

Writing Back to the Empire: From *M. Butterfly* to *Madame Butterfly*

從《蝴蝶君》到《蝴蝶夫人》：逆寫帝國後殖民理論

Presented in FILLM International Congress

Re-imagining Language and Literature for the 21st Century at Assumption University,
Bangkok, Thailand. August 18-23, 2002

Cecilia Hsueh Chen Liu 劉雪珍
English Department 英文系
Fu Jen University, Taiwan 輔仁大學

Abstract

Keywords: parody 諧擬, travestism 性別反串、扮/變裝, hegemony 霸權,
Dialogism 對話論, Bakhtinian concept 巴赫汀理論, Eurocentric
ideology 歐洲中心論, colonial mimicry 殖民模仿, simulacrum 擬像,
post-colonial theory 後殖民理論

Most critical concerns of David Henry Hwang's *M. Butterfly* center around the issues of gender, identity, ethnicity, theatricality, and subversions of the binary oppositions such as West vs. East, Male vs. Female, Master vs. Slave, Victor vs. Victim, Colonizer vs. Colonized, Reality vs. Fantasy, Mind vs. Body and so on. It is agreed that Hwang successfully parodies *Madame Butterfly* by means of transvestism and transformation of western male into the critical butterfly. The transformation of the characters, either Gallimard or Song, demonstrates the dynamics or ambivalence or destabilization of gender, identity and culture politics. Bakhtinian concept of dialogism is used to expound the textuality and meaning of the play, while Gramsci's hegemony is cited to describe the western cultural leadership. Edward Said's *Orientalism* is applied to explain the Eurocentric ideology as well as misconception. Kathryn Remen makes good use of Michel Foucault's concepts of discipline and punishment and presents a convincing case of reading *M. Butterfly* as "the theatre of punishment" in which we, Gallimard's ideal audience, align ourselves with the punishing power and witness our prisoner Gallimard's death penalty for his over-indulgence in the fantasy of the perfect woman. However, some questions remain unanswered: Must one re-inscribe stereotypes in order to subvert them? What is the nature of power and gender identity? Does Hwang elide in-depth exploration of homosexuality or homophobia by appropriating travestism? My reading of *M. Butterfly* attempts to answer the above questions together with other post-colonial considerations.

Writing Back to the Empire: From *M. Butterfly* to *Madame Butterfly* 從《蝴蝶君》到《蝴蝶夫人》：逆寫帝國後殖民理論

I. Introduction

The 1988 Tony-Award winning play *M. Butterfly* written by Chinese American playwright David Henry Hwang makes a great hit among the Broadway shows. More importantly, it invites quite a few cross cultural discussions and speculations. The play is about the incredible love affair between a former French diplomat Rene Gallimard and a Chinese opera singer Liling Song, who turns out to be a man and a spy. It is inspired by a two-paragraph story in *The New York Times* (May 1986) in which a French diplomat Bernard Bouriscot was guilty of treason by disclosing confidential national secret to his Chinese “girlfriend” Pei-pu Shi, who disguised “his” sexual identity under the “modest” Chinese costume. Hwang perceives the rupture of the story, namely Bouriscot’s assumptions of the Asian stereotypes, and develops it into a “great *Madame Butterfly*-like tragedy” (Hwang 95). Hwang provides a plausible reason to explain why after twenty years of cohabitation, Bouriscot has learned nothing, including the true sexuality, about his lover: “For the myths of the East, the myths of the West, the myths of men, and the myths of women” have “so saturated our consciousness” that we, including Bouriscot, prefer to remain in a convenient world of surface and bypass “truthful contact between nations and lovers” (Hwang 100). In other words, it is the rampant cross-cultural misperceptions or misconceptions that enable Hwang to create a good play. This also is the reason why *M. Butterfly* is often chosen for the text of the present post-colonial study.

