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# Hope, Recollection, Repetition: Turandot Revisited

Ping-hui Liao

“Isn’t that the same fairy tale, Barach? Tell me the rest, because I bore myself reciting it.”<sup>1</sup> The tale is of the Princess Turandot making candidates for her hand answer three riddles on pain of losing their lives. It is a tale the Tartar Prince Calaf is unwilling to believe when told by his onetime tutor Barach. The Prince repeatedly rejects the tale as ridiculous, stupid, insensible, until he sees Turandot’s portrait. Then he is so moved by her beauty that he wants to follow in the “foolish” and “monstrous” footsteps of other princes, “throwing away their lives for such a bloodthirsty woman.” Now Calaf as well as most of the audiences know the story of the cruel princess is but a fairy tale; however, when confronted with the beauty of the portrait or the grandiose spectacle of the opera, the fairy tale suddenly becomes more real than reality. It is this repetition compulsion, the compulsion to renew some strange old myths about other cultures, that has made Puccini’s *Turandot* a constant hit.

Let us dwell on Calaf’s remarks for a moment before moving on to an observation of Kierkegaard about the repetition compulsion. “Isn’t that the same fairy tale?” suggests the tale is already familiar to Calaf, who recognizes the story as Barach recounts it. The tale is being repeated, and yet “Tell me the rest” hints that Calaf desires or at least hopes to hear a different narrative or way of telling the story that he has no difficulty recollecting and has indeed recited too many times. Curiously, Carlo Gozzi’s Calaf here wants “repetition with difference.” In that sense, he is very much like Puccini, who strives for a reconfiguration of Italy via a new operatic myth but ends up repeating the old myths. And these old myths involve precisely, I will argue, the conflation of the female and the Other. Thus the character of Liù, new to Puccini and his librettists, mirrors the earlier figures of Butterfly and Mimi.

Three paradigms of repetition in modern European philosophy are immediately brought to mind in our analysis of Puccini’s *Turandot*:

those of Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, and Freud. Nietzsche's adoption of the desire for repetition as the mark of the heroic seems relevant to Puccini's operatic project in recasting Gozzi's Calaf as the redeemer of an empire—China or, for Puccini, Italy. Freud's notion that repetition becomes a symptom, a process of acting out of trauma rather than the working through of trauma, is useful in understanding Puccini's politics of revision. But for our purpose here, Kierkegaard's point about the difference between hope, recollection, and repetition is most revealing:

Hope is a lovely maiden who slips away between fingers; recollection is a beautiful old woman with whom one is never satisfied at the moment; repetition is a beloved wife of whom one never wearies, for one becomes weary only of what is new. One never grows weary of the old, and when one has that, one is happy. He alone is truly happy who is not deluded into thinking that the repetition should be something new, for then one grows weary of it. It takes youthfulness to hope, youthfulness to recollect, but it takes courage to will repetition. He who will merely hope is cowardly; he who will merely recollect is voluptuous; he who wills repetition is a man, and the more emphatically he is able to realize it, the more profound a human being he is.<sup>2</sup>

In *Repetition* Kierkegaard deploys a gender analogy—an analogy both erotic and sexist, if not abusive—to discuss the implications of repetition. The book begins with the story of a young poet who cannot summon the courage to accept the possible consequences of his marriage. The poet, who cannot fulfill the ethical claims of his engagement, finally gives up hope of renewal (and repetition) in the ethical sphere, as does his advisor and friend Constantius in the aesthetic sphere. The narrative ends with Constantius's intimation of a third kind of repetition—in the religious sphere. For Kierkegaard, the unity of personhood—which he apparently understands as manhood—can only be achieved in a religious sphere, a third mode of repetition that enables the rebirth of God in man, that brings the eternal into the present and thereby gives the past its meaning. In his first mode of repetition, that of love and renewal in the ethical sphere, and to which the above quoted passage serves as an introduction, relations between the young poet and his beloved, the “wretched seducer,” end in despair and weariness. A second mode of repetition in the aesthetic sphere fares no better. Evidently, only the rebirth of a male God in the Son can be an ultimately fulfilling and profound mode of repetition. Of course, Kierkegaard is simply echoing Western philosophers from Plato to Hegel on the discovery of true meaning—that the sensual only serves as a preliminary to the rational—but his discourse is more fascinating and seductive, full of lively imagery and metaphor.

