

An Interpretation of *M. Butterfly* from Homi Bhabba's Hybridity Theory

He Yuhan^{a,*}

Southwest Minzu University, Chengdu, 610041, China

^a1274239059@qq.com

*Corresponding Author

Abstract: Henry David Hwang's *M. Butterfly* is regarded as a successful reverse to the classic Italian opera *Madame Butterfly*. This thesis aims to interpret *M. Butterfly* from Homi Bhabba's hybridity theory to explain the process of this reverse. The imperial western culture represented by Rene Gallimard meets with the oriental culture represented by Song Liling. In a seemingly conquered and assimilated environment, the latter constantly mimics, hybridizes and penetrates the front to create slippage and rupture, dissolving its authority.

Keywords: *M. Butterfly*; heterogeneity; mimicry; hybridity; dissolution; Orientalism

1. About the Book

In *M. Butterfly*, the main character, Rene Gallimard, as a French diplomat, viewing eastern things by traditional western thinking model and concept. Similar to Pinkerton in *Madame Butterfly*, he falls in love with a Beijing opera actor Song Liling. At the first sight of Song, he thinks "she" is graceful and delicate. He wants to take "her" into his arms, take "her" home and pamper "her". He thinks that Song would love him deeply, just like the way Cio-Cio-San in *Madame Butterfly* loves American navy officer Pinkerton, who even sacrifice herself to meet her fantasy. But in fact, Pinkerton is deceived by the actor Song, who is a Chinese spy with a disguise of feminine dress up. Song Liling knows the west well, no matter the foreign language or their culture. Taking advantage of westerners' fixed thinking model and concept, he deludes Gallimard successfully and acquires government information. On the contrary, Gallimard is immersed in this fantasy: believing he is loved by the perfect woman and everyone should envy him. In the end, the deception is exposed. Rene Gallimard can't stand the agony of being abandoned and chooses to commit a suicide to complete his oriental fantasy.

The title, *M. Butterfly* is an abbreviation in the French fashion. It is far more mysterious and ambiguous that it denotes the character Butterfly's gender. Song, as a transvestite, wins Gallimard's trust easily. Because in Gallimard's heart, he thinks eastern women fear them and eastern men hate them. And they have a natural attractiveness for delicate eastern women. And for the west, "it 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"¹ (Hwang 1989: 83). Applying these cultural stereotypes, Song plays a demure and submissive Chinese girl through being a man. The author Hwang tells this ridiculous and impossible story to implore "to all sides to cut through our respective layers of cultural and sexual misperception, to deal with one another truthfully for our mutual good, from the common and equal ground we share as human beings" (Hwang 100).

2. The Current Situation of Interculture

2.1 The Cultural Difference Between the East and the West

China is an old nation with more than 5 thousand year's history. Therefore, China has a very old civilization. Mostly, Chinese people are under the influence of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism. Confucianism regards benevolence and righteousness as its core and the Confucians follow the five principles: benevolence, justice, courtesy, wisdom, and faith; Taoism regards conforming to nature as its core; Buddhism regards compassion, great love, and liberation as its core. The three are interdependent,

¹ David Henry Hwang. *M. Butterfly* (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 1989), p83.

infiltrating and influencing each other to construct the whole of Chinese traditional culture. On the one hand, Chinese people inherit and carry forward good traditional cultural wealth. On the other hand, their behaviors are limited by these morals and principles.

While the Western culture emphasizes self-realization. Western culture is often considered to be originated from ancient Greece, Roman Empire, Catholicism, and Protestantism, which are collectively referred to as Judeo Christian culture. Besides, western culture is also rooted in the popular culture of Germanic, Slavic, and Celtic, which is an important driving force for the formation of European medieval culture. Since modern times, there emerge a series of important concepts and various doctrines, thoughts, and schools. In the field of philosophy, there are the concepts of experience, scientific method, universality, objectivity, rationality, and universal laws; in the field of politics, there are the concepts of progress, cosmopolitanism, freedom, democracy, rights, equality, and universal human nature; in the field of religion, there are the concepts of religious tolerance, atheism, skepticism, and separation of politics and religion; in the field of society, there are the concepts of civilization, education and so on. Among these concepts, the concepts of freedom and rights are especially emphasized.