In addition, *M. Butterfly* is designated a political play. Hwang specifies his intent, positionality as well as strategy in the “Afterword,” declaring that he is to write a “deconstructivist *Madame Butterfly*” linking “imperialism, sexism, and racism” by “breaking the back of the story” (95). The trajectory of “breaking the back of the story” is reminiscent of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s radical method of “reading against the grain” so as to locate the silence which spots *aporias* (gaps or lacunas between thoughts and rhetoric) and the signs of resistance (Spivak 197). Likewise, Hwang intends to radicalize his source story to the root and probe the ideas or imagined space beyond the story. But Hwang cautions the reader that his “deconstructivist *Madame Butterfly*” is not “an anti-American play” or “a diatribe against the stereotyping of the East by the West, of women by men” (100) although the conventional narrative of the Italian opera is about a submissive geisha girl Cho-Cho San (“Butterfly” in Japanese), who sacrifices her life for a “Vagabond Yankee”—Lieutenant Benjamin Franklin Pinkerton of the American navy. Whereas

Puccini's *Madame Butterfly* contains "a wealth of sexist and racist clichés," it still reaffirms Hwang's "faith in Western culture" (95). Therefore, in *M. Butterfly*, Hwang desires to subvert the stereotypes by re-inscribing them and wills his play to be "a plea to all sides to cut through our respective layers of cultural and sexual misperception" (100).

As for Hwang's positionality, it is explicit that his complicity lies with the West rather than the East. Given his background (the second generation son from a wealthy Christian Chinese family in America) and emerging status in the American theatre, we have good reasons to believe "the Asian component of his sensibility had already incorporated the West" (Biggsby 330). Despite the fact that Hwang is known for genuine combination of Western and Asian theatre forms and that once he remarks his plays are "his attempt to 'explore human issues without denying the color of [his] skin,'" there is no denying that he fills his service in the regime of American theatre, which to him means "to acknowledge the multi-cultural nature of American society" (Biggsby 330). Moreover, Janet Haedicke asserts that "*M. Butterfly* achieves its political object 'to fight the religion of the present in America' by trying 'to link imperialism, racism, sexism [in] a certain historical perspective'" (28). Indeed, Hwang's pro-American positionality might be able to account for the polarized responses from his audience. According to a reader-response project conducted by John J. Deeney, a professor from Chinese University of Hong Kong, American responses to Hwang's play "have been positive and readers have not been unduly upset by the deliberate aberrations from conventional thinking and acting. On the other hand, Chinese readers have been largely negative, contrary to what one might have thought" (29). Overtly, Hwang's play has a greater appeal to the Americans than to the Chinese. This different reception reassures us that Hwang's *M. Butterfly* is not so much a correction of the cultural indictment of the East as criticism of the Western attitudes toward the East. At this point, Hwang's positionality is similar to that of J. M. Coetzee, a white South African writer and critic. Coetzee in his famous book *White Writing* documents important works of South African literature. But more often than not, Coetzee alludes to the Western literary tradition and writes about the appraisals of the imagined space of European and North American genres and their impact on the natal space of South Africa. A central argument of Coetzee is that "writing . . . is white insofar as it is generated by the concerns of people no longer European, not yet African" (11). In this light, *M. Butterfly* could be another kind of white writing for it is also haunted by the imperial past and set out to explore the grey area which is neither white nor black.

Nevertheless, *M. Butterfly* is valuable as a practical test to recent theoretical speculations. Most critical concerns of the play center around the issues of gender,

