

The Dangerous “Glory” of Killing: *La Donna del Lago* and *Die Fledermaus*

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Summary

This is the story of two operas that display the glory of honor and the destructiveness of honor – destructiveness to others, but also to oneself. *La Donna del Lago* starts with hailing the glory hunters can attain by killing wild beasts, and it continues with an unrelenting invocation of the glory that warriors can reap from crushing the enemy. In the operetta *Die Fledermaus*, we meet Prince Orlofsky, an aristocrat who is bored, not least since his *raison-d’être*, namely, to be a warrior who defends his royal master, is unfulfilled. He has accumulated riches and would need war to regain his true knightly identity. Being in limbo, he cynically takes to humiliating his fellow human beings by advertising ridiculous leisure activities as desirable tokens of higher class, and he uses humiliation among underlings as his entertainment. Soon after this opera was created, World War I started, with a sigh of relief among men of honor: finally, glorious action had found a new arena! The subsequent escalation toward the threat of global nuclear annihilation made unmistakably visible the suicidal character of this kind of male honor: it leads to the dance on the Titanic.

The operas

On December 11, I had the privilege of experiencing Gioachino Rossini’s 1819 opera *La Donna del Lago*, at the Metropolitan Opera in New York, an opera derived loosely from the narrative poem *The Lady of the Lake* by Sir Walter Scott. A critic somewhat condescendingly summarizes what happens in this opera: “At the time, romantic tales of the Scottish highlands were all the rage in Europe, so Rossini and his librettist Andrea Leone Tottola jumped on the bandwagon with this tale of the spunky lass Elena, who comes to the rescue of the lost hunter Uberto – who, as it turns out, is actually King James V in disguise. Unfortunately, Elena’s father and her boyfriend Malcolm are rebels against the crown, and it’s only after a good deal of warfare that the king rewards Elena’s valor by pardoning her kinsmen.”¹

On December 7, I was able to see the operetta *Die Fledermaus* (“the Bat”), by Johann Strauss II, which premièred in 1874 in Vienna. It is an opera based on *Das Gefängnis* (*The Prison*), a farce by German playwright Julius Roderich Benedix (1811–1873), and on the French vaudeville play *Le réveillon*, by Henri Meilhac and Ludovic Halévy. It is an opera whose motivating force is boredom, and revenge for humiliation as entertainment for the bored. The one who is bored is Prince Orlofsky, who lacks war to be a true knightly aristocrat. A man named Frank was once humiliated by his friends who landed a cruel prank on him, and now, many years later, he devises a sophisticated plan to punish his former tormenters. They shall suffer and destroy themselves at their own hands, through falling into the intricate web of traps that Frank weaves around them. Frank achieves one of his original goals: his machinations amuse bored Prince Orlofsky; it is at the Prince’s party that Frank has foreseen the self-destruction of his victims to unfold. Indeed,

their vanity had made them accept his devious invitations, yet, his punishment fails all the same: his old tormenters and new victims react in ways he had not predicted, and instead of misery, all-out happiness is the result, at least for them.

The tragedy of the security dilemma

Both operas are written in times when the security dilemma was strong. The culture of honor – particularly for males – that emerged in that context, is the backdrop for both operas: glory derived from bravery; boredom, when bravery is redundant; and, as a consequence, the threat of collective suicide when bravery means embracing strategies and technologies of total annihilation.

The term *security dilemma* is used in political science to describe how mutual distrust can bring groups of people who have no intention of harming one another into bloody war.² The security dilemma is tragic because its “logic of mistrust and fear” is inescapable: “I have to amass weapons, because I am scared. When I amass weapons, you get scared. You amass weapons, I get more scared.”

The book *Die Waffen nieder*, or *Lay Down Your Arms!* brought its author, Bertha von Suttner, the Nobel Peace Prize in 1905. She describes the logic of armament in Europe in the decades before the First World War:

- Meine Rüstung ist die defensive (my efforts to arm are defensive),
- Deine Rüstung ist die offensive (your efforts are offensive),
- Ich muß rüsten, weil du rüstest (I have to arm myself because you arm yourself),
- Weil du rüstest, rüste ich (because you arm yourself, I arm myself),
- Also rüsten wir (so we arm ourselves),
- Rüsten wir nur immer zu (so we arm ourselves ever more).³

The security dilemma plays out when states (or social units) are both too close and too far apart – too close to each other to forget that the other exists and may represent a threat, but too far apart to be able to safely gauge the other’s true objectives and intentions and develop trust. The essence of the security dilemma is “too much distance for trust, therefore obligatory mistrust, with trust being devalued as naïveté and weakness.”