Around the world, there is cultural discrimination in modern times: viewing Asian culture as old and antiquated and western culture as advanced and enlightened. Every kind of culture has its value. Traditional treasure has been inherited so long for its special use. It is formed in the national personality that we Chinese people have good morals and unite as one. Besides, Asian culture is constantly changing and progressing. It abandons its waste part, absorbs western advantages, and forms a new self. In modern China, traditional culture and modern civilization unite harmoniously. In Chinese cities, high-rise buildings coexist with antique buildings. There are TV series adapted from classic novels and fashionable Hollywood sci-fictional movies. The Chinese people not only absorb the western advanced concept of freedom and openness but also retain the traditional virtues of kindness and peace-loving. Therefore, the Asian culture should be treated from a brand new and righteous perspective.

2.2 *The Western Discourse Hegemony and Orientalism*

The formation and development of the western ideological system are based on the dualistic opposition of logocentrism. The so-called logocentrism refers to setting a series of binary oppositions in a hierarchy, making the secondary second item subordinate to the first item in the first place, and then establishing hierarchical differences in this opposition. For this reason, in the discourse of political literature and other fields, the west is always the pronoun of modernity, development, civilization, and wisdom, while the East is defined as the image of barbarism, backwardness, ignorance, and ignorance. So far up till now, the West has dominated the power of discourse and imposed their systems of values on other sides. They have even made up lies to frame the East and sets up with a sequence of concepts to define the East.

Orientalism was originally a general term for the study of the history, literature, culture, and other subjects of oriental countries. While according to Edward Said, a concept of "Orientalism"² in his *Orientalism* was published in 1978. Orientalism has three meanings: first, orientalism is a discipline of academic research in the West, and all kinds of doctrines and theories about the East and the West. Secondly, orientalism is a way of thinking model or cognitive system, which is based on the binary opposition between "the Orient" and "the Occident". Thirdly, Orientalism is a kind of power discourse or culture hegemony. In fact, it is a vision of imagination and filtering framework, a "demonization" and "orientalization" of the East, a way for the West to control, rebuild and reign the East, and a tool and ideology of colonialism and imperialism. Westerners despise oriental culture and arbitrarily fabricate oriental culture, viewing themselves as superior to easterners

In act one scene four, Gallimard gives a rough translation of the famous duet "The Whole World Over": "The whole world over, the Yankee travels, casting his anchor wherever he wants. Life's not worth living unless he can win the hearts of the fairest maidens, then hotfoot it off the premises ASAP"³ (Hwang 7). The maidens here refer to eastern ladies. In westerners' eyes, eastern girls are so obedient and delicate that they can't resist the fatal attractiveness of western men and need their support necessarily. In act one scene four, Gallimard acclaims that "We, who are not handsome, not brave, nor powerful, yet somehow believe, like Pinkerton, that we deserve a Butterfly"⁴ (Hwang 10). It seems that westerners are deeply trapped in this subjectively made-up fantasy: eastern girls have a natural complex to westerners, though some of them are ugly, coward, and weak in the West. In addition, Helga and Gallimard despise

² Said, E. *Orientalism*. (New York: Random House, 1978), p32-50.

³ David Henry Hwang. *M. Butterfly* (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 1989), p7.

