

The actual roles of
"him" and "her":
contrasts in she
stoops to conquer
and m. bu...



The figurative use of masks in *She Stoops to Conquer* and *M. Butterfly* is present in both the characters and the themes to define genders and deceit. Goldsmith and Hwang use mockery and satire in the two plays interchangeably through time and space and to interlock the two plays together in terms of themes as well as to set them apart. When it comes to the ending of the play. Both protagonists from *M. Butterfly* and *She Stoops to Conquer* challenges social norms through satire and deceit to transform and break gender stereotypes for femininity and masculinity, and while *M. Butterfly* makes the audience form false assumptions about gender roles from disguise and irony, *She Stoops to Conquer* uses satire to cross boundaries on how the audience thinks about men and women from different social hierarchies.

As the play begins, Rene Gallimard in *M. Butterfly* paces around his jail cell and mutters about losing his one and only love, addressing Butterfly, who is actually a man in disguise: " He still claims not to believe the truth." " What? Still? Even since the trial?" " Yes. Isn't it mad?" (Hwang, 8) By using two complete random characters whose name isn't even mentioned, Huang uses irony and satire to emphasize on making fun of Gallimard about how he is still so hung up on a man whom he thinks was the perfect woman. In Scene Three, Gallimard thinks the whole country is still idolizing him when in reality; the whole nation is mocking him. Smiling, Gallimard starts talking to the audience, " You see? They toast me. I've become patron saint of the socially inept. Can they really be so foolish? Men like that - they should be scratching at my door, begging to learn my secrets! For I, Rene Gallimard, you see, I have known, and been loved by... the Perfect Woman" (Hwang, 9).

The very fact that M. Butterfly is indeed, a man cloaked as a woman, suggests the notion that everything started out as a lie, or disguised in falsehood, from the beginning. Gallimard recognizes himself as the masculine figure in the situation, but towards the end realized that he is actually the feminine figure in terms of politics and personal relations as well. Song, or otherwise known as Butterfly, says to Gallimard towards the end, " You don't really believe that I'm a man. I'm your Butterfly. Under the robes, beneath everything, it was always me. Now, open your eyes and admit it - you adore me" (Hwang, 65-66). There is strong satire and mockery dripping from the words of Song. It is only towards the ending where the tables have turned and the gender and cultural stereotypes have been reversed - for the West to be masculine and for the Asian/East to be feminine. Gallimard has made a fool out of himself as a result of believing too much in stereotypes.

On the other side, Hardcastle and his daughter, Kate (or Ms. Hardcastle) starts bickering about Kate's future spouse, to whom Hardcastle says its Marlow. In the beginning scenes, Hardcastle seems to push the idea of Marlow as a possible spouse for his daughter, yet Kate's generic replies have already start serving as disguise for the gender and class stereotypes existing in the play. Hardcastle continuously says, " Depend upon it child, I'll never control your choice, but Mr. Marlow, whom I have pitched upon, is the son of my old friend, Sir Charles Marlow, of whom you have heard me talk so often. The young gentleman has been bred a scholar, and is designed for an employment in the service of his country. I am told he's a man of an excellent understanding [...] Young and brave. Very generous. And very

handsome. And, to crown all, Kate, he's one of the most bashful and reserved young fellows in all the world." (Goldsmith, 17-18) It is ironic because when talking about gender stereotypes, Kate's fate and marriage is clearly arranged by her father, Hardcastle, yet a while later Kate eventually determines her own fate through disguise. All Hardcastle could say about Marlow is how good of a fit he could be for Kate. By disguising as a maid, or a woman of a lower class hierarchy, Kate is able to grasp Marlow's sincerity and persona and eventually makes Marlow fall in love with her. Kate single-handedly determines the fate of the two families, just by being herself, thus breaking the stereotype of gender classifications and social class hierarchies. "I never knew half his merit till now. He shall not go, if I have power or art to detain him. I'll still preserve the character in which I stooped to conquer; but will undeceive my papa, who perhaps may laugh him out of his resolution." (Goldsmith, 119) Kate has definitely 'stooped to conquer' by lowering herself into another class and shows that women from all hierarchies can have an influence. It is satirical and ironic because while Marlow could not talk to women of higher classes, he is smooth and reserved when talking to women of lower class; yet Kate is toying along with him along the way. The scene portrays how stereotypes are easily made and assumed, but in reality the tables have completely turned, therefore resulting in the complete opposite of how gender stereotypes are not accurate at all.

Song takes on both roles of femininity and masculinity through deceit in order to break cultural stereotypes of the East and the West, causing not only the audience but also Gallimard to be caught completely off-guard.

