

ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: SEXISM AND IMPERIALISM IN
MOZART'S *DON GIOVANNI*, PUCCINI'S
MADAMA BUTTERFLY, AND
BLITZSTEIN'S *REGINA*:
A PERFORMANCE STUDY

Anthony Eversole, Doctor of Musical Arts,
2016

Dissertation directed by: Professor Linda Mabbs, School of Music

This dissertation project comprises three major operatic performances and an accompanying document; a performance study which surveys aspects of sexism and imperialism as represented in three operas written over the last three centuries by examining the implications of prejudice through research as well as through performances of the major roles found in the operas. Mr. Eversole performed the role of Sharpless in the 2014 Castleton Festival production of *Madama Butterfly* (music by Giacomo Puccini, libretto by Luigi Illica and Giuseppe Giacosa), conducted by Bradley Moore. In 2015, Mr. Eversole sang the title role in four performances of Mozart and Da Ponte's *Don Giovanni* with the Maryland Opera Studio at the Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center, conducted by Craig Kier. Also as part of the Maryland Opera Studio 2015-16 season, Mr. Eversole appeared as Oscar Hubbard in four performances of Marc Blitzstein's *Regina*, an adaptation of Lillian Hellman's 1939 play, *The Little Foxes*. These performances were also conducted by Craig Kier. The

accompanying research document discusses significant issues of cultural, geographical, and sexual hegemony as they relate to each opera. It examines the plots and characters of the operas from a postcolonial and feminist perspective, and takes a moral stance against imperialism, sexism, domestic abuse, and in general, the exploitation of women and of the colonized by the socially privileged and powerful.

Recordings of all three operas can be accessed at the University of Maryland Hornbake Library.

They are: Giacomo Puccini's *Madama Butterfly* (the role of Sharpless)

July 20, 2014, Castleton Festival production, Bradley Moore, Conductor
Castleton, Virginia

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's *Don Giovanni* (title role)

November 22nd, 2015, Maryland Opera Studio, Craig Kier, Conductor
Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center, UMD

Marc Blitzstein's *Regina*, (Oscar Hubbard)

April 8th, 2016, Maryland Opera Studio, Craig Kier, Conductor
Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center, UMD

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PUCCINI'S *MADAMA BUTTERFLY*, AND BLITZSTEIN'S *REGINA*:
A PERFORMANCE STUDY

by

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Dedication

I dedicate this document to the memory and empowerment of those who have been marred by the tyranny of patriarchal and imperialist principles throughout history. May this beautiful art form of opera serve as a device for emancipation and healing.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my parents, family, and friends for their unwavering support; my dissertation committee chair, Linda Mabbs for her guidance and encouragement; my voice teacher and good friend, Dominic Cossa, for his wisdom, advice, experience, and for always being on my side; my remarkable coach, Justina Lee, for always buoying me up me and pushing me to be better.

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Supplemental Recordings

DVD 1: *Madama Butterfly* Act I

Butterfly_1.mp4

Butterfly_2.mp4

DVD 2: *Madama Butterfly* Acts II & III

Butterfly_3.mp4

DVD 3: *Don Giovanni*

DON_GIOVANNI_SUNDAY_NOV_22_2015_1.m4v

DON_GIOVANNI_SUNDAY_NOV_22_2015_2.m4v

DON_GIOVANNI_SUNDAY_NOV_22_2015_3.m4v

DON_GIOVANNI_SUNDAY_NOV_22_2015_4.m4v

DON_GIOVANNI_SUNDAY_NOV_22_2015_5.m4v

DON_GIOVANNI_SUNDAY_NOV_22_2015_5.m4v

DON_GIOVANNI_SUNDAY_NOV_22_2015_6.m4v

DON_GIOVANNI_SUNDAY_NOV_22_2015_7.m4v

DVD 4: *Regina*

REGINA_4_8_16_1.m4v

REGINA_4_8_16_2.m4v

REGINA_4_8_16_3.m4v

REGINA_4_8_16_4.m4v

REGINA_4_8_16_5.m4v

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Chapter 1: Theoretical Frameworks of Exploited Populations

Introduction

From its inception, the art of opera has either knowingly or ignorantly dealt with relevant social affairs. Modern progressive thought has caused interpreters and commentators to reflect on the history of opera and other art forms to evaluate important societal values. This document focuses on one such value that has undergone a great transformation among the public consensus in the past three hundred years. The exploitation of certain populations by those more privileged is a communal problem that continues to have political, social, and psychological relevance. Exploited groups are diverse and various, but for the purpose of presenting a sample of those represented by operatic history, this paper explores the populations discriminated against because of gender, race, and geographic locality.

This study examines three operas through performance and historical research, that present a cross-section of varying musical styles, time periods, and compositional techniques as well as exhibit issues of exploited populations through the lens of historical cultures. The author, having prepared and performed each of these works, both professionally and as part of this dissertation project, has gained valuable insight and awareness of the social and interpersonal struggles of the characters found therein. Mozart and Da Ponte's *Don Giovanni* (1787) tells the tale of exploited women: victims of seduction and rape at the hands of the infamous libertine. Puccini, and librettists Illica and Giacosa's *Madama Butterfly* (1904) not only explores American imperialism as a central theme against an exploited Japanese population

but exposes the abusive treatment of women by the turn-of-the-century patriarchy. Marc Blitzstein's *Regina* (1948), an adaptation of Lillian Hellman's play, *The Little Foxes*, investigates the greed and avarice of a post Civil War family in the deep South that exploits their town's black population as well as treats the female family members as commodities: tools to be employed in the pursuit of even greater wealth.

Each of these operas are explored in greater detail in subsequent chapters. To establish a pertinent discussion of the social issues at play, a theoretical framework based on research compiled by Adriana Nieves, and consisting of several points of postcolonial and feminist theory would be valuable. Nieves' research on *Madama Butterfly*'s "harmful social and political ramifications"¹ and her vision of opera through the lenses of feminist and postcolonial theory have established a solid foundation for this research. Her emphasis on "gender, race, and class tensions"² as applied to *Madama Butterfly* informs the study of all three operas.

Cultural Hegemony

The term "cultural hegemony" was coined by Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937), an Italian theoretician and a favorite of cultural and Marxist theorists. He applied "Marxist theory to hegemony's concept of geopolitical domination of one state over another. While hegemony states that one city-state may dominate another by the use of political force, cultural hegemony posits that domination may also take the form of cultural control."³ Nieves asserts that "cultural hegemony works as a ruling force that

¹ Nieves, Adriana V. *Madama Butterfly: The Mythology or How Imperialism and the Patriarchy Crushed Butterfly's Wings* (Orlando, Florida: University of Central Florida, 2014): p. ii.

² Ibid, p. ii.

³ Ibid, p. 3-4.

diminishes the impact of any opposing forces and dilutes the opposition within the mainstream.”⁴ The concept of cultural hegemony is based on the assertion that a dominant societal class rules and leads other “submissive” classes “through the exercise of moral and intellectual leadership.”⁵

Eurocentrism

Related to the concept of cultural hegemony, especially when it comes to discussing the operatic art form, is the notion of Eurocentrism, which, according to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, reflects “a tendency to interpret the world in terms of European or Anglo-American values and experiences.”⁶ It is important to note that Eurocentrism represents both European and Anglo-American bias, as both European and American operas are examined in this paper. Nieves suggests that not only does Eurocentrism position Europe and America as the “focus of the world,” but also “marginalizes the rest of it.”⁷ She continues: “A duality of sorts occurs here—a focus on one half of the world neglects the other and *creates* the Other... For seventeenth-century imperialist Europe, the idea of the Other encompassed native peoples from whatever parts of the world it sought to colonize, dominate, and exploit.”⁸

⁴ Ibid, p. 4.

⁵ Storey, Jonathan. *Cultural Theory and Pop Culture: A Reader, Third Edition* (Dorchester, Dorset: Dorset Press [1994] 2006), p. 67.

⁶ <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/Eurocentric>. Date accessed 29 March 2016.

⁷ Nieves, p. 5.

⁸ Ibid, p. 5-6.

Colonialism vs. Imperialism

Exploitative control has historically been present in both the colonizing and imperialistic activities of dominant groups over marginalized populations. The important distinction between colonialism and imperialism must be clarified. Nieves explains that “colonialism is the conquest of other peoples’ lands and goods, and involves moving people to a new territory where they live as permanent settlers while maintaining a relationship with the parent nation. European capitalist colonialism requires a flow of human and natural resources between colonized and colonizer nations wherein profits always travel back to the parent nation... Imperialism is the creation and maintenance of an unequal economic, cultural, and territorial relationship between states that take the form of an empire and which base their power structures on domination and subjugation.”⁹

Imperialism can be observed in many iterations. This study focuses explicitly on cultural imperialism, which “transpires when one country’s practices and policies enforce hegemony.”¹⁰ Other forms include economic, political, and military imperialism. Indian researcher Ania Loomba suggests that the variances between colonialism and imperialism differ “depending on their historical mutations.”¹¹

Postcolonial Criticism

A discussion of postcolonial criticism, a social response to European colonialism and imperialism, can be problematic in that the term “postcolonialism has two

⁹ Ibid, p. 6.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Loomba, Ania. *Colonialism-Postcolonialism*. (New York: Routledge, 1998), p. 6.

connotations: 1) *after colonialism*, indicating temporality, and suggesting a period after colonialism; and 2) *against colonialism*, suggesting a moral stance against colonialism.”¹² An examination of postcolonial criticism and the presence of exploitative and hegemonic behavior by the characters in each story serves as the foundation of this study of intolerance found in opera. Nieves encapsulates the scope of postcolonial criticism:

Principally, postcolonial criticism seeks to analyze, discuss, explain, react, and respond to histories of colonialism and imperialism through several methods of intellectual discourse. As these colonial and imperialist histories are so complex, postcolonialism is an intersectional academic discipline, employing Marxist critiques of capitalism, feminist critiques of patriarchy, analyses of nationalism, analyses and critiques of racism, analyses and critiques of psychoanalysis, and poststructuralist critiques of modernism.¹³

Feminist Theory

It is useful to outline a theoretical framework of feminism in order to effectively discuss the sexist elements that are present in *Don Giovanni*, *Madama Butterfly*, and *Regina*. Feminist theory is generally broken down into three subcategories: liberal feminism, radical feminism, and multicultural socialist feminism. Nieves asserts that “many aspects of feminism and postcolonial theory overlap: both focus on oppressive power structures and work to dismantle them; both possess intersectional qualities with many other criticisms and analyses.”¹⁴ Liberal feminism, which centers on legislative change and equality with men, while important, is not the focus of this

¹² Nieves, p. 7.

