THE FEMININE ON DISPLAY:

PUCCINI'S OTHERING OF THE LOWER-CLASS WOMAN

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Introduction

Late nineteenth-century opera across Europe brought tragedy, death, and the taboo to the stage, all connected to social and political advancements occurring concurrently. The beginning of feminist movements across Europe (and the United States), the emergence of Sigmund Freud's and Friedrich Nietzsche's scholarship, and growing interest in psychology led to new operatic themes. More specifically, psychology moved in the direction of exploration of the female body and mind. Recent advancements in understanding female biology as well as shifting perceptions of the feminine perpetuated an obsessive interest in sexuality, which manifested in literature and on the operatic stage. The best-known late nineteenth-century operas—including Giacomo Puccini's *Tosca* (1900), Richard Wagner's *Parsifal* (1882), and George Bizet's *Carmen* (1875) —centered on intersecting themes of female sexuality, religion, and classism. These themes continued to grace the stage into the twentieth century, and became sources of interest for operatic audiences across the Western world.

The influence of scientific advancements, political change, religion, and aesthetics in Europe produced substantial impact, but Italy differed from the other major art-producing countries such as France and Germany. It is possible that the heavy influence of Catholicism in Italy in particular stunted the infiltration of taboo sexual themes, but late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Italian operas still featured these themes, in different contexts and with different approaches from the rest of Europe. Several of these operas did not receive positive criticism from audiences, purely because these themes, while growing in popularity, were still perceived as shocking and outside the cultural norm in several ways. In Italy the social and political influence of religion fostered harsher responses to portrayals of sexuality on the stage

than in other countries. Additionally, the sense of nationalism being promoted in Italy following the 1861 unification left little room for women to gain autonomy or independence. Moreover, the emancipation movement for women in Italy did not begin until the 1880s, while several other countries had already begun pushing for equality.[1] Thus portrayals of female sexuality were demonized despite ongoing curiosity about the subject among male doctors.

Verismo in literature is characterized by plots revolving around lower-class characters, typically in Sicily, featuring fatal love affairs and tragic endings. Similarly, operatic *verismo* typically centered on the tragic lives of the lower class. Although several composers can be considered verismic, Giacomo Puccini is undoubtedly the best known composer of the *verismo* movement. His operas combined themes popular across Europe, such as sexuality and fatal devotion, with Italian culture and literature to create canonically verismic operas. Even though many of his operas do not fit perfectly within the *verismo* mold, almost all of them employ verismic characteristics. Focusing on the lives of lower-class characters who engage in debauchery—extramarital sex, infidelity, and murder to name a few—Puccini's operas synthesize then-taboo themes with realism. He does this while reinforcing late nineteenth-century Italy's social hierarchy, highlighting the social (and, in this thesis, the gendered) Other.[2] This thesis surveys Puccini's operas to illustrate the ways in which he followed late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century operatic trends, while also using Italian nationalism to other lower-class women.

[1] The beginnings of first-wave Feminism in the U.S. and Britain had already begun at this point.
[2] Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), 1-3.

Chapter One: Social and Political Influence on *Verismo*

War and political unrest plagued Italy during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The *Risorgimento* and struggle for unification, as well as the First World War, left Italy socially scarred. Social upheaval manifested in literature and art, impacting hierarchies and social dynamics across classes. Inspired by the trend of realism in French literature, Italy followed suit in portrayals of everyday life in their literature and opera. Italian writers and composers coined the term *verismo* to describe the artistic movement, using it to create a sense of nostalgia and national identity following decades of political unrest. Although *verismo* served as entertainment for the upper class, the social elite exploited the poverty that lower-class Italians experienced, particularly othering lower-class women.

Italy had previously abolished feudalism under Napoleon's rule (1804-1815), leading to increased class tensions and a lack of resources for working-class Italians.[3] The dissolution of feudalism initially benefited the upper class, but negatively impacted them over time as the importance of their rank declined.[4] Following the fall of Napoleon's empire and Austria's subsequent gain of a large geographical portion of Italy in 1815, Italian cities became hubs of violence and revolution.[5] The Austrian government attempted to mediate the shift from French to Austrian rule by censoring and eradicating any emblems of Italian culture.[6] Italy took cues from Spain and France to revolt, and in 1861 became an independent nation following decades of war with the Austrian government.[7] Marked by political and economic corruption, high illiteracy

[3] Martin Clark, *The Italian Risorgimento* (New York: Pearson/Longman, 2009), x-xi.
[4] John A. Davis, "Italy 1796-1870: The Age of the Risorgimento," in *The Oxford History of Italy*, ed. George Holmes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 183.
[5] Clark, *The Italian Risorgimento*, 20-24.
[6] Davis, "Italy 1796-1870: The Age of the Risorgimento," 185-186.
[7] Clark, *The Italian Risorgimento*, 38.

rates, and a lack of national identity, the period of struggle for Italian independence is typically referred to as the *Risorgimento*.[8] Political tensions during this period exacerbated class differences, leading to a movement among the upper class that emphasized nostalgia and simplicity, traits they often associated with rural, lower-class Italians. Italy's newfound independence and attempt at unifying a previously fractured people led to a shift in communal consciousness and social priorities.

Following Italy's unification, the country worked to deal with the aftermath of war and establish its identity as an independent country. In addition to being impacted by war, nineteenth-century Italy saw population growth, industrialization, and urbanization, leading to congestion in cities and a starker contrast between social classes.[9] The tension between classes, together with restricted social mobility, led to an othering of the lower-class by the bourgeoisie.[10]

Italy's political conflict and subsequent unification impacted social roles, specifically for women. Across Europe nineteenth-century women were expected to be devoted and chaste, creating a model of femininity that was only further cemented following unification. Italian society valued women's unfailing loyalty to men, often depicted in the arts as female martyrdom.[11] Women's virtue was was also prized. Literature across Europe featured sexual themes, specifically in France, and the relationships between men and women in these works highlighted gendered expectations for women. Although men entered sexual relationships with little to no repercussions, women, being perceived as inferior, were condemned and labeled as depraved.[12] Following Italy's unification, these expectations for women's virtue became

[8] Michael Saler, *The Fin-de-Siècle World* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 168.
[9] Saler, *The Fin-de-Siècle World*, 169.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Susan Rutherford, *Verdi, Opera, and Women* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 49.
[12] Ibid., 112.

seemingly inviolable. The emphasis on chastity among women was so vital in Italian culture that rape was seen not as a violation of the woman, but of the social order.[13] The perception of women as parts of a whole—rather than self-governing individuals—bound them to the family unit, elevating them to national symbols of loyalty and leaving them no margin for error.

The term *Risorgimento* essentially means to "rise" or refers to a "second coming."[14] The term in the context of late nineteenth-century Italian culture re-emerged during the aftermath of unification. As *Risorgimento* suggests, Italians were in a time of "historical and moral rebirth," and felt the need to establish a cultural identity.[15] This identity was curated by artists, writers, and composers as they created representations of an ideal Italian public. Many literary texts written during the *Risorgimento* revolved around suffering and tragedy, characterized by "a hero betrayed [and] a woman dishonored."[16] The protagonists overcame their obstacles because of their martyrdom and the acknowledgement of their obligation to defend their community.[17] Through literature and other art mediums, Italian identity and nationalism were established as the public increasingly valued the importance of sacrifice, community, and loyalty to country.

Italy lost several battles against Austria during the First World War, and began to feel that their "Risorgimento aspirations" were in danger.[18] The failures Italy suffered reflected poorly on the country, leading to fear of losing Italian nationhood and the dissolution of the upper class.[19] The tension caused by political turmoil perpetuated class distinctions and divided the country. Many hoped the wars that Italy fought would be fruitful for the Italian people, but

[13] Ibid.
[14] Rosario Forlenza and Bjørn Thomassen, *Italian Modernities: Competing Narratives of Nationhood* (New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 9.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Ibid., 10.
[18] Paul Corner, "Italy 1915-1945: Politics and Society," in *The Oxford History of Italy*, ed. George Holmes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 265.
[19] Ibid.

instead they achieved an "[increase] in class divisions" and "a violent polarization of politics."[20] As socialism dissolved, Mussolini rose to power, leading to a shift in national consciousness despite scattered animosity towards fascism in Italy. Following the war, an adjustment of social roles occurred similar to the shift that followed the 1861 unification, as Mussolini worked to ensure that women remained in the home and served as mothers, reproducing and taking care of children.[21] At the start of the twentieth century, Italian women had begun pushing for body autonomy and more respect from society, which clashed with Mussolini's ideas for Italian women.[22]

Religion also played a pivotal role in women's subversion and erasure in society. Catholicism and its influence over social customs situated women within familial roles, demanding chastity and submissiveness. Religious subversion of women transferred to education as well. Women across Europe were excluded from systems of education and denied knowledge about their own bodies.[23] Women, especially from the lower class, received virtually no educational opportunities and were left out of conversations about the female body, ultimately being pushed towards an "understanding of the social laws separating man and woman" through exploration in relationships.[24]

Because of the increased emphasis on the family unit as a defining characteristic of Italian culture and religion, especially under Mussolini following the First World War, women continued to be subverted and denied representation beyond canonical femininity.[25]

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[20] Ibid., 267-268.
[21] Karen Offen, *European Feminisms, 1700-1950: A Political History* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 283.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Silvia Valisa, *Gender, Narrative, and Dissonance in the Modern Italian Novel* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014), 62.
[24] Ibid., 66.
[25] Offen, *European Feminisms, 1700-1950: A Political History*, 198-199.

Social expectations for women, particularly lower-class women, in late nineteenth-century Italy enabled writers and composers to other them via a new sort of exoticism. This new exoticism further marginalized underprivileged women. The place of women behind men positioned them on the "sidelines" of society, othering them through symbolic isolation.[26] Moreover, stereotypically feminine qualities, such as devotion and displaying emotion, were taken by writers and artists and dramatized, promoting the fetishization of female sexuality and death.

Further depictions of realism in literature are rooted in contemporaneous perceptions of male-female relationships and female sexuality. Social limitations restricting what women could learn and how they could establish personal identities produced limited literary models of femininity. Advancements in medicine and the exploration of the female psyche, paired with the lack of education and freedom for women reduced them to bodies and symbols of sexuality.[27] Because of these barriers and social binds, women were either perfectly chaste or fallen outcasts, the latter placing them in the position of "Other" and victims of "intellectual, physical, and self-disciplinary weakness."[28]

Although *Verismo* emerged from this affinity for depictions of lower-class living among the Italian elites, it originated in nineteenth-century France. French literature underwent a surge in realism and depictions of the lower class, propelled by authors such as Henry Murger and Antoine Prevost. Such authors romanticized realism and a "shared reality" among the French.[29] The intimate nature of realism in French literature, which bled into realism movements across

[26]Leticia Glocer Fiorini, *Deconstructing the Feminine: Psychoanalysis, Gender and Theories of Complexity* (London: Karnak Books Ltd., 2007), 80.
[27] Valisa, *Gender, Narrative, and Dissonance in the Modern Italian Novel,* 65.
[28] Kae Fujisawa, "Puccini's Love Duets and the Unfolding of Time," (PhD diss., The City University of New York, 2016), 74.
[29]Guido Mazzoni, *Theory of the Novel,* trans. Zakiya Hanafi (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2017), 232.

Europe, allowed for reflection and objectivity through the use of first and third person storytelling.[30] Italian artists of the *verismo* movement employed these French methods to create a sense of intimacy and idealization—with an Italian twist.

Verismo romanticized tragedy, often as a result of upper-class Italians turning to bucolic and lower-class scenes as a way of producing nostalgia.[31] Romanticism provided a means of escapism, a way of coping with political turmoil and an "unbearable socio-cultural situation."[32] But under the guise of romanticism and nostalgia, artists manipulated tales of tragedy and social issues to create scenes of passion and allure. Similar to other movements in the nineteenth century, this exploration of a different social class served as a kind of exoticism for the upper class, capitalizing on poverty.[33] Perceptions of lower-class immorality and debauchery became highly popular because the upper class had grown tired of consuming art that featured the "same old themes" that excluded realism and any non-aristocratic characters.[34] *Verismo* literature and opera exaggerated aspects of realism, providing vehicles for entertainment that exploited the realities of lower-class life.[35] By utilizing "romantic historicism" and a social "Other," audience members maintained "[romantic] alienation" and created a nostalgic world without the poverty and illnesses faced by the lower-class.[36] *Verismo* put the suffering of lower-class citizens on display, dramatizing it and ultimately distancing the lower class from the rest of society.[37]

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[30] Ibid., 249.
[31] Adriana Corazzol and Roger Parker, "Opera and Verismo: Regressive Points of View and the Artifice of Alienation," *Cambridge Opera Journal* 5, no. 1 (March 1993): 41-44.
[32] Morse Peckham, *Romanticism and Ideology* (Hannover, University Press of New England, 1995), 45.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Andreas Giger, "Verismo: Origin, Corruption, and Redemption of an Operatic Term," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 60, no. 2 (Summer 2007): 281.
[35] Corazzol and Parker, "Opera and Verismo," 41.
[36] Morse Peckham, *Romanticism and Ideology* (Hannover, University Press of New England, 1995), 33.
[37] Corazzol and Parker, "Opera and Verismo," 44.

Originally, however, *verismo* artists sought to promote social change and draw attention to lower-class living conditions. Writers and composers of verismic works used their depictions of poverty as an attempt to "hold up a mirror to society" and highlight the ways in which it continually perpetuated class distinctions.[38] Although a large portion of the Italian upper class felt that these *verismo* novels and operas were purely entertainment, some felt it important to acknowledge that an idealized past never existed.[39] Composers attempted to show audiences that the ideal past they consumed as a means of escapism disregarded the reality of poverty. By using *verismo* to show Italian society its failures and neglect of the lower class, composers and authors acknowledged the concept of nostalgia as a vehicle for perpetuating tension between social classes and the idealization of poverty.

Verismo in literature first emerged in the writings of authors such as Luigi Capuana and Giovanni Verga. They were famous for their portrayals of "impoverished characters in rural Sicily," which would surely have been exotic to the Italian upper class.[40] Through the use of both geographical and social distance, *verismo* writers othered and isolated lower-class characters, allowing readers to experience the supposed "nostalgia" they were seeking without having to face the hardships of poverty first-hand.

Verismo plots often hinge on a tragic death, usually of a heroine. Heroine deaths—either of chaste maidens or demonized fallen women—served as common plot twists across Europe. In French literature, for example, many lower-class women who used men to escape poverty were hyper-sexualized and condemned. In nineteenth-century realism, any woman who failed to

[38] Giger, "Verismo: Origin, Corruption, and Redemption of an Operatic Term," 37.
[39] Kunio Hara, "Staging Nostalgia in Puccini's Operas," (PhD diss., University of Indiana, 2012), 9.
[40] Arman Schwartz, "The Verismo Debate," in *Giacomo Puccini and His World,* ed. Arman Schwartz and Emanuele Senici (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 261.

maintain a pure and chaste image "[died] in society's eyes."[41] The only alternative to death for a woman who broke the "moral code" was success as a courtesan.[42] The term "courtesan" refers to a lower-class woman who "provides charming companionship for a period of time."[43] Typically, these men paid them special attention, educated them, and gave them money. Many lower-class women in the nineteenth century, especially in France, chose to become courtesans or enter sexual relationships with upper-class men to escape poverty and gain access to opportunities they would not have had otherwise. Often this was the only way for women to receive any sort of education. Such women, however, were punished by society, and courtesans in *verismo* do not survive because they are social pariahs.

Voyeurism in *verismo* pervades the way that artists, writers, and composers positioned women in their works, punishing them for their sexuality while placing it on display for viewers. Manifestations of these ideals appeared in *verismo* literature and opera because heroines were punished for their passionate love, eventually being killed or driven to suicide. The fetishization of death and women's suicide were defining characteristics of *verismo*, rooted in loyalty. Romanticism and nineteenth-century portrayals of women highlighted the ways in which society viewed them as Other, and continued to link them to death and fatal passion.[44]

Suicide became highly feminized in the nineteenth century, owing to the way its permanence reflected the same permanence women felt in being bound to their social roles.[45] Nineteenth-century associations of women with suicide revolved around societal expectations, since it symbolized a rejection of societal roles by women, in which they make the choice to end

[41] Ibid., 1.
[42] Ibid., 6.
[43] Ibid.
[44] Margaret Higonnet, "Suicide: Representations of the Feminine in the Nineteenth Century," *Poetics Today* 6, no. 1/2 (1985), 106.
[45] Ibid., 105.

their life. The rigidity of social roles in the nineteenth century did not permit women many choices, and this inherent lack of choice contributed greatly to the feminization of suicide.[46] Many *verismo* heroines sacrifice themselves, but a large number of them become sacrifices as they suffer the consequences of their actions. Specifically in Puccini's operas, heroines are victims of illness, jealousy, greed, or pride. The use of death as a punishment for choices made by women reflected perceptions of proper Italian character, and othered heroines through isolation.