identity, ethnicity, theatricality, and subversions of the binary oppositions such as West vs. East, Male vs. Female, Master vs. Slave, Victor vs. Victim, Colonizer vs. Colonized, Reality vs. Fantasy, Mind vs. Body and so on. It is agreed that Hwang successfully parodies *Madame Butterfly* by means of travestism and transformation of western male into the critical butterfly. The transformation of the characters, either Gallimard or Song, demonstrates the dynamics or ambivalence or destabilization of gender, identity and culture politics. More interestingly, Jung Su applies Bakhtinian concept of dialogism to explain the textuality and meaning of the play, while Gramsci's hegemony is cited to describe the western cultural leadership. Edward Said's *Orientalism* is applied to explain the Eurocentric ideology as well as misconception (Su 90). Kathryn Remen makes good use of Michel Foucault's concepts of discipline and punishment and presents a convincing case of reading *M. Butterfly* as "the theatre of punishment" in which we, Gallimard's ideal audience, align ourselves with the punishing power and witness our prisoner Gallimard's death penalty for his over-indulgence in the fantasy of the perfect woman (399-400). However, some questions remain unanswered. For example, Hsiao-Hung Chang and Dorinne K. Kondo both ask, "Must one reinscribe stereotypes in order to subvert them?" What is the nature of power and gender identity? "Does Hwang elide in-depth exploration of homosexuality or homophobia by appropriating travestism?" (Su 95). Haedicke is puzzled when "*M. Butterfly* begs for a feminist reading; yet an Anglo-American feminism grounded in sexual difference as paradigmatic opposition falters before the play" (27). My reading of *M. Butterfly* attempts to answer the above questions together with other post-colonial considerations. In the meantime, I'd like to introduce my reading strategies labeled as "interpellation and interpolation" derived from Bill Ashcroft's essay "Interpellation and Post-colonial Agency" and his book *The Empire Writes Back*.

II. Interpellation and Interpolation

M. Butterfly is a text appropriate for post-colonial speculation in that it is written with post-colonial strategies. As mentioned before, Hwang writes his deconstructivist play by "breaking the back of the story." It turns out he writes a parody against *Madame Butterfly*, successfully subverting a western canon. Indeed, he is practicing re-placing theory advocated in the influential book *The Empire Writes Back*. In explaining post-colonialism as reading strategy, Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin start by pointing out the subversion of a canon involves not only replacement of other texts, but more importantly, a conscious alternative reading (*The Empire Writes Back* 189). While commenting on the post-colonial readings of canonical works such as

Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, they write, "more important than the simple reading of the text itself by critics or in productions has been widespread employment of the characters and structure of *The Tempest* as a general metaphor for imperial-margin relations, or, more widely, to characterize some specific aspect of post-colonial reality" (Ashcroft, *The Empire Writes Back* 190). Re-reading or re-writing *The Tempest* has become a paradigm for post-colonial literature. Moreover, there exists a tendency to make the *silent* characters speak for themselves. For example, Jean Rhys' strategies of writing back to Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* in *Wide Sargasso Sea* are to centralize the marginal character—the madwoman in the attic—and to interrogate those ordinary tropes of invasion and colonization, such as the system of slavery. "From a post-colonial reading perspective such unspoken subjects may well become the crucial announcements of the text" (Ashcroft, *The Empire Writes Back* 193). In this light, David Henry Hwang writes back to Puccini's imperialist text by articulating the conventionally voiceless Butterfly. If Gallimard were not so obsessed with his imperial fantasy, he should have recognized the two different Butterflies. When he meets Song at the German Embassy, Song on the stage "was a Butterfly with little or no voice—but she had the grace, the delicacy" although he also believes that "in opera the voice is everything" (Hwang 15). But when he approaches Song offstage, he is "silenced" by her pungent refutation, re-imagining a western woman sacrificing for a short Japanese man. Another triumphant moment at which Song retorts against the western masculinity is when s/he answers the judge's interrogation in the French courtroom:

Judge: Would you care to enlighten the court with this secret knowledge? I'm sure we're all very curious.

Song: I'm sure you are. (*Pause*) Okay, Rule One is: 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* . . . You've maybe heard those phrases a few times in your own life, yes, Your Honor?

Judge: It's not my life, Monsieur Song, which is on trial today.

Song: Rule Two: 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. Do you know rape mentality?

Judge: Give us your definition, please.

Song: Basically, "Her mouth says no, but her eyes say yes."

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. (Hwang 82-83)

In truth, Hwang allots quite a lot of speaking space to the supposedly submissive subjects. Song the travestite just now speaks in the identity of an oriental woman.

And many of his words repeat the exact phrases that Gallimard has said about the Vietnamese. But the repetition sounds ironic because of its being uttered by an emasculated subject. Similarly, when Renee challenges the phallocentrism with her “clinical” observation and outspoken comment about “weenie” (the penis), her words are “simply not acceptable” to Gallimard (Hwang 55-56). However, Hwang succeeds in making them heard.