¹³ Ibid, p. 8.

¹⁴ Ibid, p. 16-17.

dissertation. Radical feminism and multicultural socialist feminism have more historical relevance in a discussion of the operas in question.

Radical Feminism and Phallism

The term “radical” in modern society has gained the negative connotation of “excessively extreme,” when in reality, the term is etymologically derived from the Latin “radic” which means “root.” Radical feminism seeks to treat the root of the problem. “Therefore,” posits Nieves, “radical feminism does not seek equality with men as equality sets men as the standard; instead, it seeks liberation from oppression, and advocates cultural change over legislative change.”¹⁵ Marilyn Frye asserts that sex oppression is perpetrated by phallists. Nieves expounds on Frye: “Phallists ascribe to phallism—a concept Frye explains is parallel to humanism, in which humans are the center of the universe and animals orbit around that center to serve their needs. Thus, phallism, for Frye, is the idea that men are the center of the universe, and both animals and women orbit that center to serve their needs... The attitude of the phallist is that he cannot take women seriously.”¹⁶ For Frye, the solution is separatism: liberating women “from this oppression by affirming women’s worth and identities outside of phallocentrism, outside of the realm of men.”¹⁷

Multicultural Socialist Feminism and Intersectionality

The multicultural socialist approach to feminism is intersectional with Frye’s notion of phallism, but also includes other models of oppressed groups at the hands of the

¹⁵ Ibid, p. 18.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid, p. 19.

privileged. Nieves explains that “intersectional approaches rely on an understanding of white privilege, class privilege, and male privilege. White privilege advantages whites at the expense of everyone else; class privilege privileges the bourgeoisie (owners of capital) at the expense of the proletariat; and male privilege privileges males at the expense of everyone else... At the center of these circles are white, upper-class males. On the margins are poor women of color.”¹⁸

Origins of Feminist Literary Criticism

A discussion of phallism and cultural hegemony in opera inevitably leads to a discussion of the judgments of previous commentators and interpreters of those operas. With this in mind, it is useful to explore the origins of feminist literary criticism. Sydney Janet Kaplan identifies the origins, which are two-fold: one begins with the “recognition of our love for women writers”¹⁹ and another that is driven by “the urge to reveal the diverse ways women have been oppressed, misinterpreted and trivialized by the dominant patriarchal tradition, and to show how these are reflected in the images of women in the works of male authors.”²⁰

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Kaplan, Sydney Janet. “Varieties of Feminist Criticism.” In *Making a Difference: Feminist Literary Criticism*, edited by Gayle Greene and Coppélia Kahn. New York: Meuthen & Co., 1985.

²⁰ Brown-Montesano, Kristi. 2007. *Understanding the Women of Mozart's Operas*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Chapter 2: Don Giovanni

The Evolution of the Don Juan Legend

Mozart and Da Ponte's *Il dissoluto punito, ossia il Don Giovanni* premiered on October 29, 1787 in Prague. By the time their adaptation of the legend of Don Juan (a fictional libertine and seducer) hit the stage with Luigi Bassi singing the title role, many versions of the libertine's exploits had been seen throughout Europe in various dramatic genres; especially in Spain, Italy, and France.

Don Juan Tenorio and Tirso de Molina

"The Don Juan myth originated in Spain in the seventeenth century." David Whitton explains: "History suggests that, after having seduced and kidnapped the daughter of the Commander Ulloa, Don Juan Tenorio proceeded to kill the father in a duel. When Don Juan Tenorio had the audacity to visit the tombstone of his victim, the Franciscan monks assassinated him. To disguise their murderous actions, the monks decided to spread the rumor that Don Juan Tenorio had been struck by lightning and dragged down to hell by the statue of the commander he had killed."²¹ This account was widely disseminated and eventually gave way to a variety of dramatic adaptations of the story. Henriette Javorek submits that "the idea of Don Juan as the ultimate Mediterranean ladies' man has not merely survived, but has preoccupied playwrights and filmmakers throughout the centuries and has grown to exemplify maleness in patriarchal society."²² Don Juan quickly became a hero to the phallist

²¹ Whitton, David. *Molière / Don Juan* (Cambridge, 1995), 1-12.

²² Javorek, Henriette. 2005. "The Development and Increasing Feminization of the Don Juan Myth in the Mediterranean." *Mediterranean Studies* 14: 185.

community of the seventeenth century, and his status has changed very little over the past three centuries.

One of the first known iterations of the Don Juan mythology is *El burlador de Sevilla y combitato de piedra* (The Joker and the Guest of Stone), a play written by the Spanish monk Tirso de Molina in 1630. The play's initial scenes take place in Italy, but the rest of the action occurs in Spain. The play surveys the mystery around the death of the real-life character of Don Juan Tenorio. During the 1650s and 1660s the Don Juan myth continued its literary development throughout Europe, but especially in France.

Don Juan in Mid-Seventeenth Century France

In 1657, The Italian Players brought to Paris the legend of Don Juan in their adaptation of Molina's play entitled *Convitato di pietra* (The Guest of Stone) written by Onofrio Giliberto in 1652. Though the Giliberto text disappeared, another Italian version written by Giacinta Andrea Cicognini survived and inspired subsequent French adaptations in following years. Among these adaptations are *Le festin de pierre ou le fils criminel* (1659) by Dorimond, as well as Villier's play by the same title (1660). Both were simple translations of Giliberto's text. With the French adaptations, the focus of the Don Juan mythology shifted from a morality play to a psychological exploration of the Don Juan character. The ideology of Don Juan as a phallist hero and a symbol of sexual freedom began to gain traction in the late seventeenth century. The libertine's actions were seen as more accepted, and Don Juan began to be viewed as a protagonist. During this same time period, the *commedia dell'arte* began performing the Don Juan myth as a farce, further

emphasizing the comic elements and de-emphasizing the interpretation of the myth as a cautionary morality tale.

Molière's Dom Juan

Perhaps the most celebrated interpretation of the Don Juan mythos emerged on 15 February 1665 in the form of *Dom Juan ou le Festin de pierre* by Jean-Baptiste Poquelin de Molière. The honorific *Dom* (Portugal) is used by Molière rather than the previously referenced *Don* (Spain, Italy); both titles, from the Latin *Dominus*, (roughly, "Lord") are used interchangeably as a designation of nobility. Molière (Poquelin's stage name) was a seventeenth-century French playwright and actor who is considered to be among the greatest masters of comedy in Western literature. An innovative playwright, Molière combined the *commedia dell'arte* with the more refined French *comédie*.²³ *Dom Juan* enjoyed significant success in its opening weeks at the Palais-Royal Theatre, but was withdrawn and forbidden after only fifteen performances due to allegations that Molière "advocated *libertinage* and ridiculed traditional morals."²⁴ Molière not only shows indifference towards the religious customs, but he also exhibits barefaced apathy for seventeenth-century theatrical conventions. Javorek explains:

The controversy surrounding Molière's *Dom Juan* stems from the author's lack of respect for seventeenth-century convention. Much like his character, Dom Juan, Molière breaks with the rules of a classical society. When writing his play, Molière ignores the requirements for the unities of time, place and action. He writes his play in prose rather than the verse traditionally employed in higher theatrical

²³ Roy, Donald. "Molière", in Banham, Martin (ed.) *The Cambridge Guide to Theatre*, 1995, Cambridge University Press, p. 756.

²⁴ Whitton: p. 8.

forms. He crosses between genres, combining elements of farce (like the scenes involving the merchant, Monsieur Dimanche) with scenes from classical comedy (like the reprimands of Dom Louis, Dom Juan's father). He introduces grotesque passages (like Sganarelle's description of his abscess), alongside mysterious phenomena of nature (like the shipwreck that Dom Juan and Sganarelle survive), and topics of elevated drama (such as discussions of religion).²⁵ Next to these blatant signs of disregard for seventeenth-century theatrical propriety, Molière also challenges the values of his society, particularly the sexual mores of his time.²⁶

Despite Louis XIV's patronage of Molière and his company, by this time called the *Troupe du Roi au Palais-Royal*, *Dom Juan* was forbidden just weeks after its opening, and remained so throughout Molière's lifetime. The play was finally published in a censored version in Amsterdam in 1683, in Brussels in 1684, and only in 1813 in France as part of the collection of Molière's complete works.

Don Juan: Symbol of the Phallist Patriarchy

Throughout the history and development of the Don Juan mythos during the seventeenth century, the *libertine* settled into his role as a symbol of the phallist patriarchy. As early as 1630, the veneration of the Don Juan character as a representative of the values of the patriarchy began to take hold. Molina's Don Juan is revered and admired unless he interferes, by way of his seductions, with the permanency of society. Javorek explains:

“The hero's seductions in the play carry serious significance on a physical and practical level. Don Juan's seductions are not a game. They interfere physically with women's virginity and marriage, and disturb the stability of the entire society. Molina creates a direct opposition

²⁵ G. Michaut. *Les lutes de Molière* (Paris, 1925 and Genève, 1968), p. 148-84.