⁴ David Henry Hwang. *M. Butterfly* (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 1989), p10.

eastern culture and mock easterners. Besides, Gallimard presents his recognition of eastern people: “The Orientals simply want to be associated with whoever shows the most strength and power... Orientals will always submit to a greater force”⁵ (Hwang 46). Therefore, Gallimard makes a wrong prediction towards the relationship between Vietnam and America. In act one scene seven, they have a short discussion about Chinese and Chinese culture. Gallimard says: “The Chinese are an incredibly arrogant people” and Helga cracks a joke that “What is it that Madame Su says? ‘We are a very old civilization.’ I never know if she’s talking about her country or herself” (Hwang 18). The “old” here is not a commendatory term. Their implied meaning is that Chinese culture is outdated and rigid and Chinese people always boast their deep-rooted culture. Instead, it is westerners who stand still and refuse to make any progress. “The West believes the East, deep down, wants to be dominated-because a woman can’t think for herself”⁶ (Hwang 83). Therefore, Song easily cheats Gallimard and other westerners with a disguise of innocent and ignorant image. There is one of “her” secret rules of cheating: “As soon as a western man comes into contact with the East-he’s already confused. The West has sort of an international rape mentality towards the East”⁷ (Hwang 82). The West is like a tall and strong man while the East is like a small and slender maiden. Naturally, there exists a dominating and dominated relations between the West and the East.

3. The Analysis of the Text from the Hybridity Theory

3.1 Heterogeneity

First of all, there exists heterogeneity in the cultural space in *M. Butterfly*. Different ways of thinking modes and ethics collide with each other. The cultural heterogeneity of the East and the West is not only opposite but also influenced each other, which is full of ambiguity and uncertainty.

First, the heterogeneity lies in the living habits of the West and the East. The café is very common to see in France. People in tuxedos and bad expatriate jazz-like enjoying cappuccinos in a tiny café. And in China, tea is the representation of Chinese living habits. It is not polite to forget to pour the tea for guests when guests are inviting home. And Chinese people always go to teahouse or Opera theater in their spare time, chatting or watching local Opera. They love to accumulate in a crowded place for the love of hilarity. But there is Gallimard’s description of the opera house: “The room was hot, and full of smoke. Wrinkled faces, old women, teeth missing-a man with a growth on his neck, like a human toad. All smiling, pipes falling from their mouths, cracking nuts between their teeth, a live chicken pecking at my foot-all looking, screaming at her”⁸ (Hwang 20). The Chinese group is described as noisy, dirty, disorderly, far away from civilization, living in a room with animals. Also, at the same time in 1960, whether in the French Embassy in Beijing or Gallimard’s residence, those diplomats from the West all wear decent tuxedos, drink grape wine of high equality, and enjoyed symphonies and operas. Moreover, Chinese people have nothing to do at night because they don’t stay up late. While for westerners, parties are the way to have fun at night. They will call on several friends, each with different snacks, and will prepare a lot of games and activities for entertainment. In their eyes, the Chinese idea of a dance hall is a dirt floor and a man with a flute. There is no need to go to a Chinese dance hall for them.

Second, the heterogeneity lies in the thinking modes of the East and West respectively. In terms of the concept of sex, Chinese people are more conservative and shyer. They believe that sex is a family event and an unspeakable personal desire. Compared with easterners, westerners are much more open. They don’t confine their sexual behavior to the family. On the contrary, they enjoy the process of sexual union. As for Gallimard, he has had a passionate union with Isabel when in school. In addition to his wife Helga and his lover Song Liling, he has an extramarital affair with the feminine student Renee. Westerners have a strong desire for sexual gratification. And in terms of personal achievement, Chinese people think that serving society is the greatest achievement. In the concept of comrade Chin, she views Song living abundantly with Gallimard as a disgusting and shameful thing. She says: “Actor-oppressor, for years you have lived above common people and looked down on their labor. While the farmer ate millet-”⁹ (Hwang 70). Chinese people regard collective interests first while westerners regard personal interests first. The emphasize of the achievement of individual goals, such as promotion and making a fortune, and they don’t care about other people’s living conditions. Therefore, western and eastern thinking modes are somewhat different in many aspects.

⁵ David Henry Hwang. *M. Butterfly* (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 1989), p46.

⁶ David Henry Hwang. *M. Butterfly* (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 1989), p83.

⁷ David Henry Hwang. *M. Butterfly* (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 1989), p82.

⁸ David Henry Hwang. *M. Butterfly* (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 1989), p20.

⁹ David Henry Hwang. *M. Butterfly* (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 1989), p70.

