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Utopian and Heterotopian Readings of the Megamusical: A Tool for Exploring the Issues of Social Justice Represented in Miss Saigon and Hamilton

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Contents

Introduction

This work focusses on how reading the megamusical through the lens of utopianism helps to understand its potential for social change. While utopia provides a space for the audience to feel uplifted and euphoric, it is also a concern that it draws on outdated ideologies to make its audience feel nostalgic, content and ultimately entertained (Barthes, 1957, 26). These outdated ideologies masquerading as utopian performatives (Dolan, 2005, 19) will be explored as reasons for the controversy within *Miss Saigon* and potential reasons why East Asians are discriminated against today (Said, 1978, 11). So what then for the utopia and its role within social change? The heterotopia is understood as actualised utopia (Foucault, 1984, 3) by Foucault, as well as layered spaces created on stage which may depict 'times from the past which have relevance to the present' by Tompkins (Tompkins, 2011, 178). This will be explored in the work's final chapter, a case study of *Hamilton.* Similar to the old Shakespearian adage 'all the worlds a stage' heterotopia on stage reflects the world back at us and to do this it very often layers metaphorical moments.

Hamilton juxtaposes certain social/political concepts with its theatrical elements making it an example of a heterotopic megamusical. It seeks to create social change by placing People of Colour in roles they would normally be denied, in order to explore the founding of the USA through new representation. The show reflects our racially discriminative society back at us by changing the story. Tompkins in her book *Theatre's Heterotopias* goes on to say that 'The enactment of heterotopia has the potential to make theatre transportive and transgressive as it re-evaluates spatial structures on stage in a manner that can have implications of how we look at the wider world' (Tompkins, 2014, 179). Not every audience member will watch a show and then feel compelled to help society with or without the heterotopic techniques present, they

may take a more interpassive role but according to Robert Pfaller the more abstract the art-form is the more interactive the viewer becomes.

As a white woman aiming to understand the thoughts of People of Colour and the racial controversy of the shows I will discuss inside this work, I am aware that my position is that of research and not of experience, I do not aim to speak on behalf of the people subject to these issues of social justice but simply provide evidence of the offence caused from real accounts giving insight into how utopianism has played a part in the way we portray and treat ethnic communities in the theatre. I am unable to say for definite what kind of social change audiences are inspired to create after watching a megamusical, during this study. However, I can draw on the research to see the potential for social change caused by the form. I understand that using the blanket term of West in order to describe both the white British and US cultures may seem reductive but I wish to keep the work in keeping with the foundation texts (Said for example) whilst also making clear distinctions between these cultures when necessary.

As previously touched on, Robert Pfaller in his book *Interpassivity* simplifies abstract and realistic art into two categories: Interactive and interpassive. Abstract art requires a certain amount of work from the viewer as they piece it together or question the emotions brought up by it. Interpassive art which may be of a realistic scene does not ask much of the viewer, only that one admires it and appreciates the skill. I wish to use this example as a foundation for understanding utopia and heterotopia as they appear on stage. Below I have provided my specific applications of utopia and heterotopia as they are presented in the megamusical.

UTOPIAS: Depicting societal ideals on stage to provide escapism and entertainment for an audience through utopian performatives. Utopian Performatives on stage allow the audience to social dream. They appear on stage most commonly as dream songs where the characters discuss their motives in the show, e.g, seeking love, success and or safety. The utopic world on stage can be described as a beautiful painting the audience are gaining inspiration or a feeling of satisfaction from.

HETEROTOPIAS: Depicting a new concept on stage born from a societal issue to create entertainment and affect social change. The heterotopia occurs on stage when physical space and metaphoric spaces are utilised to affect the audience's view of their own reality. The heterotopia gives the audience a wider understanding of the influence of the onstage action to change society around it. If we imagine the heterotopia on stage is a painting it would be abstract or unfinished in a way which may spark conversation for the viewer and encourage them to question or rectify what they have just witnessed. Based on how Sternfeld defines the megamusical, I provide *Hamilton* as the example of a contemporary megamusical and refer to it as such throughout.

Before we delve into how the megamusical exhibits utopian and heterotopian qualities we must first understand the key theoretical terms which will be used in the thesis including Jill Dolan's *utopian performatives* and Lyman Tower Sargent's term 'social dreaming', as well as a definition of the megamusical itself.

