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A Swarm of Butterflies: Their Flight from French Exoticism to the Stage, from the Opera to the American Multicultural Classroom

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I. Introduction

David Henry Hwang's *M. Butterfly* has become a canonical work in what we in the States call multicultural literature, that body of works that triumphs the struggles of hybridized and "exilic" subjectivity. Hwang's play, that took Broadway by storm in 1988, is actually the conflation of two stories. One recounts the plot of *Madama Butterfly* (1904), Puccini's opera depicting a caddish American naval officer who exploits and ultimately destroys a young Japanese woman whom he temporarily marries. Hwang combines this narrative with the actual story of Chinese Communist intrigue in French diplomatic circles during the Vietnam War. He then dramatizes this amalgamation with the addition of a subplot (true to the historical source material) in which the seduced woman is really a man. Power is sex, whether it be straight, gay or transgendered. The West victimizes the East and the East, in turn, strategically uses the West's racism against itself.[1] Hwang's conceit consists in parodying Western exoticism, politics, and sexual role playing with respect to the "Orient." His critique of erotic and political imperialism, while convoluted, is neither sophisticated nor particularly novel. One might say that the play's adoption into the American multicultural canon speaks more to its facile exposition of themes dear to this literature (fluid identities, fragmentary egos and victimized gendered selves) than to its literary merit. Hwang's play clearly served the perceived needs of the theater-going public of its time and the politics of the multicultural classroom today. Its treatment of the themes of

1. For a discussion of nineteenth-century exoticism and an examination of the premises of Orientalism, see Figueira 1994.

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race and gender, once sensational, is now easily consumed by a reading public nurtured on reality television and enlightened by a curriculum based on a tradition of identity studies that promotes the normalization of "difference."[2] As a canonical text of multiculturalism, Hwang's play supports a pedagogical ideology concerned largely with white liberal guilt, Third-world victimization by the First World, and reverse discrimination. In order to move beyond the master narrative of American multiculturalism, I have found it useful to take my students on a journey back from Butterfly's most recent avatar to her predecessors in nineteenth- and early twentieth- century literatures. I have sought to relativize the multicultural reading of the play by contrasting it to its source material: Pierre Loti's novel, *Madame Chrysanthème*, John Luther Long's short story *Madame Butterfly*, David Belasco's play of the same name, and Puccini's opera. Butterfly's flight from one rendition to another shows how far the discourse on race has traveled in the last century and a quarter. It is not my intention to offer a conventional literary analysis or an overview of the critical assessments of these works. Instead, I hope to outline briefly the trajectory of this particular story's reception and adaptation. In the process, I hope to touch upon issues that inform the recent criticism of these texts today and question the manner in which certain theoretical models are implemented in scholarship and pedagogy. Finally, I wish to share my experience of the effectiveness of these critical approaches in today's multicultural classroom.

Ⅱ. A Swarm of Butterflies in Multicultural Stage and Classroom

Following the military success in 1854 by Matthew Perry and the subsequent opening of Japan to the outside world, there was a movement in western art, music, and literature to capture the essence of Japanese culture. Toward this end, the burgeoning arts and crafts movement at the turn of the nineteenth century sought to blend elements of Japanese traditional style with Western art forms. As a consequence of this cultural trend, the Japanese themselves began to craft pieces of "Japanese art" for consumption in the West. This dissemination of Japanese and pseudo-Japanese artistic production culminated in the Centennial World's Fair in 1867, where the Japanese pavilion was a resounding success. *Japonisme* was so popular that it even became a subject of

2. For a discussion of the role of multiculturalism in American academe, see Figueira 2008.

satire, as in Gilbert and Sullivan's *Mikado and Patience*. The various versions of the Butterfly stories should be viewed in this context.