Third, the heterogeneity lies in their attitudes towards each other. The western culture represented by Gallimard holds an indifferent and exclusive attitude towards heterogeneous culture. The basic reason why Gallimard has a crush on Song Liling when he sees Song for the first time is that westerners had a kind of rape mentality towards the easterners. They always impose their understanding on the eastern people but do not willing to have a deep contact with the eastern culture. In the conversation between Gallimard and Helga, Gallimard says “All I hear every day, everywhere is how old this culture is. The fact that ‘old’ may be synonymous with ‘senile’ doesn’t occur to them” and Helga acclaims that “You’re not going to change them. ‘East is east, west is west, and...’ whatever that guy said”¹⁰ (Hwang 18). On the other hand, as an easterner, Song Liling shows her longing for a Western life. “How I wish there were even a tiny café to sit in. With cappuccinos, and men in tuxedos and bad expatriate jazz”¹¹ (Hwang 21). Evidently, easterners' view on eastern culture is monotonous and hegemonic, with a strong tendency of cultural colonization, which runs counter to the reality and historical development of the East. Relatively speaking, the eastern people adopt an inclusive and open cultural attitude, actively approach and absorb the advantages of western culture, and actively carry out the strategy of hybridization, thus rewriting their weak cultural identity and subverts the status of both sides.

3.2 Mimicry

Homi Bhabha, born in India, as one of the most important theorists in post-colonialism, has proposed his unique system of theories about post-colonialism. In the study of the binary opposition between the first world and the third world, he cares about the development of the third world. Bhabha applies Samuel Weber’s formulation of the marginalizing vision of castration and acclaims that “colonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite”¹² (Homi Bhabha 1994: 88). The mimicry here is constructed around an ambivalence. In order to seek security, the mimic disguise and conceal itself in a same big environment. It absorbs and embezzles everything useful to complete itself. In order to surpass itself, the mimicry has to continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference effectively. Then after repeating with a difference, the mimic has the power to survive independently and forms a menace to the former. Therefore, mimicry is a good strategy for the colonized to seek a new survival.

There is a certain stereotyped view of Asians as modest and obedient and Asian women as demure and submissive. In many artistic works such as *Madame Butterfly*, the fragile heroine from the eastern world falls in love with a cruel western man and dying for “her” love. So, to satisfy Gallimard’s fantasy about eastern women, Song plays such a role in this play. “She” seems so beautiful and slim that all western men want to protect “her” in their arms immediately at the sight of “her”, though “she” sings not well enough. “She” keeps flirting with Gallimard and pretends that “she” is afraid of him. When “she” invites Gallimard to “her” apartment, “she” tells him that there is an element of danger to his presence. It strengthens Gallimard’s belief that “her” heart is shy and afraid though “she” looks bold and outspoken outwardly. “her” words “I am a Chinese girl. I’ve never...never invited a man up to my flat before. The forwardness of my actions makes my skin burn”¹³ indicates that “she” is a modest Chinese girl (Hwang, 31). This creates an illusion that Song takes a step forward for love bravely and makes Gallimard can’t help touching “her” hair and praises the beauty of “her”. Gallimard makes an evil experiment that he doesn’t phone or write “her” for five weeks and let “her” waiting for him, just like catching a butterfly who would writhe on a needle. The reason why he doing this is that he wants to get the rush of power, the absolute power of a man. Song writes him several letters and finally commits that “she” has already given him all “her” shame. Seemingly Gallimard has controlled Song but Song has controlled him in turn. Song confesses that “men always believe what they want to hear. So, a girl can tell the most obnoxious lies and the guys will believe them every time- ‘This is my first time’ - ‘That’s the biggest I’ve ever seen’-or both”¹⁴ (Hwang 82). So, when Gallimard kisses her roughly, she resists slightly and says “No...no...gently...please, I’ve never...”¹⁵ (Hwang 40). She lies many times such as “I’ve tried to appear experienced, but...the truth is...no” or “Please...it all frightens me. I’m a modest Chinese girl”¹⁶ (Hwang 40). Song meets all fantasies Gallimard has towards an eastern woman with a beautiful and slender appearance, a demure, and submissive character and an eastern identity. When Gallimard asks Song to strip, “she” makes a split decision to tell him that “she” is pregnant. “She” knows his wife Helga

¹⁰ David Henry Hwang. *M. Butterfly* (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 1989), p18.