Besides, Hwang makes good use of the strategies of appropriation and reversal of the original text. The most obvious example is key details, phrases, or themes of *Madame Butterfly* have been enacted or quoted but distorted at the appropriate place of *M. Butterfly*. Even *M. Butterfly* itself is put within a “big quotation mark” for we may read the play as Gallimard’s confessional monologue before death. The confessional framework is akin to the memory of Tom in Tennessee Williams’s *The Glass Menagerie*. The narrator can walk in and out of the memory freely. The intrusion of reality into fantasy or fantasy into reality is also Arthur Miller’s favorite technique. But Hwang uses it to usurp the reality as well as fantasy. This is how he creates the ambivalent, actually traumatic, moment for Gallimard to commit suicide. Unlike the conventional tragedy which presents recognition at the end, *M. Butterfly* provides a tragic misrecognition. That is also an intriguing subversion of the conventional trope.

To sum up, in Hwang’s play we find a good demonstration of Bill Ashcroft’s “principle of post-colonial agency” by means of “interpolation.” According to Ashcroft, the most contentious problem in post-colonial theory is how to make the voice of the colonized heard. Can the subaltern speak? Or can one use the language of imperialism without being inescapably contaminated by an imperial world view? To answer those questions, Ashcroft proposes this principle of post-colonial agency, the kind of agency available to the subaltern subject. He explains:

... the principle concedes, on the one hand, the central function of language in constructing subjectivity, but which confirms that capacity of the colonized subject to intervene in the material conditions of suppression in order to transform them. The point is that this is invention. Resistance to imperial control does not necessarily mean rejection, the utter refusal to countenance any engagement with its forms and discourses... the most effective post-colonial resistance has always been the wrestling from imperial hands of some measure of political control over such things as language, writing and various kinds of cultural discourse, the entry into the “scene” of colonisation to reveal frictions of cultural difference, to actually make use of aspects of the colonising culture so as to generate transformative cultural production. In this way, the colonized subject “interpolates” into the dominant discourse, and this word interpolation is the general term I want to use for this range of resistance practice. (“Interpolation” 176-77)

To paraphrase and summarize Hwang's theatrical method and Ashcroft's theorization, I would come out a rough depiction of how *M. Butterfly* "writes back to the empire". It begins with a radicalized reading of the canon, then spots the rupture or the silence in the text, re-registers the alienated other into the dominate culture, regains the speaking power and makes the difference or friction seen or heard. But this sounds like one-way wish fulfillment. Moreover, Ashcroft is aware what Edward Said has warned about the "inequitable exchange" between the west and the east, the *aufhebung* and the subaltern (*The Empire Writes Back* 179). The ambivalent, precarious, almost unpredictable relationship between the dominator and the dominated is another uncontrollable variable to prevent one from conforming to Ashcroft's solution. To settle down the confusing colonizer-colonized relationship, Ashcroft appropriates a rhizome model. He further explicates:

A better model of the ambivalent, fluid, chaotic relationships within the colonial exchanges and indeed of social reality itself is perhaps provided by a concept that I want to appropriate from Deleuze and Guattari: that of the rhizome. The rhizome describes a root system which spreads out laterally rather than vertically, as in bamboo, which has no central root but which propagates itself in a fragmented, discontinuous, multi-directional way.... But this notion is just as constructed as that of center and margin, just as much in the interests of perpetuating power as the Manichean binaries of self and other, coloniser and colonised. The imperial power represents itself as a central root, but in fact the operation of power, like the operation of social relations themselves is both processual and discontinuous and propagates laterally and spatially like the rhizome. This metaphor provides a complicated and less easily representable model of colonial relations, but it does accommodate the various subject positions an individual may occupy within the colonial discourse. The colonised subject may also be the colonising subject depending on its location in the rhizome. ("Interpolation" 183-84)

The rhizome model seems convincing especially when it is applied to describe the subverted power or gender relations in *M. Butterfly*. Song indeed overpowers Gallimard at the end of the play. Yet, what about the day after? The subversion does not mean total negation or replacement. The western hegemony may stay in power even when Gallimard ceases to be. Likewise, *Madame Butterfly* will continue to be sung, appreciated, or depreciated, even parodied, or maybe assimilated by different people in different positionality and to different degree. To me, the rhizome seems a preferred map to visualize the post-colonial situation. Of course there are other considerations to discuss about Hwang's play.