²⁶ Javorek: p. 188-89.

between men and women in his play. On one extreme, he sets the characteristics of men as “honor, vivacity, courage, and nobility of birth and character,” and on the other extreme, those of women as “honor, innocence, and beauty.”²⁷ Completely restricted to a passive role, women need only remain honest, innocent, and pretty, while men take active responsibility for the development and defense of society through their courage, physical prowess, and wits. In this world of King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella, Don Juan represents a true man. His sexual escapades can be ignored and forgiven up to the point where he does not interfere with the “socially stabilizing function of women.” In other words, Don Juan is only condemned when he hampers women in their social function as creatures who guarantee the continuation of a stable community. Don Juan’s punishment is presented as a necessary but unfortunate development; however, Don Juan remains the ideal prototype of a man.”²⁸

Don Juan’s sexual escapades were not looked down upon because of their moral depravity or for the decadent mistreatment of women. The *libertine* remained a staunch symbol of the phallist ideal unless societal conventions were disrupted and the “commodity” of a woman’s role in the community was devalued. In other words, “a daughter or a wife could only be an asset when she assured the continuation of the family lineage through the birthing and upbringing of legitimate heirs. Men were supposed to ensure that women could fulfil their societal job, and tampering with a woman’s virginity gave grounds for murder.”²⁹ Thus, a Don Juan could only pursue his lifestyle of free love to the extent to which it did not interfere with the status quo; otherwise, he faced social retribution.”³⁰

²⁷ Althoff, Gabriele. *Weiblichkeit all Kunst* (Stuttgard, 1991), p. 139-42.

²⁸ Javorek: p. 186.

²⁹ Argyrou. *Tradition and Modernity in the Mediterranean*, p. 80-92.

³⁰ Javorek: p. 186-87.

Don Juan: Liberator of Women from Societal Oppression?

Don Juan's Freedom and Female Sexual Emancipation

Molière's text in particular "presents a view of male-female relationships that completely breaks with and challenges seventeenth-century sexual ethics. Moreover, when submitted to modern interpretations, Molière's *Dom Juan* brings to light increasingly invasive and emancipated female characters."³¹

A mutual theme in each version of the Don Juan legend, from Molina to Molière to Da Ponte, is the *libertine's* assertion of individual and sexual liberty. Don Juan's desire for freedom from social limitations drives his action throughout the dramas. In the Molière text in particular, "Dom Juan's sexuality stems from his refusal to observe any sexual taboos. Molière liberates Dom Juan's sexual practices from any convention, stressing the repressive nature of monogamy and of the institution of marriage. In the play, Dom Juan implies that love and marriage only create an unnatural state of servitude and slavery. Dom Juan acts as a symbol of utmost freedom from any societal restraints."³² "...In other words, Dom Juan only concerns himself with the immediate pleasures to be obtained from his actions without any regard for social restrictions or for the consequences of his behavior. If we extrapolate from this idea to include women, Dom Juan's many sexual exploits also allow for feminine freedom. Without the conventions that establish women in their roles as

³¹ Javorek: p. 189

³² Albanese Jr., Ralph. *Le dynamisme de la peur chez Molière: Un analyse socio-culturelle de Dom Juan, Tartuffe, et L'École des Femmes* (Mississippi, 1976) p. 63-4.

wives and mothers, Don-Juanesque thinking provides for masculine as well as feminine exertion of liberty.”³³

The irony of patriarchal repression of women in the Don Juan mythos lies in the element that as Don Juan carries out (or attempts to carry out) the seduction of various women, those women show their strength and emerge from the subjugation of the phallist regime. Javorek, by way of Scolnicov, provides an interesting analysis of this phenomenon: “In Molière’s text, women do not die of shame when they are seduced. Rather, they thrive in a masculine universe by insisting on a Don-Juanesque outlook on life and by engaging in a ‘selfish way of life.’³⁴ The critic Hanna Scolnicov maintains that at the height of seventeenth-century patriarchy, examples in literature such as Molière’s *Dom Juan* demonstrated ‘man’s futile attempt to keep the woman a prisoner in her house and achieve total control over her.’³⁵ Even the nobleman and expert seducer Dom Juan fails to preserve his control of women who, learning from, and liberating themselves through his example, become his female counterparts, free from convention and rules.”³⁶ Javorek goes as far as praising and defending the libertine’s behavior and philosophy when she submits that “allowed to live out his sexual freedom, Dom Juan harms no-one deliberately. He lives his life as a gentleman, displaying great subtlety of taste, a refined sense of self, and an altogether heroic and seductive persona. One could argue that Dom Juan only lives according to his natural human freedom, and that it is society that harms his female

³³ Javorek: p. 189.

³⁴ Whitton: p. 4.

³⁵ Scolnicov, Hanna. 1994. *Woman's Theatrical Space*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

³⁶ Javorek: p. 192.

partners. Dom Juan does not judge the objects of his seduction; society places the blame and limits the actions of women. In this regard, Dom Juan calls for female emancipation.”³⁷

Counterpoint to Javorek & Scolnicov

As was explored in the introductory chapter, the radical feminist viewpoint rejects the notion of using men as a measuring stick for female behavior and progress. Though she acknowledges the strength and independence of Molière’s female characters, Javorek’s assertion that Dom Juan’s women liberate themselves “through the example” of Dom Juan and “become his counterparts” is problematic when viewed through the feminist lens. Kristi Brown-Montesano, in her analysis of the women of Mozart’s operas, defends the radical feminist viewpoint. Turning our attention away from Molière and towards Da Ponte, Brown-Montesano submits that “the female characters of *Don Giovanni* have been interpreted primarily in terms of their relationship to the lionized Don: friend or foe, validation or obstacle.”³⁸ She also addresses the issue of the Don Juan character’s status as a phallist idol:

Most of the misogynistic readings and many of the neutral ones as well reflect a bias in favor of the male protagonist... The reception literature for *Don Giovanni*, for example, has helped to create a mythic hero out of the eponymous rake—originally an ambiguous figure at best. A cultural figure since at least the seventeenth century, Don Juan has attained an enduring aesthetic appeal with Mozart’s opera, which provoked rhapsodic responses from literary nobles like E.T.A. Hoffmann, Goethe, Kierkegaard, Shaw, and others. Too often, however, Mozart’s willful, seductive, and violent protagonist has been rarified by idealization and projection, credited with virtues—

³⁷ Ibid. p. 190.

³⁸ Brown-Montesano: p. 24.

unflagging bravery, triumphant self-determination, revolutionary resistance to oppressive societal power, and sensual idealism—that are, at best equivocally represented in the opera, and are sometimes flatly contradicted. The Don has also served as the libidinous and eternally resourceful poster boy for centuries of restless (male) envy and self-indulgence masquerading as autonomy, transcendent vision, and unyielding personal power.³⁹

Brown-Montesano's perspective certainly seems to be more aligned with the ideals of radical and multicultural socialist feminism and intersectionality than does Javorek's in this case. Although the two critics are discussing different iterations of the Don Juan mythos, Brown-Montesano also validates a very different notion of Don Juan's sexual freedom when she maintains that "Don Giovanni must take power away from the women he seduces or rapes in order to attain his one "liberty"—a slippery term, etymologically related to that less gallant concept, *libertine*. Indeed, the process of aestheticization focused on the figure of Don Giovanni has all but expunged the opera's original main title, the one Mozart himself entered into his catalogue of works: *Il dissoluto punito*, or "the dissolute punished."⁴⁰ Though an interpreter of a character should never identify his role in such stark, contrasting terms as good or evil, these differing viewpoints may prove useful to the conductors, singers, directors, and designers producing the opera.

The multicultural socialist approach to feminism, as cited earlier, embraces the understanding of male privilege and class privilege. Don Giovanni's exploitative seduction of women exemplifies male privilege, and class privilege. Mozart's operas systematically pit the serving class against nobility, generally overcoming the ruling

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid, p. 25

class. *Don Giovanni* is no different. Class privilege is evident especially in Don Giovanni's attempted seduction of the young bride, Zerlina, as he woos her with promises of elevated luxury and socioeconomic standing. Zerlina, when rescued from her folly by the noble Elvira, however, rises above her station as she firmly rejects the libertine and the cross-sectional sexist and imperialist culture he represents. Nieves' definition of postcolonialism is evident in Giovanni's final three attempted seductions: those of Zerlina, Donna Anna, and Donna Elvira. Though each rejects the Don for different reasons, each woman's grasp of postcolonialism, or in other words, their moral stance against the sexist mistreatment of women is most appropriately subcategorized, when viewed from a modern social justice perspective, as a "feminist critique of patriarchy."⁴¹

⁴¹ Nieves: p. 188.

Chapter 3: Madama Butterfly

Orientalism as Cultural Hegemony

W. Anthony Sheppard, in an *Oxford Bibliographies* entry, describes the phenomenon of exoticism: “In much of the extensive literature on the subject, exoticism is considered a form of representation in which peoples, places, and cultural practices are depicted as foreign from the perspective of the composer and/or intended audience. In earlier usage of the term, ‘exoticism’ and ‘exotic’ referred to an inherent quality or status of the non-Western Other.”

Postcolonial criticism grew in importance with Edward Said’s highly regarded 1978 book *Orientalism*. Orientalism is a subcategory of exoticism in that “the idea of the Orient provides European culture with a powerful Other.”⁴² Said submits that “the Orient has helped to define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience,”⁴³ and that rather than being a mere result of European imagination, Orientalism is a “created body of theory and practice in which, for many generations, there has been a considerable material investment.”⁴⁴ Said claims that knowledge is never innocent or neutral, and draws upon poststructuralist Michael Foucault’s declaration that “knowledge constructs what it purports to know... mediated by history, rather than being pure knowledge of unmediated raw truth.”⁴⁵

⁴² Said, Edward. *Orientalism*. (New York: Vintage Books, 1979) p. 1-2.

⁴³ Said: p. 6.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Parker, Robert Dale, *How to Interpret Literature: Critical Theory for Literary and Cultural Studies*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011) p. 255.

