



2st International Congress of
Educational Sciences and Linguists (ICEL 2023)
20-21 July 2023



Warsaw / POLAND

<https://www.icssietcongress.com/icel-2023>

A POSTSTRUCTURALIST ANALYSIS OF DAVID HENRY HWANG'S "M. BUTTERFLY"

Assist. Prof. Neslihan GÜNAYDIN ALBAY

Department of English Language and Literature at Doğuş University, İstanbul/ TÜRKİYE

Abstract

Premiered in 1988, American playwright David Henry Hwang's "*M. Butterfly*" is focused on the relationship between Bernard Boursicot, who was a French diplomat and Shi Pei Pu, who was a Peking opera singer. The play deconstructs gender and ethnic stereotypes by reversing the binary opposition of the male versus female, and western versus oriental. In Puccini's famous romantic tragedy, the oriental is depicted as weak, submissive and loyal under the dominance of patriarchy and western power. However, Hwang deconstructs binary oppositions by reversing the original plot. Hwang transforms the romantic tragedy into tragic romance with its deep implications on gender, identity and race over a problematic love affair. While a faithful Japanese girl falls in love with an American sailor and waits for him to return hopelessly for years in the original plot, a French diplomat named Gallimard starts a queer relationship with Song, who works as an opera singer, but in fact, is a Chinese spy in disguise of a woman in Hwang's *M. Butterfly*. Hwang's play breaks up the preconceived myths and opinions on Asian identity, prejudiced concepts of male and female and biased views of Orient and Occident. The aim of this paper is to present an orientalist view on Hwang's "M. Butterfly", which was a reinterpretation of the Butterfly myth of Giacomo Puccini's opera. David Henry Hwang illustrated a love affair between Asian and American cultures to highlight the western bias towards the Asian culture and unmask the stereotypical visions through profound dramatic scene effects. The paper also aims to analyse how gender, culture and race politics work out in Hwang's "M. Butterfly", based on the poststructuralist and postcolonial theories, following the works of Said, Bhabha, and Derrida.

Keywords: David Henry Hwang, *M. Butterfly*, orientalism, oriental, western, deconstruction, poststructuralist.