

## Article analysis

Name

Institution

### Analysis of the article

Garber states that “The presence of the transvestite, in a text, in a culture, signals a category crisis elsewhere. The transvestite is a sign of over determination—a mechanism of displacement”. This statement is a basic statement but one which carries within itself the weight of the article. In the article, the world is devastated after it is revealed that a Frenchman had a relationship with a ‘woman’ for over twenty years. The fact that these two had been exchanging state secrets, which made them get sentenced to prison over a certain period of time. What left the world distraught was not this treason as the knowledge that these two had been cohabitating for over a decade. Even the judge who sentenced them was wary of the fact that the Frenchman could not differentiate between a man and a woman for over 20 years. This scandal led to the creation of a number of plays as well as movies pertaining the same by various renowned actors and production houses (Eng 1994). M. Boursicot had fallen in love with this woman and they had lived together for quite a long period of time. How the Chinese managed to hide his sexuality from his partner for so long was baffling. The Chinese ‘woman’, Mr. Shi had embarked on the knowledge and the stereotyping that Oriental women were supposed to be submissive to their partners and through this factor, he was able to keep M. Boursicot at a distance (Garber 1992).

This concept and this stereotype is brought out quite clearly through different plays. For instance, in the M. Butterfly play, at the end, the Western actor is the one who wears the wig and the kimono that belong to his oriental counterpart. This is a sarcastic touch to the story depicting M. Boursicot, a transvestite himself of lacking the capacity to differentiate between different genders. This follows that a conclusion is drawn from various angles and from various people across the globe. Basically, people reasoned that it would not have been possible for a man to stay with a ‘woman’ for that long without being in a position to distinguish whether the partner was a man or a woman. And the fact that at these two had been having sex for an indefinite period of time only serves to bring about more confusion to the allegations raised by M. Boursicot.

Critics argue that there is no way that the French man could have engaged himself to the Chinese ‘woman’ for that long without having some form of intuitions pertaining to the gender of his partner. For this reason, the media has branded the Frenchman the gay person. Mr. Shi was reviewed with mixed skepticism. Most critics did not know what to think of him. The fact that he had been able to pull off being a man for so long only to get discovered that he was also a spy much later was very confusing. Hwang decided to write a play on the same and his cast included prominent actors.

The transvestite in this story bore a lot of confusion. The six-year charge given to these two for the treason charges did not seem to deliver as much hype as the issue of their being together for so long without a proper knowledge of their genders was bigger news. This brings us to the issue of culture and cultural disposition. It is a well known fact that oriental women are more submissive to their partners when compared to the westerners. However, as much as this statement is in its basic form, it can be said as being totally vague. Today, these women cannot be said to be submissive. Matter of fact, these women in these oriental regions have increasingly come up so strong in their personalities. The culture in this region however shows women in the region have a tendency of being submissive and very respectful of their husbands.

Perhaps it is this disposition and stereotyping that had led M. Boursicot the wrong way all the while. The French man, according to his own statements states that Mr. Shi was a very modest and respectful ‘woman’ and for that, he respected her. According to him, when they got intimate, Shi did not get naked and the Frenchman thought it was the conservative culture of the oriental she was upholding. For this reason, he did not bother her. The sex between the two was a tricky scenario. Many people have come up with various theories to prove how this intercourse occurred. A popular one is where they insinuate that Mr. Shi used lubricants on closed thighs and M. Boursicot was duped into believing that he had sex with a lady. When asked, he stated that there was no given time when he ever felt as if he was making love to a fellow man. In addition, the fact that they rarely had sex made the arrangement even more cordial. When asked, Mr. Shi stated that he used to hide his privates using clothing that squeezed them to an extent that nobody could notice a thing. His facial disposition, body build and even voice tone did not betray his manhood.

Hwang blows up the transvestite nature in the M. Butterfly play leading to acts and films on the same being developed. As observed here, In the shadows of a diva serves to bring to life the various transvestite issues created by Hwang in the play M. Butterfly to life. The concept of culture brings about a balance in this case showing that the transvestite nature of many individuals result from the various cultural dispositions that they face.

## References

- Eng, DL 1994, 'In the shadows of a Diva: Committing Homosexuality in David Henry Hwang's M. Butterfly,' *Amerasia Journal*, vol. 20, no.1, pp. 93-116.
- Garber, M 1992, *The occidental tourist: M .Butterfly and the scandal of transvestism*. In Parker, A et al (eds), *Nationalism and sexuality*. New York: Routledge.