¹¹ David Henry Hwang. *M. Butterfly* (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 1989), p21.

¹² David Henry Hwang. *M. Butterfly* (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 1989), p88.

¹³ David Henry Hwang. *M. Butterfly* (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 1989), p31.

¹⁴ David Henry Hwang. *M. Butterfly* (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 1989), p82.

¹⁵ David Henry Hwang. *M. Butterfly* (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 1989), p40.

¹⁶ David Henry Hwang. *M. Butterfly* (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 1989), p40.

is suspicious of his incompetence and behaves “her” trust on him. All in all, Song Liling is a successful actor and knows every inch of Gallimard’s desires. These all make him conceals invisibly.

3.3 Hybridity

The word “hybrid” is first mentioned in biology, meaning the hybridization of different biological species. Later, it is used in other subjects in natural science and social science. Russian formalist Bakhtin acclaims the “hybridity”¹⁷ of languages. First, within a language, the same language unit has different tones, stresses and meanings. Second, there is also hybridity between two or more languages. Homi Bhabha combines “hybridity” with postcolonial studies and advocates that the situations of colonization and colonization are mixed, thus developing a contradictory and fuzzy transitional space in the aspects between language identity and psychological mechanism. Therefore, “hybridity” refers to “the process of mixing different races, ethnic groups, ideologies, cultures and languages”¹⁸ (Han Ziman 2002: 54). Through this hybrid strategy, the colonized questioned and subverted the cultural hegemony of the colonizer, realized the movement of the third world criticism from the edge to the center, and enriched the worldwide cultural diversity.

The hybridity in *M. Butterfly* first indicates in its narration structure. The play *M. Butterfly* starts with the lead-in of the famous opera *Madame Butterfly*, and the two texts are mixed. The audience enters the theme easily by the western narration of *Madame Butterfly*. And different protagonists in *M. Butterfly* play different roles in the opera. Song Liling plays Cio-Cio-San, Gallimard plays Pinkerton, Gallimard’s friend Marc plays Sharpless and comrade Chin plays Cio-Cio-San’s faithful servant, Suzuki. This way of hybridity eliminates Song Liling’s heterogeneity. When Gallimard first meets with Song, she appears in the role of Cio-Cio-San, singing the death scene from *Madame Butterfly*. Cio-Cio-San is a typical oriental traditional woman in the eyes of westerners. She is gentle, beautiful and weak. She believes and listens to every word of Pinkerton. Such Cio-Cio-San has no independent consciousness. Even if she has her own idea, she can’t show it. Even if she has said what she thought, her voice is insignificant, and no one would care about her thoughts. In front of Pinkerton, the man from a powerful Western world, she is ignored. In other words, her right to speak has been deprived by the western world. As same as Cio-Cio-San, in *M. Butterfly*, Song Liling plays an eastern female. First, as an easterner, he is facing the unfair treatment of Westerners. Second, the women’s identity is oppressed by Gallimard, who represents absolute male power. Therefore, the image of Cio-Cio-San removes Gallimard’s suspicion of Song’s fake identity. The two stories’ lines are interwoven and relates to each other.

