicts ultimately leads to a blending cultural identity, with obvious variability and reality. In David Henry Hwang's drama, *M. Butterfly*, the fluidity of cultural identity is well represented. He realized that one of the key dimensions of identity is the national identity, which can be achieved by realizing that the generalization of the characteristics of the other is different from his own. National identity does not exist independently from other forms of cultural identity; instead, they are intertwined with each other in various ways. Therefore, Hwang never ignores the important factor of "change". It is also based on this understanding that he has been able to explore the path of cultural identity.

For a long time, the discussion on cultural identity has become more and more extensive, and the search for cultural identity has also become an unavoidable part in every Chinese

①Lee, Robert G. *Oriental: Asian Americans in Popular Culture*[M]. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1999.p.2



American writer's work. They, for instance, have spared no effort to investigate identity issues in the context of immigration, ethnicity, ethnic culture, and mainstream culture, so that they have formed a unique perspective of "cultural identity of Chinese Americans". In *M. Butterfly*, the theme of "cultural identity" can be found in various forms.

Gender is considered as one of the elements that make up cultural identity. In Judith Butler's view, "Gender itself is a process of transformation or activity".<sup>①</sup> For Hwang, "gender" is a favorable factor for the creation of identities, which is perfectly reflected in *M. Butterfly*. The concept of gender includes both the question of how to define masculinity and femininity, and also that of how men and women relate to each other. The definition of gender is the focus of struggle in many societies because what it means to be a man or what it means to be a woman is never fixed. In fact, these definitions themselves are part of the products of power struggles between men and women. The discussion of the relationship between men and women reflects many of the arguments we discussed above. Wherever it is in the world, or whatever is the nature and type of relationship between men and women, gender inequality always exists, and men are the dominant gender and are considered to be superior to women. Some people say there is a natural hierarchy between men and women—a natural inequality, which is supported by historical evidence and the comparison with the animal world. It seems impossible to consider grade without regard to gender. With regard to the inevitable connection between men's superiority education and women's inferiority, it is believed that this idea is consistent with other modes of thinking in Western society, namely, the hierarchical relationship between nature and culture. Scholars have noticed the connection between women and nature, men and culture, women and the private, family, men and public, and they believe that in those societies and communities where culture is seen as better and more advanced than nature. Public issues are paramount while private ones come last; gender relations will inevitably be understood from a hierarchical perspective. In *M. Butterfly*, Hwang subverts the traditional "masculinity" and "femininity", but uses a man who disguised himself as a woman to completely confuse the differences of gender, thus triggering an in-depth discussion on this topic.

From a historical point of view, like gender, race has become a measure of cultural differences. Race is a social domain rather than a biological one and has evolved into one of the criteria for defining different cultural identities. In the study of race and racism, culture and conflict are also closely linked. Races are categorized diversely, but there are always many differences within a certain "ethnic" group, as there are differences between different ethnic groups. Fryer has pointed out that racial prejudice is expressed by one nation against the popular belief held by another. In this regard, racial prejudice is cultural-oriented. In Western ethnic discourses, including those of the United States, there are always some discourses which put whites against blacks, and believe that whites are naturally civilized and blacks are inherently lazy and dirty. This stereotyped ethnicity is not only restricted to blacks, but also to ethnic

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①Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*[M]. London: Routledge, 1990

Chinese. As a second-generation immigrant writer, Hwang has not lived in China for a single day, nor can he speak any Chinese. His understanding of China is mostly based on his elders' life experience or verbal remarks and China does not leave a true cultural mark on him. He is a true native American, but at the same time he is aware of his Chinese origin, the combination of which can lead to ethnic conflicts and controversies. He says: "It's probably true that all my work in some sense confronts the issue of fluidity and explores the idea that who we are is the result of circumstance, the result of things that are not necessarily inherent but instead come out of our interaction with our contacts."<sup>①</sup> Racial discrimination links inequality with cultural differences and draws on the perception of these differences to legitimize oppression. Behind the hatred of race and gender comes class hatred and class struggle, and racial conflicts can develop into class conflicts. Only when the race category has been transformed into a class category can we find ways to eliminate these struggles. In general, ethnic conflicts cannot be resolved or eliminated, but they can only subliminate into a different and erasable struggle. Here, it is worth underscoring that cultural control is an essential element of economic and political control. Just as feminists insist, the assigned cultural roles help explain their differences and unequal relationships with men.

In *M. Butterfly*, David Henry Hwang intentionally blurred the identity and gender of the protagonist. Through these special identities, he has successfully drawn people's attention and reminded many people of their situation who are ambiguous about their cultural identity. What's more important is that he used the other element of cultural identity—the "culture" itself. In the multicultural environment of the United States, the boundaries between different cultures have become increasingly blurred and the cultural mix is more and more prominent. Along with the cultural mixture and collisions between different cultures, many new identities have emerged, which cannot be simply judged by the color of skin, gender or ethnicity. Many individuals slide back and forth between different cultures and fashion their current cultural identity through continuous absorption and transformation.

For Hwang, how to retain Chinese traditional cultural identity and build a brand-new cultural identity for Chinese Americans in American society is a question worthy of in-depth study. His creative approach begins with exploring the identity crisis of ethnic Chinese. In his work, Hwang reconstructed cultural identities of Chinese Americans and carved out a unique path for the cultural identity of ethnic Chinese, which was the most substantial step he took on his journey of cultural identity exploration.

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①Lyons, Bonnie. "Making His Muscles Work for Himself": An Interview with David Henry Hwang. *The Kiterary Review*(Winter 1999): 231.

## 1.4 Literature Review

### 1.4.1 Research Abroad

Compared with the domestic research, the study on David Henry Hwang and *M. Butterfly* in foreign countries is a lot in-depth. For the research on *M. Butterfly*, there are mainly three ideas in foreign papers.

First, overseas scholars draw their special attention to the aesthetic sense of the dramatic dilemma and conflict. Du Wenwei, graduating from Washington University in St. Louis, whose Ph.D. dissertation *From M. Butterfly to Madame Butterfly: A Retrospective View of the Chinese Presence on Broadway* examines the Chinese presence on the Broadway stage, reveals the basis on which *M. Butterfly* manipulates stereotypes that its predecessors had created, presented, and carried on without question or modification. Some scholars hold the view that the rewriting of *Madame Butterfly* retains the solemnity of the dramatic conflict.

Second, the analyses from the postcolonial perspective, cultural studies and Orientalism are carried on. In the paper of *David Henry Hwang's M. Butterfly Deconstructs Cultural Stereotypes and Archetypal Projection*, the author thinks that in Hwang's search for cultural identity, however, his plays also show the indispensable role of cultural myths in cultural interactions and the inevitable link between cultural myths and political realities. Joseph Kai-Hang's M.A. thesis *Examining the Literature of Resistance: The Politics and Poetics of Chinese American Identity in the Works of Frank Chin and David Henry Hwang* pays particular attention to how Chinese American writers, namely Frank Chin and David Henry Hwang, contest the emasculated stereotype of Chinese American identity by reclaiming historical agency, demanding representational authenticity, and urging for political equality in their literature.

Third, researchers abroad make an attempt to analyze *M. Butterfly* from the angle of drama art. David Henry Hwang had a try to combine Chinese culture and American culture. In addition, he undertook an experiment to combine western drama, Chinese theatre, Chinese opera and Japanese noh.

### 1.4.2 Research at Home

There are many aspects in the study on *M. Butterfly* at home. As for the domestic scholars working on studying Chinese American drama, Xu Yingguo is the one of the most well-known researchers, who is the professor of Foreign Languages Department in Tian Jin University of Technology. Based on the extensive research for decades of years, her monograph *A Study of Chinese American Drama* has been published in August, 2012. As a groundbreaking effort, this book systematically gives an introduction contemporary Chinese American productions most of which are in the form of printed texts to the Chinese readership. Professor Xu Yingguo put her focus on the themes and styles as well as on the works' cross-cultural ramifications, critical

issues and literary concerns. In this monograph, she mentioned *M. Butterfly* which has a profound theme related to race, gender, identity and cultural communication between the East and the West.

Domestic researches on *M. Butterfly* mainly concentrate on the following aspects.

First, quite a few researchers focus on the Orientalism which is deconstructed and subverted in order to achieve the goal of cultural communication and cultural integration. In *Construction and Evaporation of Oriental Illusion*, He Chaohui showed the readers how the Oriental myth in *M. Butterfly* was destroyed. While other researchers held the view that Hwang's attempt to overturn the Orientalism was virtually a process of reorientalization. They thought it was Hwang's strategy to flatter the West thus intentionally uglifying the Chinese normal image, which can be seen in Xu Jia's thesis *M. Butterfly: Deorientalization and Reorientalization*.

Second, there is another research method that many scholars adopt to focus on the cultural political studies to analyze the Hwang's cultural strategy which, to some sense, aims to deconstruct *Madame Butterfly*. On cultural studies, first and foremost, scholars pay special attention on cultural strategy Hwang employed when writing *M. Butterfly*. From Lu Jun's M.A. thesis *Deconstructing Madama Butterfly: The Politics of David Henry Hwang—The Reversed Stereotypes of the East for the West in M. Butterfly*, little did he suspect that there should be sincere treat to treat between the East and the West. It is only on that basis that people of different backgrounds and various civilizations can live peacefully on the earth. Another two masters' theses, Li Xiaoyi's *David Henry Hwang: the Exploration and Innovation of Culture Identity* and Chen Jing's *Cultural Probe and Cultural Transcendence*, the papers are based on the cultural perspective, combing the overall creation of Hwang under the background of post-modern and cross-cultural times, in terms of the Oriental mainstream discourse. Another attention was paid to Hwang's writing from the perspective of deconstruction. The important representative works are *A Study of M. Butterfly from the Perspective of Gaze Theory*, *A Study of Gender Issues in M. Butterfly* and many others. These papers try to explain the subversion and reinterpretation of Hwang's works on the deconstruction of the inherent relations existing in various fields of social culture based on the sense of text itself.

Third, some scholars develop an interest in the semiotic and psychological analysis of *M. Butterfly*. Kong Xue's *On the Cultural Symbols of M. Butterfly and Their Effect* probes into the feasibility of cultural symbols in terms of communication and reception as well as the positive effect of cultural misconceptions. Kong Jingfang's paper *Representation and Cultural Identity: Semiotic Analysis of David Henry Hwang's Plays F.O.B., M. Butterfly and Yellow Face* through the comparative analysis states that Chinese Americans ought to free themselves from the dominant cultural representation and try their hard to establish their own independent cultural identity. *Discuss the Psychological Structure of the Characters' Image in M. Butterfly* written by Hu Yanyan in the Central Normal University conducts a deep analysis of the two main characters centered on social psychology.

Fourth, intertextuality attracts widespread attention of Chinese academia. Yin Yin's paper *On Intertextuality in M. Butterfly and Madame Butterfly* is one of the representatives, in which she concluded that the intertextuality in *M. Butterfly* tried to show the wisdom and dignity of the oriental people from many angles, and put the audience into a broader cultural field, and comes to the answer of dispelling cultural opposition, respecting cultural diversity and reshaping the image of the East.

Fifth, there are some papers investigating the tragedy of the protagonist Gallimard. Several M.A. theses are the representatives. Yu Yili's paper *On the Presentation of Tragedy Spirit in M. Butterfly* aims to re-examine the *M. Butterfly*, analyze the tragedy of the characters in the play, and interpret the tragic spirit contained in the play. *An Elegy of Persona: On the Tragedy of the Protagonist Gallimard in M. Butterfly* points out the revelation of Gallimard's tragedy to modern man. Gallimard's tragedy is in nature a tragedy of persona. People should not live only with his persona masks and hide their true self.