Thus, the Orient itself is an imagined geography created by Europe, for “it is the [the West] that articulates the Orient.”⁴⁶

Said claims that ideology is central to the making and maintenance of colonial societies, especially in constructing representations of “home” (here) and “over there.” “Not only does Orientalism construct for Europe an Other (the Orient, and all who dwell within its imagined geography), but it also serves to maintain a broadly imperialist view of the world. Said contends that European knowledge of the ‘Other’ is always a reflection and maintains the West’s own self-image.”⁴⁷ Just as Orientalism propagates an imperialist viewpoint, it also nurtures misogyny and phallism. As Said observes: “Orientalist discourse finds qualities in the East that overlap with the qualities that misogynist discourse finds in the feminine.”⁴⁸ Nieves expounds upon Said’s table: (Figure 1) “One could easily replace the table headings [below] to describe misogynistic discourse. Thus, colonialism feminizes the colonized in an attempt to masculinize itself.”⁴⁹

Figure 1: The Occident versus the Orient

<i>West – Occident – Home – Masculine</i>	<i>East – Orient – Other – Feminine</i>
Europe, rational, hardworking, kind, democratic, moral, modern, progressive, technological, individualist, the center of the world, scientific, logical, safe, civilized	Sensual, lazy, exotic, irrational, cruel, promiscuous, seductive, inscrutable, dishonest, mystical, superstitious, primitive, ruled by emotion, barbaric, static, dangerous

⁴⁶ Said: p. 22.

⁴⁷ Nieves: p. 10.

⁴⁸ Said: p. 3.

⁴⁹ Nieves: p. 11

Japonisme

Japonisme, a branch of the Orientalist movement previously described, exploded on the European art scene in the nineteenth century after new technologies opened the eyes of the Western world to previously unexplored Eastern lands. Japan had been closed to the outside world for more than two hundred years, a fact that increased the excitement in 1860 when Japan began to allow easier access to foreigners. In a catalogue for a 1992 exhibition in Kyoto, museum director Oshima Seiji wrote “...the dynamic effect of Japonisme was due to the combined stimulation of its exotic strangeness and its meaningful content.”⁵⁰ Japanese art came to the West during a time when European artists were seeking ways to move away from the traditional formulas and methods of the official schools and salons. Jan van Rij explains that “Japonisme, overcoming its exotic phase, became one of the models that stimulated an avant-garde of painters, etchers, sculptors, and architects, among them Édouard Manet, Claude Monet, Edgar Degas, Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec,... Vincent van Gogh,... James McNeill Whistler [and others].”⁵¹ Though Japonisme had great influence on the visual arts, it also had considerable influence in music. Music critic Michel Fleury observes, “The assimilation by western music of elements borrowed from the Asian or Arab East should be seen in parallel with the influence of Japanese painting on Whistler or Manet.”⁵²

Prior to Puccini’s *Madama Butterfly*, in terms of Japonisme in opera, came

⁵⁰ Rij, Jan van. *Madame Butterfly: Japonisme, Puccini, & the Search for the Real Cho-Cho-San*. (Berkeley, Calif: Stone Bridge Press, 2001): 38.

⁵¹ Rij: 39-40.

⁵² Rij: 45.

Saint-Saëns' opera *La Princesse Jaune*, (The Yellow Princess) which, with its use of pentatonic scales and a few borrowed Japanese popular tunes, became the first Western musical work with a Japanese theme and employed an imagined Japanese musical technique. Mascagni's 1898 opera *Iris* was also a predecessor of Puccini's work on a Japanese theme, for which Luigi Illica, Puccini's librettist, penned the text. Mascagni did not bother to utilize Japanese techniques or borrow Japanese tunes but rather relied on the synthesis of Japanese themes in the Italian style. Upon seeing Mascagni's opera, Puccini remarked that he admired the instrumentation but found the dramatic structure left much to be desired.⁵³ Between 1870 and 1895, a slew of operettas, light comedies, and musical comedies adopted Japanese themes, the most well known of which remains the Gilbert and Sullivan operetta *The Mikado*.

Orientalism vs. Authenticity: Puccini's Borrowings

Puccini documented in a letter to Illica that he had a desire to "do [his] best to represent [Japan]." The majority of the borrowings found in *Madama Butterfly* are authentic melodies of Japan, which leads most scholars to paint Puccini in the light of having yearned for Japanese authenticity, and not simple superficial approximations of what Europeans thought sounded "exotic" or "Eastern." Recent findings, however, may provide a new portrait of Puccini's approach to exoticism.

In June 2012, W. Anthony Sheppard wrote an article for *The New York Times* in which he recounts the story of his discovery of a music box at the Morris Museum in Morristown, New Jersey, which plays Chinese tunes and may have been the source

⁵³ Rij: 48

of two unknown melodies in *Madama Butterfly* previously thought to have been of Japanese origin. Sheppard relates:

...Even now few visitors spend much time in the room where Swiss music boxes are displayed. Yet, being a musicologist, I lingered there alone last January as my children ran ahead. I kept listening to one box in particular. A harmoniphone from around 1877, equipped with a reed organ and able to play six Chinese tunes from a cylinder.

Confused at first, I suddenly realized I had stumbled on the key to a musicological mystery many decades old. Scholars have long known that Puccini used Chinese tunes in his opera *Turandot* (set in China and left incomplete on Puccini's death in 1924). But they have been puzzled by the origins of two "Japanese" tunes in his *Madama Butterfly* (set in Japan and first performed in 1904). What I had found were *Chinese* sources for two major themes in *Butterfly* and a surprising connection between that opera and *Turandot*.⁵⁴

Sheppard goes on to explain that Puccini had listened to a Chinese music box in 1920 at the home of Baron Edoardo Fassini-Camossi, who was a veteran of the Chinese Boxer Rebellion in 1900 and acquired the box during his time in China. Three of the tunes from the Fassini music box were prominently featured in *Turandot*. The Guinness box (from the Murtoth D. Guinness Collection of mechanical musical instruments and automata) at the Morris Museum also contains two of the *Turandot* melodies but also a principal theme from *Madama Butterfly* which was applied to the Act I love duet between Cio-Cio San and Pinkerton. Evidence shows that the Guinness box may also have been owned by the Fassinis (Puccini knew the family and was a close friend of the Baron's brother, Alberto) and heard by Puccini around the time he was drafting *Madama Butterfly* in 1901 and 1902. Sheppard wrote:

⁵⁴ Sheppard, W. Anthony. "Music Box as Muse to Puccini's 'Butterfly.'" *New York Times*, June 15, 2012.

“Puccini used several popular Japanese tunes in “Butterfly,” including “Sakura, Sakura” and “Miya Sama,” but the Guinness box reveals that around 1901 he was apparently willing to use Chinese music as well in his representations of what he termed the “yellow race.”⁵⁵ He continued to discuss the subject of the lost melody’s text:

For decades, in an effort to reconstruct Puccini’s models, scholars have been stitching together fragments of published Japanese songs that he might have seen. Fortunately the Guinness box includes its original tune sheet, listing the folk-song titles in Chinese and in transliteration, which turns this music box into a Rosetta stone. The main theme for *Butterfly*, a geisha, is labeled “She Pah Moh” on the tune sheet. Some musicological detective work, with help from the Chinese language scholars Cornelius C. Kubler and Ping Wang, identified the tune as “Shiba Mo,” or “The 18 Touches,” an erotic song often banned in China. This folk song, which also turns up in Chinese operas, is delivered in the voice of a male lover celebrating 18 parts of a woman’s body in explicit detail, moving caress by caress from head to toe.

The specific moments when “Shiba Mo” appears in “*Madama Butterfly*” and Puccini’s sense of humor, said to have been rakish, suggest that he knew what the song was about. The melody appears prominently at the climax to *Butterfly*’s entrance, as she presents herself to her lustful American bridegroom, Lieutenant Pinkerton. *Butterfly* sings the whole melody, in the same key as on the Guinness music box, as she explains to Pinkerton that she has severed all ties to her Japanese past and will devote herself entirely to him. The tune also appears at the climax of the Act I love duet, as Pinkerton eagerly leads *Butterfly* into the house to consummate their marriage.⁵⁶

This new evidence and research has contributed additional understanding and insight into Puccini’s desire (or lack thereof) for authenticity. It appears he was content to

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

use Chinese melodies as well as Japanese and that his work may not have been an exception to the normative European paradigm of enthusiasm towards exoticism art, which was principally ambience over authenticity.

The Gospel of Teddy Roosevelt: Political and Cultural Imperialism

The other extreme of the cultural spectrum observed in Puccini's *Madama Butterfly* is his depiction of America. The opera is extremely popular in the United States, though according to John Louis DiGaetani, it is "in part an allegory about the subtle devices [American] imperialism uses to exploit the native colonial."⁵⁷ In his essay "The American Presence in *Madama Butterfly*," DiGaetani points out that Sharpless and Pinkerton are both in Nagasaki for a reason. Sharpless's function is diplomatic, but what of Pinkerton?

In 1904, the year of *Madama Butterfly*'s premiere as well as the year in which the opera is set, Theodore Roosevelt, historically one of America's most imperialistic leaders, was president.⁵⁸ He first attracted national attention with his participation in the Spanish-American war, in which the United States fought for possession of Cuba. Roosevelt was William McKinley's running mate in the campaign of 1900, and became president when McKinley was assassinated in 1901. Roosevelt held the office until 1909. During his time as McKinley's Vice President, Roosevelt encouraged the president to aid European powers in crushing China's Boxer Rebellion of 1900: China's attempt to rid itself of foreign domination eventually led to Roosevelt's open

⁵⁷ DiGaetani, John Louis. *Puccini the Thinker: The Composer's Intellectual and Dramatic Development*. (Bern: P. Lang, 1987): 116.

⁵⁸ "Theodore Roosevelt - 1901-1909: Imperialism" sparknotes.com. Accessed 17 April 2016. <http://www.sparknotes.com/biography/troosevelt/section8.rhtml>.

door policy. This statement of principles allowed all nations equal access to trade with China as well as the colonization of Chinese lands. DiGaetani asserts that “Theodore Roosevelt had no qualms about joining in since he felt ‘chinks’ as he usually called them, would benefit from being forced to trade with the U.S., but he didn’t want such inferiors emigrating here and limited their legal entry through American emigration laws.”⁵⁹

DiGaetani considers Roosevelt to be “one of the leaders most responsible for America’s continued and obstreperous presence around the world.”⁶⁰ Roosevelt was responsible for the domination of the Panama Canal region for American interests, as well as solidifying control over the Hawaiian Islands, the Phillipines, Puerto Rico, and other various islands in the Pacific. Roosevelt’s slogan came from an old African proverb “Speak softly and carry a big stick, and you will go far.” His administration’s foreign policy soon adopted this slogan and brandished the “big stick” of the American military on several occasions during his presidency. A disciple of Alfred T. Mahan and Rudyard Kipling, Roosevelt believed in the superiority of the white race, in the need for an expansionist (even imperialist) mindset, as well as such racist clichés as “manifest destiny” and “the white man’s burden.”