Second, there is hybridity in Song Liling’s gender. To begin with, Song enters “as a beautiful woman in traditional garb, dances a traditional piece from the Peking Opera, surrounded by the percussive clatter of Chinese music”¹⁹ (Hwang 1). The image of traditional eastern women has become the premise for white men to accept “her”, and also caters to the needs of the overall environment of white mainstream discourse. In act one, scene nine, Gallimard and Marc look out of the window, finding that Song wears a sheer robe. “With her back to us, Song mimes attending to her toilette. Her robe comes loose, revealing her white shoulders”²⁰ (Hwang 25). This is an extraordinary bootylicious scene for spectators. Cause all his life Gallimard has been waiting for a beautiful girl who would lay down for him. Though Gallimard, not good-looking and not strong, he thinks like a white man, he deserves a beautiful eastern girl. As a feminine embodiment, Song Liling pleases Gallimard’s sexual desire from the knowledge of “her” mother because “her” mother knows how to please a man for being a prostitute. She does all the work. All Gallimard has to do is only to lay back. Moreover, they have enjoyed a more complete union. After removing “her” makeup, wig and kimono, Song changes into a man, wearing a well-cut suit in the court. The shallow, glib and obsequious image completely without substance strikes Gallimard. It is totally different from the feminine image before. In order to help Gallimard see through his act, he removes his clothes and even his briefs. Finally, instead of sobbing, Gallimard bursts into laughs. He realizes that he has made an unforgivably ridiculous mistake and this misrecognition disrupts him in the end. He is a man who loves a woman created by a man. In the last scene of act three, Gallimard plays the Butterfly in the opera and plunges the knife into his body. Gallimard then transforms into a feminine image as supplementary.

Third, there exists hybridity in Song’s cultural identity. In essence, eastern culture is a tolerant, peaceful and flexible culture. The western culture is aggressive and wins others in a short time. In the

¹⁷ Kurt W. Back *Social psychology*. (Tianjin: Nankai University Press, 1987), p358.

¹⁸ Han Ziman. (2002) Literary translation and hybridity. *China Translation*, 2, p54.

¹⁹ David Henry Hwang. *M. Butterfly* (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 1989), p1.

²⁰ David Henry Hwang. *M. Butterfly* (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 1989), p25.

process of the hybridity of the two cultures, in order to achieve the ultimate goal, the eastern culture has to take circuitous tactics, first catering to the western culture, and then slowly permeating the western culture for a long time. In this process, eastern culture absorbs the advantages of western culture, seizes the loopholes of western culture, and constitutes a threat to western culture in turn. In his definition of eastern women, Gallimard thinks that eastern women are shy and submissive. Song Liling appropriately shows these characteristics: honesty, timidity and restraint. At their first meeting, Gallimard praises her beautiful performance and she replies "You make me blush. I'm no opera singer at all"²¹ (Hwang 16). It seems that Chinese people are always modest even though they make great achievements. When Song invites Gallimard up to her apartment, she pretends to be regretful, making an excuse that she is slightly afraid of scandal. And when Gallimard wants to remove the only barrier left between them, Song says "Well, come. Strip me. Whatever happens, know that you have willed it. Our love, in your hands. I'm helpless before my man"²² (Hwang 60). Therefore, Song Liling successfully plays the role of a weak eastern woman. In fact, he looks like a cad in slacks and a button-down collar. The eloquent cad image strikes Gallimard deeply.

Song Liling gradually penetrates the western discourse through the strategy of hybridity, and moves from the edge to the center of discourse. At the same time, it is not hard to find out that what influences or hinders the communication between the East and the West is not the existence of different cultures, but the cultural barriers created by western people. Westerners artificially define "the Other" by labels, and artificially create inequality. There is no doubt that the west is defining the paradigm and scope of world discourse, and using their pre-definition to define, judge and rewrite what they think is heterogeneous or even reactionary. Aiming at the cultural containment of western colonial thinking mode, Homi Bhabha's hybrid theory starts from the ambiguity and uncertainty of culture, actively penetrates the western mainstream discourse through the hybrid of western mainstream discourse, so as to loosen, melt and disintegrate the strong Western imperialist discourse, which becomes a new perspective to explore the communication between the East and the West in the postcolonial context.

3.4 Dissolution

Homi Bhabha's postcolonial criticism starts with the deconstruction of national myth. This kind of deconstruction is hybridized by sneaking into the inner part of national myth, and then creates a subversive third space. This strategy of hybridity transcends the heterogeneity of the two sides, dispels the essentialism base that the West has always constructed with political thinking and literary language, opening up a new development path for the culture of the third world with strong realistic criticism and militancy.