Pierre Loti, whose real name was Julien Marie Viaud was born in 1850 and grew up in Rochefort where he led an isolated childhood, surrounded by female relatives. The monotony of French provincial life was enlivened by letters the family received from Gustave, the older son who was a naval surgeon stationed in the colonies. Loti's later persona as an adventurer was considerably marked by these letters. His brother's untimely death while in the service brought home to Loti the heavy cost of empire and inspired in him fierce anti-colonial sentiments. However, when the family's fortune suffered a downturn and charges were brought against his father for embezzlement, Loti was forced to enter the navy himself to support the family. He served actively for forty two years in Africa, Turkey, the South Pacific, Japan, and China. More than perhaps any French writer of his generation, Loti adopted an orientalist lifestyle in terms of clothing, language, and romantic dalliances. He kept a record of these love affairs in journals and transformed his experiences into popular fiction. A Turkish mistress inspired the composition of *Aziyade* (1879), whose success spawned *Rarahu* (1880) dealing with Tahiti, and *Le Roman d'un Spahi* (1881) recounting his adventures in Senegal. *Madame Chrysanthème* (1887) offered a loosely autobiographical account of Loti's temporary marriage to a geisha in 1880. The Japan depicted in this novel consists of lantern processions, teahouse parties, paper parasols, and kimonos. These props were employed by Loti to examine the loss of old Japan and the ramifications of its cultural clash with the West. However, this thematic spoke more to Loti's debt to romanticism than to any sustained judgment he might have had on the colonial venture. Loti drew his characters as embodiments of nineteenth-century colonialist prejudices while, at the same time, his broad brush strokes and use of irony called these same attitudes into question.

Madame Chrysanthème was soon translated into English. Loti's novel presents a first person narrative of a young naval officer, Pierre, from his arrival in Japan, engagement of a marriage broker, temporary marriage with Chrysanthème, and their social life with other couples, to his eventual departure. The couple parts amicably with a rather tepid leave-taking. Neither the French naval officer nor his Japanese wife is portrayed in a positive light. Pierre is a callous and exploitative caricature of the Westerner imperialist functionary. Chrysanthème, clearly the secondary character to the French protagonist, is practical, unemotional, and rather venial. The ideal edenic

Japan that Pierre seeks throughout the novel is constantly undercut by sordid reality (Loti 18). Exotic Japan has been ruined by both the decadence of the Japanese themselves and by Western intrusion (20).

Madame Chrysanthème also presents a profoundly racist vision. The French naval officer views the Japanese as frivolous, smelly, and cunning people (21, 25, 66). He describes them as monkeys, hedgehogs, rats or puppets (26, 31, 66). Japan is portrayed as mummified, degenerate, hopeless, and grotesque (325–30). As in all exotic quests, Pierre's longings cannot be satisfied and the protagonist (and we must assume Loti also) must move on to other exotic locales to quench their ennui (11–12). The novel includes a number of secondary characters: Yves, Pierre's sailor friend, the landlords, Mme. Prune and her husband, and the group of other *mousmés* who have been married off in similar fashion. The Japanese wives are depicted as playthings. The central metaphor of the novel, the butterfly, symbolizes the passive object of the western gaze and female victim of male acquisitive lust. The Japanese woman, like a decorative pinned butterfly, must be sacrificed for the aesthetic pleasure of the western male. Loti juxtaposes the colonialist erotic adventurer Pierre to the good Frenchman, Yves, who chastely loves Madame Chrysanthème from afar. At one point, Pierre even offers the sexual services of his wife to Yves who recoils in horror (50). The novel concludes with Pierre shipping out. His last vision is of his wife counting the money she earned from the marriage. Upon sailing away, he throws away the lotus she gave him as a parting gift and prays that the ocean will cleanse him of the entire adventure. Loti's novel presents a profoundly depressing portrait of the interconnectedness of sexual tourism, racism and exoticism – themes that unfortunately we can still relate to today.

Another version of the fated encounter between a Western sailor and a Japanese geisha can be found in John Luther Long's short story entitled *Madame Butterfly* which first appeared in the January 1898 issue of the Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine. Long, a lawyer by profession, claimed to base his story on the recollections of his sister, a Mrs. Correll, who had lived in Nagasaki with her Methodist missionary husband. Long used Loti's novel as the structural model for his short story. He focused, however, on the geisha as his principal character. She marries an American naval officer with the evocative name of Benjamin Franklin Pinkerton. Loti's heroine, Ki-Kou San, here becomes Cio-Cio San. It is Long who adds the nickname Madame Butterfly to his rendition, thus directly associating the young Japanese bride not with the beautiful and delicate flower (an image that Loti created and then

subverted), but with the impaled and aestheticized insect. In both instances, of course, the young woman is objectified. Long also invented additional characters who would later resurface in Puccini's opera, notably Prince Yamadori and the Consul Sharpless. While much shorter than Loti's novel, the plot of Long's story is more sophisticated. Long begins his version with Butterfly already abandoned. There is no scene of the exploitative marriage that in Long's version is brokered by her family. They are the callous mercenary instigators who sell their unwilling and traumatized young daughter into what is essentially prostitution. Pinkerton further isolates Butterfly from her community by forcing her to convert to Christianity. In her naivete, she believes that the marriage is real, since Pinkerton has leased a house for nine hundred and ninety nine years and retrofitted it with American hardware in order to keep the Japanese (and particularly Butterfly's family) out. When Pinkerton departs, he promises to return to her when the robins nest again.