Jacques Derrida and many critics, most notably Sander Gilman, Shoshana Felman, and Luce Irigaray, have discussed modernity and sexuality, repetition and repression, the use and abuse of women in representing other races and in refiguring social problems.<sup>3</sup> Michèle Le Doeuff constantly reminds us that insects are more protected against philosophical abuse than women.<sup>4</sup> In the pages that follow, I would like to examine *Turandot* in light of this Kierkegaardian analogy, to see it as a text that by addressing the pre-modern Other both displaces and replaces urgent problems at home.

Puccini, in his revision of Gozzi, projects his Italian hopes and fears onto a distant land and thus attempts to formulate a new beginning for modern Italy. As a result, his *Turandot* is a repetition with a difference, a revision and a displacement. This is a theme hardly touched upon by critics. In an earlier work, I suggested that we could see Calaf as an agent that constantly deploys a strategy of repetition with a difference to appropriate or repress the voices of the Other. Now, I see the opera as trying to deal with the inner crisis of modernity and identity. The phantom in this opera—the ancient Chinese Princess Louling—is actually a projection of Puccini’s anxiety and agony over Italy’s inability to break with the past, to envision a new modern nation-state.<sup>5</sup> I am not suggesting that Puccini was a proto-fascist or, as Wally Toscanini—daughter of the conductor—once said, “pro-German,”<sup>6</sup> though one certainly cannot ignore these political issues in Puccini.<sup>7</sup> What is most interesting in the opera is how Puccini urges his librettists to make crucial changes in Gozzi’s play and thus to create a different text in which gender, race, class, and nationalist issues come up against a romance narrative of love conquering all, of love making everyone its slave. It is Liù who stands in the problematic and ambivalent intersection between hope and recollection, love and sacrifice, victory and defeat. In contrast to *Turandot*, who stands for “hope”—and indeed, her first riddle is about hope (whereas in Gozzi it is about the Sun)—Liù is portrayed as a woman from the past who recollects. She is also the one that Puccini ironically embraced and partially identified with, when he realized that he would not live to complete his opera.

To follow Kierkegaard, then, we may well view *Turandot* as a narrative moving from Hope to Repetition, as a text on a lovely maiden turning into a lovely wife and thereby enabling the courageous man—Calaf—to realize the third mode of repetition, i.e., the rebirth of the father in the Son, the transfer of patriarchal power. Between Hope and Repetition, Liù, the figure of Recollection, is somehow repressed but returns nevertheless as a “specularized” Other to urge us

to think beyond the specular structure and to relate her to other oppressed or silenced human subjects.<sup>8</sup> The main story of the opera, the tale of hope and repetition, is constantly being retold in opera houses, as audiences in their cravings for the happy endings of success and recognition both desire and hope to hear it repeated and repeated well. Like *Aida* or *Semiramide*, *Turandot* is a number opera and the last masterpiece of the operatic grand tradition to have proven itself over time.<sup>9</sup> One could even define opera, based on the success of *Aida* and *Turandot*, as an art of recollection and repetition—repetition with a difference, of course, for audiences are enthralled to see repeated what they recognize as famous scenes, even as they draw on their recollection of previous performances for comparison.