In defense of President Roosevelt’s foreign policy, he inherited an empire-in-the-making when he assumed office in 1901. With the acquisition of the Phillipines, Puerto Rico, and Guam, and a protectorate established over Cuba and annexed Hawaii, the United States had acquired an overseas empire. Roosevelt is largely

⁵⁹ DiGaetani, 117.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

responsible for increasing the influence and prestige of the United States on the world stage and developing a world-class military. He effectively raised the nation to the status of a world power. Roosevelt followed the example of McKinley in ending the relative isolationism that had dominated the country since the mid-1800s. As a result, he also sought to establish a reliable defense for protection against conflict with potential enemies. Still, it is well documented that Roosevelt believed that the exportation of American values would have an “ennobling effect on the world.”⁶¹

While DiGaetani’s rhetoric and selectivity to historical facts seems slanted and dismisses much of the good done by Roosevelt, it appropriately frames the mindset and presence of the American military in Nagasaki in 1904. Pinkerton’s battleship would likely have been part of Roosevelt’s “big stick” policy by defending American merchants from Japanese retribution or perhaps to guard the Chinese coast following the quelling of its “rebellion.” By the end of the nineteenth century, Nagasaki had become a “rest and relaxation” port for American sailors, who would often use Nagasaki geishas as prostitutes. In a letter to a friend written in 1902, Albertus Peters, a crew-member of the U.S.S. Charleston, recorded: “Nagasaki is the first city I have ever visited where I could not find a place to eat and sleep and rest when coming ashore without having to do so in a saloon, a gambling den, or a house of ill repute, and that is saying a great deal, for I have spent three years traveling in foreign lands.”⁶² The perspective of Nagasaki as a “recreational” destination for

⁶¹ “Theodore Roosevelt: Foreign Affairs” millercenter.org. Accessed 15 April 2016.

<http://millercenter.org/president/biography/roosevelt-foreign-affairs>.

⁶² Groos, Arthur, and Giacomo Puccini. *Madama Butterfly, fonti e documenti della genesi*. Lucca: Centro studi Giacomo Puccini, 2005: 12.

sailors not only provides insight to Pinkerton's exploitative attitude towards Cio-Cio San, but also elucidates the profitability of Goro's business practices as well as the validity of Sharpless's moral trepidation. Imagine the quandary of conducting effective diplomacy with such a consistently exploited population.

Why did Puccini use such iconic American names as *Benjamin Franklin* Pinkerton, and the gunboat *Abraham Lincoln*? These names, as stated by DiGaetani, "exemplify America's most appealing idealism in personal liberty and race relations: it creates a 'special irony' that Pinkerton's behavior exemplifies the opposite of what these men stood for."⁶³ The choice of the names used was not Puccini's, nor was it the decision of Illica and Giacosa. He used them because David Belasco and John Luther Long had used them first. Belasco and Long were both Americans making an anti-imperialist statement. This is a fact that reminds us that imperialism was never as popular with the American public as it seemed to be with the elected officials.

Pinkerton's hegemonic behavior and imperialist approach is manifested in his Act I aria and duet with Sharpless in which he characterizes himself as a "*Yankee vagabondo*" who "wanders from country to country" with a condescending attitude toward foreigners, flexible in his adaptability to their customs, and mindful only of his own pleasure and profit."⁶⁴ The older, more experienced Sharpless attempts to set Pinkerton straight by suggesting that Pinkerton's perspective is an "easy gospel, but it saddens the heart." Consul Sharpless, in this statement, as well as in several others made in the first act regarding the consequences of Pinkerton's foolish behavior, is

⁶³ DiGaetani: 118.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

later discovered as remarkably divinatory. As an American diplomat working at an R & R port such as Nagasaki, Sharpless undoubtedly has had to conduct damage control in more than one case of an irresponsible sailor causing harm to locals and showing disrespect for sacred customs. He seems to know what is coming and he does what he can to prevent it. The interaction here between Pinkerton and Sharpless suggests a “political paradigm: thoughtless military force insensitive to the conscience of the diplomatic mission which is, ultimately, impotent before such power.”⁶⁵

Puccini takes the opportunity here to borrow a popular American melody to indicate a nationalistic contrast to the many Japanese melodies borrowed for *Butterfly*. Among them is the current American national anthem. *The Star-Spangled Banner*, however, was not the official anthem at the turn of the century. A popular patriotic song with poetry by Francis Scott Key and set to the melody of John Stafford Smith’s “The Anacreontic Song,” *The Star-Spangled Banner* was recognized as an official Navy hymn in 1889, but was not named the national anthem until a congressional resolution was signed by President Herbert Hoover on 3 March, 1931. From then, the Puccini borrowing has given Pinkerton and Sharpless an even more extreme nationalistic and imperialistic subtext as they sing “*America forever*” in English to the borrowed patriotic melody during their Act I duet.

Following Sharpless’ gentle reprimand of the dangers of Pinkerton’s condescending, exploitative attitude, Pinkerton nonchalantly defends his position by saying that men of such advanced age cannot remember the pleasures of love, then toasts to the egocentric sentiment that he looks forward to a future date when he can

⁶⁵ Ibid. 119.

marry a real American wife. At this moment, we hear the meter change and Puccini deploys the “Echigo Jishi” tune for the entrance of Butterfly and her friends. Ralph Locke, in his article on broadening the view of exoticism, states: “The sequence of musicalized events—Pinkerton’s heartless vow, Butterfly’s floating entrance and graceful landing—castigates Pinkerton’s selfishness and hypocrisy. By extension, it also castigates the imperial system that has brought Pinkerton to this distant land with dollars enough in his pocket to turn matters to his own advantage.”⁶⁶ DiGaetani considers it “a musical juxtaposition that emphasizes the opera’s conflict of American and Japanese values.”⁶⁷

As Puccini’s *primo tenore* and poster boy for American imperialism, Pinkerton is uncommonly coarse. The first thing he asks Goro at the beginning of the opera is where the bed is located. During the wedding ceremony he continuously urges Goro to “*fate presto*” (to hurry). Pinkerton is clearly eager to get the young Butterfly into bed. The troubling sense of exploitation is unmistakable. It is interesting to note that in both literary sources, as well as the original Milan version of the opera (which premiered at La Scala to a devastatingly negative public response and was later revised to be premiered in Brescia) there is a moment in which Cio-Cio San admits that she initially feared the match with Pinkerton because she had equated Americans with Barbarians. In this case, she would have benefited from obeying her instincts.

Another ill omen is presented to Cio-Cio San during the first act. During the

⁶⁶ Locke, Ralph P. 2007. “A Broader View of Musical Exoticism”. *The Journal of Musicology*. 24, no.4: 516.

⁶⁷ DiGaetani: 119.

love duet, following the wedding ceremony, Cio-Cio San recounts to Pinkerton having heard that in America, butterflies are pinned to a board for display in a collection. Pinkerton's response "so they will not fly away" as well as his earlier assertion that a "*Yankee vagabondo*" is not satisfied unless he "*fa suo tesor i fiori d'ogni plaga, d'ogni bella gli amor*" (makes his treasure the flower of every region, of every beauty the love) hints at something that Butterfly does not yet know. She, too, is simply part of a collection; her wings pinned and unable to fly. Sharpless prophecies this metaphorical clipping of Cio-Cio San's wings when he advises Pinkerton that "it would be a great pity to tear those light wings and lay waste to a believing heart."⁶⁸ DiGaetani calls Pinkerton the perfect imperialist villain... for his status as villain is not known until it is too late.⁶⁹ He is a handsome, wealthy, sharply-dressed young man who "promises not exploitation but a loving partnership that represents progress and mutual happiness."⁷⁰

Examples of Phallocentrism and Fetishization in *Butterfly*

In Act III, when Pinkerton and his American wife, Kate return to Nagasaki to take his and Cio-Cio San's child back to America, promising a better life, Puccini employs an interesting technique that places more importance on the music than the text, and further reinforces the anti-imperialist frame of reference. If one reads the Act III libretto, the final trio of the opera, *Io so che alle suo pene*, encounters Sharpless pleading with Suzuki to convince Cio-Cio San to give up her child to the care of Kate

⁶⁸ Puccini, Giacomo, and Nico Castel. *The Complete Puccini Libretti*. Geneseo, N.Y.: Leyerle, 1994: 302.

⁶⁹ DiGaetani: 120.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

Pinkerton, while Suzuki protests and Pinkerton wanders around the room muttering about the things in his line of sight that remind him of his time with Butterfly: the flowers, the bedroom, and his own portrait. The musical setting, however, paints a very different picture of the scene. Locke explains:

The music enacts a very different scenario, reflecting the power relations of imperialism. Throughout the 30 slow (*largo*) measures of the trio, the orchestra plays a quietly surging and even unfurling melody. Sharpless and Pinkerton take turns doubling the orchestra's melody. Beginning softly and *dolce*, they gradually build to an immense climax, at which the tenor holds a four-beat-long high B-flat. The baritone finally joins him on his own equally intense high F. It is not Pinkerton but Suzuki who is, throughout most of the trio, reduced to muttering. Her protesting words, mostly set as recitative-like interjections, seem to bounce ineffectually off the seamless wall of male legato singing (Example 7)... One imagines that the two men think their Western cultural values are superior to those of the Japanese. Pinkerton, after all, had ridiculed the Bonze in Act I. Yet here they prove themselves to be as deaf to a Japanese woman's entreaty—as unlistening—as was the Bonze on that former occasion.⁷¹

Figure 2. Puccini, *Madama Butterfly*, Act II, scene 2 trio: Pinkerton and Sharpless ignore Suzuki's concerned protestations.