The emphasis on death in *verismo* is rooted in romanticism, a movement displaying a sort of ambivalence towards women, glorifying them while also associating them with destruction.[47] The movement's "tendency towards escapism" led to the exploitation and romanticization of tragedy, linked closely with poverty in the nineteenth century.[48] While romanticism is linked to escapism, it still operates within the boundaries of nineteenth-century societal expectations. At the core of romantic realism are women who "[live] for love in an unrespectable way" and "[die] for love."[49]

Verismic operas feature lower-class characters as well as a death, usually that of a heroine. Similar to literary *verismo*, operatic *verismo* exaggerated real life and embellished the experiences of the lower class. Most *verismo* operas, specifically those of Puccini, are riddled with death, brutality, eroticism, and tragedy.[50] Although these operas produced dramatizations of real life, *verismo* itself aimed to be a portrayal of "human nature at its most elemental," and an outlet for expressing emotions that were not permissible in society's eyes.[51] Italian opera served

[46] Ibid., 112.
[47] Kathleen Rowe, "Romanticism, Sexuality, and the Canon," *Journal of Film and Video* 42, no. 1 (1990): 51.
[48] Corazzol and Parker, "Opera and Verismo," 44.
[49] Fujisawa, "Puccini's Love Duets and the Unfolding of Time," 78.
[50] Giger, "Verismo: Origin, Corruption, and Redemption of an Operatic Term," 34.
[51] Vivian Schweitzer, *A Mad Love: An Introduction to Opera* (New York: Basic Books, 2014), 116.

as a way of establishing and flaunting cultural traditions, which were exemplified in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as Italian culture experienced a renewal following the *Risorgimento*.[52] Verismic operas aimed to create a sort of exoticism since they center on a "historical, geographical, or social [Other]," a role that women often filled.[53]

While several popular pieces of verismic literature were set in rural areas, many *verismo* operas take place in large cities, dramatizing the perception of congested cities as hubs for moral corruption.[54] The choice to set operas in heavily populated cities, especially in Puccini's case, foreshadowed the fate of the characters, specifically the heroines, because it conveyed to audience members class connotations and how life functioned within the character's sphere.[55] The symbolism found in settings of *verismo* operas, as previously stated, provided insight into stereotypes regarding the lower-class and the debauchery found in slums of large cities, and many audience members felt that these characters surrendered morality.[56] Despite criticism of the movement because of its connections to *fin-de-siècle* aesthetics, it became a pivotal part of late nineteenth-century Italian opera.

Composers and librettists writing operatic works followed the *verismo* model very closely, including a cast of lower-class characters, either a rural or inner-city setting, a scandalous relationship, and the death of a heroine, typically. Male-female relationships in *verismo* operas received heavy emphasis, and, like settings, were used to foreshadow the fates of the characters. In the context of late nineteenth-century Italian opera, women in the same social class as their male counterpart may be spared in the end, but this is not always the case, as seen

[52] Peckham, *Romanticism and Ideology*, 39.
[53] Corazzol and Parker, "Opera and Verismo," 44.
[54] Fujisawa, "Puccini's Love Duets and the Unfolding of Time," 74.
[55] Ibid.
[56] Giger, "Verismo: Origin, Corruption, and Redemption of an Operatic Term," 304.

in Puccini's operas. Composers used duets to formulate relationships between heroes and heroines, aiming to cement their bond and their fate.[57] Harmonies, key relationships, setting, and text all symbolized different types of love and pointed towards the end of relationships, because in most cases of verismic opera, the hero and heroine do not end up together.[58] Puccini's operas, while not fitting perfectly within the *verismo* model, employ lower-class characters and their rich lives full of passion, tragedy, and violence to romanticize female sacrifice and poverty.[59]

[57] Fujisawa, "Puccini's Love Duets and the Unfolding of Time," 102.
[58] Ibid.
[59] Matteo Sansone, "Verismo: From Literature to Opera" (PhD diss., University of Edinburgh, 1987), 18-19.

Chapter Two: The Verismic Man

Giacomo Puccini's operas employ rich harmonies and color, along with plots featuring tragic and passionately fatal relationships between men and women. While he himself never experienced a fatal affair, Puccini's relationships with women informed his compositions and impacted the people around him, providing him with material to use on the stage. His countless affairs with women impacted the content of his operas and his reputation as a virile but emotional man. His overt sexuality and obsession with women gave some critics the impression that he and his compositional style were feminine.[60] His "feminine" style and the content of his operas reflected French *fin-de-siècle* ideals, rather than outright promotion of *Risorgimento* values.[61] Conflicting perceptions of the composer followed him for the entirety of his career and after his death, since some felt he tarnished the country's operatic image, while others, including scholars today, see him as a representation "to a perhaps [unrivaled] extent [of] the very essence of Italian opera."[62]

Italy's standard for women stemmed from its emphasis on devout mothers as a pillar of the family unit. The devotion that women felt not only to their husbands but their families, and by extension their country, reflected Italian nationalism and the importance of loyalty. Puccini's mother, Albina Puccini, exemplified these pivotal traits of the Italian woman, and she influenced her son's relationships as well as his operatic heroines.

[60] Alexandra Wilson, "Torrefranca vs. Puccini: Embodying a Decadent Italy," *Cambridge Opera Journal* 13, no 1 (March 2001): 39.
[61] Ibid., 41.
[62] Alexandra Wilson, *The Puccini Problem: Opera, Nationalism and Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 1.

Puccini grew up in poverty, and his family struggled financially, since his father died in 1864. As a result, he and his mother maintained a very close relationship and relied heavily on each other. Puccini supported his mother and siblings financially, and his mother made sure he had every opportunity for success.[63] Letters written between the two confirm that he valued her opinion, and worked hard to ensure that she approved of his works and career as a composer.

Puccini's parents expected him, as the son of a musician, to follow the same vocational path, but several teachers, including his own uncle, stated that he was not a gifted student and showed no promise as a musician.[64] Despite these criticisms of her son, Albina "cleared every obstacle from [his] path" to ensure that Giacomo received the best music and general education.[65] Their relationship was so significant to him that after her death—Puccini was "despondent," having lost one of his closest confidants and supporters—he stated that "no matter what triumphs [his] art may bring [him], [he] shall have little happiness" without his mother.[66] The relationship proved so influential that it impacted his marriage and his relationships with other women. It informed much of his work because his operas feature intertwined themes of maternal aspects and sexuality. Drawing evidence from Puccini's own life and the storylines of his heroines, many scholars feel that his relationship with his mother helped shape his characters. In his critical biography, Carner connects Puccini's relationship to his mother to his emphasis on voyeuristic female sexuality in his operas. Carner's adamance that Puccini had a "mother-fixation" has been questioned by Budden, who states that Carner's argument that such a fixation causes composers to "[view] womanhood across an unbridgeable polarity between the madonna

[63] Mosco Carner, *Puccini: A Critical Biography* (London: Duckworth, 1974), 21.
[64] Ibid., 16-17.
[65] Ibid., 21.
[66]Sandra K. Davis, "Metamorphosis of a Butterfly: Puccini and the Making of a Powerful Tragic Heroine" (PhD diss., University of Hawai'i, 2005), 55.

and the prostitute" is not solid.[67] Puccini scholars such as Carner and Schwartz have attempted to establish theories regarding Puccini's demeanor and the impacts his childhood had on him as an adult. There has been an ongoing debate about Puccini's connection to his mother and the loss of his father, and whether these are potential sources of the characteristics that are "feminine." While there is no evidence of Puccini being "abnormally attached" to his mother, she maintained great influence in his life.[68] The duality of women as mothers and sexual objects became a prevalent theme in late nineteenth-century opera and literature, and Puccini's works were no exception.

Late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Italian culture valued women solely as mothers, nurturers, and producers of the population. Women not considered virtuous and therefore unfit for motherhood served as partners for men looking for companionship. Puccini's extramarital relationships were almost always with women of the lower class, women who typically would not have been considered fit for motherhood, since they were poor and unmarried. Puccini's heroines who fit into this category were used for their bodies, since their male counterparts never marry them. By creating these types of heroines, Puccini and his librettists condemned them to death, because they exemplify the "negative" parts of femininity in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Italy.

Puccini seemed to have an urge to engage women in ephemeral affairs, as a way to "assert himself" and reinforce his "virility."[69] While he never maintained contact with these women for long and had no investment in them besides physical attraction, he continued to entertain these relationships, since he was a very indulgent man with a taste for luxury and

[67] Julian Budden, *Puccini: His Life and Works* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 476.
[68] Ibid.
[69] Carner, *Puccini: A Critical Biography*, 174.

passion.[70] Although he had affairs with women of all classes, the fact that several of his affairs were with lower-class women, viewed as "socially inferior," demonstrates his need to prove his masculinity.[71] He himself, supposedly being "incapable of [experiencing] true love," created characters who felt lasting passion and formed deep relationships.[72] The women in his operas, many of whom were from the lower class, experienced that "true love," their entire lives "consummated in [their] boundless devotion to [their men]."[73] Puccini did not even experience "true" love with his own wife Elvira, and the lack of this component in his personal life manifested in his operas. He consistently created women who were consumed with love, to the point of suffering and eventual destruction.[74] His heroines reflected an unfailing trust and devotion that he felt he had not received in his own relationships.

Puccini met his wife when she became his student. Her husband at the time was a friend of Puccini's from school, and he requested that Puccini teach her piano.[75] The two began a relationship and Elvira became pregnant, but they could not be married because her marriage to her first husband could not be annulled. The two ran away together, a shocking choice to Elvira's relatives, given that she was a member of the upper class.[76] Puccini's taste for adventure and opulence applied not only to his relationships, but to his life as a whole. Having grown up poor and elevating his social and financial status due to his success as a composer, he indulged himself, pampering his need for luxury. He and Elvira were well matched in this way, because she ensured that anyone whom she met knew she was rich, as was her husband.[77]

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[70] Ibid.
[71] Ibid.
[72] Ibid.
[73] Ibid., 175.
[74] Ibid.
[75] Ibid., 44-45
[76] Ibid., 45.
[77] Ibid., 175.

Elvira's beauty and social status granted her notoriety in aristocratic circles, but so did her bitter jealousy and "narrow [mindedness]."[78] While her suspicions of his infidelity were valid, Elvira's jealousy played a large role in estranging the couple. She chased away any women attempting to meet with her husband, even if just for professional opportunities.[79] Despite her anger at his infidelity, Puccini willingly admitted that he was having affairs and refused to stop, stating that he was guilty but that "it was [his] destiny that [he] must be guilty."[80] Her insistence that he give up his affairs and his refusal to do so resulted in violent rifts between the two, impacting their relationship as well as Puccini's writing.

In a particularly tragic anecdote, Elvira's jealousy led to the death of a maid employed by the household. Doria Manfredi worked for the Puccini family for five years and was considered very valuable. Puccini enjoyed her company and was fond of her, which planted seeds of jealousy in Elvira despite the relationship being purely platonic. She accused Doria of having an affair with her husband, feigning evidence to prove her guilt. Doria was fired from her job, and accosted anytime she came across Elvira. On seeing Doria, Elvira launched verbal attacks on her, spewing vulgarities and lies in front of anyone around. The treatment she received from Elvira and the loss of her job led her to suicide, further driving a wedge between Puccini and his wife.[81] The event affected the composer so much that he immortalized Doria in his *Turandot* character Liù. These tragic characters that Puccini included in his operas led to comparisons with other Italians composers, and criticism about Puccini's dedication to Italian nationalism.

[78] Ibid.
[79] Ibid., 178.
[80] Ibid.
[81] Ibid., 182-183.

Giuseppe Verdi (1813-1901) was a pinnacle of Italian nationalism and independence in the nineteenth century, his name even serving as a motto for the *Risorgimento*.[82] The primary themes of his operas were patriotism, justice, and action. Many of his operas "[cultivated] the image of the passive woman, surrounded by politicized, dominant, and heroic men."[83] Verdi's casts featured stark depictions of gender norms and the dominance of masculinity, because male characters consistently outnumbered women in his works. Verdi's emphasis on masculinity characterized his operas down to vocality. Verdian operas typically featured a "low vocal tessitura," further connecting them and Verdi himself to the perception of Italian values and opera as androcentric.[84] He wrote highly political operas, enhancing his popularity as Italians achieved independence and worked towards a national identity. Puccini's style differed from Verdi's in several ways, and many critics felt that Puccini was "feminizing" Italian music and threatening to unravel the art form.[85]

Much of the emphasis on masculinity following the *Risorgimento* and moving into the twentieth century stemmed from a fear of "waning fertility," as well as the emergence of *fin-de-siècle* aesthetics rooted in stereotypically feminine characteristics.[86] The infiltration of French literary themes threatened Italian culture, and led to criticisms of Puccini since he employed these characteristics in his operas. Many critics felt that "one could never create an honestly Italian opera out a subject [that] summed up all the worst excesses of French literature – sadism, wanton violence, depraved sexuality, [and] murderous women," which were all perceived as

[82] "Viva Verdi" stood for Vittorio Emanuele Re d'Italia. Roger Parker, "Verdi, Giuseppe," *Grove Music Online*, accessed 14 March 2023, https://doi-org.ezproxy.tcu.edu/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.29191.
[83] Helen M. Greenwald, "Verdi's Patriarch and Puccini's Matriarch: 'Through the Looking-Glass and What Puccini Found There,'" *19th-Century Music* 17, no. 3 (Summer 2007): 222.
[84] Greenwald, "Verdi's Patriarch and Puccini's Matriarch," 228.
[85] Wilson, "Torrefranca vs. Puccini: Embodying a Decadent Italy," 42.
[86] Ibid., 49.

"incompatible with [Italian] national character."[87] Additionally, the loss of traditional family roles resulted from the emancipation movement for women and the push for suffrage, which emerged in Milan in the 1880s.[88] In contrast to Verdi, Puccini purposefully made women the focus of his works.[89] Puccini's concentration on heroines and their relationships placed importance on passion and sentimentality to elicit responses and convey unspoken emotions to audiences. Late nineteenth-century critics and audiences felt that the prioritization of emotion was feminine.[90] Wilson states that "the question of the composer's Italianness—versus his 'international-ness'—was a matter of fraught debate."[91] Criticisms of Puccini stemmed from these "images of gender," earning him criticism as the "antithesis of italianità."[92]

Puccini's critics felt his music slandered Italian nationalism and the Italian opera tradition that Verdi had helped to create, but their arguments were not only with his compositional style. They often criticized Puccini himself. His shy yet amiable public persona, as well as his extreme sensitivity, led to perceptions of him as effeminate.[93] Fausto Torrefranca, an adamant critic of Puccini, compared the composer to his character Mimì, stating that he, like "the little seamstress," was "venal but concerned to keep up appearances."[94] Torrefranca's attack on Puccini's music as well as his integrity mirrored the thoughts of many Italians, who felt that the emphasis on femininity and its prevalence on the stage—owing in part to Puccini—was a direct attack on Italian culture. He went as far as implying that the composer was incapable of producing meaningful music because his feminine style indicated that he was, like women, an

[87] Wilson, *The Puccini Problem*, 74.
[88] Wilson, "Torrefranca vs. Puccini: Embodying a Decadent Italy," 48.
[89] Davis, "Metamorphosis of a Butterfly," 51.
[90] Leon Botstein, "Music, Language, and Meaning in Opera: Puccini and His Contemporaries," in *Giacomo Puccini and His World*, ed. Arman Schwartz and Emanuele Senici (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 190.
[91] Wilson, *The Puccini Problem*, 2.
[92] Wilson, "Torrefranca vs. Puccini: Embodying a Decadent Italy," 31.
[93] Carner, *Puccini: A Critical Biography*, 166-167.
[94] Wilson, "Torrefranca vs. Puccini: Embodying a Decadent Italy," 35.

"empty [vessel] incapable of creativity."[95] The perceptions of Puccini as feminine and the belief that women were intellectually inferior was a large source of the criticism leveled against the composer. Despite the push for masculinity to prevail, Puccini's affinity for *fin-de-siècle* themes reflected the late nineteenth century's changing aesthetics, and many Italians welcomed this shift.

In a scathing review, Torrefranca stated that Puccini's operas were "rooted in fin-de-siècle stasis, decadence, neurosis, and eroticism," with stories revolving around the "ritualistic suffering and death of the female lead."[96] He continued his tirade against Puccini and femininity by stating that *fin-de-siècle* aesthetics were riddled with dependency and sickness, features markedly present in Puccini's heroines and at times his heroes.[97] Late nineteenth-century literature and opera frequently centered on femicide, and Puccini was consistently drawn to lower-class women in his life. The "idealist notion of love" in opera and especially in Puccini's work is represented by "a man worshipping an ideal woman" or "a woman sacrificing her life for [a man]."[98] Puccini created idealism in his works through the latter, because he was known for his "suicidal or morally 'tainted'" heroines.[99] Puccini's failure to ever form a long-lasting and happy relationship points towards his constructing these characters to create his own perfect woman—one over whom he has power, and who is willing to sacrifice everything for him.