Although the domestic research on *M. Butterfly* covers a wider and wider perspective, scholars have to admit that there are still such limitations as lack of interpretation of the characters and detailed text analyses. The scholar Zhang Qiong points out: "Text as a discourse practice points to social history".<sup>①</sup> But here is inadequate research on the theatrical dialogue characteristics due to scholars' taking little notice of *M. Butterfly* as a drama. In terms of research ideas, domestic researchers give the top priority to inherent way of studying Chinese American literature but place the drama text analysis at the bottom of everything. Although there are some innovative and independent research, perspectives, ways and ideas in the study of *M. Butterfly* in China, on the whole, there is still a long way to go for the development of this research direction. Based on the review above, in this study, an attempt is made to combine drama theory and cultural research with text analysis, and provide a new research way in order to broaden the scope of research and expand academic horizons.

①张琼.从族裔声音到经典文学——美国华裔文学的文学性研究及主体反思[M].上海:复旦大学出版社, 2009: 56.

## 2 Confrontation and Conflict of Cultural Identity

In the process of encountering with the West, China, once the world focus, was being viewed as a marginalized cultural and religious nation, as well as a stagnant, backward, and closed empire from the perspective of historical development, while Western countries were correspondingly regarded as the center of world civilization. When Western capitalism stepped onto the track of rapid development, they adopted an expanding foreign exchange strategy, and even resorted to colonial plunder to gradually establish western hegemonic authority and Western discourse power. In *M. Butterfly*, Song Liling and Gallimard have multiple cultural identities. In this chapter, readers will see how the two persons' cultural identities confront with each other.

### 2.1 Western Cultural Hegemony and Orientalization of China

Edward Said published *Orientalism* in 1978, which attracts widespread concern and strong repercussions from Western scholars. Since its publication, this book immediately aroused considerable interest and had extensive impact in Western academic community. For Western scholars, Orientalism is an important part of post-colonial theory. The emergence of Orientalism opens up the research perspectives of scholars, expands the thinking of pure literature research, and it criticizes the Western cultural hegemony and power politics. Said's *Orientalism* mainly reveals that in the nineteenth century, the imperialist countries such as Britain, France and Germany used different methods such as fiction and fabrication to view the East with prejudice, weirdness, and novelty in an attempt to control, colonize and subvert the Oriental world.

Hegemony, coming from the Greek word "hegemon", does not mean a static power relationship but an ongoing process. In the United States, natives hold such a stereotype about the eastern women who are not as dictatorial and independent as western women. It is due to such a knowledge about eastern women that American men are satisfied to marry women who come from the east countries. Therefore, it is wonderful for the white men to have an eastern woman as a wife, all of whom are submissive, obedient to and good at pleasing their husbands. For the western men, the eastern women are exotic all the time. Heejung Cha holds the similar view: "Both Song and Gallimard are ideologically stereotyped in relation to cultural others as a submissive, exotic, erotic Oriental woman and a heterosexual imperial adventurer respectively".<sup>①</sup>

However, how did these preconceived notions actually come into being? When people traced back to the origin of the notions, it was not so hard for them to discover that David Henry Hwang had mentioned those in the afterword of *M. Butterfly*:

*Now our considerations of race and sex intersect the issue of imperialism. For this formula—good*

<sup>①</sup>Cha, Heejung. "Are You My Butterfly?"? *Self in Gendered Other in David Henry Hwang's M. Butterfly*. Journal of American Studies, 2008.



*natives serve Whites, bad natives rebel—is consistent with the mentality of colonialism. Because they are submissive and obedient, good natives of both sexes necessarily take on “feminine” characteristic in a colonialist world.*<sup>①</sup>

The fantasy stereotype concluded by the westerners is actually the misunderstanding not simply between men and women as well as a misconception between the East and the West. It has seemed inevitable that such kind of mistake of magnitude would have taken place one day in the world as long as China is orientalized by the western cultural hegemony countries. Besides, ethnic Chinese American female fiction writers often use matrilineal narrative in their works. Even the feminist critic King-kok Cheung admits that “It is impossible ... to tackle the gender issues in the Chinese American cultural terrain without delving into the historically enforced ‘feminization’ of Chinese American men.”<sup>②</sup>

In the course of time, in the eyes of colonialists, no matter men or women who held the view of colonialism were almost had the same skin color and wore their blinkers. Hwang’s analysis can be described to the point. It is no doubt that there is actually a deeper level of conflict hiding behind the identity issue. The change of identity brought about by the change of gender could be reset with a person’s self-definition, but in the mass culture, this concept is always stubbornly sticking to its own position with colonialism. In the play the way Gallimard treated the Oriental opposite sex in the East got the same refraction in his political views. When he presented his views on the Vietnam issues to his colleagues, he thought Orientals would always submit to a greater force. Thus, then the Oriental women should naturally surrender to the feet of the Western men. As a representative image of occidental colonialists, Gallimard saw his conquest of Song Liling as a victory of the white man, and then naively believed that China would be forced to fully open to the West one day. Gallimard talked about the East-West relations as a “natural affinity”. He also expressed his understanding of the East to his French friend Marc. In his opinion, the submission and obedience had a very long history. The Whites were born with the ability to conquest the East, which was buried deeply in their heart. When he talked to his friend Marc, Marc showed Gallimard misconceptions that both the Oriental men and women were afraid of the westerners and that the Oriental men hated the Whites. From his remarks, it could be seen that that was what Westerners had always believed to be true. As Song Liling stated in the court,

*“The West thinks of itself as masculine—big guns, big industry, big money—so the East is feminine—weak, delicate, poor ... but good at art, and full of inscrutable wisdom—the feminine mystique. Her mouth says no, but her eyes say yes. The West believes the East, deep down, wants to be dominated—because a woman can’t think for herself”.*<sup>③</sup>

As mentioned above, through the previous analysis, conclusions drawn by the West were

①Hwang, David Henry. *M. Butterfly*[M]. New York: Penguin Books, 1989.p.99

②Cheung, King-kok. *An Interethnic Guide to Asian American Literature*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

③Hwang, David Henry. *M. Butterfly*[M]. New York: Penguin Books, 1989.p.83

proved to be terrible misunderstandings. With regard to history and culture, there was a deep misconception of the West to the East. Looking back at the early works of David Henry Hwang, one could find the keys to the questions why the Chinese Americans had never truly integrated into the United States all the time and find the reasons why they had always been treated as devil by the West. In the book of *M. Butterfly*, one could have a good commanding of that. The West described the East in full accordance with its own delusions, but the East could not transmit the voice that really belonged to itself. Finally, the West monopolized the expression of the East and formed its own set of so-called systems called "Orientalism". In the tone of "Orientalism", it was often full of Westerners' arrogance and arbitrariness, and the description the West made to the East was definitely untrue. From the West's perspective, China is marked with the communism. Westerners point out that Chinese politics have the characteristics of totalitarianism, that is to say, China tolerates the zero discrepancy. In the U.S., Americans firmly believe that there are series of surveillance systems made by Chinese government on which it relies to assist itself in manipulating the ordinary people's speech and monopolizing. To the Americans, they have a great belief that the communist party place itself above the law which is made by lawmakers to rule its common people.

When David Henry Hwang made a counterattack in response to the slander, Westerners ought to be shocked. After that, *M. Butterfly* is vilified as an anti-America work by Americans. In the case of such a misconstruction, David Henry Hwang gives the corresponding explanation which could be thought as a very fair and positional reply. It is noted that Hwang thinks of his masterpiece *M. Butterfly* as a pledge coming from both the East and the West with the wish to face each other sincerely to gain the mutual interest and benefit each other in a fair position shared by human beings instead of constructing cultural and gender misunderstandings accumulated by any respective side.

In the current accelerating globalization of economy and politics, the ethnic and cultural collisions are becoming more and more intense. Segregation caused by ethnic conflicts and distinct skin colors will not be eliminated within a short period of time. It is an evident reality that a group can truly get rid of its identity confusion caused by gender and racial imagery features when it makes every effort to penetrate the fake mask and probe into deep reasons. It is also the only correct way for the West to help itself eliminate its misunderstanding and have a better knowledge of China, even with the eastern countries included.

## 2.2 Stereotypes of Chinese in the Eyes of Americans

In some aspects, readers or spectators can see the differences in Chinese Americans' identity and social status through the analysis of the stage images of Chinese in different historical periods. From the mid-19th century to the mid-20th century, the stage image of Chinese American underwent a process of being separated and negatively transformed in terms of intelligence, appearance and culture. A lack of mutual cultural communication will inevitably

deepen the severe gaps from different backgrounds. Therefore, Chinese American dramatists view the American theater as a platform for their political and cultural appeals.

China's image has changed quite a lot in the minds of the westerners for centuries. Chinese stage image was far from being unpleasant when it entered the United States. Since the U.S. Congress passed *The Chinese Exclusion Act*, however, a series of discriminatory policies targeting Chinese appeared in the United States. During this period, there were always negative Chinese roles on the theater stage in the United States, who were naive, stupid, or morally corrupted. In short, they could not integrate well into American society; in other words, they integrated into American society but threatened the security and harmony of American society. From the middle of the 19th century to the beginning of the 20th century, Chinese actors who appeared on the mainstream stage of the United States had limited scenes and little time to show up. Their appearance only added exotic elements to the drama in order to attract more audiences. Due to the influence of racial discrimination caused by economic competition in the United States and other factors, the Chinese image in the mainstream stage of the United States in the middle and late 19th century was normally rather negative. To take a dialogue as an example, in *M. Butterfly*, readers can have a general knowledge of stereotyped image of Asians from the dialogue between Gallimard and his friend Marc.

*Marc: Ah, yes. She cannot love you, it is taboo, but something deep inside her heart ... she cannot help herself ... she must surrender to you. It is her destiny.*

*Gallimard: How do you imagine all this?*

*Marc: The same way you do. It's an old story. It's in our blood. They fear us. And their men—their men hate us. And, you know something? They are all correct.*<sup>①</sup>

The braids of Chinese men not only appeared as a prop on the stage of the American drama, but also caused the contempt of the mainstream American society for the lack of Chinese manhood. In addition, playwrights often used the insufficiency of Chinese Americans' English language skills to demean Chinese. By mocking the voices of disadvantaged or minority groups, powerful linguistic groups could increase their sense of identity as strong groups and thereby strengthen their own solidarity. It can be seen that the poor command of English on the stage not only separated the Chinese characters from European and American groups, hindered them from integrating into the mainstream society, but also provided an excuse for discrimination against Chinese Americans. Throughout the 20th century, Chinese male roles on the American theatre stage were very similar. They were shabbily dressed, and even deliberately distorted their true image. Chinese women also had a stereotypical image that was widely circulated. Unlike Chinese men, women always had two images: they were either ignorantly naive and refused to be contaminated by evil, or rude and unreasonable, which made others terror-stricken. These images were popular for a long time. They were either weak, obedient—just as Asians wanted Asians to be, or mighty, sinister and evil, who represented the dangerous “Yellow Peril”.

①Hwang, David Henry. *M. Butterfly*[M]. New York: Penguin Books, 1989.p.25

The reasons Chinese Americans were considered as incompetent “others” in the US history are manifold, but history, politics and culture—these three factors cannot be ignored. *The Chinese Exclusion Act* and the *Anti-U.S. Citizens and Ethnic Minority Marriage Act* made Chinese people actually “castrated”. The former forbade the entry of a Chinese worker’s wife into the United States, while the anti-commissary law deprived Chinese men of the right to have own children in the United States. Besides, the Chinese images created by Chinese American writers were quite different and the public didn’t know the truth that the Chinese images in American stages were out of touch with reality. Some writers were inclined to fabricate stories to distort the Chinese true image, which left the negative impressions upon the Americans. In Chinese American literature, in reaction to how to portray Chinese culture and Chinese American image, writers normally had different strategies. Among them, their different strategies gave rise to disagreement and even led to serious personal grudges. Of all debates, the most important one was Frank Chin’s scathing attack on Maxine Hong Kingston and Amy Tan and other Chinese American writers. In the name of keeping Chinese cultural traditions true, Frank Chin criticized Kingston’s serious misrepresentation of Chinese traditional stories such as the story of Hua Mulan joining the army on behalf of her father in her works such as the *Woman Warrior* and deliberately flattering American readers’ curious taste for the ancient and antique East.