However, in Puccini's case, we have to add another sense of repetition as developed by Jacques Attali in his *Noise: The Political Economy of Music*.<sup>10</sup> For not only was Puccini's an age of innovative recording (see in addition to Attali, the entry "recording" in *The New Harvard Dictionary of Music*), but Puccini deliberately reproduced exotic melodies in his operas. His art is that of repetition in an age of repeating and, I would argue, that of a musical elaboration that records, re-appropriates the Other in a specific historical period of expansion and colonization, the age of empire as Eric Hobsbawm calls it.<sup>11</sup> Puccini deployed colonialist language to tell of his "conquest" of Covent Garden and, as DiGaetani and Sachs demonstrate, was strongly influenced by the Italian *Risorgimento* movement and later on swayed to some extent by Mussolini's Fascist movement. "Let's hope the Germans come to put things in order," Puccini is reported to have said to an outraged Toscanini in the summer of 1914, on the eve of the First World War.<sup>12</sup> And Guido Marotti claimed that in 1924 Puccini said (although the quotation may not be verbatim, it has the ring of authenticity about it):

I favour a strong state. Men like Depretis, Crispi and Giolitti were to my taste because they gave orders instead of taking them. Now Mussolini has prevented Italy from falling to pieces! . . . Germany was the best-governed state and ought to have been a model to others. I don't believe in democracy because I don't believe in the possibility of educating the masses. It's like trying to hold water in a wicker basket! Without a strong government headed by a man with an iron fist, like Bismarck in Germany in the past and like Mussolini in Italy now, there is always the danger that the people, who construe freedom as mere licence, will become undisciplined and wreck everything. That's why I'm a fascist: because I hope that fascism will achieve in Italy, for the good of the country, the pre-war German national model.<sup>13</sup>

Perhaps, Puccini is too flagrant a case of such political affiliation, a case too easy to establish. But what interests me here is the way in

which Puccini projects problems of his time onto another space and time in his revision of *Gozzi*, rather than the Orientalist elements embedded in his musical discourse, which Edward Said has discovered in other composers and theorists—Mozart, Wagner, Verdi, Toscanini, Gould, Mann, Adorno, and Foucault, for instance. Said has certainly reiterated the affective experience of cultural and political marginality by elaborating—hence the title of his recent book—upon sites of representation of the Orient; he has forcefully directed our attention to histories of discrimination and misrepresentation.<sup>14</sup> But by positing the existence of two systems of oppression—imperialism and patriarchy—and by pointing out the ways in which they have been related, Said has invoked an “experience” that implicitly endorses essentialized concepts, as James Clifford, Homi Bhabha, and many others have pointed out.<sup>15</sup> A text like *Turandot*, therefore, needs to be reconsidered not simply in terms of metaphor or metonymy, of imperialism and patriarchy, but also of “polytropes,”<sup>16</sup> and of the modernity crisis in the West. It can be reread as a text involved in what Chris Bongie calls the “exoticist project” that attempts to displace and begin somewhere else,<sup>17</sup> and as a split text that in its inner contradiction and ambivalence urges us to rearticulate, in the words of Bhabha, “the sum of knowledge from the perspective of the signifying singularity of the ‘other’ that resists totalization—the repetition that will not return as the same, the minus-in-origin that . . . serves to disturb the calculation of power and knowledge, producing other spaces of subaltern signification.”<sup>18</sup> And in such rereadings, problems such as the following become crucial: how to describe political mobilization without appealing to essentialized, ahistorical identities; how to depict human agency while acknowledging its linguistic and cultural constraints; how to incorporate fantasy and the unconscious into studies of social behavior; how to recognize differences and make processes of differentiation the focus of political analysis without ending up with either unconnected, multiple accounts or overarching categories like class or “the oppressed”; how to acknowledge the partiality of one’s story (indeed of all stories) and still tell it with authority and conviction.<sup>19</sup>

In his letters to the librettists Giuseppe Adami and Renato Simoni, Puccini constantly asked them to make revisions in Schiller’s adaption of *Gozzi*. As a result, the relative contributions to the plot of the opera by the librettists were mostly dictated or influenced by the composer. The most striking of the changes is the transformation of the crowd scenes. In *Gozzi*, the crowd consists of slavewomen, eunuchs, soldiers, priests, and an executioner. But Puccini wanted a group of “homeless” Chinese people, who could be easily swayed and