Puccini's focus on lower-class characters and settings also led to perceptions of his music as feminine. Many of his verismic operas are set in quaint villages or the slums of a big city, with heroines filling domestic roles. These operas entered the home, a domain primarily associated

[95] Ibid., 38.
[96]Ibid., 222.
[97] Ibid., 47.
[98] Schwartz, "Realism and Skepticism in Puccini's Early Operas," 37.
[99] Greenwald, "Verdi's Patriarch and Puccini's Matriarch," 233.

with women.[100] Verdi's operas typically took place in public spaces, utilizing religion and politics to construct scenes in cathedrals, palaces, and the homes of the upper class. They rarely ventured into domestic territory, and when they did it was to highlight power structures.[101] In contrast, Puccini valued intimacy in his settings, contrasting the chaos of city life with intimate scenes of characters sharing a private space. This contrast serves as Puccini's "inversion or, perhaps, even a perversion of Verdi's priorities."[102] Scholars have identified the importance of emotion and connections between characters in Puccini's operas, since "the issue of privacy… was essential to [him]."[103] Puccini's reliance on intimacy to emphasize the "intensity of confrontation" and the emotional tension between male and female characters connected him to *fin-de-siècle* ideals and ultimately to femininity.[104]

Many comparisons between Puccini and Verdi rely on the emotional and cerebral style that the younger composer used to construct his characters, as well as settings and a lack of politicization. One stark contrast between the two is Puccini's outright focus on female sexuality and the relationships between men and women.[105] Puccini's overtly sexual themes failed to adhere to Italy's standard for women and were therefore perceived as an attack on national identity and Italian culture. Critics used these comparisons to further criticize Puccini, citing gendered associations to distinguish the two. Wilson states that "Morello questioned Puccini's status as a national composer by drawing direct comparison with Verdi," and that he felt that "Verdi knew how to write 'manly' music" and therefore "aimed for something deeper in his operas than Puccini did."[106]

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[100] Ibid., 222.
[101] Ibid.
[102] Ibid.
[103] Ibid., 226.
[104] Ibid.
[105] Ibid., 234.
[106] Wilson, *The Puccini Problem*, 85.

Despite widespread criticism of Puccini and his style, many felt that he revolutionized opera and that his works were not overly feminine or threatening of Italian musical culture. Critics blamed him for the destruction of Italian opera, while others deemed him a "national idol" and a champion of the genre.[107] Following the *Risorgimento*, Italy was broken, emigration rates rose, and some in the country feared they would not be able to retain a "homogenous Italian identity."[108] Puccini was increasingly successful as a composer, and his works continued to grace the stage, popularizing and changing opera in Italy. For some, he became a representation of Italian culture, a pillar of society in a time of "internal fracture" and lack of national identity.[109] Despite condemnation for his effeminate style and characterization, his supporters disagreed, and felt that his operas displayed emotions authentically. Puccini's works conveyed emotions with an honesty not typically permissible by society, a virtue that was perceived as "particularly Italian."[110] While a large portion of critics and the Italian public "derided [him] as a manifestation of decadence," his weaving of *fin-de-siècle* aesthetics into Italian culture earned him the label of "symbol of cultural strength."[111] The same feminine qualities that led to criticisms of Puccini and his work also proved fruitful, because his candidness and emotionality increased his number of supporters.

Puccini's hunger for success and dominance over the women in his life paired with his interest in power dynamics, which he reflected in his operas. Comparisons with Verdi highlight the ways in which Puccini's portrayals of power dynamics are not political but gendered.[112] Although many of his hero and heroine pairings are of characters from the same social class, the

[107] Wilson, "Torrefranca vs. Puccini: Embodying a Decadent Italy," 31.
[108] Ibid., 30.
[109] Ibid.
[110] Ibid., 39.
[111] Wilson, *The Puccini Problem*, 2.
[112] Greenwald, "Verdi's Patriarch and Puccini's Matriarch," 233.

seemingly inevitable death of the heroine emphasizes the social order of the late nineteenth century, and the dominance of masculinity over femininity. The placement of his heroines in relation to his heroes also solidifies the dynamic between the characters, because the heroines function as "mute [audiences] for [interminable performances]."[113] Puccini's emotions were reflected in his characters, as he constructed his own perfect woman: one willing to operate within the social order, a victim of power dynamics, and ultimately, a sacrifice.

Puccini's life and his relationships impacted his personality and his writing, leading him to compose verismic operas characterized by fiercely devoted women who want nothing more than love, so much so that they will die for it. Never having truly achieved a happy and loyal relationship, his characters are manifestations of not only ideal Italian women but also of the woman Puccini wanted in his own life. These constructions and the vulnerability he expressed in his operas led to some criticisms about his style and his loyalty to Italy, but they also helped established a new tradition that in part characterized opera in the late nineteenth century. Almost all of his operatic heroines die for love, an end that contemporaneous audiences and critics felt was honorable and ideal. The treatment of these women and their deaths synthesize late nineteenth-century social expectations and class distinctions, as well as Puccini's own perceptions of women and femininity.

[113] Ibid., 31.

Chapter Three: A Man of Influence?

Puccini's presence in the musical canon looms large, and he is a giant in operatic staging and literature today. Wilson states that "today there seem to be few composers as central to the operatic repertory as Puccini," but his style and the musical trends he employed did little to create a lasting influence on his contemporaries.[114] While Puccini's operas were situated well within the *verismo* tradition, towards the end of his career after World War I, the trends that had characterized late nineteenth-century Italian opera began to dissolve. Puccini continued to compose verismic operas, but with different motives and by drawing inspiration from newer aesthetics. Many of his contemporaries remain in his shadow owing to his popularity and prolificity, but a handful of composers produced at least one canonically famous opera, such as Ruggero Leoncavallo (1857-1919) or Puccini's own student Franco Alfano (1875-1954). While at the end of Puccini's career verismic characteristics were still prevalent in the works of some composers, a survey of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Italian opera highlights the ways in which *verismo* went out of fashion.

For most of his career Puccini was driven by aesthetics, which is seen throughout all of his operas, because his verismic style reflects the social conditions that manifested in literature and on the stage. As he continued to compose into the twentieth century, the changing political climate, the turmoil of the First World War, and the rise of fascism led to changes in musical trends. While remnants of *verismo* remained in Puccini's twentieth-century operas, he began to compose with a more commercial mindset, because *verismo* began going out of style among younger composers. During the first part of his career in the late nineteenth century Puccini,

[114] Wilson, *The Puccini Problem*, 1.

along with several other composers, modeled his operas after verismic literature. Yet Puccini is certainly the best known verismic composer because of his large output.

Leoncavallo is arguably the most famous composer of *verismo* besides Puccini, having written one of the most well-known verismic operas *Pagliacci* (1892). Leoncavallo's ability to recognize the dichotomy between real life and dreams, which characterized his operas—especially in *Pagliacci*—earned him praise.[115] Like Puccini, Leoncavallo understood the "connection between social values and the market for entertainment," and was successful at turning his verismic compositions into commodities.[116] While Leoncavallo's reputation revolved around his ability to capture the essence of *verismo* on the stage, he was overshadowed by Puccini's prolific output.[117] Leoncavallo conceived an operatic setting of *La Bohème* before Puccini, but the latter heard of his plans and composed an opera before Leoncavallo's premiered.[118] While Puccini's operas have remained in the repertory in a way that Leoncavallo's have not, Leoncavallo was very popular during his lifetime and his premieres, especially that of *La Bohème,* did much better than Puccini's.[119] Additionally, Leoncavallo's works gained popularity outside Italy, with audiences in Germany preferring his works and the aesthetics of the *giovane scuola*.[120] During the latter part of his career, however, his popularity declined, most likely because he continued to compose in the verismic style despite it becoming less of a priority among younger Italian composers.[121]

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[115] Matteo Sansone, "The 'Verismo' of Ruggero Leoncavallo: A Source Study of 'Pagliacci,'" *Music & Letters* 70, no. 3 (August 1989): 351.
[116] Michele Girardi, "Leoncavallo, Ruggero," *Grove Music Online*, accessed March 17 2023, https://doi-org.ezproxy.tcu.edu/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.16430.
[117] Ibid.
[118] Christopher Smith, "Murger [Mürger], Henry [Henri]," *Grove Music Online*, accessed March 17 2023, https://doi-org.ezproxy.tcu.edu/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.O009838.
[119] Girardi, "Leoncavallo, Ruggero," *Grove Music Online*.
[120] Ibid.
[121] Ibid.

Audiences and scholars regard Leoncavallo's *Pagliacci* as the prime example of *verismo* because of its depictions of southern Italian culture, lower-class characters, and fatal passion. His plot and musical choices exemplify *verismo* because of the opera's "picturesque rustic idyll and dangerous Otherness found in artistic-commercial representations."[122] Additionally, the heroine in *Pagliacci* is killed, much like several other well-known verismic heroines. His *La Bohème*, too, aimed to "convey the realities of life in the Latin Quarter of Paris," inspired by the original author Henry Murger's short stories.[123] The verismic characteristics that define Puccini's operas do the same for Leoncavallo, and the latter continued to actively draw inspiration from *verismo* for his operas until the end of his life.

Several lesser-known composers—such as Francesco Cilea (1866-1950) and Umberto Giordano (1867-1948)—also composed in the verismic tradition. Giordano composed at least one popular opera in the style, *Mala Vita* (1892). The work is "based on a novella of low-life Naples," and contains a "wealth of local [color]."[124] Unlike Puccini, these two composers, as well as Leoncavallo, were much less prolific, never able to popularize their operas as Puccini had done.

While significantly less popular than Puccini and Leoncavallo, Giordano found success in composing verismic operas. However, he has not retained a prominent position in the musical canon. Giordano is, "so far as non-Italian audiences are concerned, a one-opera composer."[125] Despite his limited fame, he "was, with Leoncavallo, one of the first composers to apply the formula of *Cavalleria* [*rusticana*]" and therefore *verismo*.[126] Giordano's first full-length opera,

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[122] Laura Basini, "Masks, Minuets and Murder: Images of Italy in Leoncavallo's 'Pagliacci,'" *Journal of the Royal Musical Association,* vol 133 no. 1 (2008): 53.
[123] Girardi, "Leoncavallo, Ruggero," *Grove Music Online*.
[124] Julian Budden, "Giordano, Umberto (Menotti Maria)," *Grove Music Online*, accessed 17 March 2023, https://doi-org.ezproxy.tcu.edu/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.11173.
[125] Carner, *Puccini: A Critical Biography*, 262.
[126] Ibid.

Mala vita—like several of Leoncavallo's operas—received positive attention in Germany and Austria, but was less popular in Italy because it was "too shocking for Italian audiences."[127] *Mala vita* fits well in the *verismo* style, having been modeled after Pietro Mascagni's *Cavalleria rusticana* (1890), a pivotal piece of literature in *verismo*. The opera centers on a man named Vito Amante, who suffers from tuberculosis. His neighbors convince him that if he manages to save a woman from a sinful life, he will be cured. He decides to execute this plan with a prostitute named Cristina, whom he plans on marrying. Vito's married mistress, Amalia, hears of his plan, and decides to win Vito back. She first attempts to bribe Cristina to leave him, eventually threatening her, but fails. Amalia then approaches Vito and convinces him to be with her again, and he obliges, declaring his love. Both Vito and Cristina turn back to their old ways at the end of the opera.[128]

Similar to Franco Alfano's *Risurrezione* (which will be discussed later), the original version of *Mala vita* strays from the verismic model because Cristina, who lives as a prostitute, and Amalia, who cheats on her husband, both survive, although Cristina suffers emotionally. Giordano's 1897 revision, while less popular than the original, reflects the key features of *verismo* and the plot characteristics that Puccini typically employed; in the 1897 version, Giordano has Cristina commit suicide, a plot device prevalent in verismic literature and opera.[129]

Francesco Cilea wrote several successful works, but his opera *Adriana Lecouvreur* (1902) was among only three that have stayed in the "international repertory."[130] The opera follows an actress, Adriana Lecouvreur, as she prepares to perform. She is in love with Maurizio,

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[127] Julian Budden, "Mala vita ('Underworld')," *Grove Music Online*, accessed 17 March 2023, https://doi-org.ezproxy.tcu.edu/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.O903160.
[128] Ibid.
[129] Ibid.
[130] Julian Budden, "Adriana Lecouvreur," *Grove Music Online*, accessed 17 March 2023, https://doi-org.ezproxy.tcu.edu/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.O004093.

but Michonnet declares his love for her as well. The princess of Bouillon (who is married to the prince) and Michonnet are engaged in an illicit affair, which Adriana discovers when Michonnet mistakenly gives her a bracelet that the princess left behind. The princess grows jealous of Michonnet's love for Adriana and attempts to poison her with powder dusted on a bouquet of flowers. Adriana exposes the princess's affair by revealing her bracelet, further angering the latter. The princess exacts her revenge as the opera ends by tricking Adriana into smelling flowers she believes are from her lover but are instead covered in the poisonous powder, killing her.[131] Cilea's staging of muddled relationships, infidelity, betrayal, and ultimately death situate the opera within the *verismo* model.

Puccini's student Alfano, who completed *Turandot* (1926) following his teacher's death, is a primary example of the dissolution of *verismo* and the shift in twentieth-century Italian musical aesthetics. While Alfano's operas eventually moved away from the late nineteenth-century verismic model, his earliest opera, *Risurrezione* (1904) still employs many of *verismo's* primary characteristics. Critics cite both Puccini and Giordano as influences on Alfano, stating that Alfano wrote the opera in the "Puccini-[Giordano] tradition."[132] The work centers on themes of humanity, and the connections between love, grief, sacrifice, and sentimentality.[133]

Alfano's *Risurrezione* draws inspiration from the libretto written by Cesare Hanau, based on Leo Tolstoy's novel *Voskreseniye*. The plot details the life of a maid, Katiusha, who begins a love affair with a man named Dmitri. She then becomes pregnant and upon seeing him at the train station, realizes he has married another woman. Katiusha is tried for prostitution, with

[131] Ibid.
[132] John C. G. Waterhouse, Virgilio Bernardoni, and Johannes Streicher, "Alfano, Franco," *Grove Music Online,* accessed 17 March 2023, https://doi-org.ezproxy.tcu.edu/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.00547.
[133] Theodore Baker and Guido M. Gatti, "Franco Alfano," *The Musical Quarterly*, 9 no. 4 (October 1923): 560.

Dmitri serving on her jury, and is sent to Siberia as punishment. Dmitri offers to follow her there, but she refuses him, and begins a new relationship with a fellow prisoner named Simonson.[134]

This opera is verismic in the way that Alfano used his heroine to elicit emotion. He felt that Katiusha kept her soul pure despite facing rejection, condemnation, and sin.[135] His heroine, while not a typical *verismo* character owing to her reclamation of power and survival, serves as a symbol of love. Scholars Baker and Gatti state that Alfano's characters' "feelings touch and harmonize with our own," and that they "live in an ideal world."[136] These characteristics indicate that Alfano's style retained remnants of *verismo,* no doubt influenced by both his teacher and the lingering musical aesthetic. The use of his heroine to convey emotion and romanticize tragedy and tumultuous passion connects *Risurrezione* to *verismo*, although this is one of the only verismic characteristics present in the opera.

While *Risurrezione* employs some of the features that characterized Puccini's operas, through plot as well as reception of the opera it is clear that *verismo's* popularity had declined by the time of its premiere. The "musico-dramatic organization" employed in the opera alludes to *verismo*, which critics at the time considered to be "somewhat old-fashioned."[137] In *Risurrezione* "the environment is realistic and the characters are those of every-day life," but the characters are "elevated and purified" while the story is one of "redemption through love."[138] Alfano strayed from the model in his treatment of the heroine by allowing her to live despite her perceived immoral lifestyle. Additionally, she rejects the hero, and this reclamation of female power is not typically a characteristic of *verismo*. While Alfano no doubt drew inspiration from his teacher

[134] Jürgen Maehder, "Risurezzione," *Grove Music Online*, accessed 17 March 2023, https://doi-org.ezproxy.tcu.edu/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.O904241.
[135] Baker and Gatti, "Franco Alfano," *The Musical Quarterly*, 9 no. 4 (October 1923): 560.
[136] Ibid., 574.
[137] Maehder, "Risurezzione," *Grove Music Online*.
[138] Baker and Gatti, "Franco Alfano," 560.

and the lingering remnants of *verismo*, his opera reflects the ways in which musical trends had moved beyond the movement.

Chapter Four: The Sacrificial Lamb

Several of Puccini's operatic heroines exemplify the Madonna-whore dichotomy, and most of them can be sorted into one of these two categories.[139] This chapter will focus on Fidelia from *Edgar* (1889), Liù from *Turandot* (1926), and Mimì from *La Bohème* (1896), highlighting the ways in which they are idolized and therefore othered from the rest of society. Each sacrifices her own safety and well-being for the man she loves, and this fatal devotion—so common among nineteenth-century operatic heroines—elevates them to an unreachable Madonna standard. Their untouchable Madonna status and the power dynamics within which they operate emphasize their social Otherness, as well as the ways in which their choices and eventual deaths have rendered them sacrificial lambs.

Although Italian society often punished women who broke the moral code, on the operatic stage heroines whom society would have considered "pure and virtuous" also frequently died.[140] *Fin-de-siècle* audiences determined the fate of Fidelia, Liù, and Mimì because Italian society operated within a code valuing strong morals, justice, and the subversion of free passion.[141] While the heroine is not always the "moral offender," her status as social Other is often the primary reason for her death.[142] As will be seen in the discussions about Fidelia, Liù, and Mimì, adherence to the social code in relationships—not just their own behavior—typically condemns the heroines.