What is the Megamusical?

According to Jessica Sternfeld in her book *The Megamusical* (2006) the megamusical is 'a type of musical which rose to prominence in the 1970s and 1980s and it remains a dominant force on Broadway today' (Sternfeld, 2006, 1). Sternfeld explains how 'megamusicals are large (mega) in several aspects' (Sternfeld, 2006, 2). The plots of megamusicals are epic tales of 'romance, war, religion, redemption, life and death' (Sternfeld, 2006, 2). The music and sets are also attributed to the mega aspect of the megamusical. '[A] megamusical has little to no spoken dialogue, but is typically sung throughout […] characters do stop and sing numbers but they also sing everything else including their dialogue with each other' (Sternfeld, 2006, 2). The sets of this form of musical are 'impressive, expensive, twinkling, moving and distracting' (Sternfeld, 2006, 2). Examples of classic megamusicals include *The Phantom of The Opera, Cats, Starlight Express, Chess, Les Miserables and Miss Saigon*, many of which are still popular today. Warren Hoffman in his article 'Everything Old is New Again: Nostalgia and the Broadway Musical at the End of the Twentieth Century'[2] states: 'Long runs of megamusicals became the norm in the 1980s […] with shows running anywhere from ten years to, in the case of *The Phantom of the Opera,* twenty- five years and counting' (Hoffman, 2014, 169).

The megamusicals focussed on within this work will be *Miss Saigon* in chapter two and, what I define as a new heterotopian megamusical in my final chapter on *Hamilton.* I will also touch on *The Phantom of The Opera* and *Les Miserables* when discussing how the various utopian patterns occur inside the megamusicals' form and content. The form is larger than life and 'spectacle [is] crucial for the megamusical' (Sternfeld, 2006, 2). Everything an audience member could wish for when wanting to escape the outside world (Dyer, 1977, 273) could

potentially be found at the megamusical. This is largely the reason why I define the form as utopian. But what is utopia?

What is Utopia?

In this thesis and particularly Chapter 1, I will be referring to utopianism and utopia to explain the way both audience and character dream of a better world for themselves or conceptualise of another reality that would bring them happiness. Utopianism as understood by utopian studies scholar Lyman Tower Sargent is simplified below:

> **Utopianism**: social dreaming.
>
> **Eutopia or positive Utopia**: a non-existent society described in considerable detail and normally located in time and space that the author intended a contemporaneous reader to view as considerably better than the society in which that reader lived (Sargent, 1988, xii).

Utopianism has been defined as the act of imagining a world better than our own, by Thomas More and Lyman Tower Sargent. Thomas More coined the word 'utopia' in 1516, taking it from the Greek word 'outopia' meaning, 'no place'. To dream of the 'no place', 'the realm of the not yet set' (Dolan, 2005, 7) is the stuff of our inner utopic vision, as we are dreaming of a world which does not exist in reality, only in our minds. Sargent calls this dreaming of the good 'no place' or dreaming of something better for ourselves 'social dreaming', which I will argue is how the audience may interact with the megamusical's utopic attributes. It would be wishful thinking to assume everyone who watches a musical feels they are witnessing utopia or being given a place to imagine it. Many audience members who may have been subjected to watching a show by a fanatic family member may cringe when they are unable suspend their disbelief at an all singing and dancing reality for the next 2.5 hours or so. However these audience members are still aware that 'the ideal' utopia is trying to present itself on stage in the form of a world where everyone expresses themselves through song and dance.

In the first chapter, when looking at the story/plot of a musical, I will be pinpointing the areas which draw on utopian attributes, these include the depiction of loving relationships, the fight

for justice perhaps in war or a social movement and pursuing safety or success. These concepts are often depicted within the megamusical as a song, dance the use of both combined. These are the utopian performatives (Dolan, 2005, 19) depicted on stage which spark an audience's social dreaming. Dolan defines utopian performatives in her book *Utopia in Performance* as a device or theatrical element which aims to cause the spectator to feel, for maybe just a fleeting moment, a sense of the utopian reality. Utopian performatives give us as an audience a glimpse of a better world and perhaps cause a need to bring social harmony in our own communities. As Dolan concludes regarding utopian performatives and their link to social change: 'The imagination can connect us to a renewed understanding of our separate corporealities, can let us appreciate commonality alongside our new and deep understanding of difference' (Dolan, 2005, 164).