But most importantly, Ashcroft's post-colonial theories of interpolation and rhizome have answered the questions for Hwang. Must one re-inscribe stereotypes in

order to subvert them? The answer is yes. According to Ashcroft, it is a worthy risk. Although it may not completely resist or overthrow the hegemony, it does not necessarily become contaminated in it. In fact it is not possible to maintain cultural purity or isolation. As for the question of the nature of power and gender, the rhizome gives a vivid depiction. The power is indeed a matter of positionality and interaction for it is always in the fluid destabilization, so is gender. Gallimard, Song, and even Comrade Chin can be male, female and androgynous, depending on the situation. The question whether Hwang has avoided the discussion of homosexuality by means of travestism will be answered when I come to post-colonial consideration of the white womanhood.

III. More Post-colonial Consideration

M. Butterfly maps out a convincing post-colonial situation. *The Empire Writes Back* defines “post-colonial” as “to cover all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day” (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin 2). David Henry Hwang in his “Afterword” points out his use of the term “oriental,” instead of Asian or Chinese, specifically to denote an exotic or imperialistic view of the East. Although the play takes place in the decade 1960-1970 in Beijing or from 1966 to the present in Paris, Gallimard, his wife Helga and their western friends cannot get rid of their imperialistic mentality but hold on to colonial fantasy. Gallimard compares himself to Pinkerton because he says, “We, who are not handsome, nor brave, nor powerful, yet somehow believe, like Pinkerton, that we deserve a Butterfly” (Hwang 10). Helga at her first appearance points out her colonial background. She declares, “My father was ambassador to Australia. I grew up among animals and kangaroos” (Hwang 14). More often than not, she acts like a tourist and goes with the ladies to a martial arts demonstration. Moreover, the Danish student Renee with whom Gallimard has “extra-extramarital affair” has a father exporting “a lot of useless stuff to the Third World” (Hwang 52). Gallimard’s supervisor Toulon, who is also French ambassador to China, insists that he lives in China but not with Chinese (Hwang 45). To the westerners, the imperial past is never passed; the post-colonial situation is endlessly prolonged. That is why they continue to sing and read their imperialist narrative *Madame Butterfly* and wonder why the Chinese cannot appreciate its beautiful music (Hwang 19). Ironically, they would never understand why the Chinese are “incredibly arrogant” about their “very old civilization” (Hwang 18).

However, the seemingly overdetermining post-colonial situation is bitterly felt by the Orient, not the West. In Puccini’s opera, it is Cho Cho San who suffers and

sacrifices herself. “Death with honor/ Is better than life/ Life with dishonor,” (Hwang 15, 92) she says. But to whom does she do the honor? What does her death mean? Vron Ware makes a very interesting comment on interracial love affairs and her conclusion is

Interracial sex frequently leads to death in colonial fiction, and it is important to ask what this means. Is it a discourse on the impossibility of love between a man and woman from entirely different cultures? (233)

If Ware is right, I would add that the suffering or death is often assigned to the third world woman, just like butterflies which are often caught and pinned to death. Consequently, Gallimard has to transform himself into a Butterfly woman before he commits suicide if his suicide is to repay the impossible love.

In fact, the overdetermining post-colonial situation is responsible for the production of Third World Difference that dehumanizes the oriental woman like Song Liling into “plaything.” “Third World Difference” is a term used by Chandra Talpade Mohanty to describe that “ahistorical something that apparently oppresses most if not all the women in the [third world] countries” (53-54). As a matter of fact, Mohanty’s essay “Under Western Eyes” is valuable in “critiquing Western feminism which too easily elide[s] specific cultural difference and ‘naturalise[s]’ all women’s oppression under widely differing manifestations of patriarchal domination to European models” (53). Song makes a similar distinction when she taunts Gallimard at the first meeting with a sharp contrast between the Western woman and the Oriental woman:

Song: Consider it this way: what would you say if a blond 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. (Hwang 17)

She is fully aware that the Oriental woman is the object of the Caucasian men’s imperial fantasy. She asks Gallimard—

Song: Could you imagine it otherwise? Clubs in China filled with pasty, big-thighed white women, while thousands of slender lotus blossoms wait just outside the doors? Never. The Clubs would be empty. We have always held a certain fascination for you Caucasian men.