[139] The dichotomy places women into two groups: those who are pure and pious, and those who are perceived as immoral. Some exceptions in Puccini's operas are Minnie (*La Fanciulla del West*), Lauretta (*Gianni Schicchi*), and Sister Angelica (*Suor Angelica*).
[140] Fujisawa, "Puccini's Love Duets and the Unfolding of Time," 79.
[141] Ibid., 84.
[142] Ibid.

The determining factors for a violation of the moral code (and therefore the death of a heroine) are urban settings, social status, and relationship to the hero. In her dissertation, Fujisawa uses duets to make connections between settings and the fates of heroines. She states that the settings in which characters fall in love indicate the end of their relationship. The "falling-in-love" duets that occur privately are considered more appropriate by audiences, because they are not public displays of passion.[143] In all three of the operas discussed in this chapter, the forming of the relationship happens privately, the only exception being that Liù's love is not requited. The intimate nature of these meetings, in Edgar and Fidelia's case under an almond blossom tree, and Mimì and Rodolfo alone outside, denotes a sense of "decency" and "respectability."[144]

In addition to settings of love duets, the negative connotations of crowded cities in the nineteenth century also contributed to the separation of hero and heroine at the end of many Puccinian operas. Late nineteenth-century Italian society viewed heavily populated cities as corrupt, given the mixing of social classes and negative perceptions of lower-class areas. Also, the *verismo* movement contained remnants of the realism trend in nineteenth-century French literature, which often revolved around courtesans and other lower-class characters living morally corrupt lives in large cities. *La Bohème* and *Turandot* both take place in large cities—*La Bohème* in Paris and *Turandot* in Peking. One notable difference is that *Turandot* takes place in ancient China, separating the opera from the perceptions of large cities as centers of debauchery. *Edgar*, while not set in an urban area, references Edgar's life with Tigrana in a "castle of orgy," which refers to the depraved city.[145] Urban areas in the late nineteenth century, specifically in

[143] Ibid., 97-98.
[144] Ibid.
[145] Ibid., 79.

verismo, denoted temptation and the assumption that its residents were acting immorally, behavior that society deemed punishable.

The social status of heroines and their respective heroes also indicate their fate. A common theme in Puccini's operas is class distinctions, highlighted through male-female relationships. Many of his heroines are lower-class, making them dispensable; many of them enter relationships with men who are above their station. In leaving their own social class, they condemn themselves to death because happy endings in Puccinian operas are typically only granted to couples in the same social class.[146] Often this is untrue for couples who are both living in poverty, because of the negative perceptions of the lower class by aristocrats. *Verismo* partially appealed to the upper class because it allowed for a voyeuristic viewing of corruption among the lower class, which they could consume from a distance. The downfall of these characters often lies in their actions, which are connected to behavioral tropes associated with the lower class, barring them from the happy endings achieved by characters such as Turandot and Calaf, and Lauretta and Rinuccio.

The relationship between hero and heroine in Puccinian operas points towards the heroines' fates, because virtually all of Puccini's heroines fall into one of two categories: a woman who chastely waits for a man, or one who lives with a man outside of marriage.[147] A common theme is that both groups of women are punished for being connected to their heroes, whether or not they choose to break the "moral code."[148] In the case of Fidelia, it is Edgar's behavior and depravity that leads to her death. After Edgar falls under Tigrana's "spell," she

[146] Edgar and Fidelia, as well as Rodolfo and Mimì are exceptions, because they are in the same social class, but they violate the moral code in other ways, which solidifies the end of their relationships because of the heroine's death.
[147] Sister Angelica from *Suor Angelica* (1918) is one exception, although she is still thought to have violated the laws of society, because she has a child out of wedlock.
[148] Fujisawa, "Puccini's Love Duets and the Unfolding of Time," 84.

claims him and the two live an immoral life together.[149] He falls victim to the "free passion" condemned by society.[150] His punishment, then, is the loss of love when Fidelia is murdered by Tigrana. Similarly, Mimì's death is partially a result of her relationship, but serves as punishment for Rodolfo. Throughout the opera, Rodolfo and Mimì both know that she is sick, although Mimì fails to truly understand the severity of her situation. Her relationship with Rodolfo revolves not around love, but rather lust and Rodolfo's desire for a poetic muse.[151] His sour behavior towards her, which he claims is jealousy but is actually fear, stems from his guilt over Mimì's health and his inability to save her.[152] As Mimì dies, Rodolfo mourns her, not as his lover, but as the "loss of [his] lyric muse."[153] Puccini's commentary on the lack of value that society has for beauty and art points towards Mimì's death as a result of Rodolfo's poverty.[154] Liù's death differs from the previous two because it does not serve as punishment for the hero, but rather a punishment for being in love. Liù's suicide is a result of her fatal devotion, a verismic motive and ending. All three of these heroines foreshadow their deaths in interactions with their heroes.

One of Puccini's early but lesser-known operas, *Edgar* is verismic in nature and a perfect depiction of the social conditions under which women were living in the late nineteenth century. His heroine Fidelia is named well because she is chaste, obedient, and faithful. Set in Flanders, this opera follows Edgar as he is caught in between two women: Fidelia and Tigrana, the latter who manipulates Edgar into being with her instead of his true love Fidelia. After Edgar leaves with Tigrana and is presumed dead after joining the army, Fidelia mourns him and remains

[149] Burton D. Fisher, *Puccini's Operas: The Glorious Dozen* (Miami: Opera Journeys Publishing, 2004), 51.
[150] Fujisawa, "Puccini's Love Duets and the Unfolding of Time," 78.
[151] Peggy Munoz Simonds and Roger T. Simonds, "Passion Unbound: Orpheus and Eurydice Romanticized in Puccini's 'La Boheme,'" *Ars Lyrica* 8 (1994): 36.
[152]Geoffrey Edwards, *Verdi and Puccini Heroines: Dramatic Characterization in Great Soprano Roles*, (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2001), 69.
[153] Simonds and Simonds, "Passion Unbound," 39.
[154] Ibid.

chaste in his memory. Edgar sneaks back into the village in disguise and confronts Fidelia, revealing that he has been alive this whole time and has come back to her. Their joy is short-lived, because Tigrana discovers what has happened and, in a jealous rage, murders Fidelia.

Fidelia's fate highlights the ways in which she represents proper Italian femininity, but Tigrana's behavior also exemplifies the Italian virtue of loyalty, although in a dark and twisted way. Both heroines display aspects of Italian nationalism, but it leads to their downfalls as well. Fidelia's devotion to Edgar led to her death, just as Tigrana's devotion led her to violence and destruction. The sacrifice of both life and freedom are manifestations of loyalty no matter the consequence. In addition to providing examples of loyalty and idealized femininity, these two female characters, as well as Edgar's interactions with them, symbolize Italian nationalism. Prior to falling in love with Fidelia, Edgar had loved Tigrana. His choice to leave her and his devotion to Fidelia have religious undertones, significant given Italy's reputation as a Catholic country.[155] Fidelia is essentially a personification of the motherland, and her fatal devotion reflects the values of Italian nationalism and in particular the kind of virtues expected of Italian women.[156]

Puccini others Fidelia by separating her from Edgar and Tigrana, and his librettist does the same through naming her and structuring her behavior. Her name alludes to her character—a pious and devoted young woman. Her stark contrast from Tigrana, who receives ample attention both from Puccini and Edgar, others her as well, making the distinction between the two heroines. In his othering, Puccini also elevates Fidelia, putting her on a moral pedestal. In particular, Puccini's choice to position Fidelia across from Tigrana in the opera highlights the ways in which she represents good over evil, and traditional nineteenth-century Italian values.

[155] Julian Budden, "Edgar," *Grove Music Online*, accessed 18 February 2023, https://doi-org.ezproxy.tcu.edu/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.O900607.
[156] Fujisawa, "Puccini's Love Duets and the Unfolding of Time," 84.

Tigrana is a courtesan who was born in Moorish Spain, but grew up in Flanders. In addition to her "exotic" heritage and vocation, she also "bewitches" Edgar, further demonizing her and painting her as a villain.[157] Fidelia is loyal, innocent, and loving, all traits valued by Italian society and which drew Edgar to her. As Edgar grows tired of his life with Tigrana, he "[nostalgically] yearns for home and the chaste Fidelia."[158] The comparison between Tigrana and Fidelia and their relationships with Edgar highlights not only the ways in which Fidelia acts as Other in the opera, but also the religious and nationalist undertones Puccini employed.

Outside of the opera's plot, Fidelia fits the role of Other because of her gender and social status. As a female character written by a late nineteenth-century librettist and composer, she receives less attention than the hero, both in terms of the plot and the music. Specifically in nineteenth-century Italy, women were expected to be subservient to men and remain devoted. In their loss of identity, women remained on the outskirts of society, and Fidelia is secondary to Edgar and his relationship with Tigrana for a large portion of the opera.

Puccini's othering of Fidelia through her gender extends to the musical content of *Edgar*. While Edgar has his own theme, as does Tigrana, Fidelia has no musical theme attached to her. In fact, as Puccini edited *Edgar*, which he did more than once, he rewrote music that had previously been sung by Fidelia, and allotted it to Tigrana.[159] Her lack of musical presence represents her "feminine passivity."[160] Tigrana's arias emphasize Fidelia's lack of musical motive and her chaste nature. Tigrana's music contains "impressive dramatic power, melodic

[157] Fisher, *Puccini's Operas: The Glorious Dozen,* 51.
[158] Ibid., 52.
[159] Budden, "Edgar," *Grove Music Online*.
[160] Fujisawa, "Puccini's Love Duets and the Unfolding of Time," 224.

sweep," and a style that "conveys her savage nature."[161] In contrast, Fidelia's music is "tender and passionate," coinciding with her demeanor.[162]

As stated before, *verismo* emerged from the Italian upper class turning to bucolic stories from Sicily to entertain themselves. They searched for nostalgia amid political turmoil, and *Edgar* fits the mold, because it features all the verismic characteristics: lower-class characters, rural setting, and a tragic love story. The fascination with the lower class and the exoticism featured in literature and opera othered characters such as Fidelia. Her chaste and obedient nature eventually leads to her death, but it also separates her from the rest of the cast, elevating her to the Madonna status. In the Italian tradition, Puccini constructed the perfectly obedient and loving woman, using these characteristics to idolize her to critics and audiences. In her piety and innocence, Fidelia exemplifies the ideal woman, separating her from the other type of woman, who represents the demonized aspects of femininity. Fidelia's death, while tragic, serves as a representation of the power of passion and love, as well as the loss of traditional femininity. She represented "purity" and vulnerability," and her death serves as punishment for Edgar and his actions throughout the opera.[163] Puccini's and his librettists' choice to kill Fidelia was necessary, because Tigrana's death would not have had the same effect, since Edgar did not love Tigrana as he loved Fidelia, and the former's death would not symbolize the loss of love.

When Puccini wrote *Turandot*, critics and listeners felt that he had strayed from his typical style, and that this opera chased musical trends. With the emergence of fascism as Mussolini rose to power, in addition to the increasingly popular futurist movement, Italy's aesthetic hardened and became less romantic, and Puccini reflected this in his character

[161] Fisher, *Puccini's Operas: The Glorious Dozen*, 56.
[162] Ibid., 57.
[163] Fujisawa, "Puccini's Love Duets and the Unfolding of Time," 79.

Turandot. The princess is cold and unyielding, subjecting her suitors to torture and death. Another character, Liù, became the most beloved from this opera. Among the cold and mechanical façade of futurism demonstrated by Turandot, Liù received adoration for her warmth, emotionality, and willingness to sacrifice herself. Her obedience and sentimentality reflected ideal Italian qualities, and she is another primary example of Puccini using women to exemplify these traits.[164]

The premise of *Turandot* is a disgraced prince trying to win the hand of Princess Turandot, who kills her suitors after they cannot answer her riddles. Prince Calaf's father, the exiled King Timur, and his servant Liù watch the events unfold throughout the opera. Liù, having been smiled at by Calaf on one occasion, is in love with him, and fears for his safety. Knowing Turandot to be cruel and believing her riddles to be unsolvable, Liù tries to warn Calaf and convince him to flee. Calaf, having already solved Turandot's riddles, states that she can kill him only if she can discover his name. To protect him and prevent Turandot from learning his name, Liù commits suicide, because she claims that only she knows the answer and she will not surrender it. Turandot only discovers Calaf's name when he tells her, and after her defeat, she accepts him as her husband, saying that his name is "love."[165]

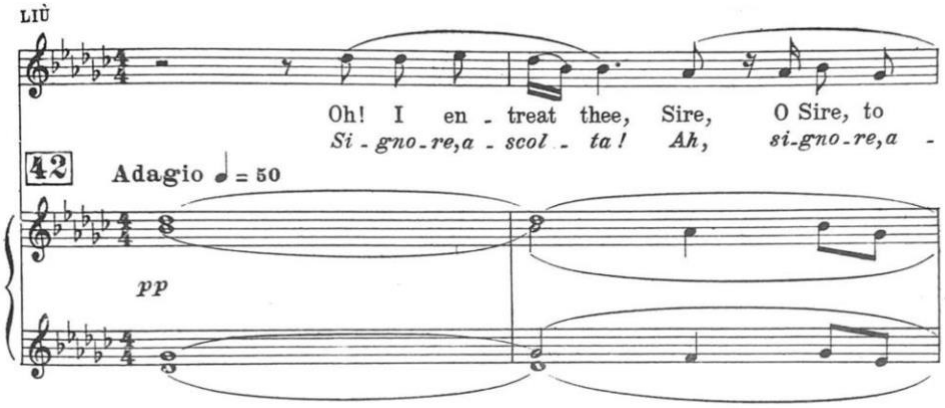
Liù represents the Madonna component of the Madonna-whore dichotomy through her sacrifice and humble nature. Love and loyalty motivated Liù's suicide, and through this final act of devotion Puccini's heroine became the "dramatic embodiment of the enabling power of love."[166] She differs from Fidelia in that she decided to end her life, although her death was

[164]Alexandra Wilson, "Modernism and the Machine Woman in Puccini's Turandot," *Music & Letters* 86, no. 3 (August 2005): 434.
[165] Julian Budden, "Turandot," *Grove Music Online*, accessed 18 February 2023, https://doi-org.ezproxy.tcu.edu/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.O900607.
[166]Edwards, *Verdi and Puccini Heroines*, 121.

indirectly a result of poverty similar to the other heroines. Her love for Calaf was unconditional, representing both the Madonna as well as the emotion and vulnerability that early twentieth-century Italian society sought.

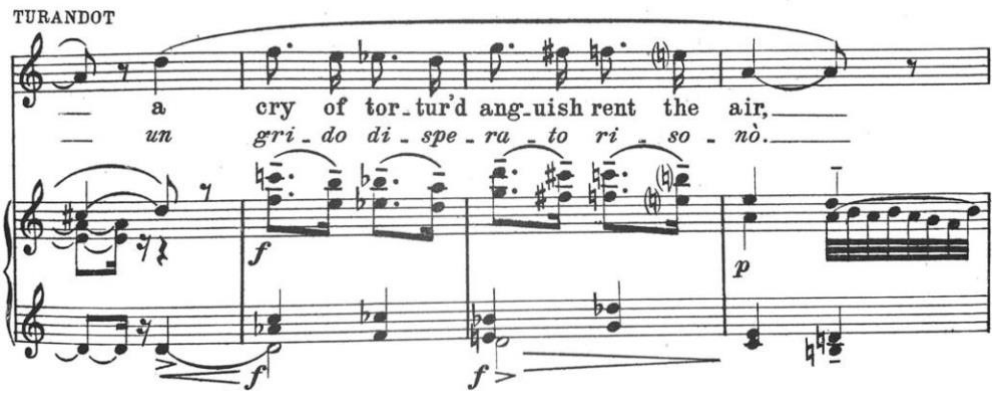
Liù's demeanor is highlighted by her juxtaposition with Turandot. As Giuseppe Giacosa and Luigi Illica wrote the libretto, Puccini requested that Liù, who did not appear in the original play by Carlo Gozzi, be added.[167] Because Puccini added her character, her Madonna status and contrast to Turandot solidify her as the sweet and emotional sacrificial lamb, and Turandot as the mechanical and cold-hearted princess. This dichotomy appears in their respective arias as well. Turandot's music is dissonant and frantic, with support from the chorus and thick accompaniment. Liù, on the other hand, sings diatonic melodies, accompanied by drawn-out whole and half notes. Liù's accompaniment perpetuates the idea of her as the innocent young woman, because her musical persona is calm, passionate, and devoted. In contrast, Turandot's music paints her as aggressive, unwavering, and callous.

Figure I: Excerpt from "Signore ascolta"[168]



[167] Budden, "Turandot," *Grove Music Online.*.
[168] Giacomo Puccini, Franco Alfano, Giuseppe Adami, and Renato Simoni, *Turandot: a Lyric Drama in Three Acts & Five Scenes* (New York: G. Ricordi & C., 1929), 115.