I agree that certain moments on stage may trigger this inside the audience and I term this within the work as triggering the audience's social dreaming (Sargent, 1988, 12) However I disagree that all utopian performatives can cause the audience members to make social change outside the theatre as Dolan poses. This is due to how the utopian attributes of the megamusical utilise outdated ideologies in order to form nostalgic, enjoyable moments for the audience who are unknowingly having their status quo reinforced by these 'utopic' moments. This is explored in more detail in the second chapter of the work.

In the opening chapter I use the term 'utopic vision' to define an individual's experience had when watching a megamusical, this is speculated to be when the audience member begins to create in the mind, a picture of a better world, or a *feeling* of what a better reality may be. When the audience have individual utopic vision together, they are, as Sargent states, social dreaming. I understand that Social dreaming is an example of how 'communitas' (Dolan, 2005, 14) works within the audience who are responding to a utopian performative on stage. I have provided the utopic process of the megamusical below.

1. A utopian performative happens on stage
2. This triggers our social dreaming (imagining our ideal reality)
3. We connect to this experience which triggers our emotions and nostalgic memories
4. The utopian performative has in the case of *Miss Saigon* **reaffirmed the audience member's status quo**

In *Utopia in Performance* Dolan understands a similar process occurring within theatre, when a particular 'utopian performative' happens on stage that triggers the audience to dream of a better world or think about their aspirations, she also explains that this may also trigger something in the audience which 'shapes' the world. (Dolan, 2005, 7). The utopian performative which triggers social dreaming in the spectator may do so by providing outdated ideologies. This will be the focus of chapter two. After detailing where these utopian performatives may occur in the form and content of the megamusical I will then discuss how nostalgia and mythologies as understood by Roland Barthes and Rebecca Ann Rugg may influence how an audience view themselves and the rest of society after the performance. If the show perpetuates older ideologies in order to create a positive feeling of nostalgia then the social implication of the audience outside the theatre could be negative. I will show how this can be applied to the megamusical in more detail in the second chapter of the thesis *The Miss Saigon Controversy as a Product of Utopianism.* The utopian performatives within the show *Hamilton* have a greater potential to affect social change as they reveal the audience's true social reality on stage. This will be explored in the final chapter of the work. Reading the megamusical in this way helps to understand where the social justice issues present in the case studies (*Miss Saigon* and *Hamilton*) occur and how they may affect the musical's potential for social change.

Talking Through Chapter Two

The term social justice will be used throughout this thesis in order to discuss where equality for race and gender may have not been present in the shows mentioned. *Miss Saigon's* social injustice has been in the way the show represents East Asians and particularly East Asian women, whereas these social norms present in theatre have been broken, somewhat, within *Hamilton,* where a conscious effort to represent race and gender with an ethos of equality has been made. Inside the second chapter of the thesis both the original (1989) and revival (2014) of *Miss Saigon* will be discussed. The utopic qualities of the show are analysed, particularly the areas of the show which have aided the show's stereotypical, racial representations. The second chapter applies the understandings of utopia in chapter one in order to explore the controversies regarding social justice which surround this megamusical. Orientalism in the form of white-washing and yellow-face are a focus for the chapter as a way to understand these ideologies as utopic yet evidently harmful for society. Edward Said's book *Orientalism* has become a foundation for many academics researching this area and I too will be applying his work to my own. Statistics from East Asian actors and academics of the topic will also be provided. This chapter will provide the opinions of the East Asian performers happy with the show and those who are offended by, or believe the show will impact EA communities negatively. Despite being the 'quintessential' example of a megamusical as Jessica Sternfeld writes in *The Megamusical* (Sternfeld, 2006, 293), the show has a lot of negative implications for social justice and this can be seen by the examples and reactions I will discuss during the chapter. Therefore the seemingly utopic form does not necessarily equate to positive impact on the audience. From the show's use of yellow-face, gibberish lyrics which masqueraded as Vietnamese, to its female Asian stereotypes, the *Miss Saigon* controversy is an example of how the utopian mythologies (outdated ideologies) can affect theatre and society.