Gallimard: . . . that fascination is imperial, or so you tell me. (Hwang 22)

Song’s statements well support Mohanty’s third-world difference. That also answers Janet Haedicke’s puzzle when she claims that Anglo-American feminist reading for sexual difference is frustrated by *M. Butterfly*. White women may take a similar

standing with their men. As the famous feminist poet Adrienne Rich states,

White feminists today, raised white in a racist society, are often ridden with white solipsism—not the consciously held belief that one race is inherently superior to all others, but a tunnel-vision which simply does not see nonwhite experience or existence as precious or significant, unless in spasmodic, impotent, guilt-reflexes, which have little or no long-term continuing momentum or political uselessness.

(qtd. in Ware 20)

Indeed, there are two different worlds of women. Besides, gender or sexual ambivalence that Hwang creates in his play may be responsible for Haedicke's frustration. But Haedicke admits she has a "still haunting response" to the play at the beginning of her essay. It is because when she attended the performance of the play in New York in 1988, she expected "an indictment of male exploitation" and "viewing the discomfort of her male companions" before the play. But she turned out to be the one who was defiant and who "had pleaded guilty to the Asian's onstage indictment of Western men" (27). That is, she sympathized with subjectivity of Song and felt guilty for pushing Gallimard to the death end. Haedicke's ambiguous response to the play points out the functional role of white femininity in the post-colonial situation. In fact, Vron Ware has proposed white womanhood on the agenda of post-colonial discourse which becomes one of the major aims of her book *Beyond the Pale*. She further expounds, "I hope to demonstrate that the construction of white femininity—that is, the different ideas about what it means to be a white female—can play a pivotal role in negotiating & maintaining concepts of racial and cultural difference" (4). In truth, white femininity in the western history has long been regarded as a symbol of civilization. In the fictions, she is used to convey Eurocentric attitudes toward race and class. Consider the women characters, especially old women in the novels of Henry James and E. M. Forster. In the colonial fiction, she may become an excuse for flaunting power. Adela Questeds in *A Passage to India* may be a good example. Her quest is to alienate Fielding from the colonized subject Aziz. With this knowledge in mind, I discover Hwang has a clever use of his white female characters, Helga and Renee.

To begin with, Helga is characterized older than Gallimard, ignorant about Chinese opera, but a "pretense" to keep the good name of Gallimard. Her snobbish attitude toward the customs and history is farcical in a sense, but it is typical of the Eurocentric mentality. Her marital relationship is sterile but does safeguard Gallimard's heterosexuality. Ironically, she seems more functional in China than in France. Gallimard is to divorce her even before he knows Song is coming to seek him out. There is an unsaid irony when Helga is attracted by the riot right in her own country! Paradoxically, both Helga and Gallimard have found their life in China more enjoyable. Helga confesses to Gallimard:

I never thought I'd say it. But, in China, I was happy. I knew, in my own way, I knew that you were not everything you pretended to be. But the pretense—going on your arm to the embassy ball, visiting your office and the guards saying, “Good morning, good morning, Madame Gallimard”—the pretense... was very good indeed. (Hwang 75)

The function of Helga in the play can be viewed as the hidden consciousness of Gallimard. She is like a fictional trope to disguise the unpleasant side of Gallimard's mentality. The English novelist Charles Dickens is famous for using women characters to speak of human evil. But Hwang uses Helga to cover Gallimard's weakness. For example, in China she reminds Gallimard of the duty of a married man and giving birth to the offspring. In a word, Helga is a dutiful colonial daughter, who is functional but not effective in the post-colonial discourse.