Largo ♩ = 54

SUZUKI

3

E vo - le - te ch'io chie - da ad u - na ma - dre...

PINKERTON

cresc.

-ta - ta è la stan - za dei no - stri a - mor...

SHARPLESS

-vra. Suv - vi - a

p cresc.

⁷¹ Locke: 517-518.

At the end of the opera, Puccini and his librettists added one more anti-American touch to the score's stage directions. Though ignored in most modern stagings, prior to committing *harakiri* offstage, Cio-Cio San places a small American flag in her son's hand. Butterfly's death is juxtaposed with her small boy waving the flag of his father. "While most audiences see the scene as merely one of pathos, the symbolic intent is clearly to remind the viewer of the ultimate villain: American imperialism in the orient."⁷² The character of Madama Butterfly experiences oppression and tragedy at the hands of both imperialist and patriarchal forces.

Fetishization

Imperialist and feminist theories all come together with the study of Fetishization in *Butterfly*. Fetishization of the Asian woman, posits Nieves, "is a place where postcolonial, critical race, and feminist theories intersect."⁷³ All three aspects of multicultural socialist feminism and intersectionality come into play here. Nieves quotes Sunny Woan's article "White Sexual Imperialism: A Theory of Asian Feminist Jurisprudence" in which Woan asserts that "the underlying cause of sexual-racial inequality between White men and non-White women is white sexual imperialism... [T]he history of Western political, military, and economic domination of developing nations compelled women of these nations into sexual submission to White men."⁷⁴ Nieves clarifies the theory and its relevance to Puccini's opera by stating that "when the only prerequisite for sexual attraction to an "Asian" feminine

⁷² DiGaetani: p. 24.

⁷³ Nieves: p. 27.

⁷⁴ Woan, Sunny. "White Sexual Imperialism: A Theory of Feminist Jurisprudence." *Washington and Lee Journal of Civil Rights and Social Justice Law*, vol. 13 (2008), p. 5.

female body is her appearance as Asian, as *Oriental*, as *Other*, we consider such attraction fetishization. Such fetishization upholds sexual stereotypes and harmful depictions of Asian women that lead to hyper-sexualization (resulting in everything from mail-order brides to underreported rates of sexual violence against Asian women). The stereotype of hyper-sexualized Asian women presents her as one that is ‘small, weak, submissive and erotically alluring...’^{75,76}

Fetishization serves the philosophy of phallocentrism, as it centers around the needs of white men. In describing the stereotype, Woan emphasizes that “she not only exemplifies hyper-sexuality, but hyper-heterosexuality, male-centered and male-dominated... the perfect complement to the exaggerated masculinity of the white man, existing solely to serve men and be sexually consumed by them.”⁷⁷ Woan continues: “Asian Pacific women are particularly valued in a sexist society because they provide the antidote to visions of liberated career women who challenge the objectification of women.”⁷⁸ This concept of the fetishization of the Asian female is particularly cogent when dealing with the Cio-Cio San’s narrative. Many scholars, including Ralston, point to *Madama Butterfly* as the quintessential example of the stereotype that “the Asian Pacific woman is the ‘exotic erotic’ whose purpose is to serve, support, and sacrifice for the man at the center of her universe.”⁷⁹ Much of

⁷⁵ Ralston, Julie Yuki. “Geishas, Gays and Grunts: What the Exploitation of Asian Pacific Women Reveals About Military Culture and the Legal Ban on Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Service Members.” *Law and Inequality: A Journal of Theory and Practice*, vol 16, no. 2 (Summer 1998), p. 661-701.

⁷⁶ Nieves: p. 27.

⁷⁷ Woan: p. 4.

⁷⁸ Ibid. p. 5.

⁷⁹ Ralston.

Illica and Giacosa's text given to Pinkerton in his duet with Sharpless in Act I points to Pinkerton's phallogentric and sexually imperialist approach. Pinkerton proclaims, in his narrative describing the "Yankee vagabond" that "la vita ei non appaga se non fa suo tesor i fiori d'ogni plaga" (makes his treasure the flower of every region, of every beauty the love). Moments later he profiles his mental image of Butterfly as the delicate "exotic erotic" stereotype described by Ralston:

Lieve qual tenue vetro soffiato alla statura, al portamento
sembra figura da paravento. Ma dal suo lucido fondo di
lacca come con subito moto si stacca, qual farfalletta
svolazza e posa con tal grazietta silenziosa che di
rincorrerla furor m'assale se pure infrangerne dovessi l'ale.

Light as fragile blown glass in her stature, in her bearing,
she seems like a figure from a screen. But from her shining
background of lacquer how with sudden movement she
detaches herself, like a little butterfly she flutters and rests
with such silent gracefulness that I am assailed by a furor to
pursue her, even if I should break her wings.⁸⁰

Later in Act I, in an aside to Sharpless, Pinkerton comments "Con quell fare di bambola, quando parla m'infiamma..." (With that doll-like manner, when she speaks she sets me aflame...). These examples support the Pinkerton's sexist, phallogentric viewpoint and evidence his sexually imperialist and hyper-sexualized assessment of Cio-Cio San.

Following in the footsteps of John Luther Long and David Belasco, Giacomo Puccini imbued the *Butterfly* tragedy with his own touch of skill and charm. A story that was born of an Eastern vs. Western conflict became an opera in which Puccini delved deep into the trove of Japanese popular tunes for the characterization of the

⁸⁰ Castel, Nico, Sherill Milnes, and Marcie Stapp. 1994. *The Complete Puccini Libretti: In Two Volumes; Volume I*. 2. p. 302.

psychological inner battles of its characters, specifically Puccini's favorite, Cio-Cio San herself. Though he strayed from his quest for authenticity on a few occasions, Puccini's dedication to *Madama Butterfly* was complete. From his reaction at the original viewing of the Belasco play in London to his depression after the disastrous La Scala premiere, it is clear that Puccini was invested in his heroine and her harrowing tale. His was not a case of appealing to the masses taken up in the exoticism and Japonisme movements. He seemed to try to concern himself with telling the tale, and chose musical borrowings that would best represent his characters, their psyches, and environments.

It was not lost on him that Long's short story and Belasco's play were works of anti-imperialist protest. He knew that if not for the American imperialist agenda and deep-seeded colonial condescension, Butterfly's fate might be different. Puccini, however, allowed for a sympathetic Sharpless (at least for the first two acts) to soften the blow of the anti-imperialist message. Even the concealed villain Pinkerton, in Act III, seems to have gained some compassion and understanding. By studying Puccini's masterwork, we learn that the "easy gospel" of phallogentrism, racism, cultural hegemony, sexual imperialism, and exploitation of underprivileged populations can only "sadden the heart."⁸¹

⁸¹ Puccini/Castel: 302.

Chapter 4: Regina

Marc Blitzstein (1905-1964)

Marc Blitzstein, primarily a composer of American musical theater in the tradition of Kurt Weill and Hanns Eisler, was a prolific combiner of musical styles and genres. John Shout describes Blitzstein's early life: "A musical prodigy from a well-to-do Philadelphia family (his father a banker), he followed the proper paths for his first twenty-five years: classical piano at three, lessons with Rosario Scalero at the Curtis Institute and later with Nadia Boulanger and Arnold Schoenberg in Berlin."⁸²

The public perception of Blitzstein's musical legacy has always been somewhat lukewarm. Shout explains that "as a composer he rarely rates mention in considerations of twentieth-century music, although forty years ago Aaron Copland wrote, 'But now at last we have two composers—Virgil Thomson and Marc Blitzstein—who seem to have set us on our way toward having our own kind of operatic piece.'"⁸³ The reasons for his lack of historical attention may be attributed to multiple factors. Shout speculates that "Blitzstein prefers discordant harmonies with simple melodies, avoiding familiar and comforting resolutions; unlike Eisler, though, he will imitate established popular song forms for purely whimsical parody. All this has the consequence of leaving him stranded outside both the academic and the popular mainstream."⁸⁴

⁸² Shout, John D. "The Musical Theater of Marc Blitzstein" *American Music*, Vol. 3, No. 4 (Winter, 1985), p. 414.

⁸³ *Ibid.* p. 413.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.* p. 415.

In terms of style, Blitzstein's "natural impulse is to reach—and convert—the average listener. This requires that his music be instantly accessible and immediately sensuous; Blitzstein rejects atonality, and his closest admirers among modern composers have been Copland, Thomson, and Bernstein. Interested in direct theatrical communication, he writes for actors who can sing rather than for singers who can act, keeping vocal parts fairly simple (although less so later when his work becomes less directly political)."⁸⁵

In 1947, Blitzstein began work on *Regina*, his first musical theater work in seven years. This was a departure for Blitzstein in terms of style, form, and compositional technique. There was a volley of praise and criticism from the musical community regarding Blitzstein's entry into the operatic arena. Shout explains:

Regina is operatic in that it demands singers first, rather than actors, and in that Blitzstein adds several moments to Hellman's play exclusively for their musical possibilities. Yet there are long stretches of spoken dialogue interrupting the arias and the *Sprechstimme*. For Virgil Thomson, otherwise a staunch Blitzstein supporter, it "hands over the expressive obligation to mere speech whenever the composer feels inadequate to handle the dramatic line." Blitzstein may have had *Carmen* in mind (he called *Regina* his "opera comique"), but the coexistence of speech and song created an apparent discomfort in some of the critics at that time—a discomfort voiced not only against *Regina* but against Menotti's *The Consul*, and the Langston Hughes/Kurt Weill *Street Scene*. *Regina* is, under these preconceptions, not a musical because its subject is too somber, and it is not an opera because it attempts to make its impact through straight drama."⁸⁶

⁸⁵ Shout: p. 414-15.

⁸⁶ Shout: p. 422.