The action of Long's version is considerably telescoped. Early in the narrative, Pinkerton leaves Japan and effectively disappears from the action. During his absence, Butterfly gives birth to a son. The bulk of the plot consists of her long wait for Pinkerton's return. The dialogue is difficult to follow throughout the story, since Butterfly speaks a rather incomprehensible English. In fact, her speech resembles racist parodies of black English, rather than Asian-inflection.

> Where is she? Hah! Mans tole me she gone an'merry with a fool Yamadori! Gone me my purple eye bebby away! Then I jump roun' his neck bifore he gitting to angery, and hole his han,' an'say, close to his ears 'Ho do, Mr. B.F. Pinkerton?' Aha, ha,ha! What you thing, Suzuki. Tha'smos' bez'nize thin I aever see! (5)

Long offers this odd patois as a Japanese rendition of English and then intersperses it with actual Japanese songs followed by their English translations, simultaneously offering a demeaning racist portrayal of Japanese speech while referencing authentic Japanese lyrics.

In Long's story, Butterfly is not the cynical woman of Loti's novel who sold herself into prostitution but someone who is unhinged. She acts irrationally with both her maid and baby. Before Pinkerton arrived in her life, we are told, she exhibited no reason, after he left her, she has become irrational. It is, as though, the West presented her with some temporary access to rationality

that she loses once her American husband leaves her. The child is portrayed as symbolically fragmented – we are told he is docile and obedient because he is half Japanese and handsome because he is a half white. Yamadori is presented as a catch in this version, not the racist caricature we find in Puccini's opera. He is a modern pensioned prince who has knowledge of the outside world. A cosmopolitan sophisticate, he offers Butterfly a viable and desirable marriage proposal. In her deluded state, Butterfly mocks him and declines his repeated offers. Yamadori tries to explain that her marriage is fanciful and that she should not take it seriously, since sailors have sweethearts in every port. He also informs to her that America is a very harsh place, where people abandon children in baskets to be cared for by the state in orphanages. He comments that in America orphans are deemed odious and cannot rise above their initial condition (Loti 75–76). Butterfly, however, ignores the real life situation in both Japan and the United States of a mixed-breed child. She stubbornly holds to the misguided belief that her marriage is protected by American law and that an American officer would be true to his word and a gentleman. She believes that Pinkerton will return when the robins nest again and repeatedly asks everyone she encounters if they knew when these birds nest in the United States. This poignant question becomes the leitmotif of Long's story and is picked up by Puccini. The answer she finally receives from Sharpless – that he knows nothing about ornithology – when translated into the Italian of Puccini's opera, becomes (for me at least) one of the funniest lines in all opera: "Non so niente dell'ornithologia."

After Butterfly finally spies the ship with Pinkerton on board with a blond woman, she goes to the consul for clarification. Sharpless responds by offering her money which she refuses. A woman named Kate then enters his office to send a telegram to her husband, named Pinkerton. She writes him that she has already seen the baby and the nurse. Kate plans to visit Butterfly the next day with the hope of taking the baby and joining Pinkerton in the next port. The truth finally dawns on Butterfly and when Kate calls her a pretty plaything, Cio-Cio San proudly objects. Kate even ventures to add that she can "quite forgive our men for falling in love with you." To which, Butterfly gives the Consul her remaining few dollars and leaves. These scenes do not appear in the opera. However, Puccini does take from Long the sense of Butterfly's nobility, virtue and lack of mercenary motivation. He also borrows from Long the elaborate preparation and act of her suicide, the ritualized taking of the sword, the recitation of its inscription –"To die with Honor, when one can

no longer live with honor" (Long "ch.15," 1), and the suicide itself. In Long's version, she slits her throat and appears bandaged in the final scene of the story. It is unsure whether she dies or survives. Due to stage conventions of the time, this act occurs behind a screen and Butterfly reappears with the bandage to embrace the child one last time. When Kate comes to the house the next day, it is empty – leaving us to assume that the maid has spirited the child away after the suicide.