Political and cultural castrations are also reflected in films and publications. Ethnic images and racial images are often closely linked with masculinity and femininity. Hollywood filmmakers have clearly defined the hierarchy by gender, so that all Asians are set in a pattern: the “Dragon Lady” tempted by a castrated eunuch, the gentle maid, etc. Among the mainstream discourses, *M. Butterfly*, which has won widespread attention, does not have a satisfying male role. The male characters cast in the play are “negative” persons who either deceive others or are cruel. Such cultural misreadings can be disastrous, according to David Leiwei Li: “what the white critical benevolence accomplishes, in addition to elevating ... , is precisely the reinforcement of racial and cultural incommensurability between ethnic and dominant populations within the same nation”<sup>①</sup>. Thus, it can be seen that Chinese writers have internalized or reshaped the new racial image and reinforced the “prototype” of Asian characters that have been rooted in the hearts of American readers and spectators.

If the literary practice of some writers’ groups represented by Frank Chin is a cry for the wrath of Chinese or Asian American writers, then the literary creation of some writers led by David Henry Hwang is a mild but very successful “sprechen”. From the experience and lessons of taming and antagonizing situations, these writers adopted safer and more effective ways to give the floor to get rid of the tradition of autobiographical writing, in an attempt to express the general situation of the individual and even ethnic groups through literary or historical or cultural metaphors or symbols. The author believes that David Henry Hwang’s creation and

①Li, David Leiwei. *Imagining the Nation: Asian American Literature and Cultural Consent*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998.p.60

social practices have injected vitality into the development of American or Asian American literature, have contributed to the preservation of Chinese culture, and have composed the immortal male chapter in the history of Chinese American literature.

## 2.3 Oriental Female Obedience and Occidental Male Hegemony:

### Song Liling and Gallimard

Oriental women are attractive to western men, in the sense that they are “exotic”, “delicate”, “submissive”, and they possess the quality to sacrifice almost everything for “love”. The stereotyped image of Orientals is deeply ingrained in the minds of westerners, and it has become a major problem confronting western artists today. Despite the lack of masculine dignity in front of western women, Gallimard, a mediocre white man, neither handsome, nor brave or powerless, firmly believes that he has the power to obtain a “butterfly”. There has been a vision in his deep mind: “We, who are not handsome, nor brave, nor powerful, yet somehow believe, like Pinkerton, that we deserve a Butterfly”<sup>①</sup>, which is the symbol of Occidental male hegemony.

### 2.3.1 Modesty and Sinisterness: the Image of Song Liling

David Henry Hwang’s drama *M. Butterfly* tries to present audience with a positive image of Chinese and Chinese culture. In the eyes of Americans, Asians including Chinese can be divided into two kinds: one is the image of the yellow peril theory which is so sinister and insidious that those people must be persecuted since they are out of the control of white people; the other Asian image is a model of ethnicity who are eager to be rescued by white heroes and therefore, they are loyal servants and partners of white westerners. Song Liling in *M. Butterfly*, however, is a collection of these two images.

Song, as Gallimard’s butterfly, is crafty and good at disguise and Gallimard feels unbelievable and disgusted with Song’s male identity. From this point of view, Song is undoubtedly a sinister and deceitful Asian representative. On the other hand, Song is his gentle lover. Later, Gallimard followed Pinkerton and betrayed Song with another western woman, because he felt excited through his challenge to Song’s love. In order to completely conquer Song Liling, he deliberately ignored her letters, because he thought it would torture Song’s emotions. Throughout the process, he had a feeling of “rush of power—the absolute power of man”<sup>②</sup> until Song expressed his concession to him, he said: “Yes, my experiment had been a success. She was turning on my needle”<sup>③</sup>. Although Song sometimes contravened Gallimard’s wishes, she was still a gentle lover, which can be seen from the Gallimard’s narratives “Butterfly and I. She would always have prepared a light snack and then, ever so delicately, and

①Hwang, David Henry. *M. Butterfly*[M]. New York: Penguin Books, 1989.p.10

②Hwang, David Henry. *M. Butterfly*[M]. New York: Penguin Books, 1989.p.32

③Hwang, David Henry. *M. Butterfly*[M]. New York: Penguin Books, 1989.p.36

only if I agreed, she would start to pleasure me”<sup>①</sup>; but at the same time she was being subjected to double castration by gender and race.

The whole story of *M. Butterfly* actually is tightly linked with Song's self-dressing and performance. The first meeting of the hero and the heroine of the play took place at the French ambassador's house in Beijing. The heroine, Song Liling, dressing as Madame Butterfly was singing the death scene of Puccini's opera in her own voice and moving to "Love Duet". Song Liling was playing the butterfly and singing operatic lines in a decent way. Song's nontraditional but decent voice and beautiful performance deeply attracted the Gallimard: "Here...here was a Butterfly with little or no voice—but she had the grace, the delicacy ... 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, pamper her until she smiled”<sup>②</sup> For Gallimard's part, he had always seen many women play the Madame Butterfly in bad makeup in earlier days but the first time he believed it was a beautiful story after Song's utterly convincing. It can be implied that Gallimard saw the story as a love fantasy in which the submissive Oriental woman made a pure but unworthy sacrifice to the cruel white man.

Song blamed Puccini's opera for catering to the fantasy of the white men and suggested that Gallimard go to Beijing to watch some real theater to broaden his mind. That next week Gallimard went to Song's apartment for a visit because he had a great interest in Song and in his heart he thought "she has ... an interest in me" and "her heart is shy and afraid. It is the Oriental in her at war with her western education”<sup>③</sup>. As she appeared, she wore a black gown of the 1920s, standing in the doorway and looking like a Hollywood movie star for Chinese Americans. Then Song changed her arrogance during their first contact and became implicit, shy, sensible, and affluent. In this passionate meeting, Song the Oriental girl showed her high respect to the Occidental man Gallimard, which readers can see from the play. When Gallimard studied the picture in Song's room and showed his heartfelt thanks to Song, Song "glides up to him", "curtsys" and apologized for not pouring any tea to him and then she poured herself for the gentleman. She answered Gallimard's questions smilingly, confessing her failure and embarrassment before Gallimard. When facing Gallimard, Song tried hard to hold a western woman's face up to her own but finally failed. As a Chinese girl, it was the first time that she invited a man up to her own parlor, which made her heart beat too quickly and her skin burn. Song viewed herself as a modest girl and was afraid of staying alone with a man especially a western white man in her small and frightened heart. In Castro's eyes, "Forced to think about notions of national identity, many become evasive and cautious”<sup>④</sup>. In front of Gallimard, Song Liling removed her performance costume and wore simple baggy clothes. Such kind of dress code made her more like Madame Butterfly, which enhanced Gallimard's strong desire for her.

①Hwang, David Henry. *M. Butterfly*[M]. New York: Penguin Books, 1989.p.49

②Hwang, David Henry. *M. Butterfly*[M]. New York: Penguin Books, 1989.p.15

③Hwang, David Henry. *M. Butterfly*[M]. New York: Penguin Books, 1989.p.27

④Castro, Brain. *Looking for Estrellita*. University of Queensland Press, 1999.p.44



In this appointment, the way Song Liling talked about western women was much more differently than the first night they met. In Gallimard's eyes, Song felt inferior to westerners including himself, from which in essence it can be seen that Song is of very exhaustion when faced with Gallimard as if she was frightened the life out of herself by the Occidental superiority represented by Gallimard.

To some extent, Song is sinister due to the fact that all her contact with Gallimard is based on a specific goal: in order to spy on him. Song disguised herself as a female figure to obtain information from the Gallimard, and manipulated him with the unique gentleness of Chinese women. Undoubtedly, it is such kind of disguise that has succeeded in subverting the relationship between the two protagonists and breaking the order between the East and the West. For Gallimard, "There is a vision of the Orient that I have. Of slender women in chong sams and kimonos who die for the love of unworthy foreign devils"<sup>①</sup>, which has been firmly rooted so many years in the minds of the westerners. To Gallimard, stereotyped image of Chinese women is also an important factor affecting the development of his relationship with Song. To speak in a normal way, there are also two Oriental women in the eyes of westerners: one is a prostitute or a crazy woman in the attic, and the other is the virgin or the angel in the room. Gallimard regarded Song as an angel in the room—his Butterfly. On the contrary, as some scholars put it, Gallimard was so indulged in his own fantasy for his love to Song liling that he took no notice of Song's image as an insidious person.

As Gallimard had seen in *Madame Butterfly*, the Madame Butterfly Cio-Cio-San held the fear of the western man who violently pierced a butterfly's heart and left it to vanish and perish. On the basis of the scene, a crazy idea came up to his mind. He wondered if he "caught a butterfly who would writhe on a needle"<sup>②</sup>. From his thought, readers can find that Gallimard fell into the fantasy knitted by himself and gradually fell into the trap set up by Song Liling. As Song is an Eastern woman inferior to his race, he thought that Song was the incarnation of Madame Butterfly at his first sight of her, and she is the Oriental woman waiting for him to conquer.

In the Act One, Scene Nine, there was a conversation between Gallimard and his colleague Marc.

*Marc: Ah, yes. She cannot love you, it is taboo, but something deep inside her heart ... she cannot help herself... she must surrender to you. It is her destiny.*

*Gallimard: How do you imagine all this?*

*Marc: The same way you do. It's an old story. It's in our blood. They fear us. And their men—their men hate us. And, you know something? They are all correct.*<sup>③</sup>

From the above dialogue, we can see that Gallimard indoctrinated with these racial ideas began to believe that all the elements related to Song were due to eastern cultural inferiority to

①Hwang, David Henry. *M. Butterfly*[M]. New York: Penguin Books, 1989.p.91

②Hwang, David Henry. *M. Butterfly*[M]. New York: Penguin Books, 1989.p.32

③Hwang, David Henry. *M. Butterfly*[M]. New York: Penguin Books, 1989.p.25

the western culture. Song also became a tool for the manipulation of the East by the West. When Gallimard's wife Helga asked him to see a doctor and take some tests, he thought it extremely shameful and embarrassed for a man. And then Song said to him "You men of the West—you're obsessed by your odd desire for equality"<sup>①</sup>. On the one hand, Song took the advantage of Gallimard's western equal awareness to persuade him not to subject to the doctor. On the other hand, Song made full use of her disguise to convince Gallimard that she would give him his own son at the cost of sacrificing her career. It is extremely ridiculous that Song, turning out to be a biological true man, will give birth to a baby. Therefore, obviously, it is an undeniable fact that Song's strategy to manipulate Gallimard begins to take effect, which indicates that Song is treacherous and insidious. From the very beginning, Gallimard did not intend to establish an equal relationship with Song Liling but desired for submission from Song. He believed that the outrageous remarks of Song came from the western education Song had received. However, in the heart of Song, she hated the West. When Song first met Gallimard, for example, she said: "But because it's an Oriental who kills herself for a Westerner—ah!—you find it beautiful"<sup>②</sup>. As a result, apparently, the western people's sense of power and superiority has made Song unfair, and it has also produced revenge on this unequal power. Song used spy identity to counter imperialism and used Gallimard to avenge western colonialism and succeeded in subverting the image of Asian Americans.

Song Liling is no longer a delicate, submissive object for people to play with and appreciate. Instead, "she" becomes the master of the entire incident and an astute, tenacious and powerful oriental man. At the trial court of the Paris Court, when the judge asked Song Liling how to deal with Gallimard's sexual requirements, Song Liling said: "Not really. I did all the work. He just laid back ... he might have wondered why I was always on my stomach ... it was my job to make him think I was a woman ... So I borrowed her knowledge. In service to my country"<sup>③</sup>. In the end, Song Liling completely ruined the eastern understanding of Gallimard in a brutal manner when Song took off his clothes, stood in front of Gallimard in an entirely true body form, which made Gallimard aware of the poisonous impacts of Orientalism. Just as Gallimard admitted in the end, "You showed me your true self. When all I loved was a lie. A perfect lie, which you let fall to the ground—and now, it's old and soiled"<sup>④</sup>.