In such a context, readiness for bravery in combat could mean the difference between survival or death. When the Vikings attacked, or the nomadic warriors from the steppes of Central Asia threw themselves over Europe, bravery or death were often the only choice.

However, the security dilemma is more hideous than that. It is more than a theoretical dilemma, it is a tragically deadly dilemma. The reason is that it forces bloody competition to the fore even where nobody is interested in going to war. War can simply emerge out of mutual distrust. The security dilemma is tragic because its logic of mistrust and fear is inescapable: “igitur qui desiderat pacem, praeparet bellum” is the advice given by Publius Flavius Vegetius Renatus, a writer of the Later Roman Empire. It means in English: “therefore, who desires peace, prepare for war.”⁴ Indeed, “if you want peace, prepare for war” is the very motto of the security dilemma as it evolved throughout the past millennia, and in this context, indeed, “the best defense is a good offense.” Even the most peaceable leader could not withstand this logic.

This is more than just ancient history. The term *Thucydides trap* is used by present-day strategists and political scientists to describe how the very structure of the international system may be driven by the fear that a rising power provokes in an already established power. As a result, conflict and war can arise between the two, almost independently from diplomatic efforts to avert it.⁵ Thucydides was an Athenian historian (born circa 460 before CE) and he famously wrote, “It was the rise of Athens and the fear that this inspired in Lacedaemon [Sparta] that made war inevitable.”⁶ We are reminded of Thucydides when we read: “At its core, the Iranian nuclear conflict is about trust. The U.S. does not believe that Iran’s intentions are purely peaceful, while Iran believes the nuclear issue is simply a pretext for regime change.”⁷

The dangerous age of silly carelessness

The story of the security dilemma as it has been told so far, is not the whole story. There is more to its tragic logic. In the context of a strong security dilemma, male identity became so successfully associated with war fervor and bravery in combat that the threat of war in many ways transmuted into a necessity of war, if for no other reason than to reconfirm male honor identity. The cruelty of combat, the reality of fear, and the inferiority of war as a path to conflict resolution, all this became whitewashed and hidden behind the need for a facade of bravado. The opera *La Donna del Lago* demonstrates the inferiority of war as a resolution of conflict, and it also shows the yearning of men of honor for arenas to practice bravado.

First, the opera *La Donna del Lago* demonstrates the inferiority of war as a resolution of conflict. What if former friends become new enemies, or vice versa, old enemies become new allies? *La Donna del Lago* demonstrates the fickleness of enemy/ally fault lines and shows the inappropriateness of the black-and-white “either enemy of friend” logic of war, an inappropriateness that becomes particularly apparent when killing enemies means killing friends who happen to be in the enemy camp by more or less random circumstances.

Second, to the lack of arenas for bravado. Why is the opera set in Scotland? This is what we read in the program provided by the Metropolitan Opera:

The story takes place in Scotland in the first half of the 16th century, during the reign of King James V, who is anecdotally said to have traveled throughout his kingdom in disguise as a commoner. His reign was filled with civil strife and war with neighboring England. He was the father of Mary Stuart, who succeeded him as Queen of Scots when she was six days old. The Scotland of the 19th-century Romantics’ imagination was a wild land where the usual rules of decorum didn’t apply. This imaginary place was to inspire generations of artists and musicians, including Donizetti (*Lucia di Lammermoor*), Mendelssohn (*The Hebrides Overture*), and many others.⁸

In other words, obviously, this opera, caters to a desire among its target audience for “a wild land where the usual rules of decorum didn’t apply.” In my paper on the historical development of the notion of humiliation, I describe the role of the notion of *decorum* as a forerunner of the contemporary notion of dignity.⁹ Article 1 of the of the Human Rights Declaration states that “every human being is born with equal rights and dignity and ought not be humiliated.” *Decorum* was dignity that was not yet equal: dignitaries had more decorum than the rest. *Decorum* was a refined version of the much rougher world of ranked honor. While honorable masters once unashamedly subjugated underlings with less honor, and fought for honor among themselves in

open duels or duel-like wars, decorum is much more covert and sophisticated. In his analysis of the *civilizing process*, sociologist Norbert Elias describes how shame came to forbid too flagrant power play.¹⁰