were clearly in need of both leadership and direction. They closely resembled the Italian people after World War I who were awaiting their leader Mussolini, as DiGaetani points out.<sup>20</sup> (In the most recent Metropolitan Opera production, Franco Zeffirelli deliberately puts on stage a large crowd of Chinese dressed in blue who hail Calaf as a hero that will lead them out of the Post-Mao/Post-Tiananmen political chaos. And the ideology of the spectacle is reinforced by all kinds of Orientalist motifs—ancient and modern.)<sup>21</sup> However, the most crucial of the revisions is of the figure Adelma, Princess of Tartary and Turandot's favorite slave, who, in Gozzi, tries without success to manipulate Turandot. In place of Adelma, Puccini substitutes Liù, a Tartar slave rather than a princess, and a "stranger" in her supposed fatherland—China. Even though she has taken up a Chinese identity, Liù is not recognized by any of the Chinese as a fellow citizen. She therefore becomes an ambivalent element in the border-traffic that calls into question the very criteria by which membership in an imagined community may be granted and nationality assigned. A "neither-nor" figure from the distant and no longer identifiable past, Liù wanders from Tartary to China, forever an alien and alienated. She is a figure to be recollected, not to be embraced or even rescued by the Prince. But, curiously enough, she serves as an in-between character who, by denying herself life, haunts the living and unites Turandot and Calaf as lovers and heirs to the throne.

In Gozzi's play, Adelma is very active and manipulative; in Puccini's opera Liù must sacrifice herself to keep her master's identity a mystery. This reversal of roles is very interesting. At the first sight of Calaf, Adelma recognizes him as one of her servants in Tartary, where he took on "the most menial jobs to support [his] parents,"<sup>22</sup> while trying to escape the secret search being conducted by his usurper, "the barbarous sultan Carizmo." However, the role of master and slave is reversed in Puccini, and Liù becomes more passive, helpless, pitiful, and desperate, that is, a typical Puccini feminine character. Deprived of her social and sexual advantages, Liù is forced to operate within the specular structure, resigned to being a faithful mute, of a "specularized Other" that by an act of sacrifice moves Turandot, a man-hater, the cruel Princess, toward a self-reformation, that transforms her into an "acceptable" beloved—and, indeed, a loving wife.

Another major change, Barach and Adelma becoming one in Liù, involves a crucial revision of Gozzi in aspects of gender, class, ethnicity and identity. As the former tutor of Calaf and husband of Schirina, Barach acts as a father figure in the absence of Calaf's father Timur, and throughout the play, maintains his dignity and authority,

winning respect even from Turandot. In his place, Liù is a young woman slave who has no say. Unlike Barach in Gozzi's play, who has his story—and history—to share with Calaf, Liù can only reveal her identity as a humble slave who accompanies Timur, the exiled king, in his dangerous journey to China. Whereas Barach is rewarded at the end of Gozzi's play, Liù stabs herself so her master will know that she will not betray him. The composer and his librettists thus manipulate the gender system to portray Liù as a weak but admirable woman who dies for a just cause. Timur in Gozzi is said to have made the long journey all by himself, but in Puccini he is blind and defenseless, relying totally on Liù. These changes make Liù an admirable but also pitiable person, just like Mimi or Butterfly. Winning our sympathy, though not without ambivalence, Liù is so completely a Puccinian heroine that her complicity with the patriarchal order serves to reinforce the specular structure that will subjugate the other woman—Turandot. The crucial changes in Barach's gender, class, and identity reinforce social and sexual reproductions, the patriarchal orders.