In *M. Butterfly*, David Henry Hwang spares no efforts to reveal the reasons why Song Liling, a man, showed femininity in the body, all of which are out of westerners' self-image. And this kind of Orientalism is actually devastating to the West because Gallimard's Madame Butterfly was created by Chinese organization's spy arrangement, which obviously led to joking stuffs of Gallimard's morbid love. *M. Butterfly* subverts the westerners' stereotyped vision of eastern masculinity and femininity and reconstructs the oriental masculinity.

①Hwang, David Henry. *M. Butterfly*[M]. New York: Penguin Books, 1989.p.50

②Hwang, David Henry. *M. Butterfly*[M]. New York: Penguin Books, 1989.p.17

③Hwang, David Henry. *M. Butterfly*[M]. New York: Penguin Books, 1989.p.82

④Hwang, David Henry. *M. Butterfly*[M]. New York: Penguin Books, 1989.p.89

### 2.3.2 Narcissism and Diffidence: the Image of Gallimard

In *M. Butterfly*, not only Song Liling is presenting a gender performance, but so is Gallimard. And in contrast to Song Liling's deliberate disguise, Gallimard's unconscionable gender identity performance is quite critical. In the play, Gallimard was completely different from the western masculine image in the western mainstream discourse, for he is neither handsome nor manly, which makes him be not confident in himself. While as a typical Occidental white man, he is narcissistic. As a consequence, he is a person with dual personality traits. His first sex gave him the feeling of being raped by a woman and made him so deeply ashamed that he seemed castrated at the presence of a western woman. He has a desire for his Butterfly, so that he could gain a reference and the "Other", which allows him to play a masculine man and regain male self-esteem. Thus, when he first saw Madame Butterfly, played by Song Liling, he suddenly became confident and gained a great sense of power and imagined "take her in my arms"<sup>①</sup>.

Under the disguise of Song Liling, Gallimard plays the role of a master or a controller, which gives readers a hint that Gallimard treats himself as a western man of self-superiority. When he thought he had captured the heart of his "butterfly", for instance, he deliberately refused to visit Song Liling because he was convinced of that cruelty would torture the tiny, fragile heart of the Butterfly, during which he could experience "the absolute power of a man"<sup>②</sup> over women. At this moment, Gallimard was acting like a real male who was in incredible power and intended to keep everything under his control since he had been indulged in the sense of being powerful. Ironically, however, his self image was based on lies and fantasies. It can be seen, therefore, that the image of Oriental Butterfly is not only the result of Song Liling's performance, but also the illusion created by Gallimard's fantasy on the inherent gender and racial code.

The phantom of the Oriental Butterfly is integrated so deep into the soul of Gallimard that he persists in defending his butterfly dreams even when the illusion is ultimately shattered. When Song Liling exposed his nudity to Gallimard, despite the cruel truth, Gallimard still refused to accept the reality, but would rather stay in his imagination as he said "I will prove that my love was not in vain—by returning to the world of fantasy where I first met her"<sup>③</sup>. He failed to make an attempt to rewrite his story with a totally new ending. At the end of the play, the white man dusted his face with grease and put on the kimono and wig of Madame Butterfly, blending with the Butterfly in his own mind. He took the knife, ending his life by plunging the knife into his body and became a real Madame Butterfly so as to memorize his crushed "butterfly dream". But at this time, Song Liling dressed in a man's suit, standing as a man at the back of the stage, and was smoking a cigarette, staring at this scene coldly, and gently murmuring "Butterfly?". At this very moment, the two men have a dramatic reversal of their

①Hwang, David Henry. *M. Butterfly*[M]. New York: Penguin Books, 1989.p.15

②Hwang, David Henry. *M. Butterfly*[M]. New York: Penguin Books, 1989.p.32

③Hwang, David Henry. *M. Butterfly*[M]. New York: Penguin Books, 1989.p.91

roles. Obviously, David Henry Hwang reversely imitates the scenes where an Oriental woman died for a white man, deliberately disrupts the gender and culture identity patterns in western colonial discourse existing in colonial discourse, creates a confusion of gender and Oriental cultural identity and reveals that they were merely a power structure, and the so-called gender and cultural traits are the results of cultural construction and performance, rather than essential presence.

In the story of *M. Butterfly*, Gallimard tries to apply Puccini's drama to his own life, blurring the boundaries between drama and real life, locating himself at Pinkerton and positioning Song Liling as a clever creature. When Gallimard was accused of treason and was serving his sentence in prison at the outset of the drama, he was "wearing a comfortable bathrobe"<sup>①</sup>. It reflects his mixed feeling of sadness and stubborn pride. He, on one hand, experienced the biggest shame of his life, and his own experience was exposed to the whole world and became the joke, but he then was old enough—rather lonely and "looks old and tired". More seriously, he found that the "woman" he loved for many years and his unforgettable love turned to be his wishful thinking and fantasy. To Gallimard's greatest disappointment and shame, the gently obedient "butterfly" is not only a man in disguise, but also has been making full use of him to obtain information serving for his enemy country. On the other hand, it seems that Gallimard looks unwilling to wake up from his own dreams; instead, he held his paranoid imagination. In Gallimard's imaginary dancing scene, Song Liling, dressing in traditional Chinese garb, appeared as "a beautiful woman", and in percussive clatter of Chinese music, dancing a traditional piece from the Chinese Opera. Then Song went on dancing in the subsequent "Love Duet" coming from *Madame Butterfly*, whose movements provided them with a "balletic quality". In his fantasy, there was a real "butterfly" as a sustenance that could prove his love to be not in ruin. As he admitted in the last game of the entire play, "I have a vision. Of the Orient. That, deep within its almond eyes, there are still women. Women are willing to sacrifice themselves for the love of a man. Even a man whose love is completely without worth"<sup>②</sup>. This illusion gave Gallimard a sense of self-superiority in his heart. His "comfortable bathrobe" and his narration of his own story embodied his attitude as a winner. He even mocked at himself: "I'm not treated like an ordinary prisoner. Why? Because I'm a celebrity. You see, I make people laugh"<sup>③</sup>.

In the latter half of the play, Song Liling had removed his makeup and taken off her kimono and wig, while Gallimard wore a butterfly kimono and put on a wig and a dancer brought the washing basin to him and helped him to make up his face same as the image of Butterfly. He was dressed up as Madame Butterfly in the music "Love Duet" and he killed himself as Madame Butterfly did for Pinkerton and was placed on the floor by the dancer with respect. Now he became the real Madame Butterfly.

①Hwang, David Henry. *M. Butterfly*[M]. New York: Penguin Books, 1989.p.1

②Hwang, David Henry. *M. Butterfly*[M]. New York: Penguin Books, 1989.p.92

③Hwang, David Henry. *M. Butterfly*[M]. New York: Penguin Books, 1989.p.2

Ironically, the former Butterfly Song Liling also disguised himself and established herself with another different identity. In the final scene of the play, the stage background was a court in Paris in 1986. Song Liling appeared in court as a man under trial, who at this time had already removed his wig and kimono, but put on a well-tailored suit. As he acknowledged, when he first arrived in Paris in 1970, he was dressed in kimono to continue playing the role of “butterfly” to attract Gallimard. Now, however, he seemed to have escaped from being a “butterfly” in such a dress, attacking the West’s prejudice and misunderstanding of the East as an oriental man. Then, he was no longer a dumb man in the courtroom, but became talkative with conviction and plausibility. Besides, when Gallimard dressed as a butterfly and fell to the ground, Song stood as a man with a cigarette in his mouth.

Hwang breaks through the stereotypes of Eastern and Western people through the different self-shaping and characters’ dressing. Gallimard cannot simply be read as a persecutor, or a western machismo, but to some extent, he is also a victim and critic of East-West culture. And Song Liling cannot just be regarded as a passive Oriental person, but in a sense, he (she) is an amazing director.

The self-shaping and characters’ dressing in *M. Butterfly* is a subversion of the inherent mode and stereotype of gender identity from a cultural perspective. Judith Butler’s theory of gender disguise provides the theoretical basis for such an interpretation. Butler conducts a strict classification of physical sex, gender, and sexual orientation from the angle of performance and he believes that it is meaningless to classify individuals by their sexual identity, and puts forward the theory of “queer”, which refers to those who do not match or even run counter to the gender identity with mainstream culture and the gender-cultural norms in the dominant areas. The philosophy of binary opposition in western culture divides the gender into two types: male and female. But Butler’s performance theory targets at the binary opposition of gender identity in this mainstream western culture. In the play, this secular idea of coercive heterosexuality makes it impossible for Gallimard to accept that the partner he was dealing with was homosexual. Therefore, he needs to project his desire to heterosexuality and replace his gender identity with a woman. It is worth mentioning that although this type of substitution subverts the binary opposition of gender identity, it is actually a recognition and reinforcement of obligatory heterosexuality.

Both Song Liling’s female dressing in life and later Gallimard’s female dressing on the stage can be regarded as the processing and transformation of the individualized self in modern society. They respectively act as mysterious eastern lovers and as loyal butterflies. Such kind of dressing seems to reflect the consistency between the appearance and the inner self. But whether one’s appearance is a woman but she prefers to act like a man or vice versa, the inversion reflects the contradiction, so that the interpretation of the entire gender meaning is separated from the real and false words.

The role of self-dressing and performance in the classic role of *M. Butterfly* by David Henry Hwang has become the impetus for the development of dramatic plots, and it also reveals

the construction and transformation of the identity of characters. By highlighting the character's self-dressing, the Hwang changed the stereotyped image of the characters and gave vitality to those characters. At the same time, this kind of dress is also an irony and question of the dual opposition between the gender and gender identity in the western mainstream culture.



### 3 Pursuit and Discovery of Cultural Identity

Since modern times, Western modernity has been concealed by ideological strategy, while China, one of the most important ancient civilizations and cultural powers, has been on the verge of discourse. As a result, China's identity has been repeatedly defined in the complex international discourse system, and the "otherness" of China is always absent or half absent. However, the Eastern cultural circle represented by Chinese culture constitutes an integral part of the world's culture and civilization. China's regaining position as the main body in the world cannot rely on the conscience of the West, but must depend on its own exploration and struggle for discourse power. The struggle does not aim to replace the west and make itself the center of the world, but is a self-discovery and self-exploration process regarding based on the situation in which the Chinese identity has been molded and misunderstood for a long time. At the same time, it amounts to a strategic height to overcome the existing state.

*M. Butterfly*, written by David Henry Hwang, a Chinese American dramatist, is inspired by Puccini's opera *Madame Butterfly*. It completely shattered the dream of Western imperialists to dominate, control and invade the East. *M. Butterfly* is a deconstruction of Orientalism discourse and a complete subversion of the colonial discourse of Western imperialism. David Henry Hwang lifted himself out of the Oriental tradition of western men playing and bullying Oriental weak women by creating the figure Song Liling. In addition, he discussed in depth the complexity and variability of the identity of people of different ethnicity and gender in society, the absurdity of the conceptual image, the arbitrariness of gender relations and other issues.

#### 3.1 Removal of Orientalism's Denunciation

In the discourse system of Orientalism, power exists as a hidden element and strong will, which seems invisible, but at the same time it has obvious forms of externalization to demonstrate Western cultural authority. This authoritative discourse system is constantly representing such an essence: between the West and the East, there is always a power relationship, an imperialist hegemony relationship, a Western-dominant relationship.

##### 3.1.1 Deconstruction of East-West Relations

Once China regarded the West as "Other" mainly because they had different cultures and rituals from us. Chinese people established the relationship between the central government and local governments based on "tributary culture". On the contrary, the West viewed China as "Other" with a colonial purpose, which was accompanied by colonial plunder and expansion. Although the two purposes and motivations for understanding "Other" are different, the former is void of aggression and colonization. However, the latter adopted an outward expansion strategy and used "Orientalism" as a means to support their colonialist activities. In other words, the West theoretically established and strengthened the legalization of foreign colonization.