Long's short story was so successful that he was inspired to select David Belasco, a well-known producer and writer, to transform it into a play. Belasco's version faithfully reflects Long's characterizations, dialogue and even the heroine's pidgin English. As in Long's story, Belasco's Butterfly is alternately demanding and hysterical. In the play, however, she has moved further away from the delicate flower and Belasco describes her as moving in a masculine fashion (Belasco 15). It is as though her assertive gait makes her American, while her irrationality makes her Asian. In her journey to the New York stage, Butterfly also becomes sexualized. Japanese women, we are told, do not usually enjoy kissing, but Belasco's Butterfly is enthralled by Pinkerton's embrace. This Japanese woman is not the asexual character we find in Loti and Long, but is sensually awakened by the virile American male. The subsequent loss of his love inevitably drives her mad with grief. As an aside, the issue of Pinkerton's masculinity in Long and Belasco is more complex than in Loti's version. In Loti, he is simply a predatory cad. But rather than his behavior being seen negatively (with the exception of his offering his wife to Yves), it is presented in a positive light and it was probably seen as such by the novel's initial French reading public. Pierre acts as he does out of *ennui*, rather than depravity. However, in the American and Italian versions, Pinkerton is both a cad and a coward. Only Loti's version hints that there is some existential depth to his actions.

One gets the clear sense that Belasco fashioned his adaptation for a New York theater-going audience, attuned to grappling with nuances of the immigrant experience. In Belasco's play, we find a curious discussion regarding barbarism that would certainly have resonated with an urban first-generation American public. There also is a lengthy dialogue between Sharpless and Cio-Cio San on the rule of law in the United States. The Consul explains to her that marriage is a serious affair in the States, not a temporary matter. When he subsequently informs Yamadori of the arrival of Pinkerton's wife, Yamadori implores Sharpless to explain to Butterfly what her marriage really

means in terms of American law and custom. The Prince hopes that once she understands her situation, his suit will find a more favorable response. Toward this end, Sharpless reads Butterfly the letter in which Pinkerton calls her "the little Jap girl." Sharpless then tells her that the marriage is not binding. When she shows him the child, the shocked Consul promises to inform Pinkerton of its existence. Butterfly and Suzuki then wait at the door in which three small holes have been made. The child is made to hold an American flag.

When Belasco's Pinkerton sees her, he exclaims: "Poor kid! Poor little devil" (28). He makes the lame excuse that he had initially been tempted to come back to her but thought that, given her social status, she was already counting his gold pieces to see if they were real. This image of the mercenary Butterfly, as we have seen, comes directly from Loti. In all subsequent renditions of the story, Butterfly refuses all payment. When Sharpless tries to buy her off, she declines his offer and even returns the two dollars remaining from the money Pinkerton left her with. After this scene, Belasco's play moves quickly to its denouément. Pinkerton's American wife comes to Butterfly's home to ask for the child in order to insure its future well-being. Butterfly agrees and tells Kate (who is moved to tears by her nobility) to come back in fifteen minutes. Butterfly then takes down the sword and reads it inscription. The child comes in one more time to play with his mother. Butterfly puts an American flag in his hand. She then retires behind a screen, slits her throat, and reappears with scarf on her wounds, grabbing the child for one last embrace. A fist then breaks through the *shoji* and unbolts the door. Kate enters first with Pinkerton cravenly following behind. He does approach Butterfly, embraces her and the child, and hear her dying words: "Too bad those robins didn nes' again" (32). The focus in Belasco's version rests almost entirely on Butterfly. Pinkerton only makes his ignominious entrance at the conclusion of the play. The pathos of her suicide is heightened by a long vigil (fourteen minutes in the stage production) in which Butterfly silently awaits Pinkerton's arrival. Her silent ordeal was depicted with innovative lighting effects to show the passage of time.

Belasco's play had its debut in New York on March 5, 1900. Seven weeks later, he took the three-act version to London's Duke of York Theater where it played to full houses. It was this production that caught the attention of Giacomo Puccini and inspired him to compose *Madama Butterfly* with a libretto based on Belasco's play but informed by the versions of Loti and Long. This libretto was written by Luigi Illica and Giuseppe Giacosa. An original two-act version of the opera premiered at La Scala and was a failure. Reworked