In Liù's first encounter with Calaf, she recalls how Calaf once smiled kindly to her in the palace. Then in "Ascolta Signor," a moving aria, which is a marvelous example of repetition adapted from a traditional Chinese folk song, Liù asks her master to think twice before throwing his life away for Turandot. At the very moment memory of the past is recollected, it loses its grip: the past and memory of it do not now make any difference to the Prince. As Kierkegaard knew well, recollection, the beautiful woman from the past, only tempts but does not last. Momentarily touched by Liù's plea, Calaf is still not deterred from the hope of winning, of gaining a bride and an empire. As the sweetness of that smile is evoked, it is also repressed in the form of repetition: the one who smiled can no longer smile, Calaf says sadly. As a figure of recollection and of inevitable fading, Liù is not unlike the ancient Chinese Princess Louling who possessed Turandot and demanded she recollect what a foreign prince has once done to her and, further, to avenge her by killing suitors. Both Liù and Louling are kept as hostages, slaves; they die by their own hands—though for different causes—in foreign lands. A strange double, they return to haunt as ghosts of the past that had been wronged, as Calaf's father Timur suggests. They are able to recollect but eventually fail to exercise the authority of their history: they fade into phantoms, outside of history.

The names Liù and Princess Louling are not found in Gozzi. Puccini is said to have been interested in their sound effects. Liù sounds more Chinese than Adelma; Princess Louling perfectly adds a

sense of mystery to the opera's China and to the ungraspable Chinese past. However, in creating these figures of recollection and fading, Puccini also expresses an unconscious desire to rid himself of the burden of the past, and to invent a new self. For the composer, as Giampiero Tintori has pointed out, made all possible efforts in his last years to avoid "confronting problems that history was posing ever more unpostponably."<sup>23</sup> And since China, from the standpoint of Europe, is a kind of nonplace and nonidentity, it can lend itself peculiarly well to such a cosmopolitan modernism for which all places and identities become interchangeable. At the core of Puccini's revision of Gozzi then is a modernist project of self-invention, of producing a new starting point. That is why Calaf has to turn a deaf ear to Liù, to dissolve the myth of Princess Louling and her authority, to become China's future heir—to start all over. Michel Foucault has suggested that modern man is not a man who goes off to discover himself, his secrets and his hidden truth; he is instead a man who "tries to invent himself."<sup>24</sup> Modernity, Foucault continues to say, "compels him to face the task of producing himself" in "another, a different place" which Baudelaire calls art and Puccini opera.

In terms of such a modernist project of self-invention, both Liù and Louling have to be rejected as figures of the past that stubbornly resist rupture, discontinuity. To interrupt the slow development of history and force it to enter a new time, that cuts it off from its empirical origin and its original motivations, that cleanses it of its imaginary complicities, modern historians must, as Foucault advocates in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, "direct historical analysis away from the search for silent beginnings, and the never-ending tracing-back to the original precursors, towards the search for a new type of rationality and its various effects."<sup>25</sup> The agent to bring about the displacements and transformations is Calaf, who sets Turandot and her people free from the tyranny of history by solving the riddles and thereby exorcising Princess Louling, the evil, retaliating spirit, that Turandot hails as her "ancestress." The exorcism scene does not appear in Gozzi's play, where, far from being "possessed" by an ancient spirit, Turandot is a proud but loving person who, in her own words, likes to "remain a free woman—free to despise marriage, and men, who want to keep women weak and useless."<sup>26</sup> After defeating Calaf by revealing his identity to the court, she confesses that she "won the trial unfairly."<sup>27</sup> "Let the world know," she announces, "that I am incapable of a dishonest act. And let them know as well that your own merits, your generosity, and your handsome features have softened my heart." To prevent Calaf from committing suicide, she yields, "Live, Calaf!

Turandot is your bride.” Puccini and his librettists, however, twist the honest and independent personality around, recasting her as a Salome figure, cruel, sadistic, disrespectful of life. The refiguration of Turandot becomes a projection of Puccini’s anxiety concerning the historical failure of Italy to become a modern nation-state. In other words, Turandot becomes the allegorical name for a specific historical failure: the failure of the Italian nationalist ideology to produce its own history in response to its inner sense of modernity and identity.