Regina is an adaptation of Lillian Hellman's 1939 play *The Little Foxes*. Elizabeth Phillips, in her essay on the command of human destiny in *Foxes* and Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun*, gives an excellent synopsis of the action: "*The Little Foxes*, which takes place in a small town in the deep South in the spring of 1900, is concerned with the scheme of an avaricious family, the Hubbards, to complete a deal for a cotton mill, and exploit others to their own advantage. Upon discovery that her husband, Horace, has foiled this attempt, Regina allows him to die of a heart attack by withholding the medicine he needs, but is defied by her daughter, Alexandra, who asserts that she will fight the Hubbard scheme for eating up the earth."⁸⁷

Regarding Blitzstein's choice to adapt *The Little Foxes* into an operatic work, many critics have questioned his choice of source material based solely on its potential for musicality. Shout considers the dilemma: "A work of intense theatrical power, albeit melodramatic, *Foxes* might be thought a rather unmusical play in its spare dialogue and intricate plotting, and thus an odd choice. Not surprisingly, Blitzstein abandoned many of his old styles, avoided writing in "numbers" and tried for genuine opera."⁸⁸

Lillian Hellman's *The Little Foxes*

Alexandra's willingness to fight against the destructive behavior of the Hubbard siblings is a central theme of Hellman's play. Phillips emphasizes the importance of the resistance theme by asserting that *The Little Foxes* "affirms the demoralizing and

⁸⁷ Phillips, Elizabeth C. 1972. "COMMAND of HUMAN DESTINY AS EXEMPLIFIED in TWO PLAYS: LILLIAN HELLMAN'S "THE LITTLE FOXES" and LORRAINE HANSBERRY'S "A RAISIN in the SUN"." *Interpretations* 4 (1): 29-39.

⁸⁸ Shout: p. 421.

destructive consequences of selfishness, greed, and discrimination, and insists upon the necessity of resistance.”⁸⁹ Also central to the thematic narrative of the play is the necessity for awareness of those portraying capitalistic, hegemonic behavior. Hellman chose an apt title for her cautionary tale. Phillips explains:

For her depiction of a family whose avarice and self-centeredness impel them to a ruthless and conscious exploitation of both human and environmental resources, Miss Hellman took her title from one of the most poetic books of the Old Testament, the Song of Songs, which is Solomon’s. Her allusive and evocative title, “The Little Foxes,” is derived from Book II, verse 15, of that image-packed love song: “Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines; for our vines have tender grapes.” There are implicit in this allusive title then both warning and admonition: the ruthless plunderers who destroy what they cannot use will, like the foxes in the ripening vineyard, spoil—that is, lay waste—the fruit which other persons have carefully nurtured, unless, and here is the explicit exhortation, they are taken—that is, are prevented from carrying out their depredations.”⁹⁰

Exploitation and Compassion in *The Little Foxes*

The Hubbard Sons’ Hegemonic Exploitation

Oscar Hubbard is Hellman’s best example of a “ruthless plunderer who destroy[s] what [he] cannot use.” Hellman uses this character specifically to illustrate such imperialistic and hegemonic behavior. At the beginning of Act Two, when Cal, a black servant, suggests to Oscar that the black people in town have had no meat since cotton-picking was over and that Oscar’s hunting has yielded enough “bobwhite and squirrel” to give every hungry person “a Jesus party.” Oscar’s only response is the

⁸⁹ Phillips: p. 31.

⁹⁰ Ibid. p. 30.

threat of dire consequences to anyone whom he catches “going shooting.”⁹¹ The three siblings are more than willing to dispose of anyone—even each other—if it satisfies their need to satisfy their insatiable need for more wealth and more power. For example, when Oscar and Ben Hubbard discover in Act Two that young Leo has been tampering with Horace’s safety deposit box, they are ready “to exploit their young kinsman’s dishonesty, provided only that they remain in ostensible ignorance of his deed.”⁹²

The main characters in *The Little Foxes* present us with a microcosm of the larger concept of cultural hegemony and imperialism. They are representations of the exploitation and marginalization of other less-privileged groups. The Hubbard men would acclimate nicely into the left-column of Edward Said’s table. Phillips posits: “In the *Little Foxes*, the Hubbards, who represent the dominant culture, have a wholly materialistic set of values. They all measure success in terms of possessions, nor will they scruple to use any means for obtaining what they desire. For the gentler virtues, the more exquisite and refined pleasures which can accompany material wealth, they have no regard.”⁹³

As observed in the texts of *The Little Foxes* and its prequel, *Another Part of the Forest*, Oscar Hubbard exhibits clear evidence of his deeply-seeded bigotry and intolerance. His and Ben’s exploitation of the black population of their small Alabama town is central to the plot of *The Little Foxes*. They are only able to make the deal with William Marshall to build a cotton mill because of their promise of

⁹¹ Ibid. p. 32.

⁹² Phillips: 33.

⁹³ Ibid. p. 32.

paying the black workers starvation wages. The culturally hegemonic attitudes of the Hubbards toward the black population of Bowden and its surrounding towns enforce both imperialism and capitalism. The Hubbards have more interest in making money than respecting their fellow man. The premeditated exploitation of the black population in order to make himself rich in *The Little Foxes* is consistent with Oscar's activities in *Another Part of the Forest*. In the prequel, Oscar is accused by Colonel Simon Isham of involvement with the Ku Klux Klan:

ISHAM, *sharply*: I am not interested in talking to you about the War Between the States, or about your personal war on the people of this state—Now, please listen to me. Two nights ago Sam Taylor in Roseville was badly beaten up. Last night fourteen people identified the night riders as the Cross boys, from over the line, and your son Oscar.

MARCUS, *shouts into the house*: Benjamin. Rope Oscar and bring him out here immediately. I told you fifteen years ago you were damn fools to let Klansmen ride around, carrying guns—

ISHAM: Were you frightened of our riding on you? I came here to tell you to make your son quit. He can thank me he's not hanging from a rope this minute. You have good reason to know there's not a man in this county wouldn't like to swing up anybody called Hubbard. I stopped my friends last night but I may not be able to stop them again. Tell him what patriots do is our business. But he's got not right to be riding down on anybody—⁹⁴

Oscar's denies his involvement with the Klan activities, but Marcus pays off Colonel Isham and begins to warn his son: "Do I have to tell you that if you ever put on those robes again, or take a gun to any man..."⁹⁵ It becomes very clear that Oscar's younger

⁹⁴ Hellman, Lillian. 1973. *The Little Foxes and Another Part of the Forest: Two Plays*. A Viking compass book. New York: Viking Press. p. 16.

⁹⁵ *Ibid*, p. 17.

days were occupied with similarly hateful and discriminatory activities as his later years.

Birdie versus Oscar

Phillips considers greed and lack of human compassion to be the false values depicted in *The Little Foxes*, and the opposite values to be represented by Addie, Horace, and Alexandra. One might, at first glance, consider the character of Birdie to have been wrongfully left off Phillips' list of characters displaying redeeming virtues. Her justification, however, lies in the consideration of the thematic virtues admired by Hellman: "love and tenderness, regard for other human beings, and a willingness to fight against the pillage of the earth by the Hubbards and their ilk."⁹⁶ Birdie certainly possesses love, tenderness, and regard for other human beings. Her willingness to fight, however, is curiously deficient. Phillips claims that Birdie's love for the past becomes an evasion of the present. She elaborates:

It is amply made clear that nostalgia for a romanticized past is as undesirable and indeed as destructive in its final effect. Birdie constantly harks back to halcyon days at Lionnet, her ancestral estate, where gentility and the arts flourished and everyone was kind to everyone else. But her fixation on the past has pushed her into alcoholism, and the evil of her course is pointed out by Addie, the black household servant whose wisdom has come by long observation. In Act Three, Addie tells Birdie:

"There are people who eat the earth and eat all the people on it like in the bible with the locusts. Then there are people who stand around and watch them eat it. Sometimes I think it ain't right to stand and watch them do it."⁹⁷

⁹⁶ Phillips: p. 32.

⁹⁷ Phillips: p. 32-33.

John Shout, however, in a similar statement comparing the “good” and “evil” characters of *The Little Foxes*, does not exclude Birdie. He suggests: “Hellman’s more obvious divisions between good people and bad... are there too: the greedy Hubbards abuse servants and animals, they have vulgar manners, they are insensitive to beauty; Birdie, the faded aristocrat, Alexandra, the innocent daughter, Addie, the noble servant, and Horace, Regina’s long-suffering husband, oppose all that and save their tenderest music for each other.”⁹⁸ Indeed, it seems that Blitzstein’s interpretation of the characters of Hellman’s play redeems Birdie from her inactivity. By including her in the Rain Quartet at the beginning of Act Three, Blitzstein embraces her among the characters with redeeming qualities. Despite her sincerity and good heart, however, her inability to rise above her circumstances and fight against the Hubbards separates her from Horace, Addie, and Zan. One must not discount, however, Birdie’s circumstances. If there exists a scenario in which phallism and the patriarchy rears its head in the foulest fashion, it is hers. Oscar Hubbard’s physical, emotional, mental, financial, and psychological abuse of his wife is unflinching and unwavering.

Domestic violence is the ultimate and cruelest example of patriarchal phallism, and creates a “no-way-out” scenario for its victims. Birdie’s turn to alcoholism is a desperate attempt to cope with an impossible, abusive situation. Phillips’ ready willingness to fault the character for her inability to fight against “the foxes” demonstrates a shortsightedness and a lack of compassion for the multitudes of women faced with a similar inescapable abusive relationship. According to Gramsci’s definition of hegemony, domestic abuse is, on the most basic and micro level of

⁹⁸ Shout: p. 422.

observation, hegemonic, and therefore falls into the realm of intersectionality and multicultural socialist feminism. The National Coalition Against Domestic Violence defines domestic violence as “the willful intimidation, physical assault, battery, sexual assault, and/or other abusive behavior as part of a systematic pattern of power and control perpetrated by one intimate partner against another. It includes physical violence, sexual violence, psychological violence, and emotional abuse... the one constant component of domestic violence is one partner’s consistent efforts to maintain power and control over the other.”⁹⁹

Oscar Hubbard is guilty of the hegemonic behavior of abusive violence and control. The audience of both *The Little Foxes* and *Regina* observes physical violence, psychological violence, and emotional abuse in Oscar’s interactions with Birdie. Though it is never referenced in the script or score, these abusive activities lead one to speculate if Oscar doesn’t also engage in power-seeking sexual control. Hellman’s text also makes it clear that Oscar doesn’t observe his marriage vows. Much like Don Juan was the poster-boy for seventeenth-century phallism, Oscar Hubbard becomes the embodiment of hegemonic phallism and cultural imperialism; he is the mutual enemy of feminists and postcolonial critics.