Hamilton's Focus

The final chapter will shift its focus from utopia to heterotopia, which I will briefly explain here, and delve into in the final chapter of the work. Michel Foucault defines heterotopias as 'effectively enacted utopias' (Foucault. 1984, 4). From this, I also explore the megamusical as not only utopia but perhaps a heterotopia, or at least capable of creating a heterotopic space for its audience. Firstly, the megamusical is heterotopian because it is set in reality that depicts many 'no places' or worlds within worlds. The megamusical as a form plays with the use of multiple places, spatially speaking, more so than other forms of theatre due to its inclusion of the layered artistic elements which come together to frame one experience, i.e. singing while dancing and acting. It also uses space which is present yet not present or as Karel Brušák terms it, the Imaginary Action Space within the Action Space, which frames the larger socio-political issues for the audience. Brušák's study (1991) explores the imaginary spaces which occur, for example, when a door which physically leads backstage may be used in the narrative to become the door to another space, one the audience imagine, rather than physically see, perhaps from the implication of the actor's lines. I explore, particularly in the final chapter of the thesis, the physical and imaginary 'no places' in *Hamilton* as heterotopic spaces. The interplay of these two elements, constructed space (physically on stage) and abstracted space (the connotations and metaphors given by the cast or inferred by the audience) is how the heterotopic space occurs.

This line of thinking began with Foucault's understanding of a mirror. He states in 'Of Other Spaces', 'The mirror is, after all, a utopia, since it is a placeless place. In the mirror, I see myself there where I am not, in an unreal, virtual space that opens up behind the surface; I am over there, there where I am not' (Foucault, 1984, 4). This creation of one space out of many 'no

places' makes the mirror an example of a heterotopia. The audience of a megamusical may feel so connected with the character's emotions they become emotional themselves, (Taylor, 2014) their brains reacting as if the on-stage action is happening to them directly. They are therefore in a place where they are not. '[There in the mirror] there I see myself where I am not' (Foucault, 1984, 4). Musicals may create Foucault's mirrors when one actor is singing but the other character cannot hear them, for example, despite standing in close proximity. In *Hamilton* the use of a double revolving stage is used, Hamilton himself may be in the centre revolve in his 'bedroom' while other characters walk around the second revolve which is now the street or another home. There is heterotopia in the stenographic design of the show, physically embedded by the use of the double revolving stage. The sections of stage can provide physical and metaphorical spaces simultaneously for the audience. This technique is especially gripping when Hamilton's affair is taking place so close to his wife and passers-by yet metaphorically he is in another world.

In many musicals the space where the character is and is not is represented to give the audience the experience of the character thinking and the character singing, all at once. This can be seen as a staging technique here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PY5afLuAKNc. In this clip of *Miss Saigon* Kim is staged on the ground and Chris is at a height depicting him *physically* higher and metaphorically in America and 'higher' in terms of power and status perhaps also. The audience view a heterotopic space by viewing characters 'there where they are not' (Foucault, 1984, 4). Chris is at a height but the audience also view him in America, the metaphoric America constructed by the show, and there the heterotopic space exists. In this link https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SU8JYKGekXo *Hamilton's* set can be seen with its use of levels created by a interchangeable wooden scaffold, the set is ideal for exploring how heterotopias work in a show within the interplay of the physical and non-physical spaces created on stage.

In *Hamilton* the show's writer and star Lin-Manuel Miranda becomes a mirror himself as his influence on stage is present yet not present. Miranda is there where he is not, as he has become Hamilton for the duration of the show yet his political and social views have informed every part of what the audience see. Alexander Hamilton as a historic figure has been given Miranda's personality and qualities. Miranda is the example of physical space on stage or 'constructed' as Tompkins terms it (Tompkins, 2014, 37) the abstracted space or non-physical is how the audience view Miranda as Hamilton the character and the inferences made when watching him play this character. For example, Miranda has been likened to Hamilton by cast and fans (Rajczak Nelson, 2018, 61) and how this affects the way the audience view his performance will be read in the final chapter as a heterotopic space also.