Henry David Hwang's *M. Butterfly* is a powerful and effective subversion of the wrong cultural cognition. A large number of western works of art share the same cultural stereotype: Asians are poor, uneducated manual workers. Asian women are delicate girls like a lotus blossom. They are submissive, humble and love family life. Song Li is not only a typical oriental woman, but also a special political spy. In the process of approaching Gallimard as a typical eastern woman, he incarnates the perfect woman in his imagination and pretends to give all "her" love for him. Therefore, he is deeply immersed in the illusion of Song Liling. Gallimard tries to stop Song from stripping his clothes and refused to accept reality. "You're only in my mind! All this is in my mind! I order you! To stop!"²³ (Hwang 87). It is not until the end of the play that he realizes that he had been cheated from the beginning. "I just think it's ridiculously funny that I've wasted so much time on just a man"²⁴ (Hwang 88). He couldn't bear the reality of being abandoned by his love and chooses to commit suicide to seek the perfection of his dream in death. "Death with honor is better than life...life with dishonor"²⁵ (Hwang 92). Song Liling, as an embodiment of eastern women, dissolves the authority of mainstream western cultural hegemony and the absolute power of men.

The reason why this strategy of mimicry, hybridity, and dissolution works are as follows: First, Song Liling's appearance, behaviors and discourse are consistent with Gallimard's expectations of traditional eastern women. He thinks that eastern women are shy, weak, conservative, have no sense of independence, and yield to powerful western men. In western world, Gallimard was once voted the least likely person to be invited to a party in high school. He was seen as a shy, timid and self-confident man

²¹ David Henry Hwang. *M. Butterfly* (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 1989), p16.

²² David Henry Hwang. *M. Butterfly* (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 1989), p60.

²³ David Henry Hwang. *M. Butterfly* (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 1989), p87.

²⁴ David Henry Hwang. *M. Butterfly* (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 1989), p88.

²⁵ David Henry Hwang. *M. Butterfly* (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 1989), p92.

in the view of westerners. As a man who is excluded by the western public, he is eager to show his power and the ability to conquer others. He believes that the eastern women would naturally admire him, just like Cio-Cio-San loves Pinkerton. "We, who are not handsome, nor brave, nor powerful, yet somehow believe, like Pinkerton, that we deserve a Butterfly"²⁶ (Hwang 10). At this time, Song Li appears in an obedient and domesticated image, which meets Gallimard's expectation approximately. Second, even though he knows it is a dream, Gallimard doesn't want to wake up. Gallimard admits that "Yes I do! I knew all the time somewhere that my happiness was temporary, my love a deception. But my mind kept the knowledge at bay. To make the wait bearable"²⁷ (Hwang 88). From the beginning to the end, Gallimard is immersed in the false illusion of his masculinity loved by the perfect woman. Due to the influence of cultural prejudice of Orientalism, he only yearns for the delicate and beautiful Oriental women, rejects the mixed-gender identity, and refuses to treat the eastern culture with a new perspective, which leads to his spiritual collapse and destruction inevitably. On the contrary, Song Liling survives. He dares to admit the ambiguity of his gender identity and plays two roles when necessary. On the court, he directly accuses the western psychology of rape, and easily wanders in the ambiguity between men and women. It is he who survives in the third space he has built for himself at last.

4. Conclusion

To sum up, the story of *Madame Butterfly* is the product of the wishful thinking of white men in the West. There are deep traces of racism and colonialism in its story. What's worse, it helps westerners build stereotypes about the race and gender of the East. David Henry Hwang's *M. Butterfly* is a great reversion from the relationship between men and women and the relationship between men and women. It not only deconstructs the stereotype of Oriental women as Madame Butterfly in the eyes of westerners, but also reverses the original power relationship between the East and the West, which becomes the voice that is opposite to the western centralism and makes a surprising inversion of the potential cultural hegemony and power relationship in the original relationship between the East and the West.

