

M. BUTTERFLY

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HCOM 322

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1) WHY IS RENE GALLIMARD MENTALLY BLIND?

He is mentally blind because he falls in love with the oriental woman stereotype. In other words, he desires a relationship similar to the one from Madame Butterfly, the cruel white male and the submissive oriental woman. Gallimard's mind was full of stereotypes and his low self-esteem made him live in a fantasy world that did not let him see that Song was a man.

2) WHAT KIND OF RELATIONSHIP DO SONG LILING AND RENE GALLIMARD HAVE?

At some point, Song and Rene had a romantic relationship, but this can be debatable. First, Rene did not love Song, he loved what Song portrayed. He loved the submissive Chinese woman. Second, Song did not love Rene. He only took advantage of Rene in order to obtain information for the Chinese government. In conclusion, they both used each other to satisfy their needs.

3) DO YOU THINK AT THE END OF THE PLAY, RENE GALLIMARD KNOWS HE IS STUCK IN HIS FANTASY WORLD AND CHOOSES TO STAY THERE OR IS HE STILL BLIND TO THE CAUSES FOR HIS LIFE TRAGEDY?

I think Rene Gallimard is still stuck in his fantasy world. The reason being he performs the play at the end and commits suicide in which makes me believe he wants to die with him having a butterfly and the stereotypical oriental woman. Although in some form he is blinded by everything he's gone through but is still stuck in his fantasy world.

BONUS QUESTION

Do you think Rene is a tragic hero?

Rene's character is not the typical tragic hero. The traditional tragic hero, normally arises from humble beginnings, then is lead to his own tragic fall when they realize the error of their way. In Rene's case, he did not originate from a humble beginning. As a French diplomat, he failed to do good given his position. Since childhood, he admits, lacking the capacity to form meaningful relationships and to be an impressive person. Rene, does suffer a tragic fall, when his eagerness to have power takes over and he is a victim of the illusion of the "perfect oriental" woman. In the end, Rene I able to understand the situation of being used. Rene, in this situation, does note himself to have a fault in it. Rene, does not meet the definition of a tragic hero so he is not a tragic hero.

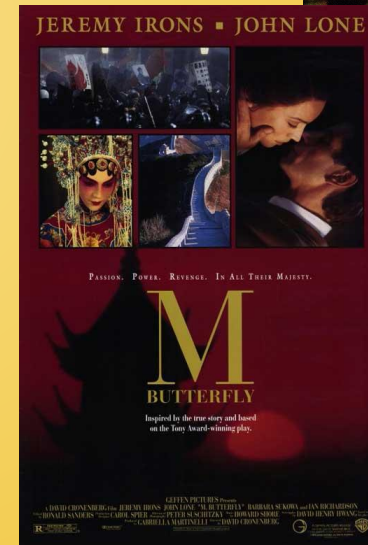
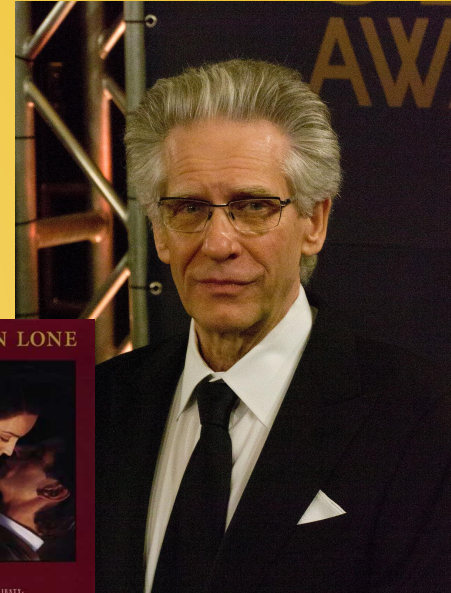
THE BACKGROUND INFORMATION ABOUT THE WORK/MOVIE

DAVID CRONENBERG:

also known as the King of Venereal Horror or the Baron of Blood, was born in Toronto, Ontario, Canada, in 1943

He reached the cult status of horror-meister with the gore-filled, modern-vampire variations of Shivers (1975) and Rabid (1977), following an experimental apprenticeship in independent filmmaking and in Canadian television programs.