In the eyes of Judith Butler, “Power is neither stable nor static.”<sup>①</sup> Power is an essential element of Orientalism, but for those who are obsessed with Oriental women, the use of power is cruel for it can bring painful punishment. This point is expressed candidly in *M. Butterfly*—in their first private contact, Song Liling accused Gallimard of being cruel and, in her letter to Gallimard, she repeatedly emphasized this point. The East offered all the pleasures of sadomasochism, and the key to this pleasure was to make others painful. Gallimard “finally gained power over a beautiful woman, only to abuse it cruelly”<sup>②</sup>. What Gallimard enjoyed is to imagine his Madame Butterfly and consider her as a slave, who could be treated cruelly. He thought the death of Madame Butterfly was a pure sacrifice for an unworthy man. Orientalism precisely channels great efforts in proving that its exploitation of Asian people and political conquest is justified. In the Western ideas of the Middle Ages, the East was where the Garden of Eden was. What else can people find in Eden apart from Eve? With regard to this, David Henry Hwang pointed it out straightforward for that the Orientalist imagination was deeply rooted in the Western soul, and Orientalism was based on Western fantasy—an exaggeration of the East rather than the products of Eastern experience. In Gallimard’s opinion, for example, Song Liling, the embodiment of the Oriental world, should be obedient, for obedience is the only correct response to God.

Although Gallimard was a complete loser in the West, when he arrived in the East, as a member of the Western colonists, he felt that he had the right to deserve a butterfly. At that time, there was a power, dominance, and hegemony relation between the West and the East. To be exact, the West was believed to dominate the East while the East could do nothing but wait for its destiny. Under the influence of colonialism, Gallimard believed that it was her destiny.

Apart from those changes in his appearance, dress, speech and behavior, he was promoted in his career and was responsible for information work. Most importantly, with full confidence, he firmly talked about the nature of China, his intentions, and the power politics of East-West relations. Gallimard’s career is an extension of his commitment to Orientalism. As many script lines have shown, those who believe in the idealistic Oriental image often find that the Oriental nation as a whole is unattractive. However, regarding knowledge about the real political world, the most inspiring point arises from the discussion of French colonial history in Indochina.

At that time, the United States was engaged in the Vietnam War, and in Dien Bien Phu, Vietnam, the French were once humiliated by the Vietnamese. In order to safeguard the benefits of the United States, therefore, Gallimard must obtain relevant information. “I think the Chinese will squawk”<sup>③</sup>, he told the French ambassador. The influence of his relations with an Eastern woman has become the basis of all his political judgments. Additionally, Gallimard told the ambassador that the mystery of China lied in the fact that it had been drawn to the path of the

①[美]朱迪·巴特勒.重新筹划普遍:霸权以及形式主义的界限,转引自朱迪·巴特勒等:偶然性、霸权性和普遍性,胡大平等译,南京:江苏人民出版社,2004.

②Hwang, David Henry. *M. Butterfly*[M]. New York: Penguin Books, 1989.p.36

③Hwang, David Henry. *M. Butterfly*[M]. New York: Penguin Books, 1989.p.14

West, although it is reluctant to public admission. The unconditional love for a white male itself was a standard expression of love for the West. Therefore, China would eventually open up to the West. Moreover, obedience is not only an aspect of Oriental women, but also a major aspect of Oriental character, for Oriental nations always showed obedience to stronger forces—“If the Americans demonstrate the will to win, the Vietnamese will welcome them into a mutually beneficial union”<sup>①</sup>. Therefore, the United States must show its strength and determination in order to defeat Vietnam.

In *M. Butterfly*, Gallimard couldn't accept that his favorite Madame Butterfly was a man and his fantasy of Madame Butterfly was completely crushed at that moment. When the sensational approach is reversed, it seems that the East has defeated the West. Moreover, the reversal of the role between the oriental woman with the cruel, cold, and indifferent western man also leads to the surprising subversion of the former power relations between the East and the West.

### 3.1.2 Subversion of the Oriental Female Stereotype

Historically, the backwardness and weakness of the East made itself a prey of Western colonists. Westerners considered the Oriental world as delicate and weak, but at the same time a beautiful woman who needed their protection and conquest. Oriental women have “something deep inside her heart ... she cannot help herself ... she must surrender to you. It is her destiny”<sup>②</sup>. At different times in history, Western colonialists, missionaries, soldiers, writers or even ordinary tourists always regarded the East as a place where they can realize their dreams, desires and demonstrated their masculinity as well as power. The construction of Puccini's *Madame Butterfly* is more precisely, a summary of the reigning ambitions of western colonists of different times by literary means. In this way, *Madame Butterfly* made the colonists' ideas more concrete. The play shows Westerners' view towards Eastern women, that is, Western men can arbitrarily play with Eastern women, whereas Eastern women ignore everything for “love” and are even be willing to sacrifice themselves for it.

In the play, Song Liling as a traditional Oriental woman is modest, shy, conservative and submissive. She wanted to invite Gallimard to watch Peking Opera, but she didn't give him a call until she saw the sun. This exotic, very oriental woman was deeply attractive to Gallimard, for he thought Oriental women should be feminine, shy and dependent on men. Gallimard, therefore, treated Song Liling not only as a woman, but also as the embodiment of a particular type of woman, the “modest Oriental woman”. Without any doubt, it is due to the fact that Song caters to Gallimard's “vision of the Orient”. So, Gallimard fell in love with Song Liling, who was graceful and beautiful. Similar to Madame Butterfly's sacrifice for love, Song Liling was willing to give up her acting career to give birth to a baby for Gallimard. This is precisely because in Song's view, a childless family was the complete fault of the woman: “And because

①Hwang, David Henry. *M. Butterfly*[M]. New York: Penguin Books, 1989.p.16

②Hwang, David Henry. *M. Butterfly*[M]. New York: Penguin Books, 1989.p.25

this incompetent can't find the defect, you now have to subject yourself to him? It's unnatural"<sup>①</sup>. With Gallimard, Song was as gentle and virtuous as anyone could imagine, and her willingness of sacrifice successfully deceived the French diplomat, who was immersed in the Oriental Butterfly dream. There is no doubt that this beautiful psychedelic Butterfly dream does not exist at all, which in essence, is merely the product of Song's tricks and Gallimard's self-delusion. To put reverie to the best use, Song successfully and freely controlled and dominated Gallimard. Westerners were so deeply misled by their entrenched Orientalism that they always took it for granted that they could impose their own subjective will upon others especially upon Asians, but they did not really understand the East.

What Hwang is talking about is that the essence of Orientalists' prejudice is the desire to know little about the East. The object of love is not a physical person—the Song Liling, or a man who plays the role of a woman in the play, but it is Madame Butterfly created by the opera. It is also Madame Butterfly that Gallimard was determined to seek in Song Liling. The imaginary knowledge derived from oriental fantasy is not based on accuracy and utility, but feeds on how much it can satisfy Westerners' arrogant psychology. David Henry Hwang achieved this goal by fabricating novels that are more realistic and more aesthetically desirable than facts. Therefore, Orientalism is a kind of establishment of ignorance as well as deliberate self-deception, which are finally projected to the East. In the Western academic tradition, this kind of fabrication plays a major role. The representations of Oriental cultures and civilizations are based on established ignorance. In other words, these cultures and civilizations are intentionally fabricated and produced.

Therefore, in the third act, the otherwise submissive Oriental woman suddenly turned out to be a man in suit and tight, which not only greatly touched Gallimard's perception of Song Liling and his knowledge of the stereotyped image of the Oriental woman, but also caused a great psychological contrast among Western audiences, subverted gender roles and colonial fantasies, and corrected the long-term Western misunderstanding of Eastern women.

### 3.1.3 Deconstruction of the Stereotyped White Men

The conceptual view of the western white male on the oriental woman is reflected in Puccini's drama *Madame Butterfly*, in which Jojossian was docile to Pinkerton and was a willing butterfly to be controlled by her lover and satisfied the desires for peek, conquests, control of western men as well as their pleasure. In the eyes of Western whites, since the West is superior to the East, and therefore should dominate the East, which should display obedience and acceptance. Eastern women, therefore, are gentle and obedient Madame Butterfly who are willing to sacrifice everything, even at the expense of dignity and life once in love with Western whites. Living together with Song Liling aroused Gallimard's desire to conquer, and Song Liling's surrender convinced Gallimard that he was in a strong position with male dignity. In a sense, it demonstrates the self-superiority of Western culture's wild imagination towards ancient

①Hwang, David Henry. *M. Butterfly*[M]. New York: Penguin Books, 1989.p.51

Eastern civilization. It can be seen that Orientalism itself is entirely a male-oriented field.

As a diplomat, Gallimard, through analysis of Song Liling's tendency to surrender, formed knowledge about Eastern China as well as Eastern women. He believed that in the depths of Song's heart, she was uncontrollably trying to surrender to this Western man, which was her inevitable destiny. This kind of knowledge not only shows the absolute power of his male identity, but also brings him career advancement. Consequently, Gallimard took it for granted that this oriental knowledge could be applied indiscriminately to the formulation of the Vietnam policy for the United States, he even asserted that "If the Americans demonstrate the will to win, the Vietnamese will welcome them into a mutually beneficial union"<sup>①</sup>. By deliberately implanting the political background of the Vietnam War, stating Gallimard's mistaken judgment, the failure of Orientalism policies resulting in United States' loss of Far East battlefield, David Henry Hwang intended to criticize the "international rape mentality" of the imperialist colonists.

Hwang described Gallimard as the embodiment of the Orientalist. The story of *Madame Butterfly* is unforgettable and beautiful for Gallimard. This kind of beauty is "a pure sacrifice". In Gallimard's fantasy, Oriental women provided all of these magical powers, or even more. Orientalism establishes a passive, childlike entity that can be loved, abused, and shaped, contained, managed, or even destroyed. Gallimard finally realized that he was deceived by his dreams: he was the butterfly himself, while Song Liling was Pinkerton.

The idealized oriental woman image that Gallimard believed also leads to another feature of Orientalism: the white man as god syndrome. White men are misunderstood as God, which is one of the oldest clichés in contemporary books, cartoons, and movies. These works are neither objective or real reports, nor literary lies, but ideologies used consciously to explain the natural superiority of white males in the West.

At the end of the *M. Butterfly*, under the scrutiny of everyone, Gallimard put on a kimono and ended his own life with a knife, just as the Japanese woman Madame Butterfly. Obviously, it also reflects the physical politics that Hwang wants to elaborate. Zhou Xian stated in his article *Seeing and Ideology* that seeing is the most natural and common behavior of mankind, but seeing itself is the process of "waking up" and a process of discovery and search, with profound philosophical, psychological, sociological, and cultural meanings, reflecting the ideology of "seeing". He believes that while understanding the ideology of aesthetics of the body, we can easily find a paradox: on the one hand, contemporary society has liberated the body's bondage and shelter, and brought new freedom to the body's exposure and communication; on the other hand, the legalization and popularization of the body's aesthetic standard inevitably leads to suppression and violence against the body. Therefore, suicide (fragmentation and violence to the body) clearly reflects people's resistance to rights, and used the death of the body as a means of self-resistance.

So what does Gallimard try to resist in his own body? The author believes that here

①Hwang, David Henry. *M. Butterfly*[M]. New York: Penguin Books, 1989.p.46

Gallimard rebelled against the orientalist consciousness that he had always believed in, which runs through the history, society, and culture of the West and incorporates in the veins of every Westerner, dictates its people. So when Gallimard used this Orientalism to find and obtain what he thought was a *Madame Butterfly* in China, the rebellion and subversion of the East made him a joke. Therefore, it is the Western ideology that Gallimard protested here with his body, for it allows Westerners to be fooled, used and abandoned by the East.