As with all cultural transitions, clearly, also this transition is bound to elicit resistance, as it proceeds from the openly rough honor of knightly warriors, toward refined aristocratic decorum, and, finally, now, ends in the contemporary ideal of equality in dignity. All those feel at a loss, who have learned to connect their identity with rough and clear-cut honor, an honor where duels decide rather than effeminate rules of decorum, not to speak of even more “cowardly” notions of equality in dignity. This resistance was present when the operas were written, and it can be observed also today, all around the world. The notion of equality in dignity, being even more novel than that of ranked decorum, also lacks in “manliness” even more than decorum does, since triumphant domination over others is now unwelcome altogether. As a result, traditional cultural identifications lose their arena, there is no place anymore for male might-is-right bravery in achieving triumphant victory over others.

Extremists around the world yearn for precisely the simplicity of “crushing the enemy”; they misattribute as lack of courage any deeper understanding of today’s world and any wish to heed its complexity. Be it the American presidential candidate Donald Trump, who calls for more guns – according to him, the November 2015 Paris massacre would have been “much different” if people had guns¹¹ – or extremists, who abuse religious teachings to manifest the “crushing the enemy” approach. As long as the world was still fragmented, this strategy was indeed sometimes successful, yet, in the new context of an interconnected world, when accepting complexity is the call of the day, its inherent risk to be suicidal becomes more apparent than before. In an interconnected world, it is more probable than before that not all enemies can be crushed, and that any attempt to do so risks turning into a boomerang. In an interconnected world, notions such as security or *Realpolitik* require new definitions, definitions that go one step further than before in considering potentially suicidal consequences of strategies that formerly were “save bets.”

Die Fledermaus is a few decades younger than *La Donna del Lago*. Here, the suffering from the lack of arenas for male honor is even more palpable. The program that is provided by the Metropolitan Opera brilliantly paints the picture of the historical context of *Die Fledermaus*. Apparently, Prince Orlofsky’s wild party, which is at the heart of the opera, was familiar to contemporary audiences. In the mid-18th century, during the composer’s lifetime, Prince Orlofsky’s “Champagne-drenched revelry... is more chronicle than caricature.”¹² Europe’s great capital cities were “playgrounds for the fabulously rich aristocracy, each trying to outdo the others with pure excess in their pursuit of pleasure. Particularly insatiable were a series of Russian princes who traveled west, especially to Paris, to spend obscene amounts of money and enjoy the renown – and debauchery – it bought them.”¹³

However, the year before *Die Fledermaus* premiered, in 1873, Vienna and its empire experienced a catastrophic stock market crash. Overnight, fortunes evaporated, and people like Prince Orlofsky had to take to austerity instead of extravagance. Not enough, “unrest was brewing throughout Europe, and though they didn’t know it, the first of the 20th century’s cataclysms was just around the corner. In less than 50 years, Austria-Hungary would no longer exist, Vienna would be the capital of a nation only a fraction of its empire’s previous size, and that nation would be a republic, leaving the aristocracy stripped of most of its power and income.”¹⁴

The Metropolitan Opera’s program finds an immensely artful formulation for the ultimate lesson of this opera: “*Die Fledermaus* – so often thought of as one of the operatic repertoire’s silliest, fluffiest works – takes on more profound significance. It embodies both fond

reminiscence and biting satire, reveling in past carelessness and profligacy while hinting at where it can lead – a lesson that has become no less relevant almost 150 years later.”¹⁵

Indeed, also 150 years later, people are as gullible and believe themselves to becoming part of the “upper ten thousand” through engaging in dangerously silly activities. Incessantly, they fall for invitations to “balls” that promise elevation into the ranks of the elite, while representing nothing but an invitation into a collective dance on the Titanic, a collective suicide. A Gucci bag, a bottle of champagne or Coca Cola, a diamond, these are those kinds of ball invitations, or, more generally, the consumerist world. Champagne is bad wine hyped by a gimmick (bubbles in this case) combined with clever propaganda, with Coca Cola following the same principle, as do diamonds, or “famous” brand names, together with their imitations. Altogether, the quality of many products is hyped and they would better remain unproduced, since their production contributes to the plunder of the Earth’s resources, with only a few elites enriching themselves, and the rest serving as useful idiots.