The cast is also an example of the mirror metaphor, they are cast despite Broadway's lack of representation and there despite the show being set in the 1700s where the people they are depicting would have been white. The show's music and costume will also be analysed through this lens of the heterotopia, especially in regards to Foucault's mirror. Foucault's understanding of the theatre as a heterotopia has been expanded upon by Joanne Tompkins in *Theatre's Heterotopias,* where she states that Foucault's theory of theatre within his article 'Of Other Spaces' is brief and that there is much more evidence of heterotopias in theatre itself that are being used to affect social change and make for a much more immersive performance and a stronger working relationship between spectator and performer. The technique of breaking the fourth wall is used within the show and is another example of the show's heterotopias. Hamilton occasionally looks to the audience, coming out of character for a moment to say 'it's true' or 'we get the job done'. Aaron Burr, Hamilton's nemesis, also narrates the show as his future self and Hamilton's wife Eliza sings from her future perspective at the end of the show. Miranda seems to enjoy playing with time frames and speaking to the audience directly in order to drive important facts home. In these moments of direct audience interaction like with Burr's

narration the audience can see how both spaces are informing one another, how both exist together in order to create a new space, the heterotopia. The audience can connect with the characters, as not just expressions of people from history, but as equals crying out for change. The idea of the ghosts of the past coming to the present to regretfully tell their tale may inspire an audience to think about what they can change now to prevent that for themselves and society.

The megamusical constructs heterotopic spaces inside the action space, as explained above, using the mirror metaphor. Heterotopias in theatre 'make the audience think without prescribing *what* to think or anticipating immediate action per se' (Tompkins, 2014, 41). Ultimately the audience are internalised to the experience of heterotopia on stage; there is much more emphasis on how the show affects them than in a megamusical with utopic attributes like *Miss Saigon* and the case studies of both shows will detail this dynamic. *Hamilton* appears heterotopic as it is a different type of megamusical from the way it was cast in a consciously ethnically diverse way, in order to push the social norms, and the fact that it is one of the few hip-hop musicals that has had large success. The show's depiction of cultural differences (Tompkins, 2014, 178) excitement which surrounds the show and social changes the show and the show's creator, Lin-Manuel Miranda have caused will be discussed as further reasons it can be classed as a heterotopia. It is inspired by the socially unjust reality and has created a bubble whereby socially just theatre can be explored.

Foucault describes the heterotopia as a 'counter-site' which sits inside society (Foucault, 1984, 3) feeding off it to create a new one. For example, *Hamilton* is an ethnically diverse musical inside a majority white framework. Broadway's casting analytics will also be provided within this chapter to further explore this juxtaposition.

> The heterotopia is capable of juxtaposing in a single real place several spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible. Thus it is that the theater brings onto the rectangle of the stage, one after the other, a whole series of places that are foreign to one another (Foucault, 1984, 6).

Hamilton juxtaposes time, musical genre, people and place on stage so as to create a version of a well-known story that is accessible and through this we can recognise the show's potential for social change outside the theatre. *Miss Saigon* also takes a well-known time in history, a time of war and large scale disruption, to present intimate human issues like love and the loss of a loved one. However, I focus more on the heterotopic reading toward *Hamilton* as the musical is politically and *socially* driven and is evidently making waves in social justice currently as opposed to *Miss Saigon* which sparked controversy and concern regarding race and gender representations. The thesis is meant to, by exploring these two megamusicals in particular, provide an overview of how utopianism can negatively and positively affect the reception the megamusical has in terms of social justice and change outside the theatre. Both shows provided in the work are perfect examples of megamusicals and both are successful, popular and move people emotionally (Soloski, 2017; Sternfeld, 2006, 293) which is why I feel it is important to look at the details which separate the two and make them megamusicals with entirely different purposes and effects. These two shows can be understood as interpassive and interactive art-froms as understood by Pfaller.

'Critics either dismiss megamusicals as pedestrian entertainment or rail against them as money making scams' (Sternfeld, 2006, 3). Like Sternfeld states, megamusicals have been ridiculed as entertainment art and nothing more, but in this thesis I pose the argument that due to the internalised nature of theatre's utopias and heterotopias they undermine that concept and recognises the form's potential for social change. Both *Miss Saigon* and *Hamilton* are set in politically tense times in history and have triggered extensive responses regarding social justice.

The following chapter will set up the concept that the megamusical exhibits utopian qualities. It will show where these utopian elements are in the form and content and how they are theorised to affect the audience. The majority of this chapter will be supported by the work of Dolan, Dyer, Sargent and Barthes to give a picture of how utopia works in the megamusical and in the mind of the audience.