Figure II: Excerpt from "In questa reggia"[169]



Liù, similar to Fidelia, is othered through isolation, social status, and in the way she presents herself when interacting with others. The majority of *Turandot* revolves around the princess and Prince Calaf, with Liù remaining on the sidelines, interjecting only to plead with Calaf to give up his chase in order to save himself. When he fails to heed her warnings, she decides she must become the sacrifice. Her position in relation to the opera's other characters highlights the ways in which she will never be a part of the inner circle. Her isolated nature further emphasizes the reality of her situation as a poor woman. Although a crucial component in the opera and partially responsible for Calaf's triumph, Liù is poor and therefore dispensable. Her position as social Other because she is a slave girl is emphasized in the way that she is soon forgotten following her death.

Liù's isolation is further represented in her music, especially in contrast to Turandot's arias. The chorus typically supports Turandot in each of her arias, whereas the only time Liù receives any musical support from other characters is when they are prompting her to reveal

[169] Ibid., 231.

Calaf's name, and subsequently calling for her execution. In Liù's other arias she sings alone, with an accompaniment much sparser than appears in Turandot's music.

Liù became a beloved heroine because she displayed emotion, passion, and loyalty amid a cast of cold and unflinching characters. In fact, critics hypothesized that positioning Liù across from Turandot highlighted the princess's cruelty, elevating Liù to the status of true heroine.[170] Part of this criticism and unexpected reception of Liù revolved around Puccini's style and the shift from his previous operas. Puccini used his "suffering heroines" to convey his own true emotions.[171] This is the source of Liù's appeal, because she (and his other heroines) was a "[bearer] of his own emotion."[172] In contrast to Turandot, Liù's emotional vulnerability allowed her to win the "battle of supremacy" between the two heroines.[173] Her sacrifice and fatal devotion made her an example of ideal femininity and prescribed the place women should have in society. Liù's purpose is to be secondary; she is there to elicit emotional response and communicate the importance of nationalist ideals.[174] Puccini's construction of Liù and his emphasis on her sentimental nature turn her into an object; she is the real "puppet," being used by Puccini to manipulate the opera's plot.[175]

Liù remains on the outskirts of *Turandot's* cast throughout the opera. While Liù was important for the plot and a beloved character, Puccini turned her into a sacrifice, othering her. Her Otherness is representative of her as the personification of Italian characteristics, especially in her death. Because Liù serves as a sacrifice, her death is not about her, but about Calaf and Turandot. She herself states that the purpose of her sacrifice is so that Calaf can win Turandot's

[170] Edwards, *Verdi and Puccini Heroines*, 121.
[171] Wilson, "Modernism and the Machine Woman in Puccini's Turandot," 434.
[172] Ibid., 437.
[173] Ibid., 433.
[174] Ibid., 448.
[175] Ibid.

heart.[176] Liù sacrifices not only her life but her identity, because once Turandot realizes she cannot discover Calaf's name, she is forgotten. In fact, Liù's sacrifice and Calaf's subsequent union with Turandot further highlights her Otherness. Budden states that "in Act III it is the Prince who appears inhuman. True, he protests angrily at the torture of Liù…but words cost little."[177]

> "Perchè, tacendo, io gli do, gli do il tuo amore…Te gli do, Principessa, e perdo tutto! e perdo tutto!
> "For by my silence, I shall give, shall give him thy love…Thine shall he be, Princess, while I lose [everything!] While I lose [everything!]"[178]

Similar to that of Fidelia, Liù's death was necessary because it propelled the story forward and allowed Puccini's ending. Liù's death represents humanity, emotion, and the triumph of love over death and evil. Late nineteenth-century Italy and *verismo* valued devotion to the point of death, and Liù exemplifies this. She suffered as collateral damage but allowed love to prevail in the end. Although Calaf does not return Liù's passionate love, she is willing to sacrifice herself so that he might experience the love that she does.

La Bohème is arguably Puccini's most famous opera, and Mimì is certainly his most popular heroine. Countless articles and books have been written about her—what she represents, perceptions of her in relation to Puccini, and parallels between her and other heroines. Her story is tragic, and she remains the timid but loyal heroine from beginning to end. Her social status and her vocation as a seamstress put her at a disadvantage because she has neither the resources nor connections to better her situation. She first appears in the opera at Rodolfo's door, and as they meet and fall in love, she tells him about her life and dreams, ultimately retreating into herself

[176] Puccini, Alfano, Adami, and Simoni, *Turandot,* 335.
[177] Budden, *Puccini*, 472.
[178] Puccini, Alfano, Adami, and Simoni, *Turandot,* 335.

upon realizing that she is bothering him. Throughout the opera, she and Rodolfo separate and reunite several times, but his jealousy and fear of not being able to protect her continue to mar their relationship. As Mimì is dying, she requests to be with her true love once more, and Rodolfo stays with her as they reminisce before she succumbs to tuberculosis.[179]

Puccini once again hired Giacosa and Illica to write his libretto for *La Bohème*, despite Giacosa already having written the libretto for Leoncavallo's setting. The original libretto featured a scene in which it is revealed that Mimì has left Rodolfo for a rich man, but Puccini vetoed this idea.[180] His vision of Mimì was that of the fatally devoted heroine, and it is this trope that situates Mimì within the Madonna archetype.

Mimì serves not only as the Madonna but as a catalyst to propel Rodolfo forward in the opera. Mimì herself represents the "embodiment of [nineteenth]-century" emotion and femininity.[181] Categorized as one of Puccini's "sentimental" heroines, her public and private persona as well as the traits that she displayed made her an ideal woman and elevated her status in the eyes of both audiences and characters in *La Bohème*.[182]

Mimì's status and her relationship with Rodolfo establish her as an object. Despite her influential presence in the opera, she does not really have her own identity; she is connected to Rodolfo as his muse. Audiences know her as a meek seamstress who dies because of her poverty. Everything else known about her relates to Rodolfo. Mimì "reveals nothing of substance about herself," and serves only the purpose of the "feminine object of affection."[183] The name that has made her so famous is not even her name. Mimì's real name is Lucia, but she is called Mimì

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[179] Julian Budden, "Bohème, La," *Grove Music Online*, accessed 18 February 2023, https://doi-org.ezproxy.tcu.edu/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.O900607.
[180] Ibid.
[181] Paula Loredana Duca, "The Emancipation of Feminine Roles in Puccini's Creation," *Bulletin of the Transilvania University of Brasov* 13, no. 2 (2020): 78.
[182] Ibid.
[183]Ya-Hui Cheng, "Feminine as Image: 'Si. Mi Chiamano Mimì,'" *Opera Journal* 43, no. 1/2 (March-June 2010), 8.

because she is poor. French society often used the nickname Mimì to refer to prostitutes or poor women in relationships with men outside of marriage.[184] Lust and passion guide Rodolfo's attachment to her as well as his need for a "poetic muse."[185] Their relationship continues to other her and obscure her personal identity as the opera progresses. His love for her is superficial, guided by intrigue and ephemeral passion. By the end of the opera, his love has turned into guilt at not being able to protect Mimì or save her from her fate.[186]

The emphasis on Mimì's loyalty and the tragic nature of her death establish her elevated position and her role as Madonna. She serves only Rodolfo, to the point of death. She has no identity, and no one calls her by her real name. Puccini's robbing of her identity and binding her to Rodolfo others her. As a proper Italian woman, she sacrifices herself for love and the good of her hero. Rodolfo uses Mimì for his own benefit, idolizing her beyond reality to achieve not only love and adoration in his relationship, but also success as a poet. He sees Mimì as the "personification of poetry," turning her into an object without identity outside of him.[187] Puccini's and in turn Rodolfo's treatment of her and his construction of his version of Mimì on the stage made her death effective. In other operatic settings of *La Bohème*, such as that of Leoncavallo, Mimì is an unimportant character who blends in with the rest of the cast. Puccini brings her to the forefront, as he entrances Rodolfo with this frail and timid woman.[188]

Similar to his treatment of Fidelia, Puccini's idolization of Mimì stemmed from her relationship with Rodolfo and her willingness to be subservient, succumbing to Rodolfo's emotions, her sickness, and eventually death. Part of her frail persona stems from her health

[184] Simonds and Simonds, "Passion Unbound," 36.
[185] Fujisawa, "Puccini's Love Duets and the Unfolding of Time," 231.
[186] Edwards, *Verdi and Puccini Heroines*, 69.
[187] Simonds and Simonds, "Passion Unbound," 36.
[188] Allan Atlas, "Mimì's Death: Mourning in Puccini and Leoncavallo," *The Journal of Musicology* 14, no. 1 (Winter 1996): 56.

because she struggles with tuberculosis throughout the opera, eventually dying of it. The emergence of the bourgeois class brought a new social hierarchy in which women were "essentially Others," a belief rooted in "intellectual, physical, and self-disciplinary weakness."[189] Mimì's sickness and her surrender to poverty represented the weakness that was associated with women and the social Other.

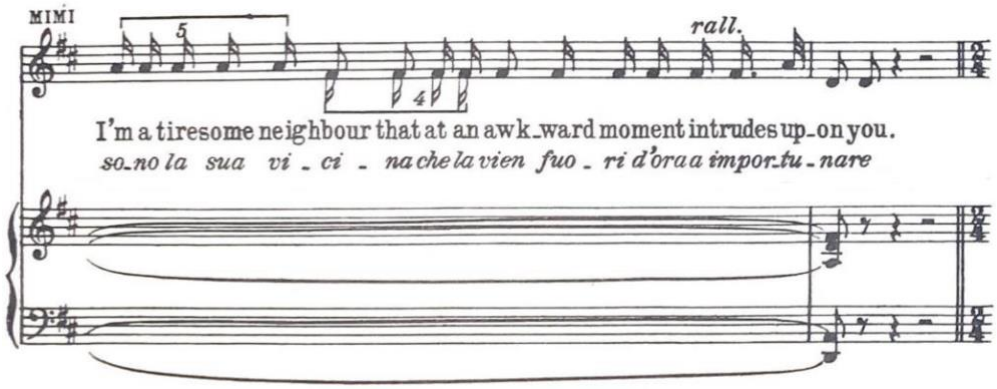
Mimì is continually idolized due to her positivity and her displays of passion for her dreams. Part of *verismo's* appeal and what led to the genesis of the movement in opera was its allowance for the portrayals of emotions that would not typically be permitted in public. Mimì, specifically in her aria, is the manifestation of these emotions, as well as a representation of the duality of Italian culture in the late nineteenth century. "Mi chiamano Mimì" details Mimì's life until her meeting with Rodolfo, as she states her hopes and dreams. This aria and the dreams Mimì confesses to Rodolfo through it lead to the personification of her as innocence and love.[190] Throughout her aria she alternates between detailing her life as a poor seamstress and her dreams of seeing the spring, which she fears may never happen. The contrasting sections represent Mimi's public and private personas, further endearing her to audiences and critics because she exemplifies a universal experience that is not publicly conveyed.[191] Mimì herself, in her confession of her dreams as well as her passion both for Rodolfo and life, became a "heroine capable of revealing to opera audiences in all times and places the ideals of their humanity."[192]

While Mimì's aria played a role in popularizing her among critics, it also serves as an othering device because she ends her aria by submitting to her secondary role, in which she exists only for Rodolfo. As she returns to reality at the end of her aria, she resigns herself to a

[189] Fujisawa, "Puccini's Love Duets and the Unfolding of Time," 74.
[190] Edwards, *Verdi and Puccini Heroines*, 62-63.
[191] Ibid.
[192] Ibid., 62

static role, subverting her dreams and her private persona. Her last line, unlike the rest of her aria, returns to a recitative-like declamation, and she quickly confesses to Rodolfo that she is his neighbor, but that she has come at an inopportune moment.

Figure III: Excerpt from "Mi chiamano Mimì"[193]



Mimì is a portrayal of private emotions and the duality of the human mind. Her realization at what she has just told Rodolfo also represents this dichotomy because she once again becomes the timid neighbor. The libretto "instructs [Mimì to] remain silent," and her behavior towards Rodolfo is not that of a "newly enraptured lover," but instead of "a woman resigned to be the mute audience for an interminable performance."[194] For the rest of the opera, her presence is typically only with or connected to Rodolfo; she has no identity outside of him.

Mimì's musical presence in the opera isolates her, and her aria "Mi chiamano Mimì" highlights the ways in which she is bound to isolation, never truly a part of the Bohemians' group. She sings her aria only to Rodolfo soon after they meet alone in the stairwell. Her fate is foreshadowed in her interaction with Rodolfo, and in her aria. "Mi chiamano Mimì" alternates between key areas, the tonal shifts representing Mimì's dream, and her reality when she realizes

[193] Giacomo Puccini, *La Bohème* (New York: G. Ricordi, 1917), 75.
[194]Schwartz, "Realism and Skepticism in Puccini's Early Operas," 31.

she may never see springtime again.[195] She understands that her relationship with Rodolfo is overshadowed by death and tragedy, which is reflected in her aria.[196]

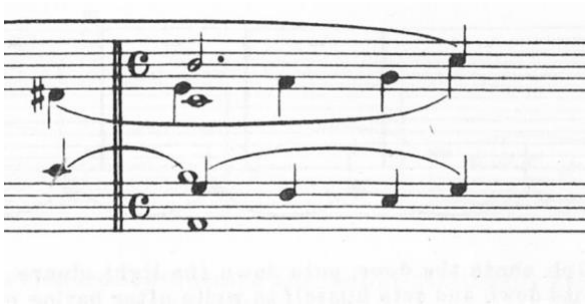
"Mia Chiamano Mimì" begins sparsely accompanied, as Mimì states that everyone calls her Mimì, but she does not know why. The lack of support under her leaves her isolated and vulnerable. Her aria is dissonant, full of key changes and chromatic passages. she begins her aria, in D minor as she explains to Rodolfo her real name, before moving on to a passage in D major in which she confesses she is a seamstress. As she begins to tell Rodolfo her dreams, the aria moves to A major. A similar progression repeats in which the aria is in D minor when Mimì sings about perceptions of her, D major when she describes herself, and A major, with a brief stop at G major, when tells Rodolfo she longs to see the spring again. The stark contrast between sections highlights Mimì's reality, as she laments her own life. Upon meeting Rodolfo, and despite his attempts to protect her, she understands that she will be a sacrifice. Her aria's contrasting sections establish her purpose; "she can only exist to love and die."[197] In addition to key changes, the actual text of Mimì's aria is riddled with symbols of death. She states that her flowers have no aroma, pointing towards her death. She will never see the spring and will die as a result of her poverty.[198] The isolated nature of her music and the jarring shifts in tonality differentiate her from the rest of the cast, labeling her as Other.

While the text of Mimì's aria foreshadows her death, the harmonic elements Puccini employed portray both Mimì's personality and her eventual fate. Her motive first appears when

[195] Ya-Hui Cheng, "The Harmonic Representation of the Feminine in Puccini," (PhD diss., Florida State University, 2008) 59-64.
[196]Cheng, "Feminine as Image," 4-5.
[197] Ibid., 4.
[198] Cheng, "The Harmonic Representation of the Feminine in Puccini," 65.

she knocks on Rodolfo's door (introduced by the clarinets and strings) before transforming into "an agitated figure…[suggesting] weakness and [labored] breathing."[199]

Figure IV: Mimì's Motif [200]



Mimì at her core is a heroine characterized by "naïf charm and failing health."[201] Harmonies and the structure of "Mi chiamano Mimì" indicate Mimì's purpose and identity; she exists in this world as a submissive participant. She begins by stating that she does not know why she is called Mimì, supplemented with her tonally unstable motive. She only achieves stability and confidence "when she becomes carried away, first with a sprightly description of her daily round," followed by "her joy of the April sun."[202] Only in dreaming does Mimì "forget her own diffidence, and with it her initial motif."[203] Puccini assigned Mimì's motive to her in a way that solidifies her unsure future and emotional tumult, cutting her dreams short by disrupting her aria, prompting her to return to her timid persona and apologize to Rodolfo for her intrusion. Through this musical portrayal of Mimì, Puccini strips her of an independent persona, othering her from the rest of the cast.

In addition to being isolated and therefore othered musically, Mimì's physical location throughout the opera highlights the ways in which she is the Other compared to the rest of the

[199] Budden, *Puccini*, 162.
[200] Puccini, *La Bohème*, 56.
[201] Budden, *Puccini*, 162.
[202] Ibid., 164-65.
[203] Ibid.

Bohemians. She often appears on the stage with Rodolfo; even with the other Bohemians present, he is her focus. Her status as a lower-class woman also others her, although not from the characters in the opera. The assumption that because Mimì is poor, a seamstress, and lives alone she is a prostitute—and therefore earns her nickname—is a method of social othering by Puccini and his librettists.