Horace and Zan

Horace and his beloved daughter Zan share Addie’s distaste for inactivity. “Horace’s refusal to participate in the deal with the Northern Industrialist, Marshall, is voiced near the end of Act Two, and in Act Three the steps he has taken to foil the evil

⁹⁹ "What Is Domestic Violence?" What Is Domestic Violence? Accessed April 13, 2016. <http://www.ncadv.org/need-help/what-is-domestic-violence>.

scheme are made clear; not only has he revealed his knowledge of Leo's dishonesty, but he plans to make a new will leaving Regina only the amount Leo has stolen. And to guarantee Alexandra her opportunity to escape the fate of her Aunt Birdie, he has not only left her his estate but has arranged for enough money to fall into Addie's hands for her to take Zan away. We have seen how Regina succeeds in destroying her husband's life, but because of his moral courage, both Addie and Zan are beyond the Hubbards' reach."¹⁰⁰

As previously mentioned, the play closes with Alexandra's courageous stand against her mother and the Hubbard way. This moment, according to Phillips, is the play's "clearest statement of a true and positive value."¹⁰¹ At the end of Act Three, she tells Regina:

"...now I understand what Papa was trying to tell me. All in one day: Addie said there were people who ate the earth and other people who just stood around and watched them do it. And just now Uncle Ben said the same thing. Really he said the same thing. Well, tell him for me, Mama, I'm not going to stand around and watch you do it. Tell him I'll be fighting as hard as he'll be, fighting some place where people don't just stand around and watch."¹⁰²

Hellman implores that we fight back against the evils of imperialism, cultural hegemony, and exploitation of underprivileged populations. The anti-hegemonic rhetoric employed by Hellman also elucidates the omnipresent phallist viewpoint extant in the turn-of-the-century South. This is among the few areas, however, in

¹⁰⁰ Phillips: p. 32.

¹⁰¹ Ibid. p. 34

¹⁰² Hellman, Lillian, and Herman Finkelstein Collection (Library of Congress). 1939. *The Little Foxes*. New York: Random House. p. 93.

which Blitzstein did not follow Hellman's lead. Shout explains that "one element of Hellman's melodrama—the Hubbard's racism—is excluded, perhaps because it might have seemed overly obvious in 1947. For the most part, though, Blitzstein follows Hellman, staying especially close to her characterizations."¹⁰³

Phallism in *The Little Foxes*

Sharon Friedman, in an article describing feminist themes in twentieth-century American drama, performs an insightful analysis of *The Little Foxes*, and asserts that "the critic with a feminist lens may ascertain underlying issues of feminism that are linked to central themes."¹⁰⁴ The main conclusion to be drawn from her analysis is that though Regina's choices are despicable, one can understand how she, as a character in the midst of such a phallist society and family, might be driven to commit such heinous transgressions. Friedman affirms that when it comes to the character of Regina Giddens, "the most wicked of *The Little Foxes*, the playwright demonstrates ways in which the powerlessness of women may give rise to the most demonic behavior. Although this play is essentially about the moral turpitude of a rapacious family in the post-Civil War South, the characterization of Regina illustrates one way in which a woman might respond to her economic powerlessness when confronted with a situation in which power is all that matters."¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ Shout: p. 422.

¹⁰⁴ Friedman, Sharon. 1984. "Feminism As Theme in Twentieth-Century American Women's Drama." *American Studies* 25 (1): 81.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

Friedman emphasizes that Hellman does not enforce women's issues as a main theme of her plays, but rather she does "empathize economics."¹⁰⁶ Friedman posits that Hellman's "women characters are often portrayed against the socio-economic structures that create and perpetuate their roles. Hellman's characters, though personally and morally responsible for their actions, are almost always portrayed within a social framework, their motives rooted in social forces. Indeed, because Hellman does not stereotype women, but rather portrays them as fully defined individuals shaped by complex political, social, and psychological forces, it is not anti-feminist that this playwright has created one of the most destructive women characters in the history of theatre."¹⁰⁷ Regina's behavior is not justified, but in part explained, by Friedman's rhetoric. Friedman further frames the experience of a strong woman in an oppressive, phallist society and family:

Regina is a demon, but her behavior is largely a response to the limited options of a woman's life, particularly the obstacles that leave her economically dependent. Though some critics have suggested that Regina is more than equal to the men in her family, the text gives evidence that she has always been at the mercy of her father, brothers, and finally her husband. Although Hellman has portrayed Regina in the home where she appears to reign, the dramatist has also shown her to be consistently dethroned by virtue of being a woman. Precisely because home in this play is the setting for business negotiations, Regina is portrayed in relation to the decision-making process where she, in contrast to her husband and brothers, is without capital. She is doubly limited in that she must rely on her husband in order to have any access to money, and because of this dependence, she is not free to leave. Thus, Regina is as much the victim as the cause of her unhappy situation.

¹⁰⁶ Friedman: 81.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

In a dialogue with Horace, Regina displays a contempt rooted in dispossession and disesteem:

REGINA: I don't hate you either. I have only contempt for you. I've always had.

HORACE: Why did you marry me?

REGINA: I was lonely when I was young. Not the way people usually mean. Lonely for all that I wasn't going to get. Everybody in this house was so busy and there was so little place for what I wanted. I wanted the world. Then, and then—Papa died and left the money to Ben and Oscar.¹⁰⁸

This passage from *The Little Foxes* provides a small glimpse into the larger backstory of the Hubbard family. Regina Hubbard Giddens has a “history of being excluded, and she is excluded because she is a woman. Having no money of her own in a family whose lives revolve around money keeps her in a state of perpetual grasping.”¹⁰⁹

Additional Insights from *Another Part of the Forest*

Seven years after the success of *The Little Foxes*, Lillian Hellman revisited these characters and penned a prequel, *Another Part of the Forest* (1946). This play depicts events that occurred twenty years earlier, including the details regarding the Hubbards' acquisition of wealth and “the ways in which women functioned as commodities in the process.”¹¹⁰ The three central women in the play are Lavinia (the Hubbard matriarch), Birdie (Oscar's future wife) and Regina. The Hubbard men, even twenty years earlier, are displaying the same maltreatment of women that we observe in *The Little Foxes*. The reader can also see where Ben and Oscar learned their cruel trade. Their father, Marcus Hubbard is a phallist poster boy in the truest sense of the

¹⁰⁸ Ibid. 82-3.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid. 83.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

word. The female characters are each faced with oppressive treatment at the hands of the Hubbard patriarchy:

Lavinia, consumed with guilt for not speaking out about her husband's lies and wrong-doings, gradually retreats to a world of fantasy. Governed first by her husband, and then by her son, she is restrained by periodic threats of being institutionalized. Birdie, a passive and vulnerable member of the dying aristocracy, must first go to Ben for financial assistance and legal maneuvers, and then must marry Oscar to remain solvent. (The Hubbards acquire her family's property through marriage.) Even Regina, the most formidable woman, must please her father and then Ben whose plan to marry her off to the wealthy Horace Giddens of Mobile has come to pass in *The Little Foxes*. Whatever "wholesale wickedness" is contrived among the Hubbards, the social and economic powerlessness of women puts them at a disadvantage.

Though Regina is as powerless as her mother and Birdie, she does not acquiesce. Instead she uses the methods that she has seen the men employ. She plays her father (Marcus) and Ben against each other, informing Ben about Marcus and Marcus about Ben so that she may gain the confidence of both. However, when the family fortune is transferred from father to son, Regina, despite her father's devotion to her and despite her plotting, is excluded from this transaction. Thus, her coup in *The Little Foxes* may be seen as the culmination of many years of having had to claw her way to the inner circle. She is a woman, albeit a vicious one, in a seething microcosm of a man's world—the dynasty of Marcus Hubbard.¹¹¹

Regina Hubbard Giddens, at first glance is a harsh, vicious character. Her circumstance, however, as evidenced by the text, is a severely repressed one. Without

¹¹¹ Ibid.

excusing her greedy, immoral behavior, one is able to relate more closely with her defiant response against the phallic patriarchy surrounding her throughout her entire life. Friedman wisely suggests that Lillian Hellman “affords her audience the opportunity to explore the conditions of a woman’s life which may lead to manipulating, possessive and “emasculating” behavior.”¹¹²

Conclusion

Don Giovanni, *Madama Butterfly*, and *Regina* provide a remarkable historical and multi-cultural cross-section of operatic works that, due to historic context, either deliberately or inadvertently examine socially hegemonic problems. The theoretical hegemony-based frameworks of imperialism, cultural ascendancy, postcolonialism, feminism, domestic abuse, and phallogentrism can be observed in these and so many other operatic works, from *Falstaff* to *The Mikado*; from *Rigoletto* to *Street Scene*. Each of these theoretical models represent relevant, hot-button political and social concerns. Whether the creative teams of an operatic production present them intentionally to encourage public thought, or whether they are just a reality of a less socially-moral age, they merit serious consideration and deliberation. Artists and production teams shoulder the responsibility of being acutely aware of the application of these issues for their audiences and communities and raising a voice of awareness in favor of a more ethical and progressive belief system. Opera has always been rooted in protest and social relevance, and it demands that as members of a tolerant society, we consider the implications of any hegemonic dogma based on the

¹¹² Ibid.

dominance of one sex, race, geographic origin, sexual orientation, gender, socioeconomic class, or religion over another, and reject it at its source. Modern social progressivism demands education, tolerance, and action.

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