It is as if people consider themselves born into an absurd contract: the useful idiots believe that they are entitled to their own personal freedom to destroy the planet if their gullibility gives them pleasure, and those few who actually do get rich, also they feel entitled to their riches. In reality, every newborn is part of an unwritten contract to curtail “freedom” so as to protect the ecological fabric of the planet, and, preferably, also the social fabric of the global human family.

In *Die Fledermaus*, the humiliation of Frank, and his attempt to take revenge, serves as a joke to amuse a bored elite member Prince Orlofsky, and Frank’s victims are oblivious of how shamefully they humiliate themselves through their gullibility and vanity. In the consumerist world, humiliation is much more serious: again, through their gullibility, people humiliate themselves, yet, now, planet Earth takes “revenge” for being ravaged for vanity. This time, the planet’s revenge – climate change, decline in biodiversity, and so forth – is not an amusing joke at all and no mercifully happy end is in store.

As to the notion of “contract,” Howard Richards, scholar of peace and global studies and philosophy, suggests to look back 2,000 years to the basics of Roman law and to grasp how it informs the core cultural structures of our modern world-system also today. If we wish to identify the features of global modern Western historical development that need to be corrected, this he suggests must be done:

- *Suum cuique* (to each his own) needs to be corrected by socially functional forms of land tenancy and socially functional forms of property in general.
- *Pacta sunt servanda* (agreements must be kept) needs to be corrected by reciprocity and responsibility for one another’s welfare regardless of whether there is a contract. Externalities need to be acknowledged as normal, not exceptional, and human action should seek to promote positive externalities and to avoid negative ones.
- *Honeste vivere* (to live honestly) needs to be corrected by recognizing that our very identity is relational.
- *Alterum non laedere* (not hurting others by word or deed) needs to be corrected to promote an ideal of service to others, above and beyond the obligation not to harm them.

Richards posits that these corrections will avoid rebuilding the present one-size-fits-all global regime of capital accumulation, but will generate multiple ways of integrating factors of production to provide goods and services that support life.¹⁶

The humiliation of a son, or the usefulness of humiliation

In the program provided by the Metropolitan Opera for *Die Fledermaus*, we read how the composer of this opera suffered from humiliation at the hands of his father:

Though Johann Strauss I strenuously opposed any of his three sons pursuing music as a career, he lost his influence over them after his constant absence and persistent affair with another woman led to the end of his marriage. The boys' mother Anna encouraged their musical pursuits, and eventually all three Strauss sons – Johann II, Josef, and Eduard – became professional musicians and composers. Initially, Johann II, the oldest and most prodigiously talented of the three, found it impossible to escape the shadow of his father, with whom he had developed an unfriendly rivalry and who actively hindered his progress in any way possible. In 1845, at age 19, he formed his own orchestra to compete with his father, and though his performances and compositions were well received, he had more success in surrounding regions than in his home city of Vienna, where Johann I still dominated musical proceedings. Johann II ran further afoul of his father and the establishment when he openly supported the revolutionary elements of the short-lived Vienna Uprising of October 1848. Father and son finally came to an uneasy reconciliation in 1849 – just in time, it turned out, as Johann the elder died of scarlet fever later that year. Following his father's death, Johann II consolidated his and Johann I's enterprises, brought his two brothers into the business, and instantly became the new monarch of Viennese dance music. By 1852, the journal *Allgemeine Wiener Theaterzeitung* recorded that "It now turns out for certain that Strauss Father has been fully replaced by Strauss Son." Johann II soon progressed from replacing his father to completely overshadowing him, eventually writing more than 400 pieces of dance music and rightfully earning his remembrance as the "Waltz King."¹⁷

Some people might argue that this story is proof of the usefulness of humiliation. After all, it propelled young men to excel. Perhaps the world would be poorer without their ambitions, as they were fired up by resisting humiliation.