and extended to three acts, it was presented three months later in Brescia to rave reviews. Since *Madama Butterfly* is the most performed opera (at least in the United States), I will not summarize its plot due to time restraints. I will, however, highlight what I think the various versions of the story discussed here bring to the opera and what the opera adds to their thematic concerns. From a dramatic point of view, Illica and Giacosa's libretto can be seen as an improvement on the source material. The depiction of the characters, the inexorable progress toward the denouément, and the dialogue are wonderfully combined with Puccini's emotionally charged music. Like Long, Illica and Giocosa quote actual Japanese songs. They even insert the Japanese national anthem *Kimi ga yo* in the wedding scene. Their use of citation is playful. Yamadori enters on stage to music from *The Mikado*, suggesting that although the opera's subject matter is serious, Puccini acknowledges its exotic and orientalist subtext. Throughout, Puccini employs the pentatonic and whole tone scales associated (by Westerners) with Far-Eastern music.

The sexualized exoticism so central to Loti's novel drops out of the American versions and the Italian opera as does its overt racist rhetoric. Japan in Long and Belasco, while not the racist stereotype we find in Loti, is still cruel and mendacious. What is particularly interesting in the American versions of the story is that the depiction of Japan appears less important than the portrayal of a specific vision of America. I will call this vision the immigrant *imaginaire*. In Long and Belasco, America is the land of just laws, but they are not necessarily uniformly enforced. There are rights and privileges for white America that are not always extended to the Other – the would-be immigrant – and certainly the Jews, Italians, and Eastern Europeans who might be sitting in a New York theater in 1900. It is significant that the protagonist in the American and Italian versions is named Benjamin Franklin Pinkerton: Franklin here denotes the worldly, common sense American founding father and Pinkerton, Lincoln's prime keeper of the law and founder of the Pinkerton Detective Agency. Although his names suggest the rule of law combined with reason, tolerance and cosmopolitanism, the protagonist is ironically an imperialist buffoon. Nowhere is this positive vision of America more ridiculed than when Puccini translates it into opera. Noteworthy in this respect is the aria *Dovunque al mondo*. Pinkerton sings that throughout the world the Yankee wanderer is not satisfied until he captures the love of every beautiful woman. That Pinkerton's colonizing urges are not merely an individual quirk is re-enforced by the aria's musical flourish from the *Star Spangled Banner*. Sharpless, although critical of

this sexual imperialism, joins him in the refrain "America, forever, America forever" startlingly sung in English in the Italian libretto. The whole scene is played farcically with Pinkerton's jingoist posturing and whisky toasts.

Illica and Giocosa are also interested in notions of law and race, themes present in the other versions of the story. They mock the myth of an America of racial equality before the law in the name they give Pinkerton's battleship. In Belasco's play, the vessel is named the "Connecticut." However, in the opera, the ship carrying Pinkerton to his fraudulent marriage and subsequent abandonment of Butterfly is re-christened the Abraham Lincoln. Finally, there is a broad critique of American military power embodied in the figure of Pinkerton. In the opera, he is a coward, unable to show himself to Butterfly until forced by his American wife. The delicate Butterfly is clearly more noble and brave than the big American officer. Puccini's image here consists of a bullying, chauvinistic America of cowards who never are held accountable for their actions. As several reprises, Pinkerton tries to buy himself out of his dilemma. He gets the Consul Sharpless to try and cover his misbehavior with a bribe – only to be rebuffed by virtuous Butterfly. In short, the opera's vision of America is clearly more severe than anything we find in the American versions of the story and this emphasis prompts me to ask the question: What were the librettists responding to with this exaggerated emplotment? Maybe beyond the exoticism of the young geisha killing herself for the love of an unworthy American naval officer, they were giving voice to a European concern with America's place in the world at the turn of the twentieth century – where Europeans tended to see American involvement in the Spanish-American War as a harbinger of our wielding of force in a global context, a threatening Anglo-Saxon attack upon Catholicism and generally American imperialism gone awry. What is interesting is that Puccini took a tale spawned from French exoticism and tailored for consumption in an immigrant New York as his source material for a unique Italian operatic critique of American imperialism.