René Gallimard is a diplomat from France who has been sent to Beijing, China. During the time in Beijing, Gallimard meets and becomes enamored of Song Liling, an opera singer who is a man dressed as a woman. The two begin a relationship, but, unfortunately for Gallimard, there is much about Song that he doesn't know. Among the revelations that Gallimard must contend with is the discovery that his lover is a man.



CENTRAL THEMES OF THE WORK/MOVIE

- ❖ **Fantasy:** René Gallimard fell in love with the fantasy of having a submissive Oriental wife. He was blind because that is what he wanted he did not love Song (woman and man) he liked the fantasy of the play. All Rene wanted was to have a butterfly
- ❖ **Love and cruelty:** Rene Gallimard falls deeply in love with Song's performance of Madame Butterfly. Later, Gallimard becomes convinced that Song is afraid of him. This is the foundation of his love for Butterfly because he can dominate her. His abuses begin as experiments to test the limits of Song's submissiveness to him.
- ❖ **Stereotypes:** Rene though that song acted the way he did because the stereotype is that all Chinese woman follow acted just like Song did.
- ❖ **Masculinity:** Throughout the entire film, Rene is able to delude himself into thinking that he is a strong, masculine man because of the illusion of love from Song. Because Song does not display any traits commonly associated with men, he is able to hide his actual gender from Rene for many years. At the end of the film, Rene feels betrayed and, in his mind, becomes Madam Butterfly-a female character.

CHARACTER ANALYSIS

- **Jeanne Gallimard:** Rene Gallimard's wife. She did not go with him where he met Song. She was always there but never really cared and at the end she left.
- **Song Liling:** A Chinese opera singer who pretends to be a woman to gain access to Gallimard and collect classified information for agents of the Chinese Communist Party. Song develops a profound understanding of Gallimard's psychology that allows him to manipulate Gallimard. In other words, he understands Gallimard's desire for a particular kind of woman: beautiful, submissive, and unquestionably devoted to him. He performs the role of that fantasy woman to possess Gallimard's love completely.
- **Marc:** Rene's friend who is considered the Western idea of masculine sexuality.
- **Rene:** A French diplomat who is deceived by Song Liling. Song plays on his desire for a subservient wife in order to spy on Western governments. Rene is incapable of seeing past his own desire and in the end becomes trapped in his own mind, unable to move on.

STYLES, TECHNIQUES, CINEMATOGRAPHY; AUTEURISM, ETC.

- ❖ The movie *M. Butterfly* was directed by David Cronenberg and written by David Henry Hwang. This is a drama movie that is based on a true story. On the movie, you can see how the protagonist has a dilemma with reality and fantasy. Also, it reflects the stereotypes that other people have about Asian women.
- ❖ Drama and body horror: David Cronenberg is known to direct body horror movies and that is why he adds the suicide at the end.
- ❖ The director chose to keep including the music of *Madam Butterfly* to remind the viewers of the significance of the opera and of the underlying themes of both the movie and the opera.

WHAT YOU GET OUT OF THE MOVIE

ANGELICA

From this movie, I learned that stereotypes can blind the perception of people about other individuals and that sometimes people can take advantage of those stereotypes. For example, Song was able to carry on with his lies because he justified his actions based on his culture and Rene did not question it.

WHAT YOU GET OUT OF THE MOVIE

ANA PAOLA

What I get from this movie is that sometimes we “fall in love” with someone but in reality it is not them we are in love with but an idea of them. Furthermore, how stereotypes are not good for the community that has the stereotype because if you don't fit it then you are seen as different and strange.

WHAT YOU GET OUT OF THE MOVIE

ROSEANNE

I learned from the movie some of the traditions and beliefs of the Chinese culture. Also, the movie shows the stereotypes that other cultures have about Oriental women. It was really impressive in how love and obsession for something can make you blind and you cannot see the reality of a situation.

WHAT YOU GET OUT OF THE MOVIE

SARAH

I got how subtle racism can be. Rene deluded himself into loving a stereotype instead of an actual person because it never occurred to him that Asian women could act differently. Rene had internalized those stereotypes and let them blind him.

WHAT YOU GET OUT OF THE MOVIE

PATRICIA

What I learned from the movie was the perceptions and stereotypes that the west has on oriental woman. M.Butterfly was ultimately a sexuality that was very insiting. As humans, we often fall in love with someone for their personality and not their appearance, which is upsetting for when we discover that they are not the person we thought they were.