In my book on emotion and conflict, I note that adherents to the traditional order of honor typically regard humiliation as prosocial.¹⁸ "Employees need to be humiliated, otherwise they do not work! Humiliation is an important tool in the workplace! It teaches people the right work ethics! Don't take this tool away from us!" is an argument frequently voiced in the corporate sector in many parts of the world. I was reprimanded in this way by a celebrated Indian economy professor in 2002 and by a renowned Chinese organizational consultant in 2006. In the same vein, some contemporary researchers still place humiliation into the traditional humility-shame-humiliation continuum. Maury Silver and colleagues, for example, suggest that humiliation functions as a form of social control, which can also be used positively, not just negatively.¹⁹ In many schools around the world, this message is still being heard.²⁰

However, to my view, advocating for humiliation as educational tool represents the same upside-down argument that is sometimes used for war. Bertha von Suttner, in her 1889 novel *Die Waffen nieder*, enumerated the arguments in defense of war that she encountered in her social environment in Europe:

1. Wars are the decree of God; the Lord of Hosts has himself ordained them (see Holy Writ).
2. Wars have always existed, therefore they will always continue to exist.

3. The Earth, without this destructive agency, would suffer too great an increase of population.
4. Perpetual peace would relax and enervate the race, and a consequent demoralization would ensue.
5. War is the best means for the development of self-sacrifice, of heroism, in short, for the strengthening of character.
6. Mankind will always differ. Complete harmony in all respects is not possible; different interests must be antagonistic; consequently, to expect perpetual peace is an absurdity.²¹

Von Suttner concludes that belligerence is always proven right, as it is based on circular reasoning. This starts with, “Admittedly, war is a terrible evil, yet, like with all laws of nature, there is no choice, we have to live with them.” The circle continues with its own inversion: “Admittedly, war is not a law of nature, it is human-made, yet, it must be waged, because, far from a terrible evil, it is of highest value, as it brings the best out in us and ennobles human nature.”

Many will agree that Nelson Mandela became a hero of dignity through resisting humiliation. Indeed, sensitivity to humiliation can lead to Paulo Freire’s *conscientization*,²² and from there to Nelson Mandela’s path of inclusive social change. Unfortunately, however, Mandelas are rare; already his successors seem to waste his legacy.

Therefore, my suggestion is to strive to bring out the best in people while abstaining from humiliation and war. Nurturing the best is much more successful when done through loving care than through wounding people. Those who wish to rescue humiliation and war as educational tools often blacken the reputation of loving care by claiming that it means but simple *laissez-faire*. Clearly, however, loving care is different from *laissez-faire*; it means truly manifesting the African saying that “it needs a village to raise a child.” I myself had the privilege of growing up in such a village, and I can attest that loving care entails social control. Particularly young men must be held by the village, must be protected from testing their abilities in too dangerous ways. Nowadays, it is the global village that fails this task.

The world is not black and white

The Age of Insight: The Quest to Understand the Unconscious in Art, Mind, and Brain, from Vienna 1900 to the Present is a book by Nobel Prize winner Eric R. Kandel.²³ It takes the reader to the Vienna of 1900, just after the staging of this opera, when science, medicine, and art began a revolution that “changed forever how we think about the human mind – our conscious and unconscious thoughts and emotions – and how mind and brain relate to art.”

In other words, notwithstanding an era being full of silly carelessness, it may also engender positive outcomes. The world is simply not black and white. Eric R. Kandel is the Kavli Professor at Columbia University and a Senior Investigator at the Howard Hughes Medical Institute. Kandel is founding director of the Center for Neurobiology and Behavior at the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Columbia University, and recipient of the 2000 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine for his work on memory storage in the brain.

This is what his book is about (see its book description):

At the turn of the century, Vienna was the cultural capital of Europe. Artists and scientists met in glittering salons, where they freely exchanged ideas that led to revolutionary breakthroughs in psychology, brain science, literature, and art. Kandel takes us into the world of Vienna to

trace, in rich and rewarding detail, the ideas and advances made then, and their enduring influence today.

The Vienna School of Medicine led the way with its realization that truth lies hidden beneath the surface. That principle infused Viennese culture and strongly influenced the other pioneers of Vienna 1900. Sigmund Freud shocked the world with his insights into how our everyday unconscious aggressive and erotic desires are repressed and disguised in symbols, dreams, and behavior. Arthur Schnitzler revealed women's unconscious sexuality in his novels through his innovative use of the interior monologue. Gustav Klimt, Oscar Kokoschka, and Egon Schiele created startlingly evocative and honest portraits that expressed unconscious lust, desire, anxiety, and the fear of death.