CHAPTER ONE: The Utopian Megamusical

Introduction

During this chapter I argue that utopianism has influenced the megamusical. This chapter will show where utopia is present in the megamusical's form and content and how this may be the trigger for an audience's social dreaming (Sargent, 1988, xii) (the audience's imagined view of a utopian reality). This chapter helps recognise the megamusical's potential for social change by posing the theory that social dreaming, triggered by the on stage utopian performatives (utopic elements of the show), may cause the audience to think and feel differently. However, utopia (as explained by the metaphor of the painting included in the introduction to the thesis) can be passive, or at least cause the audience to be passive. This is the case if the utopian performative **reaffirms the audience's status quo** by appealing to their nostalgia instead of presenting a new idea which seeks to cause social innovation. This is why in the final chapter I will explore how these utopian performatives, if within the heterotopic frame, can allow us to view the megamusical as a force for social change which shifts the audience's status quo (Tompkins, 2014).

Megamusicals often create plots that follow an expectation-tension-resolution format and, with this, characters which exist to pursue their dreams. For example, Eponine in *Les Miserables* pursues a relationship with Marius and in her dream song *On My Own* she sings about having faith in her feelings for him despite them being unreciprocated.[1] Dream songs/dances are a physical representation of the megamusical setting up utopian content. This leads to the three main desires/outcomes of these dreams which are the pursuit of **love, success** and **safety**. In this chapter I will break down what utopia is, particularly Lyman Tower Sargent's notion of **social dreaming**, (Sargent, 1994, 3) where the audience are triggered to imagine their own utopia after reading of another. His theory though relating to literature, will be applied to the megamusical as being inspired by a story written down, will only be intensified for the spectator if the story is presented physically, this understanding is based on the brain's mirror neuron responses to physical action on stage and music explored by both Millie Taylor.

In this chapter when referring to utopic vision I am referring to the imaginations of the audience members who are said to social dream when they view depictions of utopia or on-stage action they deem utopic. I will explore Karel Brušák's theory of imaginary action spaces to ground this further. I will first define utopias and dystopias along with social dreaming (our own imagined utopic world). Idealism is an attribute of utopia that is provided by megamusical shows and gives us as theatregoers the escapism, as understood by Richard Dyer (1977), we evidently seek. Within this chapter I will break down how utopianism has affected the megamusical and where we can see the megamusical drawing on utopia inside its form and content.

I will introduce information and research from Jill Dolan's *Utopia and performance* (2005) and compare this with findings from Millie Taylor's *Studying Musical Theatre: Theory and*

[1] See lyrics to 'On My Own' – 'And I know, it's only in my mind, that I'm talking to myself and to him, but although I know that his blind, still I say, there's a way for us.' (Kretzmer, 1980)

Practice (2014) which provides an understanding of the brain during musical theatre spectatorship, particularly how our mirror neurons cause us to react in real emotion as a response to the song, dance and performance. I will also provide information from Richard Dyer's article on *Entertainment and Utopia* (1977) which opens up the discussion for utopia as escapism for the audience. As Dolan speaks of a spectator who is ideally active in the world in order to create change after viewing theatre, I wish to explore the spectator as more active (in terms of social change) whilst in their seat. I do this through understanding social dreaming as 'communitas' (Dolan, 2005, 31). This concept understands the role of the audience to be active due to the way they connect with the show and their fellow audience members. In communitas the audience realise their importance as an entity, which aids the show and these positive feelings of importance and being part of a greater network could 'be experienced regularly and effectively outside of the theatre' (Dolan, 2005, 14).

Within the next section of this chapter I will introduce the work of utopian studies scholar, Lyman Tower Sargent and his definitions of utopia and how they are perceived by us, the 'social dreamers'. I will use this term social dreaming used by Sargent as a way for me to explore the community based, cultural utopic-dreaming which occurs in the reception of the megamusical. Nostalgia as a part of utopia will be explored here. Nostalgia can be closely linked to the desires that are familiar, safe and loved by us. Cultural identities of the audience and those depicted in the shows mentioned will be understood through a reading of Roland Barthes's *Mythologies* as a way to understand how cultural stories provide a foundation for what we deem as utopic and how nostalgia plays a part in how the megamusical audience social dream.

To sum up, utopianism is the act of thinking about how we can create a better reality for ourselves. In this chapter I discuss how the show we watch triggers this imagining of what this 'better reality' may be, this act known as social dreaming, as Sargent terms it, along with the

dreamscapes we see on stage we (as the audience) also hear music that tells the emotional story of the show throughout. This is the chapter where I argue that this combination of depicted utopias and singing characters gives the megamusical a greater potential for affecting social change as it has a greater capacity to emotionally affect the audience.