Table I: Mimì's Musical Presence[204]

Act and Title	Mimì's Interactions	Setting
Act One: "Mi chiamano Mimì"	Mimì introduces herself to Rodolfo	Mimì and Rodolfo are alone in the Bohemians' garret
Act One: "O soave fanciulla"	Mimì and Rodolfo sing to each other	—
Act Two: "Arranci, datteri!"	Rodolfo and Mimì talk amongst themselves	Mimì and Rodolfo are in the millinery shop and later the street
Act Two: "Chi guardi?" "Ecco i giocattoli di Parpignol"	Rodolfo finally introduces Mimì to the other Bohemians	Rodolfo and Mimì enter the Café Momus with the rest of the Bohemians
Act Two: "Una cuffietta a pizzi"	Mimì tells the Bohemians about the bonnet Rodolfo gave her	Mimì is at the Café Momus with the rest of the cast
Act Two: "Oh!…Essa!…Musetta!"	Mimì talks to Rodolfo about Musetta	—
Act Two: "Quando m'en vo"	—	—
Act Three: "Sa dirmi, scusi"	Mimì searches for Marcello	Mimì is alone outside
Act Three: "Mimì! — Speravo di trovarvi qui"	Mimì talks to Marcello about Rodolfo and his jealousy	Mimì is still outside refusing to enter the tavern out of fear of seeing Rodolfo
Act Three: "Mimì è tanto malata"	Mimì emerges and talks to Rodolfo after he tells Marcello she is dying	—
Act Three: "Donde lieta uscì"	Mimì says goodbye to Rodolfo	Mimì and Rodolfo are alone outside of the tavern

[204] Giacomo Puccini & Burton D. Fisher, *Puccini's La Bohème*, ed. Burton D. Fisher (Miami: Opera Journey's Publishing, 2005), 39-105.

Act Three: "Dunque: è proprio finita!…Addio, dolce svegliare"	Mimì and Rodolfo decide to stay together	—
Act Four: "C'è Mimì…"	Mimì is brought to Rodolfo as she dies	Musetta brings Mimì to the Bohemians' garret
Act Four: "Sono andati"	Mimì reminisces with Rodolfo and tells him she loves him	Mimì and Rodolfo are alone in the garret
Act Four: "Oh Dio! Mimì!"	The Bohemians surround Mimì as she dies	Mimì is with the Bohemians

These methods of isolation in the opera are also what categorize Mimì as the social Other in the broader context of late nineteenth-century Italian culture. Similar to Fidelia and Liù, Mimì's status as a poor woman plays into *verismo's* focus on the lower class. Her poverty partially leads to her death, condemning her to sickness and suffering. The tragedy experienced by her and other lower-class characters across verismic operas catered to the Italian elites, entertaining them through the exoticism of poor women and the struggles that came with these intersecting identities. Her lower-class status and her death because of it served as othering factors and made Mimì a commodity among viewers.

Mimì differs from Fidelia and Liù in the sense that her sexuality is part of her identity, which is also an underlying theme that leads to some criticism of her both by other characters in *La Bohème* and by critics. Given the social and religious climate in late nineteenth-century Italy, sexual deviancy and any display of sexuality in women was condemned. The fact that *La Bohème* takes place in the slums of Paris already differentiates Mimì from Fidelia and Liù.

While each of these three heroines dies from different causes, all are made into sacrificial lambs, their deaths serving moral purposes. Puccini's librettists placed them on a moral pedestal and structured them to be revered and idolized. Through this elevation, Puccini also othered them from the rest of the casts by turning them into objects and personifications of purity. By doing so

he and his librettists created the perfect woman who is bound by societal norms and cannot misstep. His primary methods of othering are isolation, characterization, and of course their deaths. Already considered the Other because of their gender and social status, they are pawns for the promotion of Italian nationalist ideals such as chastity, loyalty, and piety.[205] These "sacrificial lambs" are Puccini's manifestations of the ideal woman, othered to distinguish them from the rest of the debauched lower-class.

[205] Ibid., 78.

Chapter Five: Getting Their Comeuppance

While several of Puccini's heroines exemplify traditional femininity and the positive aspects of womanhood, many others are personifications of the demonized stereotypes of women in the late nineteenth century. The latter part of the Madonna-whore dichotomy, represented in virtually every Puccinian opera, consists of women who exhibit overt sexuality, greed, and desperation, as well as disrupt the social hierarchy. In this chapter, I will examine the title characters from *Tosca* (1900), *Manon Lescaut* (1893), and *Madama Butterfly* (1904). This chapter's heroines are listed in order of their separation from the Madonna archetype. This analysis will serve as an interrogation of their characters in the broader context of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century societal norms, as well as the ways in which Puccini used these expectations to other them. Upon closer examination, the fates of these heroines and the choices that lead to their downfalls highlight the ways in which they are similar to the previous chapter's "sacrificial lambs" in both their Otherness and their deaths.

Given that these heroines are, on the surface, quite different from those discussed in Chapter Three in terms of behavior, fate, and relationships, it is no surprise that Puccini employs different methods of othering. Puccini alienates these heroines from the rest of the cast through more subliminal techniques than those used with Fidelia, Liù, and Mimì. While the composer othered and punished the previous chapter's heroines to highlight the sins of their heroes and other characters, these heroines die due to choices they have made themselves. In turn, the methods of othering for Tosca, Manon, and Butterfly (Cio-Cio-San) revolve more around morality and relationships. The emphasis on the ways in which these women are "getting their

comeuppance" as they suffer the consequences of both theirs and their hero's choices demonstrates how Puccini viewed these women as expendable.

Late nineteenth-century Europe—Italy in particular—demonized female sexuality. In its condemnation, society also developed a voyeuristic obsession with the demise of a "fallen" woman. Puccini's operas feature several examples of this—women punished for their sexuality, but at the same time using it only to save themselves from the fate suffered by so many other lower-class women. While all these women "choose" a "debauched" lifestyle, Puccini's operas highlight the ways in which these choices stem from the world leading them to this life and ultimately their deaths. As stated in Chapter Two, in his operas and his personal life Puccini consistently gravitated toward women who were "tarnished in one way or another, social [outcasts] of doubtful virtue."[206] This translates into the story arcs of the three heroines discussed in this chapter, because they are all lower-class, tarnished by their experiences with the world and society.

The fate of these heroines indicates a significant imbalance in late nineteenth-century Italy's social hierarchy. A common theme that appears in all three of these operas is the power dynamics between a poor woman and an aristocratic man. Late nineteenth-century Europe held women to "[strict] moral obligations," leading to the disproportional deaths of heroines on the stage.[207] In the context of this chapter, the fates of these heroines highlight these strict social expectations as they "attempt to infiltrate the higher social strata."[208] The persistent classist culture of the late nineteenth century separated heroes and heroines who were not in the same social class, typically sacrificing the heroine in the process. Happy endings in Puccinian operas

[206] Davis, "Metamorphosis of a Butterfly," 52.
[207] Fujisawa, "Puccini's Love Duets and the Unfolding of Time," 78.
[208] Ibid.

usually only occur for couples in the same social class.[209] A closer examination of Puccini's works reveals that this is really only the case for upper-class characters, because many of the lower-class character pairings still end in death.[210] Fujisawa highlights this as she states that happy endings are granted to the "virtuous keepers of the moral code collectively."[211] As will be discussed later in this chapter, Puccini's lower-class characters—especially these three heroines—are often labeled as "moral offenders."[212] The separation of classes in operas as well as in the emergence of *verismo* connects to the exoticism of the lower class.

Tosca features religious undertones, as well as commentary on gendered power dynamics in the nineteenth century, which are highlighted through Tosca's interactions with the men in the opera. *Tosca* details the life of a singer whose lover is a painter, and both live comfortably, but have stigmatized reputations due to their vocations and politics. Tosca, being beautiful and talented, elicits covetousness, specifically in the police chief Baron Scarpia. Tosca's lover, Mario Cavaradossi, is wanted by the law for hiding a fugitive, and Scarpia uses this as leverage to convince Tosca to be with him. She kills Scarpia to save Cavaradossi and spare herself the horror of being assaulted by him, but her efforts are in vain. Cavaradossi is killed anyway, and as the police charge Tosca after finding Scarpia dead, she takes her own life, declaring that she pays for Scarpia's life with her own.[213]

Every other heroine discussed in this thesis is distinctly lower class, but this is not the case with Tosca. Although she is a lower-class woman, Puccini does not state this outright. In the original play, written by Victorien Sardou, Benedictine monks find Tosca in a field as a young

[209] *Il Tabarro* (1918) is one exception to this because both hero and heroine survive, although the ending is not a happy one.
[210] Fujisawa, "Puccini's Love Duets and the Unfolding of Time," 83-84.
[211] Ibid., 84.
[212] Ibid.
[213] Iris J. Arnesen, *The Romantic World of Puccini* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2009), 125.

child and take her in.[214] It is assumable that, although Puccini's opera begins in Tosca's adult life, her operatic persona shares the same humble roots as the literary version. Once again, Puccini uses social status as an othering device in the verismic fashion as he uses her lower-class background to exploit her sexuality and relationships.

Tosca's reputation as a "whore" stems from her profession, her relationship with Cavaradossi, and late nineteenth-century perceptions of lower-class women. Tosca is a singer and actress, and society perceived women who worked in these professions as promiscuous.[215] As stated in previous chapters, these associations and stereotypes of lower-class women led to perceptions of them—and women in general—as Others, a label rooted in "self-disciplinary weakness."[216] Any woman who failed to remain chaste and indulged in carnal desires became a victim of moral corruption. Tosca falls under this category because she, having exhibited passion and entered a relationship with a man, is a fallen woman.[217] Scarpia takes advantage of this, believing he is owed what she has already surrendered to Cavaradossi, by tricking her. Scarpia initially sways Tosca after convincing her that Cavaradossi has cheated on her. Once she uncovers Scarpia's malicious plan, the police chief is forced to use Cavaradossi as leverage to gain both Tosca's love and access to her body.[218]

While Tosca's profession has a large role in othering her, Scarpia's lust and his perception of her as morally loose because of her status as a lower-class woman and a singer also highlights the ways in which she serves as Other in this opera. I would like to point out here that the decisions that lead to Tosca's fate are not by her choice alone, because she finds herself

[214] Ibid., 105.
[215] Ibid., 110.
[216] Fujisawa, "Puccini's Love Duets and the Unfolding of Time," 74.
[217] Ibid.
[218] Arnesen, *The Romantic World of Puccini*, 115-116.

manipulated by the men in the opera. Cavaradossi himself relies on her, knowing that she is the only one who can save him from execution. I will discuss the inherent voyeurism in *verismo* at a later point in this chapter, but I note here that Tosca's choices were not without external influence.

Additionally, Tosca is much less "emotional" and concerned with the passion exhibited by Chapter Three's heroines, a choice the composer made intentionally. Puccini received criticism from his publisher about Tosca and Cavaradossi's "perfunctory" interactions, to which he responded that Tosca "would be far too preoccupied with the outcome of events to be able to indulge in a time-wasting effusion."[219]

Two additional components that isolate Tosca and deem her Other are her sexuality, and her openness about her relationship with Cavaradossi. Interestingly, Tosca is pious and dedicated to Catholicism, but her relationship ostracizes her from society. This mark of impurity led Tosca to her downfall, not exclusively because she was a "whore," but also because her reputation influenced her treatment by other characters. The dynamic between Tosca, Cavaradossi, and Scarpia illustrates assumptions about "morally loose" women in late nineteenth-century Italy.[220] These interactions highlight her Otherness, because she is reduced to the title of "whore," since men wanted to keep their reputations and public perceptions of them pure, while secretly indulging in taboo fantasies.[221]

In the context of the opera, Tosca's relationships with both Cavaradossi and Scarpia other her because both connect her to her vocation and to perceptions of singers as courtesans in the nineteenth century. Tosca, like the heroines discussed in the previous chapter, is also othered

[219] Julian Budden, "Tosca," *Grove Music Online*, accessed 24 March 2023, https://doi-org.ezproxy.tcu.edu/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.O005948.
[220] Fujisawa, "Puccini's Love Duets and the Unfolding of Time," 74.
[221] Davis, "Metamorphosis of a Butterfly," 62.

through isolation, because she is surrounded by men but spends most of her time alone—waiting for Cavaradossi—or with Scarpia. Her position against Scarpia in the opera highlights their differences as well as the power structures that impact her given his position as a police officer and a man. Through emphasis on her role in society, which is also seen in her interactions with Cavaradossi, Tosca becomes the Other.

While this does not serve as a method of othering, Tosca's sexuality and Scarpia's attempts to take advantage of it certainly elevate her Otherness by pointing out the fact that she, in openly having an extramarital lover, is immoral. The emerging middle class and aristocratic audiences perceived these heroines as Others fit to portray the fantasies that they could not express interest in publicly.[222] Puccini used Tosca to do exactly this. Knowing he has power over Tosca emotionally and socially, Scarpia uses her to indulge in his "taboo practices" with the "underclass [Other]."[223] The combination of the factors discussed previously—Tosca's social class and her sexuality—are the primary ways that Puccini and his librettists other her, because they created a woman who is powerless except for her body, which she uses and is punished for.

Manon Lescaut—like *Tosca*—produced another heroine who indulges in worldly pleasures and loses both her virtue and her life because of it. The opera begins with Manon and Des Grieux meeting on a snowy evening, and quickly falling in love. Manon herself originally lived in a convent, but was apparently too beautiful to be hidden from the world. Manon's brother, a soldier, convinces her to leave Des Grieux for an older, richer man named Geronte, which she does. Although Geronte is rich beyond anything she has ever experienced, Manon is unhappy with him and wishes to return to Des Grieux. Des Grieux appears in Manon's room and convinces her to leave Geronte to be with him, but she decides not to leave her wealth. Because

[222] Ibid.
[223] Ibid.

of her greed and adamance at taking her jewels with her, the police catch her after being called by Geronte. As punishment, Manon is sent to the desert of New Orleans, where she succumbs to dehydration and exhaustion, and dies in Des Grieux's arms.[224]

Manon's reputation differs from Tosca's in that she is not religious, and is much more self-absorbed and perhaps even more manipulative than Tosca. Manon's placement in a convent is not related to piety or her own desire to take the veil. Instead it is Puccini's and his librettist's choice based on her morality, because Puccini's heroines are typically sent to convents as "punishment for enjoying life too much."[225] Another important differentiating factor between Tosca, Manon, and even Butterfly is that Manon was motivated by money. Historically many women agreed to be the mistress of older, richer men for educational and economic opportunities and to escape the limited pathways they had as lower-class women. Manon, while hoping to escape poverty, sacrificed her love for gold, a choice which ultimately led to her death.[226]

Society ostracized Manon due to perceptions of her as an immoral courtesan. Her categorization as the femme fatale and the connotations of this role also demonize her.[227] Manon's experiences with men throughout the opera and her fate highlight the ways in which female sexuality continued to be exploited on the stage. Manon became a commodity, a representation of the female id and the dangers of indulgence. Audiences and critics obsess over Manon's sexuality, deeming her unworthy and selfish, as do her fellow characters, and this behavior justifies her death. Manon's own brother promises Geronte that Manon will be his.

[224] Julian Budden, "Manon Lescaut," *Grove Music Online*, accessed 2 March 2023, https://doi-org.ezproxy.tcu.edu/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.O903177.
[225] Arnesen, *The Romantic World of Puccini*, 59.
[226] Ibid., 63.
[227] Sasson, "Confessions in Fiction, Opera, and Memoir," 41.

Manon's open acknowledgment and curiosity about her sexuality mark her as a "fallen" woman, because she behaved in ways that were unacceptable to society.[228]

The settings of falling-in-love duets were a new way to mark the morality of heroines, since "in the works of [Puccini's] predecessors hero and heroine are normally in love before the curtain rise."[229] In his operas—especially in *Manon Lescaut,* given the nature of Manon and Des Grieux's meeting—"Puccini [faced] a problem relatively new to Italian opera: how to portray the burgeoning of young love."[230] Fujisawa points out the implications of public love duets, and Manon's relationship with Des Grieux is an example of the result of falling in love publicly. Fujisawa states that characters who meet and fall in love publicly are seen as indecent because they display private emotions with an audience.[231] While at the beginning of the opera the crowd of people disperses, the attention of the still-present group of students is drawn to Des Grieux and Manon's intimate meeting, which is notated in the score's stage directions. Another character, Edmondo, points the couple out to onlookers, and his motive appears in the music. His actions are supported by "a sly theme depicting the watchful Edmondo, aware of what is about to happen."[232]

> "(Edmondo con cautela si avvicina agli Studenti che sono all'osteria, ed indica loro furbescamente Des Grieux, che è in stretto colloquio con Manon.)
> *(Edmondo cautiously approaches the students and slily points out Des Grieux in close conversation with Manon.)*"[233]

The students witness Manon and Des Grieux's first interaction, as well as Des Grieux's subsequent aria in which he declares his love, repeating her motive.[234] By Puccinian rules, these

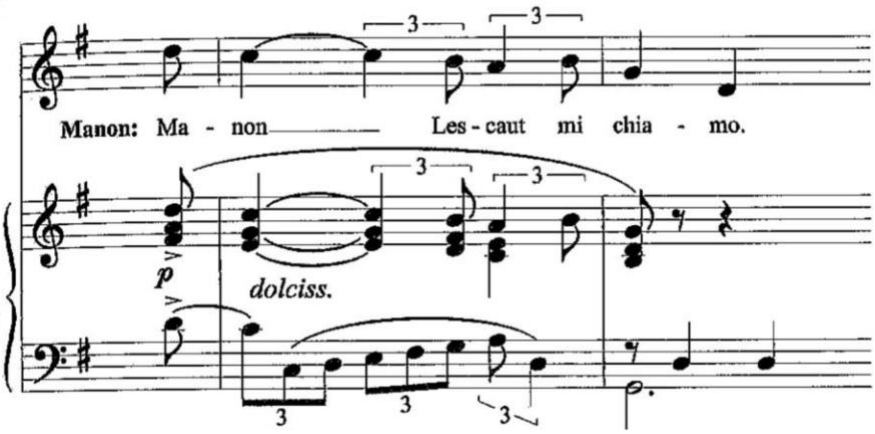
[228] Fujisawa, "Puccini's Love Duets and the Unfolding of Time," 78.
[229] Budden, *Puccini*, 111.
[230] Ibid.
[231] Fujisawa, "Puccini's Love Duets and the Unfolding of Time," 97-98.
[232] Budden, *Puccini*, 111.
[233] Giacomo Puccini, *Manon Lescaut: Lyric Drama in Four Acts: with Italian-English Text* (New York: Edwin F. Kalmus, 1970), 52.
[234] Ibid., 58-61.

two characters have become "moral offenders" and are condemned to tragedy because audiences and composers search for "moral retribution" and justice.[235] Additionally, Geronte catches Des Grieux and Manon in an intimate moment before alerting the police to the adulteress' infidelity. Once again, the intimacy and private emotions of Des Grieux and Manon's relationship become public. While Des Grieux suffers because he watches Manon die, it is Manon who pays the ultimate price.