Kandel tells the story of how these pioneers – Freud, Schnitzler, Klimt, Kokoschka, and Schiele – Inspired by the Vienna School of Medicine, in turn influenced the founders of the Vienna School of Art History to ask pivotal questions such as What does the viewer bring to a work of art? How does the beholder respond to it? These questions prompted new and ongoing discoveries in psychology and brain biology, leading to revelations about how we see and perceive, how we think and feel, and how we respond to and create works of art. Kandel, one of the leading scientific thinkers of our time, places these five innovators in the context of today's cutting-edge science and gives us a new understanding of the modernist art of Klimt, Kokoschka, and Schiele, as well as the school of thought of Freud and Schnitzler.

Again, notwithstanding an era being full of silly carelessness, it may also engender positive outcomes: the world is simply not black and white. The Chinese character for crisis expresses this wisdom: a crisis may also represent a chance. The list of examples is long and already begins far back in planet Earth's history: human life is possible on planet Earth only through a series of catastrophes. Also contemporary times offer ample examples. Knut Hamsun, for instance, was a great author, awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1920, yet, his way of relating to Adolf Hitler has caused great uneasiness among his admirers. Many think of Martin Heidegger in similar ways. Adolf Hitler, on the other side, has been acknowledged for opposing alcohol and tobacco excesses, and perhaps he felt sympathy for vegetarianism.²⁴ Or, women enjoyed somewhat more support in oppressive communist East Germany as compared to subsequent democracy, and women's societal position was also easier under cruel dictator Saddam Hussein than after his removal. Or, the African National Congress (ANC) of South Africa that liberated the country from apartheid, itself maintained cruel torture camps, such as Camp Quatro.²⁵

In other words, what is black sometimes entails white, and vice versa. This does not mean that all black necessarily entails white or needs to entail white, and also not that all white entails black or needs to entail black. The fact that Greek democracy, for instance, did not include women and lowly men, or that American promises of happiness for everybody initially were as incomplete, does not mean that this mixture of black and white is good as it is and cannot or should not be made "whiter."

It also does not mean that black becomes white only because there is also white, or vice versa, that white becomes black only because it also entails black. The 25th Annual Dignity Conference that we conducted in Kigali in June this year demonstrated to us the destructiveness of attempts to "purify" white and black, forgetting that future-oriented ethics and ways of living may also emerge in unlikely ways and in places of ambiguity.²⁶ Irreconcilable narratives have emerged in the world since the 1994 genocide was perpetrated against the Tutsi, narratives that fall prey to precisely the attempt to "purify" a situation: is Rwanda's sitting President Paul Kagame a savior and successful leader, or a war criminal?²⁷ Or, Deeyah Khan, a documentary film-maker and

activist, who conducted interviews with former Islamic extremists for her project *Jihad*, concludes that the terrorists' anti-pluralist mission is aimed at fitting reality into their own reductive world view by breaking the world into two opposed camps, jihadis and crusaders, locked in an apocalyptic battle.

Final thoughts

This is the story of two operas that display the glory of honor and the destructiveness of honor – destructiveness to others, but also to oneself. The reason is that honor has a homicidal and suicidal logic at its core. *La Donna del Lago* starts with hailing the glory hunters can attain by killing wild beasts, and it continues with an unrelenting invocation of the glory that warriors can reap from crushing the enemy.

The promise is that destroying the enemy will bring peace. However, clearly, as both operas amply display, together with reality, this promise is empty, and there are two reasons for its emptiness. First, as long as the world was not yet as interconnected as it is now, surprise attacks from unexpected enemies had always to be feared. Political scientists call this context one where the so-called *security dilemma* is strong: the Vikings came over their victims unexpectedly, like natural disasters, as did the Spanish colonizers with the indigenous peoples of the Americas. *La Donna del Lago* bears witness to the cruelty of the security dilemma, and why it is called a tragic dilemma: going to war was not “natural” – the readiness to win or die had to be instilled “artificially,” war fervor had to be created through compelling ritual, a ritual that is being put on stage also in this opera.