Therefore, Gallimard's physical politics reflect the East's examination of the West on the one hand, and on the other hand, it also reveals the West own fissures, that is, Western resistance to the West. From another perspective, this also shows the harm and the backlash of Western Orientalism.

Based on the above analysis, Hwang's *M. Butterfly* comes from his disagreement with Orientalism presented in *Madame Butterfly* and he rewrote the text in an anti-Orientalist manner. In his work, he objectively pointed out that the Western Oriental ideology would inevitably hurt itself if it were not revised, just as Gallimard did to himself.

## 3.2 Deconstruction of the Protagonists' Gender and Racial Identity

It is an undeniable fact that there are varieties of discussions and debates on *M. Butterfly* in the American society, which have aroused intense interest of the Americans since the debut of the drama on American stage. In summary, most of discussions produced by the American society are centered on the two themes: gender and race issues. For instance, people talks fervently about the issue of homosexuality, as well as Asian women. The deeper social problems behind these topics are gender and ethnic issues that are often interwoven with each other. *M. Butterfly* has always been a monumental work by David Henry Hwang in his career of creating dramas, which reflects his deep and unique understanding of identity issues. His early plays, especially the several plays represented by the Chinese American Trilogy, all revolve around the identity of Chinese Americans. According to the specific historical and social context, David Henry Hwang pays close attention to the state of Chinese Americans who live in the United States and the conflict between Chinese culture and the mainstream culture.

### 3.2.1 Elimination of the Protagonists' Entrenched Gender Characteristics

In the traditional concept of Logocentrism, men's social status is nobler than that of women, while women are always associated with such words as weakness and passivity; likewise, European white people are superior to yellow and black people, and the latter are backward and feminine. Of course, David Henry Hwang does not cater to this concept. He creates a mediocre white male in the *M. Butterfly*: Gallimard, French diplomat. He looked pretty flat and his career

was unsuccessful. At the presence of the white women, he appeared very weak or even afraid—unable to balance all his relationship. For example, he had had sex with a white woman named Isabel, but he was rather passive and seemed to be castrated by the woman. In addition, his wife, Helga, even suspected that he had no fertility, which greatly hurt Gallimard's male self-esteem. However, after watching *Madame Butterfly*, anchored by the song Madonna, Gallimard's male consciousness was called up. He hated the strength and initiative of white women, but was only obsessed with the weak, shy and conservative East women. As he admitted: "The sad truth is that all men want a beautiful woman and the uglier the man, the greater the want"<sup>①</sup>. He believed that the oriental women's lyricism is wonderful, and that women should "sacrifice for foreigners who are unworthy". From the moment he saw Song Liling, he had already imagined himself as Pinkerton. During the 20 years of their love relationship, Song Liling was always quite weak and shy, which greatly satisfied Gallimard's vanity as a man. For the first time, he had the initiative in the relationship between men and women. Song Liling, a beautiful Butterfly perfectly conformed to the stereotype of the East Asian woman in Gallimard's mind, making Gallimard gradually build a sense of superiority as a white male, even scaling new heights in his career began. "Orient sex" became a commodity in the mass culture, "with the result that readers and writers could have it if they wished without necessarily going to the Orient."<sup>②</sup>

However, at the end of the play, Gallimard, accidentally discovered that "Butterfly" was male body and still a spy. In their 20 years' relationship, Gallimard did not discover Song Liling's true gender, and instead, he even thought that "she" had given birth to a son for him, which was really incredible. In fact, several dialogues in the script have already hinted the real gender of Song Liling. At their first appointment at Song Liling's flat, she said:

*Consider it this way: what would you say if a blonde homecoming queen fell in love with a short Japanese businessman? He treats her cruelly, then 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 remarried, she kills herself. Now, I believe you would consider this girl to be a deranged idiot, correct?/But because it's an Oriental who kills herself for a Westerner—ah!—you find it beautiful.*<sup>③</sup>

From this dialogue, it is not hard to see that Song Liling is not a typical stereotype of an eastern woman. His words carry a mockery of the distorted psychology of western style masculine females. In their second conversation, Song Liling asked Gallimard to light a cigarette for him. This is a tease for Gallimard, but a masculine move for Song Liling. It's quite difficult to imagine a passive eastern woman would ask the other to give herself a cigarette. Gallimard, however, was smitten by the imaginary "butterfly" and didn't notice this detail at all. Moreover, the consistent suppression from the western women more convinced Gallimard of

①Hwang, David Henry. *M. Butterfly*[M]. New York: Penguin Books, 1989.p.14

②Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1978.p.190

③Hwang, David Henry. *M. Butterfly*[M]. New York: Penguin Books, 1989.p.17

Song's docility. In their close touch, Song refused to undress Gallimard, while the white man also did not force her to do because he thought "it was a Chinese custom" that a serious oriental woman was so shy at the presence of her beloved. As long as he had the power to conquer "her", he did not need to trouble the Butterfly. After Gallimard was arrested, however, when Song paid him a visit in the jail and planned to take off his clothes to reveal his true identity, Gallimard was terrified and deeply depressed. When he finally saw the nudity of Song, he was still reluctant to face up the reality and to admit that his Butterfly was a man, but preferred an illusion. He said in his prison cell: "In public, I have continued denying that Song Liling is a man. This brings me headlines"<sup>①</sup>.

Throughout the incident, Gallimard does not regard Song Liling as an equal individual, but a plaything and accessory, which is entirely within his power. The oriental illusion underpins his spirit. Therefore, once Song Liling tears off the gender disguise, Gallimard loses the little oriental woman who has been controlled in his "palms". She suddenly becomes the subject of the plaything of others, definitely unacceptable to him. .

### 3.2.2 Simplification of Protagonists' Racial Identity

The unrequited love of Gallimard and Song Liling not only exposes readers to the stereotyped image of oriental women in the minds of western men, but also reflects the westerners' prejudice and hegemony to the orientals. Edward Said states in *Orientalism* that orientalism is a way for westerners to dominate, rebuild, and override the Easterners, and relations between the East and the West are a kind of "power relations" and "complex hegemony relationship". Asians are "others" to the West, and Orientalism is the cultural root of western stereotypes to Asians. According to Elaine H. Kim, a Chinese American scholar, this stereotype is based on the belief that, in westerners' eyes, westerners are "more physically, mentally, and morally superior". After several contacts with the Chinese opera actor Song Liling, he thinks that he has already conquered the eastern woman, and this not only satisfies his male vanity, but also strengthens his western superiority and Orientalism.

When the French ambassador Toulon talked with him about the war situation in Vietnam, Gallimard took it for granted that there was a natural affinity between the West and the East for the Asians would always succumb to greater powers. These remarks fully demonstrate the superiority of Gallimard as a white man after his conquest of eastern women. Like the weakness of women at the presence of men, East is bound to succumb to the powerful West, just as Song Liling stated in court:

*The West thinks of itself as masculine—big guns, big industry, big money—so the East is feminine—weak, delicate, poor; The West believes the East, deep down, wants to be dominated because a woman can't think for herself; I am an Oriental. And being an Oriental, I could never be completely a man.*<sup>②</sup>

①Hwang, David Henry. *M. Butterfly*[M]. New York: Penguin Books, 1989.p.92

②Hwang, David Henry. *M. Butterfly*[M]. New York: Penguin Books, 1989.p.83



This means that even though Song Liling does not dress up as a woman, he is also a female role in the eyes of Gallimard. On the contrary, Song never fails to forget his nationality and his ethnicity, and has clear awareness of his being a real man.

Such a seemingly feminine portrayal of Chinese men has caused some dissatisfaction among Chinese American scholars. The fact is that only four or five Chinese American writers reinforce this stereotype and obviously David Henry Hwang belongs to this group. In his work, however, Song Liling is not a cynical stereotype of white people. Instead, at the end of the play, Gallimard put on the clothes and makeup to play *Madame Butterfly*, saying: "My name is Rene Gallimard—also known as Madame Butterfly"<sup>①</sup>. And then, he committed suicide, whereas Song Liling dressed up himself in a male suit and lighted the cigars on the side. At this time, the gender roles of the two men have changed—Gallimard becomes a sensitive woman while Song Liling resumes his original male identity to witness the death of this westerner without doing anything. Thus, the meaning of *M. Butterfly* is also gradually revealed. In the title, "M." can be understood as an abbreviation for French Monsieur (Mr.) or Madame (Ms.). After his death, Gallimard becomes a male Madame Butterfly; in contrast, Song Liling gets rid of the Butterfly who has been played by him in the first place.

At the end of the drama, David Henry Hwang finally completes the deconstruction of *Madame Butterfly*, subverting the strong and the weak relationship between the East and the West, and eliminating the patriarchal ideology of male superiority. Therefore, he does not cater to the tastes of Westerners and demeans the Chinese male image; instead, he breaks the western stereotype of the East. He achieves the success of doing a deconstructivist *Madame Butterfly*.

### 3.3 Reconstruction of Chinese Cultural Identity

By using Peking Opera elements in *M. Butterfly*, David Henry Hwang presents the multicultural life situations of Chinese Americans, making the drama different from the mainstream drama in terms of themes and forms of performance, thereby increasing the possibility and value of the drama, it being discovered and affirmed among the mainstream dramas, also achieving cultural communication between China and America through the drama. At the same time, it also shows an obvious fact that the performance practice, performance theory and rhetorical devices of Chinese American dramas are all intrinsically linked to the efforts to reproduce and recreate the past ones. It is these factors that constitute the characteristics of Chinese American drama.

The successful application of Peking Opera in *M. Butterfly* shows such that these Chinese elements have a variety of implied meanings in the play. It seemed sensible for Hwang to see that the integration of Asian and Western drama, in effect, was of great importance. In reality, Hwang is not the first Asian American dramatist who has made such an attempt and there are many forerunners before him who have tried to advance political ideas, and even in debating

①Hwang, David Henry. *M. Butterfly*[M]. New York: Penguin Books, 1989.p.93

ways to create Asian American complexes. As far as he is concerned, it is even much more interesting to deal with problems of forms. And in his opinion, consciously or unconsciously, if one adopts multiple forms and combines them together, he would publish his political statements in a more dramatic way. David Henry Hwang puts his own assertions in the play into practice and successfully combines eastern and western drama traditions together. The elements of Chinese drama, which are beyond the visual experience and embodied in the stage design, costume style, background music and characters, are not only drama elements, but simply narrative languages with abundant political ideas and cultural connotations.

### 3.3.1 Costume Representation and Cultural Identity

Like Cio-Cio-San, Song Liling emerged on the stage on the behalf of the ideal image of butterfly. She was in a kimono, and committed suicide like Cio-Cio-San's acts in the scene of *Madame Butterfly*. She was a beautiful girl with fascinating and delicate character, and she was shy after the performance, which was undoubtedly the very ideal butterfly in Gallimard's deep heart. It was high time that Gallimard became infatuated with it at his sight. In the need of Song's political tasks, Song Liling was intended to use the defaulting body symbols including action, posture, and costumes to face western hegemony culture, with the aim to make the images of oriental women and butterfly in Gallimard's mind coincided and finally win the balance between the two. For the audience, it was no wonder that Gallimard could not help praising that Song Liling's performance was completely convincing and amazing. Song enjoyed acting the shy temperament of the oriental women:

*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.*<sup>①</sup>

In the play, Song Liling emerged on the stage dressing as a Hua Dan in Chinese Peking Opera, and gently danced to Peking Opera tunes, acting as a beautiful young lady on the stage before Gallimard. Since then, with the development of the story, she sometimes dressed a gorgeous Japanese kimono to play a very graceful and influential Madame Butterfly: "She glides past him, beautiful, laughing softly behind her fan ... She arrives with all her possessions in the folds of her sleeves, lays them all out, for her man to do with as he pleases"<sup>②</sup>. Sometimes she wore a tight cheongsam and translucent embroidered elegantly dressing gown to make herself a charming lover. Or sometimes she wore simple baggy clothes to hide her real male shape in order to look like a true Chinese woman. These symbolic costumes are all about the femininity and Oriental sentiment, which contributes to Song Li-ling's success in constructing the identity of an Oriental woman in front of Gallimard. Nevertheless, on the basis of a pile of costumes, the gender identity itself is the greatest irony. At the end of the script, Song Liling

①Hwang, David Henry. *M. Butterfly*[M]. New York: Penguin Books, 1989.p.30-31

②Hwang, David Henry. *M. Butterfly*[M]. New York: Penguin Books, 1989.p.10

took off the robes of *Madame Butterfly* and put on a male suit in front of Gallimard. It was at that time that the audience found that the costume show performed by Song had been originally intended to dress up like an Oriental woman, and a conscious gender manipulation. It was a strong contrast between Song's naked male body and completely convincing performance in the beginning of the meet of Gallimard. At this scene, the deceitfulness of the costume achieves the ironic effect, fiercely quipping Gallimard's ingrained traditional knowledge on oriental women and his superficiality and ignorance, further revealing the fictionalization of the gender representation of the western to the Asian women as well.