Manon's attitude also separates her from the canonical mold of femininity. She is seen as "threatening and uncontrolled," which others her because she is not presenting in a way that is acceptable for a late nineteenth-century woman.[236] Similar to Tigrana in *Edgar*, Manon's behavior distinguishes her from the men in the opera as well as the Madonna archetype. One pivotal factor in this label of Other is Manon's selfishness and avarice. Late nineteenth-century Italian society valued sacrifice and submissiveness in women, and Manon in her lust for wealth casts off both expectations. Her story can be summarized as "a girl sincerely in love with a man who [cannot] offer the good life which she cannot give up."[237] Her unwillingness to surrender her wealth is what kills her, in the opera and in the eyes of society. Manon's obsession with herself even appears in her music. Her motive is her own name.[238] She has the largest musical presence and "the most important motif of the opera."[239]

[235] Fujisawa, "Puccini's Love Duets and the Unfolding of Time," 84.
[236] Sasson, "Confessions in Fiction, Opera, and Memoir," 91.
[237] Ibid., 135.
[238] Arnesen, *The Romantic World of Puccini*, 59.
[239] Budden, *Puccini*, 111.

Figure V: Manon's Motif[240]



Des Grieux—a pivotal character—lacks his own motive, yet he sings Manon's several times. Manon's arrogance is highlighted by the prevalence of her motive sung by other characters, which "makes perfect sense, since she is the cynosure for all present."[241] Each chapter preceding this one has discussed in some way the expectations for women on and off the stage. Women were expected to be devoted and loyal to a greater cause—typically a man—and operatic heroines were celebrated if they were willing to sacrifice themselves for love. Because Manon is not willing to die for love she becomes the Other.

On the surface Manon's self-conceit points towards her longing to escape poverty, but on a deeper level emphasizes the ways in which she is manipulative and a "bewitching" woman.[242] Her interactions with both Des Grieux and Geronte make it clear that Puccini wanted to create a woman who valued wealth over love, a horrible sin in nineteenth-century literature and opera.

I will discuss the class connotations in the next paragraph, but first I will address her treatment of both Des Grieux and Geronte, who are of a higher social ranking than her. Arnesen

[240] Ibid., 113.
[241] Ibid., 111.
[242] Arnesen, *The Romantic World of Puccini*, 56.

describes Manon and Des Grieux's relationship as a "sadomasochistic love between a bewitching and strong-willed woman and an enraptured and weak man."[243] His love for her is uncontrollable, and he is completely at her mercy.[244] Similarly Geronte, whom Manon manipulates for his riches, is completely in love with her. She feigns devotion, all the while meeting with Des Grieux behind his back. Manon's behavior and her treatment of both men humiliates them and reduces them to victims, especially Des Grieux. Manon's ability to gain popularity despite her "amoral charm" is rooted in *fin-de-siècle* aesthetics, which Puccini employed in creating her character: a woman who uses her sexuality to gain leverage without remorse.[245] Budden states that "the glamorization of Manon was the work of the Romantic age" and that she became a "mysterious and irresistible" woman, connecting her to the Other.[246] By structuring Manon's relationships in this way, Puccini and his librettists highlighted the ways in which she broke the moral code, humiliating men above her station. As such, she had to be punished.

While Manon is not physically isolated like chapter three's heroines, her change in status highlights her Otherness among the rest of the characters in the opera. Fujisawa analyzes Puccini's operas and concludes that social hierarchies within relationships determine the fate of heroines; *Manon Lescaut* does exactly this. Manon's death and position as Other are surely a result of her "lower-class origin/status" and her "suspected attempt to infiltrate the higher social strata."[247] Given the origins of *verismo* and its affinity for watching the lives and suffering of lower-class characters, Manon's entrance into a new social class disrupts the social order and

[243] Ibid.
[244] Ibid.
[245] Budden, *Puccini*, 89-90.
[246] Ibid.
[247] Fujisawa, "Puccini's Love Duets and the Unfolding of Time," 78.

therefore condemns her to death. Typically the lower-class could not transcend social classes, a rule especially true for a woman not deemed respectable. The debauchery associated with the lower class connects to *verismo* in that it is a form of exoticism. Manon's relationship with Geronte serves as a threat to the aristocracy because she, an immoral woman, has risen above her station. To restore the social order, Puccini's librettists had to kill Manon.[248] The social gap between Geronte and Manon is the strongest evidence that points towards Manon's infiltration of the upper class, but even her relationship with Des Grieux indicates classism and social climbing. Des Grieux is a chevalier, meaning he is a knight, and is therefore of a higher status than Manon. She is already a social Other in the broader context of society, but both relationships further emphasize her Otherness.

Manon Lescaut has religious undertones in Manon's origins and her fate. In literature and on the stage courtesans die as a way of rebirth and purification. In his dissertation, Sasson highlights ways in which nineteenth-century portrayals of French courtesans are linked to Christianity. He states that "[courtesans] can only be saved through death because only then can [they] finally be purified and faithful to one man alone as a woman redeemed through [their] suffering and death who now abides in Heaven."[249] This analysis connects not only to perceptions of Italian culture as heavily influenced by Catholicism, but also to the religious and social androcentrism prevalent in the nineteenth century. Just as the heroines discussed in the previous chapter represented pillars of religion and ideal behavior, these heroines represent the other side of the dichotomy. The emphasis on religion for the justification of femicide, of both

[248] Manon dies in the original play *L'histoire du Chevalier des Grieux et de Manon Lescaut* (1731) by Abbé Antoine-François Prévost. See Christopher Smith, "Prévost [Prévost d'Exiles], Abbé Antoine-François (opera)," *Grove Music Online*, accessed 18 March 2023, https://doi-org.ezproxy.tcu.edu/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.O009764.
[249] Sasson, "Confessions in Fiction, Opera, and Memoir," 41.

Madonna and whore, connects to the "dominant male's position" that Sasson cites, and from which all of Puccini's operas stem.[250]

Madama Butterfly is one of Puccini's best-known operas, with a heroine who has produced discourse lasting over a century. In many ways Butterfly represents both types of heroines: fiercely loyal, devoted to Pinkerton, and willing to make the ultimate sacrifice. Despite this, she is still demonized by viewers and critics, from both a twentieth- and twenty-first-century viewpoint. Negative perceptions of her from the opera's premiere until now are rooted in her display of sexuality. Her choice to be in a relationship with Pinkerton over life as a geisha positions her in the latter category of the Madonna-whore dichotomy. In addition to openly being in a relationship with a man to whom she is not technically married, Butterfly is also demonized because she is Japanese.

Madama Butterfly details the life of a girl, Butterfly, who was born into wealth but became destitute. To escape prostitution and life as a geisha, she agrees to marry an American naval officer, Mr. Pinkerton.[251] Following their marriage, Pinkerton leaves and does not return for three years. Soon after his departure, the libretto reveals that Butterfly is pregnant with Pinkerton's child. As the opera progresses and the people around her try to convince Butterfly that she has made a mistake in vowing herself to Pinkerton, she remains adamant that he is honest and will come back to her. Upon his return, Butterfly finds that he has married another woman, and Pinkerton becomes wracked with guilt, unable to bring himself to face her. In her grief, she takes a knife and commits suicide. Pinkerton assumes the fault for his action, and states that the memory of Butterfly will haunt him forever.[252]

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[250] Ibid.
[251] The Western definition of geishas typically conflates them with prostitutes.
[252] Arnesen, *The Romantic World of Puccini*, 129.

Like the other heroines in this chapter, Butterfly is cast out of society because of her sexuality, even more so than the others because she has a child out of wedlock. Pinkerton and Butterfly are married, but not in the American or European sense. In Japan many men participated in a ceremony in which they would "marry" a geisha. Typically, the marriage was simply an arrangement that was acknowledged by the pair as well society in general. The man would provide for and protect his "wife," but she would continue to work.[253] This arrangement is the kind that Pinkerton and Butterfly have, although she does not work as a geisha after marrying him. Butterfly, in her desperation to escape poverty and prostitution, has sacrificed her reputation. Negative perceptions of Butterfly also revolve around the position that mothers held in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Italian culture. Fujisawa states that women were "either sacred wives/mothers or fallen prostitutes."[254] The fact that Butterfly does not perfectly fit the mother mold ostracizes her, reducing her to Other to audiences and critics. In Butterfly's case, she is unsuitable for marriage because she is in a physical relationship with Pinkerton. Although she did become a mother, the way it happened was not respectable. Butterfly not only has a child out of wedlock, but also spends the majority of the opera focusing on her relationship with Pinkerton. While she is hopeful that he is loyal, her obsession with the relationship estranges her from the Madonna archetype. By devoting herself to Pinkerton physically and emotionally, she is othered because her behavior does not fit within the mold of mother and therefore woman.

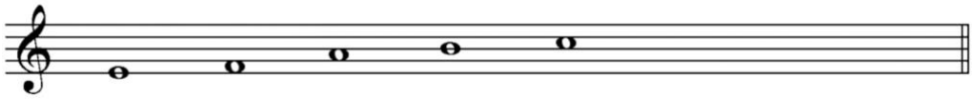
Butterfly also differs from the other two heroines discussed in this chapter because she is Japanese. Late nineteenth century's interest in exoticism carried over into the early twentieth century. Fujisawa emphasizes the ways in which this layer of othering applies to Butterfly, as she

[253] Ibid., 127.
[254] Fujisawa, "Puccini's Love Duets and the Unfolding of Time," 74.

is seen attempting to "invade Western society."[255] In employing Orientalism, Puccini has applied a third othering to Butterfly. Technological advancements and improvements in accessibility during the nineteenth century led to more widespread travel, and the interest in the East influenced composers and aristocrats, among others, to visit Asia.[256] Puccini himself was interested in and heavily influenced by Orientalism and Japanese culture. Butterfly's rejection of her heritage and the duality of American culture against Japanese throughout the opera symbolize the dominance of Western culture. Butterfly abandons her culture, her family, her morals, and ultimately gives up her life, all for Pinkerton and the hope of escaping prostitution for a life in America. The stark contrast between Japanese and American culture in the opera highlights the ways in which Butterfly is the racial and gendered Other.

Butterfly's Japanese heritage isolates her from both her American dream and her family. Cheng analyzes the theory of *Madama Butterfly* and uses scales and diatonicism employed in Butterfly's music to highlight ways in which she is completely alone and has no identity. She states that Puccini includes the Yin and Yang scales, which lack diatonicism. Butterfly's Yin and Yang scales, however, "can be *supported* by diatonicism."[257]

Figure VI: Yin Scale[258]



[255] Ibid., 78.
[256] Ibid., 59-60.
[257] Cheng, "The Harmonic Representations of the Feminine in Puccini," 118.
[258] Ibid.

Figure VII: Yang Scale[259]

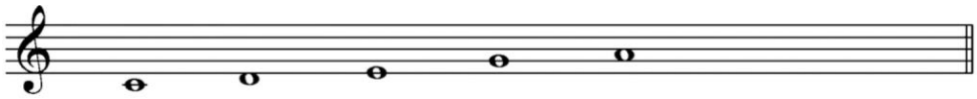
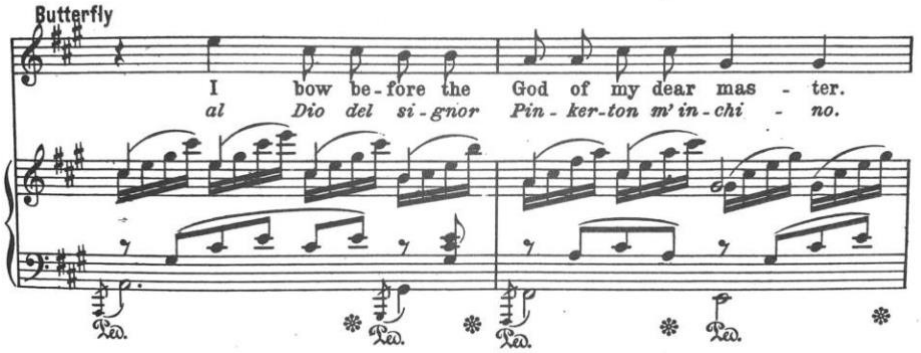


Figure VIII: Excerpt from "Ieri son salita tutti sola in segreto alla Missione"[260]



In this excerpt, Butterfly casts off her own religion and "[bows] before the God of [her] dear Master."[261] She attempts to hold on to her American dream while "unconsciously holding on to her Japanese identity" which separates her from the rest of the characters in the opera.[262] Cheng also emphasizes that "while other characters belong to either Japan or America, Butterfly is the only one who clings to both sides and belongs to neither."[263] Her lack of identity leaves her "isolated from others."[264] Once again, Puccini uses isolation as a method of othering and does this to Butterfly by stripping her of any cultural identity she had or wanted.

In the context of the opera and its connections to societal expectations, Butterfly, similar to Tosca and Manon, has a sense of determination and assertiveness about her.[265] Her

[259] Ibid.
[260] Giacomo Puccini, *Madama Butterfly: A Japanese Tragedy* (New York: Edwin F. Kalmus, 1970), 83.
[261] Ibid., 83.
[262] Cheng, "The Harmonic Representations of the Feminine in Puccini," 124.
[263] Ibid.
[264] Ibid.
[265] Arnesen, *The Romantic World of Puccini*, 126.

submissiveness to Pinkerton is never guided by expectations of women, but more by the perception of him as an American. In Puccini's opera, unlike the original play, Butterfly does not marry Pinkerton for love, although she does love him. Instead, her choice to marry him is because she believes his status and lifestyle as an American will "safeguard her honor."[266] Even in her death, she exerts a subliminal power over Pinkerton in her refusal to pardon him of his sins. Through this action and her refusal to be submissive to him after she has been betrayed, she reclaims power, ensuring that she exacts her revenge.[267]

Butterfly's strong-willed personality and her behavior towards Pinkerton, specifically after she learns of his betrayal, implies an imbalance in the opera's social hierarchy. In addition to Pinkerton marrying an American woman while he is away, he offers Butterfly money to appease her—an insult that implies that she is a prostitute.[268] Butterfly's tipping of the social scale is similar to Tosca's, but different from Manon's because Butterfly uses her death as a reclamation of power in the relationship. In the original libretto that Illica presented to Puccini, Butterly fails in her suicide attempt and is discovered by Suzuki, who tends to her wounds. Puccini rejected this version in preference to Giacosa's version, in which Butterfly takes her life.[269] Arnesen suggests that "Butterfly's suicide—in Puccini—is absolutely not a matter of her being unable to bear the loss of Pinkerton's love. It is a matter of adhering to *giri*—of not only clearing the stain on her honor, but also of avenging the insult."[270] Her death not only rids her of Pinkerton's insult and betrayal, but also places the guilt on him, putting him in the position of submissiveness. Pinkerton, consumed by his guilt at causing Butterfly's death, is at her will.

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[266] Ibid.
[267] Ibid., 130.
[268] Ibid., 127.
[269] Julian Budden, "Madama Butterfly ('Madam Butterly')," *Grove Music Online,* accessed 24 April 2023, https://doi-org.ezproxy.tcu.edu/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.O903144.
[270] Arnesen, *The Romantic World of Puccini,* 128.

Puccini's choice to give Butterfly the power labels her as Other because she is above Pinkerton, and the social hierarchy is flipped.

Among these three heroines several similarities are identifiable, specifically through cultural and social components. While exemplifying the demonized aspects of femininity, Tosca, Manon, and Butterfly still connect to the heroines discussed in the previous chapter—the "sacrificial lambs"—in that they too have that same innocence. The differing factor between these two types of heroines is the way in which they are manipulated by the people around them and their circumstances, because Tosca, Manon, and Butterfly face different choices than the heroines discussed in Chapter Three. While these women are ostracized, othered, and ultimately subjected to death because of their reputations as "whores," their choices are not entirely their own, and they, too, are victims. The emergence of the obsession with female sexuality in the late nineteenth century, as well as the religious, social, and political climates, contributed to the curation of *verismo*. The treatment of heroines in *verismo* based on these factors created a sort of voyeurism for audiences to indulge as they watch the destruction of a "fallen woman," who "dies in society's eyes."[271]

Part of what connects these three heroines to demonized femininity and immorality, in addition to their outright sexuality, are the ways in which each of their relationships function. All three of these women enter relationships fairly quickly, and they remain wrapped up in passionate and volatile unions. Tosca and Cavaradossi's relationship is characterized by jealousy, torture, and a love that "burns hotly."[272] Cavaradossi "never grows weary of Tosca's jealousy," and revels in the fact that this woman who everyone wants is pining after him.[273] Not

[271] Sasson, "Confessions in Fiction, Opera, and Memoir," 1.
[272] Arnesen, *The Romantic World of Puccini*, 100.
[273] Ibid., 107.

only does this differentiate them from the relationships discussed in the previous chapter, but it also highlights the way power dynamics are at play in the opera.