Definitions of Utopia and Their Relationship to the Megamusical

The reason for basing a lot of my argument on Sargent's work lies in his understanding of utopic vision as an experience that is created individually by each reader. I wish to juxtapose this concept with Dolan's work in *Utopia and Performance*, as she theorises the utopic process of an individual audience member as being more of an inclusive community experience (communitas), which goes on to impact society. I feel both views can be applied to the megamusical experience, as we as individuals may interpret a musical uniquely but the social dreaming (utopic vision making) occurs whilst sitting in an audience; an integral part of the megamusical form. There are also many comparisons which can be drawn from utopianism applied to literature and theatre in regards to social dreaming, which aims to describe the creative process of the individual envisioning a better world, ignited by either the performance on stage or the text they are reading. As stated in the introduction, utopianism is defined as social dreaming by Sargent, the act of imagining one's own idea of utopia which is the good imagined place, at times called the good 'no place' as it only exists in the mind of the dreamer. To better understand utopia, Sargent's *British and American Utopian Literature* states:

> The word utopia has been used as a label for things other than literature and 'utopian', for many is a pejorative label, meaning unrealistic or foolish and is used in political debate to denigrate reform proposals without having to examine their content (Sargent, 1988, xii).

With Sargent's understanding in mind, I wish to make it clear that I do not aim for this thesis to use the term 'utopian' in a way which may group all musical theatre into a category of fantastical, people-pleasing performances. I wish to bring to light how the megamusical may

present damaging ideologies **in the guise of a utopia**. This guise may make it harder for the audience member to see where the social justice issues are within the content of the show. For example, an audience member may be emotionally moved by a song within a show, not realising that the lyrics are socially unjust. A depiction on stage may cause the character to be the hero or the favourite of the story, yet this depiction is harmful socially. Therefore the depiction may be ideal in the audience's utopic vision but has dystopic effects on society outside the theatre (Xu, 2018). Chapter two will discuss this in more detail.

The theme of dreams and ideals as mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, is a large part of utopianism, and this is perhaps the 'unrealistic and foolish' section of Sargent's example of how utopia is described. I instead wish to show that the megamusical despite its ability to entertain and provide escapism for an audience also has the capability to influence how audiences view each other as well as certain social groups and social dynamics. This is explored when we look at the function of the heterotopias on stage. Sargent's understanding of how utopia is seen in the quotidian sense can be applied within the case studies in this thesis. It can be understood that utopianism is people aspiring for something better through social dreaming, with the understanding that fantasy and imagination are the foundations for our utopic vision to grow.

When we as the audience come to empathise with the characters, we come to share their visions and imagine our own possible successful futures. For example, *Les Miserables* creates characters who hope for something better: Cosette wishes for loving parents and Fantine wishes to feel safe again, The Engineer of *Miss Saigon* dreams of money to ensure his safety. Megamusicals create characters who constantly daydream, social dream, envision utopia, meaning that utopianism is always threaded through the plot, themes and characters. As well as this, these dreams are made concrete on stage through the act of singing about the dream and dancing as if within the dream.

Sargent's *The Three Faces of Utopianism Revisited* defines utopia in detail:

> The word Utopia or outopia simply means no or not place. Topos means place; 'u' or 'ou' means 'no' or 'not.' Thomas More, inventor of the word, punned on eutopia or good place, and we have since added dystopia or bad place (Sargent, 1994, 5).

Here I can apply the utopia meaning 'no place' to the utopic vision in the minds of the audience and the 'good place' as that depicted on stage, the megamusical show and the good 'no place'. Sargent goes on:

> Many, variations exist on these three words; some, like uchronia or 'not when', as serious attempts to add to our understanding and others through sheer authorial self-indulgence. Thus, the primary characteristic of the Utopian place is its non-existence combined with a topos- a location in time and space. In addition, the place must be recognizably good or bad or at least would be so recognized by a contemporary reader (Sargent, 1994, 5).