The reason Song Liling's gender and cultural identity gain Gallimard's approval is largely attributed to the fact that performer Song Liling and the viewer Gallimard both share the oriental clothes code, although one is intended to take advantage of that, and the other is presupposed by the occidental model concept. Zhang Xiaohong believes that in intercultural contact, it is clothes that always play a major role in identifying interactive games with other people. Especially when the West makes an attempt to recognize and characterize the East, the effect of cloth is fully demonstrated. Costumes as a cultural symbol accurately capture the essence of the East and let the East come into the process of its objectification. Costumes, like exotic souvenirs, become fetish totems, representing the eastern world for consumption by the west. Given that oriental dress-up becomes a vivid visual acumen, representing the exotic of the other, and thus becomes the most effective medium that the western imperialists regards the East as transcendental and fantasy eroticism. Based on the research above, it is no wonder that Gallimard treats the slim woman in Japanese kimono or Chinese cheongsam as his ideal perfect woman who turns out to be his oriental illusion.

### 3.3.2 Reconstruction of Oriental Male Image

Obviously, Song Liling pretended to be a woman who spent more than 20 years making a sustainable relationship with Gallimard, of which the French diplomat was unaware. What causes the result is not only due to Gallimard's stylized oriental knowledge, but also because of a guiding role the Chinese authorities plays.

First of all, as the Hua Dan in Chinese Peking Opera, Song Liling comes to enter Gallimard's angle of view, which creates a gender confusion for Gallimard. During the dynasties of Song and Yuan, Chinese drama grows to be mature and the protagonists of Sheng and Dan in the stage are the main roles in an opera, the situation of which has formed since then. On the stage of Yuan Operas, the number of women player groups takes up the advantage, which has many positive roles for women. But it is the rise of Mei, Cheng, Xun and Shang in the early 20th century that promotes the role of Dan to enter into stage performance center and draw the most attention of audience who watch the play. First and foremost, this phenomenon reflects the complementary needs of both males and females. In a particular way, under the feudal rites and traditional law system, women are incapable to make themselves exposed to the public. The difference of aesthetics of the whole society under the supervision of the Taoists paves the

convenient way for the debut of the fake madame coming into the public eyes on the stage where the male actors overturn their gender aiming at playing female roles. Although such kind of dislocation-style dress provides people with only a sort of gender aesthetics flaw, for the recipients, the spectators of male-see-female are actually not disguised in their psychological level.

Generally speaking, males should have been the subjects of powerful, strong and masculine social roles in the community. Because of social and cultural needs, there are abundant roles in Peking Opera created based on gender inversions and all of them become the objects of feminine, slender roles gazed at and appreciated by the public in Peking Opera. This happens to coincide with Orientalism in the eyes of westerners. The western people take the east as essentially a negative, delicate and refined beauty. As a consequence, when Song Liling encountered Gallimard in the theater, it was human nature that forced Gallimard to immerse himself in the fusion of "butterfly". In addition to this, Song Liling, as a spy, was able to help save herself from the terrible situation with her child when Gallimard was tired of her. Nevertheless, as is known to the audience, the child is the most unlikely thing to appear between Song Liling and Gallimard. As a result, the obsolete oriental imagination of Gallimard toward China is apparently used by the East and the story gradually evolves into a case of espionage in the history of diplomacy, which just reveals that arrogance and superiority of the western-centered idea have been forcefully rebounded. On the one hand, Orientalism offers a fixed and modest manner for the occidental to examine and recognize the East. On the other hand, it enables the East to reach the goal of resolving the West and defeating the West by virtue of its understanding of the West. Consequently, the drama reverses, and a martyrdom made by Madame Butterfly is transformed into a martyrdom the west does for the east, or that the West is for its own Orientalism complex and dies of martyrdom. Gallimard therefore kills himself as Madame Butterfly does.

## 4 Adhesion and Transcendence of Cultural Identity

In the setting of *M. Butterfly*, Gallimard and Song Liling have assumed special identities: they are the gender identity codes of western men and Chinese opera male Dan, and are the political identity codes of French diplomat and Chinese spy. In this sense, Song Liling, is the symbolized role of Dan in Peking Opera who deconstructs the image of the oriental woman stereotyped in Hwang's drama; "she" is a man who undertakes female gender performance; "she" is a representative of the orientals who have simplistic political missions and "she" is also a fleshy person. Their complicated identities break gender boundary and are a major breakthrough on cultural identity, which indicate adhesion and transcendence of cultural identity.

### 4.1 Breakthrough on Cultural Identity

The idea of writing *M. Butterfly* comes from a real spy story. David Henry Hwang quoted this piece of news on the title page of the script, which was originally published in *The New York Times* in May 11, 1986.

*A former French diplomat and a Chinese opera singer have been sentenced to six years in jail for spying for China after a two-day trial that traced a story of clandestine love and mistaken sexual identity ... Mr. Bouriscot was accused of passing information to China after he fell in love with Mr. Shi, whom he believed for twenty years to be a woman.*<sup>①</sup>

This piece of news brought great inspiration to David Henry Hwang. So he created a white diplomat with western traditional thinking—a Frenchman Gallimard—when he came to China he met and fell in love with the lady Song Liling, a Peking Opera actor, who played Butterfly on the stage. He thinks that Song Liling in *Madame Butterfly* is the infatuation of Cio-Cio-San who has devoted herself to the western white man, and that she would love him like Cio-Cio-San, even choosing suicide for the loss of her lover in the end. But he doesn't anticipate that all this is the hallucination that Song Liling brings to himself. *M. Butterfly* is not only a woman but also a spy with special missions. When Gallimard thinks that he has really controlled Song Liling, in effect, he has been constrained by Song Liling. He has been deeply stuck in the one-way imagination that the west built for the east and unable to extricate himself, until the truth of the facts has been exposed. The shocking power of this work lies in the fact that the east represented by Song Liling conceals his true identity and hallucinates the west represented by Gallimard with a very clever style, eventually the west falling into the trap of the east.

In Hwang's drama, Song Liling has complicated identities: a male Dan in Peking opera, an actress of *M. Butterfly*, the Imperial Concubine Yang in *The Drunken Beauty*, a French diplomat Gallimard's lover, and a Chinese spy. So these different images of Song Liling in women dress-up identification mark, let her take more responsibility for functions of Oriental cultural

①Hwang, David Henry. *M. Butterfly*[M]. New York: Penguin Books, 1989. Playwright's Notes

symbols. "Identity is related to a person's psychology and feelings about himself".<sup>①</sup> As a result, all these including Song Liling's complicated political gender and ethnic identity, whether Song Liling is a man or a woman, the different opinions of the east and the west on *M. Butterfly*, and the western man's butterfly-like vision of an Oriental woman, are thought-provoking.

From the Japanese woman's kimono, the magnificent costume in *The Imperial Concubine is Drunk*, to Mao's tunic, to the man's suit, strong oriental qualities can be not erased. The conversion of costumes not simply creates Song Liling's male gender identity, but also constructs his oriental political identity which implied his unique life experience as a male role of Dan of Peking Opera. He pursues himself in the dislocation of gender identity. He is often passive in his own identity, from accepting the role of Dan in his early years to accepting espionage missions under political pressure as well as lives under every identity imposed on him.

The success of the work *M. Butterfly* first relies on David Henry Hwang's thoughtful and in-depth consideration of identity issues. The accumulation of material is equally important. This news of *New York Times* helps David Henry Hwang to build a bridge from fantasy to reality, which makes him once again question whether he can see the authenticity of culture and the authenticity of his identity through this story. The title conceived by David Henry Hwang for this work is equally slapstick. It is a work that consciously subverts the famous opera *Madame Butterfly* by Giacomo Puccini. Therefore, the work of *Madame Butterfly* was named *M. Butterfly*. In the former one, Cio-Cio-San loved her white husband, Pinkerton so much, but she eventually fell into disuse and sacrificed herself for her love. In the latter one, on the contrary, the white diplomat Gallimard loved Chinese woman Song Liling and assisted her to steal information. After the purpose of Song Liling was announced, he revealed his true identity. This white man was abandoned in another way. It can be said that the name *M. Butterfly* is another interpretation of the *Madame Butterfly* in the past and a complete subversion of it. Its title *M. Butterfly* is even more intriguing. "M." may represent "Mr." or "Mrs.", which shows the mystery and uncertainty in gender and identity.

The play *M. Butterfly* embodies David Henry Hwang's two new ideas on identity. Firstly, he takes a partial, superficial identity conflict to a deeper level, one between the East and the West. Previously, he wrote about the free state of various Chinese Americans in American society, describing the cultural identity of this particular group of people and the identity they had encountered, but did not analyze the substantive factors behind their status. *M. Butterfly* is the most influential work after Hwang jumped out of the circle of Chinese identity writing for the time being. Secondly, there is a very clear storyline: love story between the two main roles in *M. Butterfly*. It is precisely this line that threads the identity issues embodied in the entire story in a gradual and orderly manner. Finally, the connotation of the entire work reaches its peak. On the face of it, this is a story of a woman and a man. It can be further discovered that

①弥沙. 美国华裔文学批评的擅变: 族裔性、文学性、世界性[D]. 黑龙江大学, 2016.

this is a collision of two worlds from two different cultural backgrounds with obvious ideological conflicts, namely the collision of an eastern woman and a western white man. To be more profound, this is a story between the east and the west. It is the best embodiment of conflicts and collisions between the east and the West in terms of gender, culture, and ideology.

## 4.2 Breaking Gender Boundary

At the very beginning, Gallimard asserted that Song Liling was a woman. The reason Gallimard has been long convinced of this is that he is always in pursuit of masculinity. Traditional masculine temperament and femininity are full of prejudice against description and definition of men and women. There is a very clear demarcation line between men and women. What *M. Butterfly* first states is to break the gender boundary between male and female.

When David Henry Hwang read this spy news in *The New York Times*, he paid special attention to the real French diplomat who attempted to account for the fact he had never seen his “girlfriend” naked for 20 years, “I thought she was very modest. I thought it was a Chinese custom”<sup>①</sup>. David Henry Hwang immediately realized that this was not a Chinese custom. In fact, when Asian women face their lovers, they are always not so shy as the westerners had imagined. Obviously, this is the westerners’ inherent imagination of Oriental women. In the west, it is easy to confuse any one of Asian countries with the term “Orient”. David Henry Hwang realized that what the French diplomat loved was not a human entity. He fell in love with a wonderful imagination in his mind. Prior to this, some critics once commented on *Madame Butterfly*, that men are men, and women are women, while Japanese are Japanese, and Americans are Americans, all of which were originally developed under familiar narrative conventions. However, David Henry Hwang wants to break this narrative model and determines that Gallimard a man strong enough to control others, becomes a submissive man when facing Song Liling. As the story develops, their identities have completely changed.