In letter after letter, Puccini complained about an atmosphere of banality that almost choked him. He wanted to get away; life would be more orderly and pleasant anywhere else in the world. In a letter to a friend abroad on December 11, 1920, for instance, he writes, “here in Italy life is miserable. A hundred times better in defeated Vienna than in victorious Milan?!”<sup>28</sup> “It’s better beyond the Rhine,” he says in another letter.<sup>29</sup> At the same time, he was trying to work his way through Gozzi’s tale, but, as he told his librettists, China fascinated and frustrated him. At one time he decided to give up; however, he simply could not get the exotic subject out of his mind. He urged Adami and Simoni to rewrite Gozzi’s play so Gozzi would fit his music, “music which has already been made,” he admits. The music he wrote for *Turandot* thus provokes the revising of Gozzi. Unlike his earlier works, *Turandot* has many choral scenes, scenes of people, there to express their desire for a strong hand, to greet Calaf as the sun, the glory, their savior. Etienne Balibar has recently remarked that the fundamental issue in the formation of a modern nation is “to produce the people.” To be more exact, “it is to make the people produce itself continually as national community. . . . to produce the effect of unity by virtue of which the people will appear, in everyone’s eyes, ‘as a people,’ that is, as the basis and origin of political power.”<sup>30</sup> In the first two acts, the Chinese crowds (which, as I have pointed out, do not exist in Gozzi’s play) are shown as aimless and totally confused. They sing and dance, as if enjoying the decapitation spectacle, but they also lament the cruelty and challenge the Princess’ authority in making China such a bloodthirsty nation. The court chancellors, Ping, Pang, and Pong, unlike Gozzi’s four officials, who came originally from various parts of the Middle East, are native Chinese. They are introduced by Puccini to form a unifying set of three that react in a more or less professional way to the problems caused by Turandot. They act, as Michael P. Steinberg has observed, like modern bureaucrats. They do things they do not really appreciate and plan to retire unless the situation changes. Together, the people, chancellors, council members, eunuchs and pages—even

the Emperor Altoum—realize that Calaf is the right man to make everything right, to unify the people. They sing out loudly, repeating first the Mo-li-hua theme, a theme previously associated with Turandot, and then the Imperial theme, to celebrate the victory of Calaf, the new heir to the throne and the creator of a new order.

As the chorus repeats Mo-li-hua, the famous Chinese folk tune is incorporated first into the Love theme that Calaf introduces and then into the larger Imperial theme, a theme closely related to Calaf since the Emperor addresses him as “my son.” As usual, repetition with a difference is one of the principal elements in musical composition so as to make the restatement of an idea or a figure recognizable. However, Calaf deploys the strategy of repetition with a difference to appropriate the Other, to assimilate it. In the Riddle Solving scene, for instance, he repeats the phrases introduced by Turandot and transforms them into the Love theme. He then repeats the Riddle theme by asking Turandot to solve a riddle in return. Thus, in the process of repetition, Turandot’s misanthropic Riddle motif turns into a Love motif, which by unpacking the logic of Turandot’s repetition (and revenge) compulsion will later dominate in place of the Solution motif, that has appeared in situations controlled by the Princess. Another instance of such a repetition with a difference is “Nessun dorma,” a recasting of the Princess’ decree that “None in Peking shall sleep tonight” into something completely different. Turandot’s words are appropriated and turned against her: she is tortured by the thought that she will be forced to submit and to accept Calaf as her husband. To recall Kierkegaard on the art of threefold repetition, love and marriage—the first mode of repetition—lead not only to harmony in the ethical sphere, but also to a rebirth of the Princess for the worthy Son. In other words, the first type of repetition becomes the third mode of repetition.

In Gozzi’s play, Turandot forgives Adelma and gives her her freedom. She even asks her father to be “still more generous.”<sup>31</sup> In the happy ending nobody is slighted; as a matter of fact, Calaf not only wins the hand of Turandot, he also hears the good news that his subjects have overthrown the traitorous usurper and are holding the throne for him. However, in Puccini, only the glory of the “son” is celebrated in the form of a repetition and absorption that highlights the role of love as a new and unifying force that can lead the people out of darkness. As the Imperial and Love themes are reinforced, the Princess’ motif fades, thus signifying the establishment of a new order in which the once threatening female character is domesticated and turned into a desirable, beloved wife. The repetition of the theme institutionalizes male rationality, just as the Mo-li-hua theme is subdued and gradually displaced in the process of being repeated.