Song uses his Asian origins as a tactic to pretend to be a submissive Asian

woman to 'serve' white men. Song's words and actions is completely depleted of egotism and pride, 'she' leaves it all for Gallimard. "Yes, I am. I am your Butterfly. [...] No...no...gently...please, I've never... [...] I've tried to appear experienced, but ... the truth is no. [...] No, let me keep my clothes... Please, it all frightens me. I'm a modest Chinese girl. I am your treasure. Though inexperienced, I am not... ignorant. They teach us things, our mothers, about pleasing a man. I'll do my best to make you happy. Turn off the lights." (Hwang, 33-34) Song's bubble of innocence is all an intentional act of luring Gallimard in to the eventual great scheme of acquiring secret information about international affairs between the East and the West. The intentional acting and talking like a woman blinds Gallimard's common sense and alertness because he is so obsessed with the idea of a Perfect Woman and the submissive, Oriental, woman. Gallimard tries to portray himself as the masculine one, the man of the West, and the wants to be the one who's in control; he does not even notice that Song is not only a man, but also a spy for the Chinese embassy under-covering as a woman as a form of tactics. Song shows his true side later on in the courtroom, revealing to everyone that he's a man, and testifying that Gallimard indeed loves him, with a hint of homosexuality suggested. "Go where? Rene, you can't live without me. Not after twenty years. [...] I'm your fantasy, so throw away your pride, and come... In the crush of your adoration, I thought you'd become something more. More like... a woman." (Hwang, 67) Song explicitly refers Gallimard as a woman, immediately feminizing the West and playing a more masculine role for the Oriental. Thus, the tables have turned. Song knows Gallimard will go mad and cannot live without the idea of a Perfect Woman after twenty years, therefore keeps pushing the notion onto

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Gallimard and he eventually loses his mind, his job, his wife, and his life.

Song immediately breaks and transforms the gender identity stereotypes for an alien culture to be more feminine and the West to be more masculine

Marlow in *She Stoops to Conquer* is a controversial character himself;

Goldsmith uses Marlow's own actions and words against him, turning it into irony and satire to distinguish how two genders act and present themselves from different social classes that usually mean nothing at all. Being on the higher end of the class hierarchy himself, he shows disgrace and

awkwardness when it comes to socializing with women of the higher class, yet pertains and courts lower class women. When Kate, or Ms. Hardcastle,

disguises herself as a bar maid, Marlow immediately replies, " Nothing, my dear, nothing. But I was in for a list of blunders, and could not help making you a subscriber. My stupidity saw everything the wrong way. I mistook your assiduity for assurance, and your simplicity for allurements. But it's over. This house I no more show MY face in. [...] This is the first mark of tenderness I ever had from a modest woman, and it touches me. Excuse me, my lovely girl... and I can never harbor a thought of seducing simplicity that trusted in my honor, of bringing ruin upon one whose only fault was being too lovely."

(Goldsmith, 117-118) Marlow appears to be smooth, genuine, and composed, in which the author uses this tactic to make fun of his character as well.

Marlow thinks he's more masculine by courting a woman of the lower class, and appears to be more feminine talking to women from the upper class, yet the whole time he is not the one in control, it is Kate who is; therefore Kate achieving the more ' masculine' role in the play. Previously when Kate hasn't disguised herself yet, Marlow stutters and stumbles across his words. "

Pardon me, madam, I-I-I-as yet have studied - only - to deserve them [...] It's - a - disease - of the mind, madam. In the variety of tastes there must be someone who, wanting a relish - for - um - a - um. [...] Yes madam. In this age of hypocrisy there are few who upon strict inquiry do not - a - a - a - a - " (Goldsmith, 63-64) Clearly, Marlow cannot even pronounce himself enough to get a proper sentence across to Kate when she is in her actual class status. He portrays the real feminine role here, ironically, because he likes to think of himself as the man who has control. Goldsmith also uses the satire in gender roles and identities to mock Marlow's character in how controversial his actions and words are.

While the endings of the two plays are completely different and opposite, with Marlow and Kate getting married and Gallimard committing suicide because of his shame, deceit and disguise make a strong presence in determining the two plays. The themes both set them apart and brought them together in terms of gender relations and stereotypes. M. Butterfly and She Stoops to Conquer transforms and breaks the discrimination about the roles of women and men. The characters and the scenes also depicts how satire help break the stereotypes and reaches to a level of revelation. By the end of the two plays, gender roles have been switched, broken, and changed the conceptions of social norms.