It does not appear that any of this extensive intertextuality was known to Henry David Hwang when he set about writing *M. Butterfly*. In fact, the playwright appears to have been entirely influenced by Puccini's opera. He evokes its libretto throughout the play; its various arias and dialogue are either sung or recited subversively to advance the plot, as when Butterfly's call to die with honor is spoken by the betrayed French traitor *en travestie* at the play's conclusion. In Hwang's hands, the "tragedy" of Butterfly becomes a camp farce of double betrayal, ambiguous sexuality, and insidious geo-sexual

politics. The feminist theme – that all men want to dominate (to the point of destroying) women – parallels the political theme – that the West constructs a vision of the East in order to subjugate it. Hwang's play also lends itself to a post-colonial reading – that the West must always be guilty and the East eternally aggrieved and ultimately victorious. As such, it strikes the proper political stance for the multicultural classroom. There are multiple reversals in the plot line, the foremost being the East (in the figure of the Chinese transvestite spy) who manipulates the West (in the figure of the French diplomat/seducer/traitor). Their actions and personae effectively confuse meaning and disorient the reader, a postmodern conceit if there ever was one. Finally, in keeping with multicultural ideations, Hwang's play presents identity as a fluid construct. Here too, Hwang suggests the thoroughly postmodern conclusion that perception and, even, reality are ultimately relative entities. Hwang's genius (if we can use this term) consists in taking the raw material from Puccini's sentimental tragedy and transforming it into a nihilistic farce of modern identity politics combined with the cheap shock value of transvestism, homosexual sex, and fragmented selves. Yet, although he parades readers through a series of theoretical and pedagogical clichés, Hwang brings them no closer to Asian reality than Loti. His Broadway theater audience is meant to wallow in its white liberal guilt, while embracing the moral ambiguities that Hwang's play seems to celebrate. To what degree is Hwang's *tour de force* of subversive gestures in the realm of sexuality and identity politics effective? How convincing is his postmodern riff on reality and illusion?

Ⅲ. Conclusion

In teaching all these texts to undergraduates, I have discovered something interesting. The students read the various versions of the story. We discuss its exoticism, orientalism, feminism, and multiculturalism. They appreciate the shock value of the sexuality portrayed and enjoy the ludic aspect of Hwang's play. They can engage it on the various theoretical levels. Feminist and orientalist critiques resonate with their own sense of victimhood. The themes of the fragmented self, postmodern subjectivity and amorphous sexuality are topics they feel at ease with from the other classes they take in the typical American university today. They have learned to accept the multicultural politics of the various critical readings to which they are exposed. It coincides

well with the mandate of my particular university (a state institution in the South with a lamentable history of race relations) to promote diversity and tolerance. But what I have discovered is that these students are really captivated by what is often their first exposure to opera. In fact, they request seeing various productions of the opera from different eras and companies. While they find the postmodern pastiche of Hwang titillating – especially learning that the adjective "intercrural" means something quite different than the more familiar sports term "intramural" – they end up asking me to repeat a viewing of the 1955 production of *Madama Butterfly*, with a twenty-five year old Anna Moffo making her debut on the Metropolitan Opera stage. She is not made up to be a caricature and she sings *Un bel di* exquisitely. Even the most postmodern and jaded sorority girls in the Deep South can appreciate her performance and sometimes have tears in their eyes. It goes without saying that their male classmates can relate better to a cad than a polymorphous perverse Pinkerton in drag.

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Abstract

This essay examines and compares the various renditions of the story of Madame Butterfly, ranging from the narrative found in Pierre Loti's *Mme. Chrysanthème*, the John Luther Long short story (*Mme. Butterfly*), David Belasco's play (*Mme. Butterfly*), Puccini's opera (*Madama Butterfly*), and finally David Henry Hwang's dramatic subversion of this story of ill-fated love and betrayal in *M. Butterfly*. In recent years, Hwang's play has become a canonical work in the canon of multicultural literature in the US. The author investigates how Hwang's treatment of race and gender supports this pedagogy and the identity politics currently fashionable in literature departments in American academe.

Keywords: multiculturalism, intertextuality, exoticism, Henry David Hwang, Giacomo Puccini, Pierre Loti

Dorothy Figueira has recently been named a Distinguished Research Professor at the University of Georgia. Her scholarly interests include religion and literature, translation theory, exoticism, myth theory, and travel narratives. She is the author of *Translating the Orient* (1991), *The Exotic: A Decadent Quest* (1994) and *Aryans, Jews and Brahmins* (2002), and *Otherwise Occupied: Theories and Pedagogies of Alterity* (2008). She edited of *La Production de l'Autre* (1999), *Cybernetic Ghosts* (2004) and co-edited (with Marc Maufort) *Theatres in the Round: Multi-Ethnic, Indigenous, and Intertextual Dialogues in Drama* (2011). She has served as the Editor of *The Comparatist* (2008-2011) and is currently editor of *Recherche litteraire/Literary Research*.
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