Repetition is not recollection. Once a new order is constituted in the form of repetition, there is no need to recall what is repressed in that repetition: history and women. As a matter of fact, throughout the opera, the female characters are always defined in relation to and in terms of repetition, the incessant search for a specific mode of being and meaning that will guarantee renewal or beginning anew. Women are the Other set against the interactive boundaries of sexuality and race, either to be incorporated or to be rejected. (Madame Butterfly is such an Other woman being rejected.) However, in terms of the sexual and racial politics of incorporation and rejection, Liù is a case of ambivalence and in-betweenness. Critics have faulted Puccini and his student Franco Alfano for failing to include some of Liù's music in the opera's final scene, as a way of reminding us of the human costs. In his will, Puccini did, in recollection of Liù, indicate that at the premiere the conductor should announce to the audience that the composer died at the moment he finished writing music for Liù's funeral procession. Such a gesture was possibly intended to suggest to the audience that the composer partially identified with Liù.

To conclude, then, several questions remain concerning Puccini's ambivalent attitude toward Liù: Why must Liù die and be removed from sight? So that the beautiful woman from the past will no longer come back to haunt the living? Might it have something to do with "the undoing of women" in the operatic tradition or even with the anxiety in musicology concerning the feminine, the weak, as Catherine Clément and Susan McClary have documented?<sup>32</sup> Why then did Puccini want to recall Liù at the last moment? What does this conflicting act of simultaneous rejection and recollection suggest about Puccini's revisionist project? Or about the uncanny doubling of repetition and repression—repression of the other gender and races?

In her remarkable and uncanny reading of Freud's *Das Unheimliche*, Julia Kristeva points out that "[t]he other is my ("own and proper") unconscious."<sup>33</sup> For "[a] first step was taken that removed the uncanny strangeness from the outside, where fright had anchored it, to locate it inside, not inside the familiar considered as one's own and proper, but the familiar potentially tainted with strangeness and referred (beyond its imaginative origin) to an improper past."<sup>34</sup> The foreigner is, she suggests, "neither a race nor a nation. . . . Uncanny, foreignness is within us: we are our own foreigners, we are divided."<sup>35</sup> Perhaps, this is one of the reasons why Liù is forever a foreigner, a minus-in-origin, and yet a figure of "transference" that through revealing her dynamics of otherness, of unconditioned love for the other enables Turandot to become a loving person who is freed from the burden of the past. In his fascinated invention and rejection of

Liù (and of Princess Louling), Puccini might have come to realize that, rather than a simple product of mythic figuration and representation Liù is a stranger to and within us. Liù might thus be a site where a different genealogy of modernity might be found. Rather than see modernity as a cultural event unique to the West—which is divided and multiple in itself—we might explore the possibility that modernity might have something to do with the hybrid, uneven structure of colonial encounter: of the recognition of the self in the Other.

### Notes

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1. Carlo Gozzi, *Five Tales for the Theatre*, ed. and trans. Albert Bermel and Ted Emery (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 133.
2. Soren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling/Repetition*, ed. and trans. by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 132. Published in 1843 and written under the name Constantine Constantius, *Repetition* reveals the philosopher's transmutation of the personal into the religious, following a strange logic of the repetition compulsion.
3. Jacques Derrida, *Spurs: Nietzsche's Styles*, trans. Barbara Harlow (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979). E. Sander V. Gilman, *Inscribing the Other* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1991). Luce Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman*, trans. Gillian C. Gill (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985). Also most essays collected in *Anatomy of Racism*, ed. David Theo Goldberg (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990).
4. Michèle Le Doeuff, "Ants and Women, or Philosophy without Borders," in *Contemporary French Philosophy*, ed. A. Phillips Griffiths (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987) 41–54; also see some of her recent books on the philosophical imaginary.
5. In 1898 Puccini had expressed his attitude towards politics in a letter to a childhood friend that "If I were in charge I'd happily go back to the days of that good soul, 'Carlo Dolovio.'" See G. Marotti, *Giacomo Puccini intimo* (Florence: Vallecchi, 1942), 171. And in the early '20s, Puccini often referred to his country in terms of disgust and distress. My earlier piece on Puccini appeared in *Cultural Critique* 16 (1990): 31–59.
6. Quoted in Harvey Sachs, *Music in Fascist Italy* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1987), 102.
7. See Sachs; John Louis DiGaetani, *Puccini the Thinker: The Composer's Intellectual and Dramatic Development* (Bern, New York: Peter Lang, 1987).