Renee, on the other hand, reveals the aggressive side of Gallimard. Her boldness in sexuality and craze for exotic China are attractive to Gallimard because Gallimard would like to explore that hidden space. Here is Gallimard's comment about her:

And so, I embarked on my first extra-extramarital affair. Renee was picture perfect. With a body like those girls in the magazines. If I put a tissue paper over my eyes, I wouldn't have been able to tell the difference. And it was exciting to be with someone who wasn't afraid to be seen completely naked. But is it possible for a woman to be *too* uninhibited, *too* willing, so as to seem almost *too*... masculine? (Hwang 54)

Psychologically speaking, Renee represents Gallimard's adventure for exotic sexuality. Her masculinity may account for Gallimard's hidden homosexuality while Helga's existence reminds Gallimard of homophobia. Hence I consider that Hwang has explored the discussion of sexuality not only in the exploration of the oriental women, or travestism, but also in the construction of white femininity.

In conclusion, post-colonialism as a reading strategy helps me see why and how David Henry Hwang wants to write a deconstructivist play. He does not like cultural misconceptions or misperceptions as much as we do. He does not like stereotypes of any kind either. But it seems likely that he can write as many plays as the misconceptions he can locate in his multi-cultural American society. His play is not to further extend these misconceptions; instead, they help us see why and how the bias or fantasy is produced and affecting our life. Moreover, the meaning of Hwang's deconstructivist text does not stop with de-canonizing or overthrowing a canon. “A canon,” Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin argue, “is not a body of text *per se*, but rather a set of reading practices...” (*The Empire Writes Back* 189). And *M. Butterfly* does provide a set of alternative reading practices.

Works Cited

- Ashcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths, & Helen Tiffin. *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-colonial Literatures*. London: Routledge, 1989.
- . "Interpolation and Post-colonial Agency." *New Literature Review* 28/29 (1994-1995): 176-89.
- , eds. *The Post-colonial Studies Reader*. London: Routledge, 1995.
- Bigsby, G.W. E. *Modern American Drama, 1945-1990*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1992.
- Chang, Hsiao-hung (張小虹). "Cultural/Sexual/Theatrical Ambivalence in *M. Butterfly*." *Tamkang Review* 23: 1-4 (1992-1993): 735-55.
- Coetzee, J. M. *White Writing*. New Haven and London: Yale UP, 1988.
- Deeney, John J. "Of Monkeys and Butterflies: Transformation in M. H. Kingston's *Tripmaster Monkey* and D. H. Hwang's *M. Butterfly*." *Melus* 18.4 (Winter 1993): 21-39.
- Haedicke, Janet V. "David Henry Hwang's *M. Butterfly*: The Eye on the Wing." *Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism* 7.2 (Fall 1992): 27-44.
- Hwang, David Henry. *M. Butterfly*. New York: Penguin, 1988.
- Kondo, Dorinne K. "*M. Butterfly*: Orientalism, Gender, and a Critique of Essentialist Identity." *Cultural Critique* 16 (1990): 5-29.
- Mohanty, Chandra Talpade. "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses." *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism*. Ed. Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Ann Russo, and Lourdes Torres. Indianapolis: Indiana UP, 1991. 51-80.
- Remen, Kathryn. "The Theatre of Punishment: David Henry Hwang's *M. Butterfly* and Michel Foucault's *Discipline and Punish*." *Modern Drama* 37 (1994): 391-400.
- Shimakawa, Karen. "'Who's to Say?' Or Making Space for Gender and Ethnicity in *M. Butterfly*." *Theatre Journal* 45.3 (October 1993): 349-62.
- Skloot, Robert. "Breaking the Butterfly: The Politics of David Henry Hwang." *Modern Drama* 33.1 (March 1990): 59-66.
- Spivak, Gayatri. *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics*. New York: The U of Chicago P, 1992.
- Su, Jung (蘇榕). "From 'Madame Butterfly' to 'M. Butterfly': Cultural/Gender/Theatrical Subversion in *M. Butterfly*." *Research Papers in Linguistics and Literature* 4 (May 1995): 86-106.
- Ware, Vron. *Beyond the Pale: White Women, Racism and History*. London: Verso, 1992.