Manon and Des Grieux also have a passionate and illicit affair, although riddled more with selfishness and greed than jealousy. Manon's avarice characterizes the dynamic between her, Des Grieux, and Geronte. In being torn between her lust for money or for love, she brings on the destruction of both relationships and ultimately her life.

Butterfly differs from the previous two heroines because she and Pinkerton do not have a jealous or volatile "marriage." She believes he is loyal, despite him marrying another woman while away at sea. She fits into their category only because of how quickly her union with Pinkerton begins. She becomes pregnant very soon after meeting him, which distinguishes her from the stereotypical woman. Tosca, Manon, and Butterfly—albeit quite differently—all break the moral code in some way with their heroes, and it is these violations that situate them within the whore category of the Madonna-whore dichotomy.

Tosca, Manon, and Butterfly begin their lives in the same innocent and pure way as Fidelia, Liù, and Mimì, but the experiences that follow lead to their downfall. In her writing on Bizet's *Carmen* (1875), McClary states that the "thwarted desires of middle-class males sought expression in each of these fantasy lands …but because such men wanted to preserve the purity of their own homes, the preferred object of taboo practices were racial or underclass Others."[274] In the same way that operatic heroines, especially those discussed in this chapter, served as vehicles for conveying private emotions and "[restoring] emotional wholeness," this infatuation with sexuality and moral corruption also influenced the construction of Puccini's heroines.[275]

[274] Davis, "Metamorphosis of a Butterfly," 62.
[275] Ibid., 7.

Further still, these obsessions that manifested on the operatic stage created a sense of voyeurism and exploitation of victimhood.

Each of these women's sexual identity demonizes them, despite it being Puccini and his librettists' main vehicle of exploitation. In Tosca's case, she is manipulated by both Cavaradossi and Scarpia. In seeing Tosca suffer at the thought of Cavaradossi being killed, and having leverage over her, Scarpia "gloats over Tosca's agony."[276] In Manon's case, her own brother convinces her that she should give up her relationship with Des Grieux to be with the rich Geronte, and it is this decision to sacrifice love for money that ultimately leads to Manon's death. Lescaut, Manon's brother, exploited her for his own good, because he benefited from Manon's wealth as well. He manipulated both Manon and Geronte, because he "[dangled] his sister before the rich old man."[277] Butterfly is arguably the most victimized heroine discussed in this chapter because, unlike Tosca and Manon, prostitution was the only alternative to her relationship with Pinkerton. She used her body and devotion in order to preserve some semblance of her virtue. Although these heroines are open about their relationships and sexuality, it is important to note that they are also exploited by those around them.

I would like to emphasize the ways in which these three heroines are not all that different from the heroines discussed in the previous chapter. A common theme I have surveyed is that these women suffer punishment for sins that are not their own. Fidelia, Liù, and Mimì served as sacrifices and punishment for their hero's, or in Liù's case the other heroine's failings. While a surface-level analysis of Tosca, Manon, and Butterfly creates the impression that they alone are deserving of punishment, it is clear that they too are punished for the sins of their heroes. Tosca's

[276] Allan H. Simmons and J. H. Staple, "Tosca's Kiss: Sardou, Puccini, and 'The Secret Agent,'" *The Conradian* 32, no. 1 (Spring 2007): 114.
[277] Arnesen, *The Romantic World of Puccini*, 60.

demise is primarily because of her attempts to save Cavaradossi, and to escape punishment for killing the man who planned on assaulting her. Manon, while probably the most provocative and destructive heroine discussed in this chapter, is not alone in her violation of societal rules. Her own brother is primarily responsible for introducing Manon to Geronte, initiating a relationship which is immoral in the eyes of society. Additionally, he continually remains in the ear of Des Grieux, influencing him as well. While Manon, of course, is at fault for her greed, she is not alone in her act of infidelity. Des Grieux knowingly continues his relationship with her while she is Geronte's mistress, and Manon pays the price for both of their sins. In the same way that she is the biggest victim, Butterfly seems the biggest sacrifice of all, because she is not manipulative or self absorbed; she is simply desperate. Butterfly's Otherness is most obvious because she has a child out of wedlock, but she suffers death because of a "sin" that she shares with Pinkerton. While he feels guilt because of his betrayal of Butterfly, she is the one who dies; he goes on without suffering any consequences other than guilt. These operas highlight the gendered structure of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century society. Puccini used his heroines, good and bad, to reflect the ways society operated, and sacrificed them as symbols of the sins committed by every character.

A stark contrast between these heroines and those in Chapter Three appears in the titles of the operas. Each of these operas is named for its respective heroine, whereas the previous chapter's heroines are not mentioned in the title. This detail no doubt connects to their behavior and the roles they fill in their respective operas. Fidelia, Liù, and Mimì serve pivotal purposes in their operas, but these purposes are to further support their hero. These three heroines are secondary characters. Tosca, Manon, and Butterfly, however, demand attention with their behavior. Puccini's emphasis on this specific type of heroine stresses the way both he and the

Italian public had a voyeuristic obsession with the sexuality of women, more specifically lower-class women. By behaving immorally, Tosca, Manon, and Butterfly forfeit the secondary role that Puccini's other heroines take on and move to the forefront. In addition to their debauchery, each of these heroines causes destruction and claims power through her actions and her influence over her hero. By naming his operas after these specific characters, Puccini emphasized the power that these social norms held over Italian society.

These three heroines—Tosca, Manon, and Butterfly—all "get their comeuppance" as they die, because they are defiant, assertive, and display their sexuality. Upon further analysis, however, these women are punished not only for their sins, but for the sins of their heroes as well.[278]

[278] Cavaradossi and Scarpia are both killed, but watching the downfall of Tosca preceding the end of the opera serves as punishment. Scarpia revels in Tosca's suffering, but only because he knows he cannot have her.

Conclusion

Italy's *verismo* movement revolutionized Italian opera. It emphasized the social changes that Europe experienced in the late nineteenth century as well as the changing cultural climate in Italy. *Fin-de-siècle* aesthetics ushered in new literary and operatic subjects in France that spread to other parts of Europe. Several European composers employed these French aesthetics in their operas, but fewer did in Italy than in other countries. As I have shown, Puccini is one exception to this, as was discussed when examining criticisms of his operas.

Although French *fin-de-siècle* aesthetics infiltrated Italian opera to a degree, they did not replace Italian traditions. Instead, they became integrated into the country's overarching literary and musical trends at the end of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth. Post-unification Italy worked to form a national identity revolving around gendered and religious expectations. French operatic traditions thus appeared on Italian stages peppered with Sicilian and lower-class culture, distinct gender roles, and Catholic symbolism.

The decline of *verismo* is no doubt a result of political and social changes, since the turn of the century led to drastic change across Europe, especially in Italy. During the height of *verismo* in the late nineteenth century, political turmoil and class divisions plagued Italy. The conditions of the Italian lower-class were dismal, consisting of disease and starvation, in part caused by increasing unemployment and agricultural crises.[279] At the end of the nineteenth and into the twentieth century, political shifts occurred as socialism rose, and its influence spread across Italy. Laws were passed "banning child [labor], limiting the working hours of women, and

[279] Adrian Lyttelton, "Politics and Society, 1870-1915" in *The Oxford History of Italy*, ed. George Holmes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 238.

setting up a maternity fund."[280] The discovery of the horrid living conditions of a large majority of the Italian public no doubt impacted the appeal of nostalgia and the romanticization of poverty in Italy. Additionally, the aesthetic trends across Europe bled into Italy. France's growing interest in impressionism, post-impressionism, and symbolism, and the appeal of exoticism across the continent are clear in post-*verismo* operas, such as Puccini's *Madama Butterfly* and *Tosca*. These shifts exemplify the "second generation of verists, set in their main direction of a realism tempered by neo-romantic and impressionist features."[281]

Puccini himself strayed from *verismo* in the latter part of his career, as seen in *Il trittico* (1918) and *Turandot* (1926). *Il trittico* consists of three operas that are in some ways verismic, but separate from his previous operas in terms of their plots and characters. *Il trittico,* or the triptych, consists of three works: *Il Tabarro*, *Suor Angelica*, and *Gianni Schicchi*. Each strays from the typical verismic subjects—except *Il Tabarro*, which moves away from *verismo* in other ways. *Il Tabarro,* while centered on a barge owner Michele and his unfaithful wife Giorgetta, differs from Puccini's previous operas in that the heroine survives.[282] While Luigi (the man with whom Giorgetta has an affair) dies, typically Puccini's operas end with the death of a heroine, so this shift in narrative reflects movement away from *verismo*. *Suor Angelica* and *Gianni Schicchi* are starker contrasts from Puccini's earlier operas, straying from *verismo's* lower-class emphasis and, in the case of *Gianni Schicchi,* away from tragic plots. *Suor Angelica* details the life of a nun, and Puccini's operas have not entered the church before.[283] *Gianni Schicchi* is the most

[280] Ibid., 256.
[281] Carner, *Puccini: A Critical Biography, 2*62.
[282] Julian Budden, "Il Tabarro," *Grove Music Online*, accessed 16 March 2023, https://doi-org.ezproxy.tcu.edu/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.O905041.
[283] Tosca is a religious woman and the opera itself has religious undertones, as does *Edgar*, but this is the first time Puccini focuses on a member of the church.

separated from *verismo*; the opera centers on a wealthy family, is comedic in nature, and has no character deaths.

Puccini's last opera *Turandot*, finished by his student Alfano and published posthumously, is an example of the impact of *verismo* even in its decline. I mentioned in Chapter Four that *Turandot* emerged from Puccini's attempt at moving with musical and social trends, since Italy was in the midst of the futurist movement. In juxtaposing a futurist character, Turandot, with a verismic one, Liù, Puccini created one of his most beloved heroines. While *Turandot* is not canonically verismic, the love that audiences felt for Liù reflects the ways in which *verismo* still maintained a hold on Italian opera. Each of these operas—*Il trittico* and *Turandot*—exemplifies the ways in which Puccini attempted to follow musical trends, which meant moving away from *verismo* even though that was the realm in which he composed for the majority of his career.

Puccini's shift away from *verismo*, while clear in the operas just discussed, began much earlier in his career. Carner states that Puccini "unfurled his own veristic flag in *Tosca*."[284] The opera shows his change in style as he "[shifts] from verismo to neo-romanticism, and then to exoticism."[285] *Tosca* and *Madama Butterfly* reveal remnants of Puccini's "attempts to incorporate new features" into his works, neo-romanticism in the former and exoticism in the latter.[286] While verismic elements remain in these operas, it is clear that as Puccini's career progressed, he concerned himself less with following *verismo* and more with keeping his work "distinctive and fresh" for audiences.[287]

[284] Carner, *Puccini: A Critical Biography*, 263.
[285] Cheng, "The Harmonic Representation of the Feminine in Puccini," 71.
[286] Ibid.
[287] Ibid.

Puccini was popular in Italian opera in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but the breadth of his influence did not carry as far during his life and afterwards. His grandeur and the ways in which he has surpassed virtually all other verismic composers in the musical canon implies that he had influence over his contemporaries, but further analysis disproves this. Puccini began to withdraw from *verismo* as his career progressed, but still employed several of its essential elements. Many of his contemporaries, while not directly influenced by him, did the same. Composers following him deemed *verismo* unfashionable, and his own student Alfano retained very little verismic elements in his operas. Despite Puccini's large presence, he had virtually no influence on his contemporaries, and in fact drew influence from them. His verismic operas, while pivotal in today's canon, were not perceived the same way contemporaneously.

Puccini's verismic operas fit the mold in the sense that they employ lower-class characters, tragedy, and fatal passion.[288] Puccini others the heroines in these operas, particularly by using their social status and gender to highlight the ways in which they differ from the rest of the characters. His heroines fit into two main Other archetypes: the Madonna and the whore. Both heroines are othered through isolation—physically, socially, and musically—as well as through the dynamic with their respective heroes. The Madonna heroines exemplify purity, sacrifice, and loyalty. While some of the "whore" heroines also exemplify some of these traits, they are primarily characterized by their sexuality and deviation from societal expectations.[289] Despite the stark contrast between these two heroine archetypes, further analysis reveals that both types of women are merely victims of rigid social roles and exploitation.

[288] Not every opera is verismic, but the large majority are, as I have reiterated.
[289] Tosca (*Tosca*), Tigrana (*Edgar*), and Butterly (*Madama Butterfly*) all remain loyal to their heroes for the duration of their operas.

Puccini's presence in the musical canon does not reflect his influence on his contemporaries. While politics no doubt influenced musical trends—more specifically moving on from *verismo*—Puccini's reputation most likely contributed to his lack of influence as well. Given his reputation as "the antithesis of italianità" and the rise of fascism after World War I, it is no surprise that Puccini's style decreased in popularity among young composers.[290] The concurrent rise of the futurist movement also impacted changing musical styles because it rejected the aesthetics of the *fin-de-siècle*, specifically emotion. Because *verismo*—at least in the Puccinian sense—relied so heavily on *fin-de-siècle* characteristics, his specific style of *verismo* fell out of fashion, and younger composers ventured into differing territory, leaning more towards new aesthetics driven by politics.

Puccini's style reflected the priorities of Italian opera in the late nineteenth century, highlighting Italy's changing social and political climate, as well as shifting aesthetics across Europe more broadly. He sourced much of his operatic content from literature, but the characters he curated were certainly rooted in his own perception of self and his experiences with women. Given the time during which he lived and composed, Italian national identity appear in Puccini's operas under the guise of romantic unions and tragic endings. While he remains a canonical operatic composer to this day, his style oftentimes received harsh contemporaneous criticism. Whatever influence Puccini exerted during his life was temporary and without substantial impact on his contemporaries. He composed in a very specific way, using a formula that reinforced Italy's social divisions as well as the rigid gendered expectations of the late nineteenth century.

[290] Wilson, "Torrefranca vs. Puccini: Embodying a Decadent Italy," 31.

Appendix

Puccini's Operas

This appendix is a chronological list of Puccini's operas, listed with the premiere date and location, as well as the librettist of each opera.

Opera	Librettists	Premiere Date	Location
Le villi	Ferdinando Fontana	31 May, 1884	Teatro Dal Verme, Milan
Edgar	Domenico Oliva and Luigi Illica	21 April, 1889	Teatro Regio, Turin
Manon Lescaut	Domenico Oliva and Luigi Illica	1 February, 1893	Teatro Regio, Turin
La Bohème	Giuseppe Giacosa and Luigi Illica	1 February, 1896	Teatro Regio, Turin
Tosca	Giuseppe Giacosa and Luigi Illica	14 January, 1900	Costanzi Theatre (Teatro dell'Opera di Roma), Rome
Madama Butterfly	Giuseppe Giacosa and Luigi Illica	17 February, 1904	La Scala, Milan
La fanciulla del West	Guelfo Civinini and Carlo Zangarini	10 December, 1910	The Met, New York
La rondine	Giuseppe Adami	27 March, 1917	Opéra de Monte-Carlo, Monte Carlo
Il tabarro	Giuseppe Adami	14 December, 1918	The Met, New York
Suor Angelica	Giovacchino Forzano	14 December, 1918	The Met, New York
Gianni Schicchi	Giovacchino Forzano	14 December, 1918	The Met, New York
Turandot	Giuseppe Adami and Renato Simoni	25 April, 1926	La Scala, Milan

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Vita

Allison Moore grew up in Plano, Texas, where she fostered her musical talents through playing the piano and violin, as well as singing. In 2017, she pursued a degree in music at Texas Tech University, which she completed in 2021 along with a minor in Women's and Gender Studies. After graduation, Moore attended Texas Christian University, where she pursued and completed a Master's in Music in musicology. Her research focused primarily on nineteenth-century opera, specifically in Italy. She will graduate with a Master's degree in May of 2023.

Abstract

This thesis surveys Giacomo Puccini's operas, contextualized with coverage of the social and political climates of Italy in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as well as an examination of Puccini's life and his relationships. His weaving of *fin-de-siècle* aesthetics with verismic elements emerging in Italian literature and opera created his famous heroines that earned him fame and notoriety. These heroines are categorized as either Madonna or whore based on their behavior and their interactions with their heroes. Typically these determinants are their chastity, or lack thereof, their fidelity, and their willingness to sacrifice themselves. These heroines are also othered in both libretti and scores through physical isolation, musical isolation, and class connotations. Through analysis of six of Puccini's operas, this thesis highlights the ways in which Puccini uses *verismo* and *fin-de-siècle* aesthetics to portray lower-class women as Others on the operatic stage.