8. Irigaray defines a woman as a “specularized” Other who is constantly subjecting herself to objectification in discourse—by being “female”—and then re-objectivizing her own self whenever she claims to identify herself “as” a masculine subject. She can turn upon herself or even know how to re-turn upon herself, but not how to seek outside for identity within the other: nature, sun, God . . . (woman). However, her possession by a “subject,” a subject’s desire to appropriate her, is “yet another of his vertiginous failures.” “For where he projects a something to absorb, to take, to see, to possess . . . as well as a patch of ground to stand upon, a mirror to catch his reflection,” Irigaray advocates, “he is already faced by another specularization. Whose twisted character is her inability to say what she represents.” *Speculum of the Other Woman*, 133–34.
9. William Ashbrook and Harold Powers, *Puccini’s Turandot: The End of the Great Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991). The authors analyze the dramatic and musical structures of *Turandot* in light of the Italian *melodramma*; they suggest that *Turandot* was a fitting finale for the Great Tradition of Italian opera.
10. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985.
11. *The Age of Empire 1875–1914* (New York: Pantheon, 1987).
12. Quoted in Sachs, 102.
13. Quoted in Sachs, 104.
14. *Musical Elaborations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991).
15. James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), 255–76. Homi K. Bhabha’s critique of Said will be included in his forthcoming *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1993). Robert Young provides a succinct account about Said’s “Disorienting Orientalism” in *White Mythologies: Writing History and the West* (London, New York: Routledge, 1990), 119–40.
16. James W. Fernandez, ed., *Beyond Metaphor: The Theory of Tropes in Anthropology* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991). Most essays in this collection address the problem of singling out metaphor as the major mode of cultural expressions; they argue for “polytropes,” multiple-layered tropes and textual figures.
17. Chris Bongie, *Exotic Memories: Literature, Colonialism, and the Fin de Siecle* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991), 11–17.
18. “DissemiNation,” in *Nation and Narration*, ed. Homi K. Bhabha (London, New York: Routledge, 1990), 312.
19. Joan Scott, “Women’s History,” in *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*, ed. Peter Burke (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992), 60.
20. DiGaetani, 43.
21. Michael P. Steinberg has pointed out to me that Zeffirelli has also choreographed ceremonies for the Vatican. Chiang Ching, the famous Chinese dancer, was the choreographer for the 1992 Metropolitan production of *Turandot*, but according to her almost everything on the stage was dictated by Zeffirelli. I remember hearing a woman saying, while walking out of the opera house after the final dress rehearsal, that her only objection to that production was that “they made the Orientals seem so dignified!”
22. Gozzi, 130.

23. Giampiero Tintori, *Palco di prosenio: Il melodramma, cantabi, teatri, impresari* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1980), 196.
24. "What Is Enlightenment?" in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon, 1984), 42.
25. (New York: Pantheon, 1972), 4.
26. Gozzi, 163.
27. Gozzi, 180.
28. G. Puccini, *Lettere a Riccardo Schnabu* (Milan: Emme edizioni, 1981), 105.
29. Puccini, *Lettere*, 137.
30. Etienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein, *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities*, trans. Chris Turner (London: Verso, 1991), 93–94.
31. Gozzi, 182.
32. Catherine Clément, *Opera, or The Undoing of Women*, trans. Betsy Wing (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988); Susan McClary, *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender, and Sexuality* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991).
33. *Strangers to Ourselves*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 183.
34. Kristeva, 183.
35. Kristeva, 181.