

CHAPTER THREE

CONCLUSION

The portrayal of the major characters in David Henry Hwang's M. Butterfly is used as an attempt to erode the stereotypes which have the negative images for a long time. He conveys these purposes in three steps. First, he introduces the stereotypes in Madame Butterfly which is created by Westerner. Second, Hwang creates the major characters which are portrayed differently from the old stereotypes. Third, Hwang reverses the position that Westerners are superior to Asians.

In the first step, I see that Hwang seems to agree with the old stereotypes. In the beginnings, he portrays the Asian and Western major characters as the old stereotypes. Therefore, to remind and make the reader aware about the stereotypes, he uses Puccini's opera, Madame Butterfly, as an example of Westerner's perspective about the ideal image of Asian and Westerner. Hwang uses the same stereotypes and the same idea of the story in his play that portrays the Western character who gets attracted to Asian woman who is helpless and submissive to Westerner. It makes Westerner underestimate them. However, Hwang portrays the major characters the

same as the stereotypes in Madame Butterfly, later in the play he will reconstruct the idea of the story and reverse the stereotypes.

M. Butterfly is about a French diplomat, Rene Gallimard, who is sent to Beijing during Vietnam War, is being spied by Song who works for Chinese Government. Gallimard meets Song and he falls in love with Song who has the same characteristic with Butterfly in Madame Butterfly who is helpless and submissive to Western character. Song is actually a man who disguises as an Asian woman to gain political information.

The second step of eroding the stereotypes, Hwang creates the character of the Asian and Westerner that are different with the stereotypes. This portrayal reverses the old stereotypes. Song, the Asian character, is portrayed as smart, educated and outspoken person. Song is a spy who disguises as an Asian woman and benefits these stereotypes above to cheat Gallimard. Song deceives Gallimard and makes him believe that Song is a typical Asian woman who is submissive and helpless. It makes Song succeed to gain the political information

On the other hand, Rene, the Western character is the one who is helpless, weak and stupid. Gallimard's mind is trapped by the stereotype and the story of Madame Butterfly. He admires this opera and he wishes to be in the same condition as Pinkerton, the Western male character in Madame Butterfly who has power over the submissive Madame Butterfly. Therefore, Gallimard finds and expects Song to have an Asian woman characteristic as Madame Butterfly who is submissive to Westerner. Furthermore, this makes Gallimard blinded and gradually surrender to

Song as he falls in love with her. He has believed for twenty years that Song is a woman.

When Gallimard is helpless and surrenders to Song, the position of Westerner as superior people is reversed. This is also the third step of Hwang to erode the stereotypes that Asians are helpless and pathetic while the Westerners are powerful and superior to Asians. He reverses the Western and Asian position. Through the Asia character, Song's position as Asian woman and man raises. Song as a woman can control Gallimard's mind. Song makes Gallimard fall in love and surrender to Song. Moreover, Song's position as a man is also superior to Gallimard. Song as a spy is freed and he survives until the end of the story while Gallimard is still imprisoned as he is accused of passing political information; furthermore, he decides to commit suicide because he cannot bear his shame.

By eroding and reversing these stereotypes, I see that in M. Butterfly, Hwang succeeds to raise the Asian position and erode the negative stereotype. In this play Asian can show their true image and their strength.

From my analysis I conclude that Hwang succeeds to erode the stereotypes. He erodes the Western stereotypes toward Asian who are helpless, pathetic and submissive through the portrayal of the major characters who is differently with the stereotypes. Furthermore, Hwang creates a new positive image that Asian is smart, educated and outspoken.