M. butterfly was once regarded as an anti-American drama. However, in this play, Huang doesn't want to promote the political view that east wind prevails over the west wind. Instead, he hopes that in today's globalized and diversified world, both the East and the West could reflect on themselves, enrich themselves and treat each other honestly. In a protest against racism and sexism, David Henry Hwang makes such a remarkable work to appeal to all sides to cut through the cultural discrimination and sexual misperception. With the development of the global economy, different nationalities, cultures, and languages are communicating with each other and hybridize together. In search of a mutually benefit society, every side must treat each other fairly and objectively, creating an open, harmonious, and peaceful atmosphere.

References

- [1] Back, K.W. (1987) *Social Psychology*. Tianjin: Nankai University Press.
- [2] Bhabha, K. (1994) *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge
- [3] Han Ziman. (2002) *Literary Translation and Hybridity*. *China Translation*, 2, 54.
- [4] Huang Sheng, Cai rongshou. (2009) *Deconstruction of Gender and Race in Butterfly King*. *Journal of Anhui Agricultural University (SOCIAL SCIENCE EDITION)*, 1, 82-84.
- [5] Hwang, H. (1989) *M. Butterfly*. London: Penguin Books Ltd.
- [6] Jenkins, R. (1996) *Social Identity*. London and New York: Routledge, 1996.
- [7] Ji Xiuming. (2012) *On Heterogeneous Space in Contemporary Western Ecological Literature*. *Contemporary Foreign Literature*, 1, 50-56.
- [8] Kondo, K. M. (1990) *Butterfly: Orientalism, Gender, and a Critique of Essentialist Identity*. *Cultural Critique*, 16, 15-17.
- [9] Liu Beicheng. (2001) *Foucault's Ideological Portrait*. Shanghai: Shanghai Translation Publishing House.
- [10] Lu Wei. (2005) *Deconstruction and Reconstruction in Infiltration: Chinese American literature from the Perspective of Postcolonial Theory*. Beijing: Beijing Language and Culture University.
- [11] Lu Wei. (2004) *Simulation, ambiguity and hybridity -- a Postcolonial Interpretation from Mrs. Butterfly to Mr. Butterfly*. *Foreign Literature*, 4, 86-91.
- [12] Massey, D. (1994) *Space, Place and Gender*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

²⁶ David Henry Hwang. *M. Butterfly* (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 1989), p10.

²⁷ David Henry Hwang. *M. Butterfly* (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 1989), p88.

- [13] Parry, B. (1987) *Problems in Current Theories of Colonial Discourse. The Oxford Literary Review*, 9, 43.
- [14] Ricoeur, P. (1994) *Oneself as Another. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.*
- [15] Said, E. (1978) *Orientalism. New York: Random House.*
- [16] Sheng Anfeng. (2005) *Post Colonialism, Identity and Minority Humanization - An Interview with Homi Bhabha. Foreign Literature*, 6, 56-61.
- [17] Shimakawa, K. (1993) "Who's to say?" or, *Making Space for Gender and Ethnicity in M. Butterfly. Theatre Journal*, 3, 349-362.
- [18] Straub, D. (1997) *Asian American Voices. New York: Gale.*
- [19] Sunner, W. (1998) *Postmodern double cross: Reading David Cronenberg's M. Butterfly as a horror story. Cinema Journal*, 2, 53-54.
- [20] Wang Lixia. (2020) *Construction of Cross-cultural Identity - Based on Homi Bhabha's hybrid theory. English Square*, 16, 73-76.
- [21] Wang Ning. (2002) *Narration, Cultural Orientation and Identity - Homi Bhabha's Postcolonial Criticism Theory. Foreign Literature*, 6, 49-53.
- [22] Wang Yuechuan. (1999) *Literary Theory of Post Colonialism and New Historicism. Jinan: Shandong Education Press.*
- [23] Xu Ben. (1996) *Towards Postmodernism and Postcolonial. Beijing: China Social Sciences Press.*