The second reason for why the promise of peace was empty, at least during the past millennia, added a serious problem on top of the first reason. As has been noted above, in the context of a strong security dilemma, male identity became so successfully associated with war fervor and bravery in combat that the threat of war transmuted into a necessity of war, if for no other reason than to reconfirm male honor identity. The cruelty of combat, the reality of fear, and the inferiority of war as a path to conflict resolution, all this became whitewashed and hidden behind the need for bravado. The inferiority of war as a resolution of conflict is demonstrated not least in the opera *La Donna del Lago*: what if former friends become new enemies, or vice versa, old enemies become new allies? *La Donna del Lago* demonstrates the fickleness of enemy/ally fault lines and shows the inappropriateness of the black-and-white “either enemy of friend” logic of war, an inappropriateness that becomes particularly apparent when killing enemies means killing friends who happen to find themselves in the enemy camp by more or less random circumstances.

In the operetta *Die Fledermaus*, we meet Prince Orlofsky, an aristocrat who is bored, not least since his *raison-d'être*, namely, to be a warrior who defends his royal master, is unfulfilled. He has accumulated riches and he is one of those who would need war to regain his true knightly identity. Being in limbo, he cynically takes to humiliating his fellow human beings by advertising ridiculous leisure activities as desirable tokens of higher class, and he uses humiliation among underlings as his entertainment. Soon after this opera was created, World War I started, with an uproar of enthusiasm among men of honor: finally, glorious action had found a new arena! The subsequent escalation toward the threat of global nuclear annihilation made the suicidal character of this kind of male honor unmistakably visible: it inspires the dance on the Titanic.

The “solution” is to be found at the end of *La Donna del Lago*: since both friend and enemy love the same woman, peace is possible. In other words, lasting peace can emerge in a situation where what connects all humans is foregrounded, in this case the ability to love a man or woman

as fellow human beings, irrespective of any enemy or friend camp. In the divided world of the past, such kind of peace was the rare exception from the default of war preparation – therefore the opera presents a wishful dream. In an interconnected world, in contrast, it is absolutely feasible to intentionally elevate this path to the level of default, the path of good global neighborliness or even loving global connections in the Gandhian spirit of *satyāgraha*. I call it *big love* in my book on gender, humiliation, and global security: “love is more than tolerance, more than conflict resolution, more than justice, more even than respect, even though respect is crucial.”²⁸

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Endnotes

¹ "'The Lady of the Lake' Is Frozen Over at the Met," by James Jorden, *Observer*, February 19, 2015, <http://observer.com/2015/02/the-lady-of-the-lake-is-frozen-over-at-the-met/>.

² See Herz, 1950. Under the conditions of the security dilemma, the Hobbesian fear of surprise attacks from outside one's nation's borders reigns. Barry Posen and Russell Hardin discuss these emotional aspects of the security dilemma and how they play out between ethnic groups as much as between states, see Posen, 1993, and Hardin, 1995.

³ Translated from German by the author from Suttner, 1889, pp. 110.

⁴ Publius Flavius Vegetius Renatus and Reeve, 2004.

⁵ "Stanford Expert Describes How the U.S. And China Can Manage Their Relationship and Avoid Conflict," by Clifton B. Parker, Stanford Report, August 20, 2014, <http://news.stanford.edu/news/2014/august/us-china-relations-082014.html>. "Thucydides Trap," by Karl Eikenberry, *American Review*, August 4, 2014, <http://americanreviewmag.com/stories/Thucydides-Trap>. See also Syse, 2003.

⁶ Thucydides, 431 BC, chapter I.

⁷ "The Neuroscience Guide to Negotiations With Iran," by Nicholas Wright and Karim Sadjadpour, *The Atlantic*, January 14, 2014, www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2014/01/the-neuroscience-guide-to-negotiations-with-iran/282963/. I thank Karmit Zysman for making me aware of this article.

⁸ *Giochino Rossini La Donna del Lago*, www.metopera.org/metoperafiles/season/2015-16/operas/donna_del_lago/Playbill%20Programs/Dec%2011%20Donna%20del%20Lago.pdf.

⁹ Lindner, 2015a.

¹⁰ Elias, 1982.