At the beginning of the story, Gallimard was set as a white man who “is not handsome, nor brave, nor powerful”<sup>②</sup>. He was never sought after by women. All these make it very easy for him to immerse himself in the fantasy of women. Only in fantasy, he could become a strong man and regain his confidence. In addition, the unsuccessful sexual experience during the teenage years, and the dependence on the erotic books and magazines all indicate that he has been waiting for this ideal woman to appear till he meets Song Liling, who is always in his imagination to help himself escape the sluggish identity and become a smart person who he dreams of, and to attract women intoxicatedly. After that, everything goes as he hopes. Before falling into this romance, Gallimard put some test on his ability to bear, especially his new identities that he had imagined. He wanted to see how strong the “butterfly” was, and how far she could be pushed out by him and whether it was really true as is in *Madame*

①Hwang, David Henry. *M. Butterfly*[M]. New York: Penguin Books, 1989.p.94

②Hwang, David Henry. *M. Butterfly*[M]. New York: Penguin Books, 1989.p.10

*Butterfly*—western men can casually play with oriental women in their palms. Everytime Song Liling demonstrated to Gallimard that she was weak, Gallimard intentionally showed that he was about to abandon her until Song Liling took the initiative to inform him: “I am out of words. I can hide behind dignity no longer. What do you want? I have already given you my shame”<sup>①</sup>. Later, he received the post of deputy consul of the French Embassy in China, which made his ambition more inflated. Gallimard at this time was no longer the same as the formerly weak man. He gradually gave himself a new identity through his relationship with Song Liling.

But what Gallimard did not expect was that who he had identified as a woman was not just his doll, but also a spy who had a precise mind to learn about western males’ thinking. In the cultural performance of the embassy, the two of them met for the first time. Song was playing the role of Madame Butterfly in traditional ethnic costume, which deeply attracted Gallimard. Gallimard, with a fixed mind of a white man, concluded that Song Liling would be a realistic Madame Butterfly:

*Here ... here was a Butterfly with little or no voice—but she had the grace, the delicacy...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, pamper her until she smiled.*<sup>②</sup>

Gallimard decided at the beginning that the butterfly was submissive and docile. After the show, their conversation between them showed Song Liling’s heart positively.

To be honest, Song Liling’s image in the eyes of Gallimard is exactly the same as that in other audience. Afterwards, Song Liling, for her purpose, has deliberately demonstrated the modesty and dependence of the Oriental woman. But Gallimard thinks that this is the charming mystery of the Oriental woman. This Oriental woman is different from the western women he has met. She never resists, threatens or even swears and always maintains an elegant posture and pleases him, which is a kind of shame and mystery with purity.

Gallimard hopes to see his fantasy life come true and transform himself into a powerful man, and coincidentally Song Liling’s performance caters to his needs. The deep-seated gender bias in Gallimard’s mind convinces him of the fantasy that Song was a perfect woman. “Why in the Peking Opera, are women’s roles played by men. Because only a man knows how a woman is supposed to act”<sup>③</sup>. Thus, Song Liling has always performed in female-styled clothes to acquire information from Gallimard. All this is achieved through a step-by-step plan. Therefore, it can be said that Song Liling partially gave up his own reality to strengthen Gallimard’s confirmation of his new identity. The plots alternated until Song Liling took the initiative to reveal his true identity. At this time, the two were forced to re-face their original identity.

The gender representation in the *M. Butterfly* first jumps from a woman’s kimono to a man’s suit. The clothes are used as a cultural code for gender differentiation. Ultimately, genitals become the physiological standard for gender differences.

①Hwang, David Henry. *M. Butterfly*[M]. New York: Penguin Books, 1989.p.35

②Hwang, David Henry. *M. Butterfly*[M]. New York: Penguin Books, 1989.p.16

③Hwang, David Henry. *M. Butterfly*[M]. New York: Penguin Books, 1989.p.63



Some critics profoundly analyzed that *M. Butterfly* used the gender confusion caused by visual effects to expose the instability of gender positioning, and mocked our superficial classification method for visually distinguishing men and women. After being naked, Song Liling still claimed that he/she was Gallimard's "butterfly". It seems that Song laughs at Gallimard and the viewers for their obsession. He could not finally get rid of the habit of visually classifying gender.

### 4.3 Transforming Cultural Identity

Cultural barriers are everywhere. The Western barrier to Chinese culture is also presented to readers or audiences through the works of Chinese American writers.

David Henry Hwang respects and is willing to inherit Chinese tradition. Although his understanding and knowledge of traditional culture have been influenced by his country, language, and even family development environment, his inner fetish remains the same. The success of *M. Butterfly* has brought his creative career to a peak. After earnestly reflecting and describing the marginalized reality of Chinese Americans, based on the keen insight of the playwright and his personal experience as a Chinese American, David Henry Hwang brought this overwhelming subversion of the Westerners. Serious and profound thinking comes after the subversion. Hwang comes to realize that cultural opposition will inevitably bring about a deeper dilemma in cultural identity. The most fundamental solution is to coordinate the inherent conflicts between the two cultures so as to form a relatively independent cultural identity. To construct an independent cultural identity is inseparable from the common historical starting point of Chinese Americans. Whether the Chinese Americans' past is tragic or brilliant, it will be a fossil that shows the past.

The domestic mainstream academic circle believes that the successful performance of *M. Butterfly* marks the end of Broadway's long-term dramatization of the East, heralding the beginning of a non-biased drama era. The American mainstream theatrical circle has apparently classified the dramatic creation of *M. Butterfly* into the cultural tide of the pioneering drama form innovation and exploration in the 1980s and 1990s.

In *M. Butterfly*, people can find out Hwang's sensitivity toward ethnic issues. People cannot get out of the race's mystery when ethnic and cultural conflicts are getting more and more fierce. White and yellow species are different ethnic groups. The bondage caused by skin color differences is still ubiquitous. As *M. Butterfly* shows, there are prevailing misconceptions between the East and the West. Because of the differences in geographical distribution, educational level, cultural characteristics, social resources network, and even living structure, different ethnic groups have different opportunities to occupy capital and markets. Therefore, there are also cultural misunderstandings that have formed over the years between races. These misunderstandings will cause them to attack each other and bind one another. It cannot be overlooked that each culture has its own systemic qualities. When one culture encounters

another cultural system, the former will inevitably understand each other from the specific perspective of its own system, and this particular field of vision is forever. It is impossible to fully agree with each other. It can only be the result of interaction, which is Gallimard's horizon fusion. In terms of this kind of adhesion, as a cultural symbol, the meaning of the *M. Butterfly* actually evoked in the interaction with the audience and inevitably would produce various variations. Reality is depressing and restraining people. The theorists of homosexuality and queer see the warm and same-sex love between Gallimard and Song Liling. The drama critics see the innovation and efforts of David Henry Hwang in the form of drama. The horizon of knowledge determines the people's horizon of expectation and understanding, and the audience always selects and accepts heterogeneous culture based on their own prophetic system. In the exchange of heterogeneous cultures, misunderstanding is inevitable, and in some sense, there is also rationality.

In reality, in today's globalization of information and multicultural coexistence, cultural misunderstandings are not entirely without positive cultural exchange effects. Misreading is a kind of understanding effort rather than "not reading", and it will bring further attention and research. It is the acceptance and even misinterpretation of this early symbolization that allows the source culture to have a new growing soil and has the possibility of being deeply understood and grasped in the context of foreign cultures. Even if there are cultural misunderstandings, there are also potential cultural exchange opportunities.

As a successful playwright, David Henry Hwang repeatedly emphasized his important significance for cultural identity in determining cultural identity. That is, culture is not static and it is fluid. Long ago, many Chinese-Americans were firmly opposed to the cultural adhesion with American mainstream society and believed that it is tantamount to overthrowing one's own culture. Chinese American literature has the advantage of "minor literature" because "it exists within major literature and at the same time concentrates on crossing boundaries and breaking new ground"<sup>①</sup>. Now the author is in favor of cultural integration because static culture has no meaning.

Returning to this motif of Chinese American identity again, people can see that maintaining the free flow of cultural identity is the most reasonable way to resolve cultural conflicts in a diversified context. Ethnic minority Americans, including Chinese-Americans, should no longer be limited to strict property definitions. In fact, the acquisition of identity and the preservation of their respective cultural traditions are not inconsistent. Identity itself should not be regarded as a completed reality. It is always in the process of change, and Hwang has a problem with cultural identity. The biggest contribution is that he no longer stays in the struggle between ethnic issues and the cultural conflicts between East and West. Instead, he looks further into the future and pays attention to the common problems of mankind and even to the meaning of life. Hwang has proposed a relatively complete solution to the problem of identity, which is to use

①王光林著. 错位与超越——美、澳华裔作家的文化认同[M].天津: 南开大学出版社, 2004: 259-260.

the concept of freedom and mobility to view cultural identity, different colors, and different traditional ethnic groups living together in a country. There should be mutual respect. The claims of mainstream and marginal are not absolute.

## 5 Conclusion

Cultural identity has been an ongoing theme in Chinese American literature for over a century because of the interconnectedness of gender, race, and socio-economic conditions in the historical oppression of Chinese Americans.

David Henry Hwang, a prominent Chinese American playwright also seen as a truly diasporic writer, with his cultural identity of Chinese American writer, consciously pays more attention to the cultural opposition and collapse as well as cultural identity mobility between America and China in most of his works. The current study is an attempt to broaden the scope of understanding about ethnic cultural identity development in the United States, by taking the Chinese American drama *M. Butterfly* as an example, in an innovative way in which a text analysis is conducted combining drama theory and cultural research.

Through the above analysis, the theme of the *M. Butterfly* is designed for the deconstruction of Oriental female stereotype of Puccini's *Madame Butterfly* and the gender culture of the East and the West. It is noted that East-West cultural power relation and the mimicry of the *Madame Butterfly* in *M. Butterfly* have obvious cultural and political intentions.

It is the conflicts between Americans and Chinese Americans, in terms of identity, gender, race and politics that most of Hwang's dramas endeavor to present to the public. In contrast, the broader meanings have been seen in *M. Butterfly* which makes a qualitative leap on the basis of exploration on Chinese American identity issues. Although it is a drama not based on Chinese descents as leading roles, it reveals more complex and more hidden factors of cultural identity between the East and the West. As this play comes into being, Hwang gives the answers to the questions why Chinese people are stereotyped in the minds of Americans and why they have such complex conflicts. Finally, in essence, they could be summarized as conflicts between the East and the West, as well as between the identities represented by the East and the identities represented by the West. By themes of *M. Butterfly* were meant subversion of social, political, racial, cultural and gender misunderstandings and asking Westerners to reflect on the deep-rooted prejudices in their minds.

Actually, Chinese cultural identity in the twentieth century has been a preoccupation among scholars of Chinese studies. Before writing *M. Butterfly*, Hwang completely realized that subverting the stereotyped Chinese images in Westerners' minds is the first step for Chinese Americans to construct their identities. In this play, Hwang stresses the subversion of sexual relationships and masculinity with Gallimard's transition. But for Hwang, who has devoted himself to adopting deconstruction strategy, in a sense, he makes this masculinity political mockery. For Hwang's part, with such kind of design, he aims to express, to some extent, his thought of post-colonialism and anti-male hegemony, as well as to satirize the fantasy of the Oriental *Madame Butterfly* in his drama.

In fact, *M. Butterfly*, the marvelous work of Hwang, is recognized as a masterpiece with

ethnicity, even universality as literary essential aspect, originating from the dramatic display of a certain community. In order to advance the mainstream culture, Hwang actually no longer puts much concern on the marginalization of ethnicity, but consciously puts minority culture into the melting pot of American mainstream literature. Cultural identity is not immutable, and it consists of elements of innate choice and acquisition. Especially in the trend of globalization, the national identity and cultural identification of the dispersed ethnic groups may be dual, or even multiple. Most importantly, *M. Butterfly* has led people to thinking and discussing about cross-cultural issues and cultural identity of Chinese Americans.

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