¹¹ "Trump: Paris Massacre Would Have Been 'Much Different' if People Had Guns," by Jeremy Diamond, *CNN*, November 14, 2015, <http://edition.cnn.com/2015/11/14/politics/paris-terror-attacks-donald-trump-guns/>. Trump's success story began in 1885, when his grandfather Friedrich Drumpf (the name was later changed to Trump) emigrated from Kallstad in the Palatinate, Germany, to the United States for gold mining. He then invested in purchasing land in New York. Coincidentally, the nickname given to citizens of Kallstadt has been, "die Brulljesmacher" – in High German, "die Angeber," or "the braggarts." So, Trump comes from the village of braggarts. See "Kallstadt in Rheinland-Pfalz: Donald Trump gilt auch im Ort seiner Vorfahren als Großmaul," by

Jasper Rothfels, *Der Stern*, September 14, 2015, www.stern.de/politik/ausland/donald-trump-gilt-im-ort-seiner-ahnen-als-grossmaul-6451230.html.

¹² *Giochino Rossini La Donna del Lago*, www.metopera.org/metoperafiles/season/2015-16/operas/donna_del_lago/Playbill%20Programs/Dec%202011%20Donna%20del%20Lago.pdf.

¹³ *Giochino Rossini La Donna del Lago*, www.metopera.org/metoperafiles/season/2015-16/operas/donna_del_lago/Playbill%20Programs/Dec%202011%20Donna%20del%20Lago.pdf.

¹⁴ *Giochino Rossini La Donna del Lago*, www.metopera.org/metoperafiles/season/2015-16/operas/donna_del_lago/Playbill%20Programs/Dec%202011%20Donna%20del%20Lago.pdf.

¹⁵ *Giochino Rossini La Donna del Lago*, www.metopera.org/metoperafiles/season/2015-16/operas/donna_del_lago/Playbill%20Programs/Dec%202011%20Donna%20del%20Lago.pdf.

¹⁶ Richards, 2015, Richards and Swanger, 2006, 2013.

¹⁷ Metropolitan Opera Program for *Die Fledermaus*, www.metopera.org/metoperafiles/season/2015-16/operas/fledermaus/Playbill%20Programs/Dec%202010%20Fledermaus.pdf.

¹⁸ Lindner, 2009, p. 85.

¹⁹ Silver, et al., 1986.

²⁰ Chen, 2004.

²¹ Translated from German by Alice Asbury Abbott in Suttner, 1908, pp. 171-172. The last paragraph is translated by the author. This is the German original:

Da hatte mein Vater so ein paar Lieblingsbeweise zu Gunsten des Krieges, die nicht umzubringen waren.

1. Kriege sind von Gott – dem Herrn der Heerscharen – selber eingesetzt, siehe die heilige Schrift.
2. Es hat immer welche gegeben, folglich wird es auch immer welche geben.
3. Die Menschheit würde sich ohne diese gelegentliche Dezimierung zu stark vermehren.
4. Der dauernde Friede erschläft, verweichlicht, hat – wie stehendes Sumpfwasser – Fäulnis, nämlich den Verfall der Sitten zur Folge.
5. Zur Bethätigung der Selbstaufopferung, des Heldenmuts, kurz zur Charakterstählung sind Kriege das beste Mittel.
6. Die Menschen werden immer streiten, volle Übereinstimmung in allen Ansprüchen ist unmöglich – verschiedene Interessen müssen stets aneinanderstoßen, folglich ewiger Friede ein Widersinn.

...

Und so nimmt der Streit kein Ende. Der Kriegerische behält immer recht; sein Raisonement bewegt sich in einem Kreise, wo man ihm stets nachlaufen, ihn aber nie erreichen kann. Der Krieg ist ein schreckliches Übel, aber er muß sein. – Er muß zwar nicht sein, aber er ist ein hohes Gut. Diesen Mangel an Folgerichtigkeit, an logischer Ehrlichkeit... Suttner, 1889, pp. 105-106.

²² Freire, 1968, 1998.

²³ Kandel, 2012. I thank Gabriela Saab for making me aware of this book.

²⁴ Junge and Müller, 2011.

²⁵ Trehwela, 2009.

²⁶ 25th Annual Dignity Conference in Kigali, Rwanda, www.humiliationstudies.org/whoweare/annualmeeting/25.php.

²⁷ Lindner, 2015b.

²⁸ Lindner and Desmond Tutu (Foreword), 2010, p. 115.