The plot on stage, the characters and setting all create a 'no place' which is also a physicalised idea of an ideal or good/bad place, even if the show is a tragedy I may still refer to it as utopia or providing utopian performatives for the audience as the content is an ideal space created on stage for the purpose of creating a successful megamusical. As an audience we get to inhabit these fictional spaces vicariously through the characters. Dolan states that 'utopian performatives exceed the content of a play or performance, spectators might draw a utopian performative from even the most dystopian theatrical universe' (Dolan, 2005, 8). Socially unjust and therefore dystopic moments within a show i.e. racist or sexist depictions may cause an audience to social dream. The subjective nature of these 'no places' leaves it up to the audience to decide what the on stage action triggers in their emotion and imagination, their social dream. Sargent states:

> All fiction describes a no place; Utopian fiction generally describes good or bad, no places. Also, fashions change in Utopias; most sixteenth-century eutopias horrify today's reader even though the authors' intentions are clear. On the other hand, most twentieth-century eutopias would be considered dystopias by a sixteenth-century reader and many of them would in all likelihood be burnt as works of the devil (Sargent, 1994, 5).

Sargent states above that the subjective nature of utopia's good or bad means that over time and from society to society, culture to culture the views of perfection and positive utopias change and one view of utopia will not last forever.

Having covered what utopia means, in the next section I will provide detail on what utopian performatives, utopic elements of a show may look like so we can see how the megamusical draws on utopia. This will help bridge our understanding from how the megamusical draws on utopia to how it is influenced by outdated ideologies. Through this we can understand the megamusical's potential for social change.

Where We Can See Utopia in the Megamusical

In this chapter dreams and ideals are explored as how the megamusical depicts utopia and/or creates 'utopian performatives' (the utopian on stage action). The act of 'social dreaming' is perhaps triggered by the many dream songs present in megamusicals. The link between social dreaming and dream songs may be in these types of song's capability of showcasing a character's inner hopes and desires on stage. Social dreaming and dreaming is frequently thematised in musicals, these social and personal aspirations are a constitutive component of the megamusical. The hope and dreams of a character are established in musical numbers like Boublil and Schönberg's 'I Dreamed a Dream' from *Les Miserables,* where utopia is described as a 'life worth living' and a place 'where love would never die'. In the Broadway musical *Man of La Mancha*, 'The Impossible Dream' number also describes the desire to 'reach the unreachable'. The dream within this number is a 'heavenly cause' 'no matter how hopeless'. Other songs like *Miss Saigon's,* 'American Dream', 'The Movie in My Mind' and Andrew Lloyd Webber's 'Memory' from the megamusical *Cats*, all detail utopic visions of hope and thus are examples of character's dreaming.

Sargent states in his understanding of reading fiction that social dreaming is the reader (or in this case, the audience) 'envisioning a radically different society than the one in which the dreamers live' (Sargent, 1994, 3). Inside these musical plots these numbers act as a way for the audience to hear what the character is dreaming of and how they may go about getting what they desire. Sometimes dance sequences, extra set and props are used to create the character's imagined utopia on stage. For example the Dream Ballet in *Oklahoma*[2]*!* invites the audience to watch as Laurey battles her feelings toward Curly and Jud. This dream ballet depicts Laurey's inner feelings of the love triangle on stage in the form of a large chorus dance and a smaller couple's ballet[3]. The watercolour-like haziness of the backdrop conjures up even more elements of dream and desire while also merging fantasy with reality. The dream turns nightmarish and the colour turns fiery; the dancer's costumes become dark as Laurey spirals into despair over her true feelings for Curly and fear of upsetting Jud who is obsessed with her. As stated earlier, the dream can become a nightmare. The characters are perhaps living someone else's dream, someone else's utopia is their dystopia. Their aspirations may go wrong.

Similarly The Engineer's number 'American dream' from the 2014 revival of the show *Miss Saigon* includes dancers, an expensive car and cash thrown around like confetti, this is also true for the original production of the show (1989). This display of wealth complements the lyrics of the song and manifests the internal vision of the Engineer's dream externally for the audience to see. Audience members may read into this imaginary display of wealth and pity the Engineer despite the character's untrustworthiness, as we can all relate to a dream/goal. We may also see how his thirst for physical wealth is due to him starving emotionally, having few

[2] Throughout the thesis I may refer to musicals which do not fall under the megamusical category in order to explore how music and character is used within musicals in the same or similar way as megamusicals.
[3] Oklahoma Dream Ballet (1955 film) Complete: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2D1loAVwiMc Ocklahoma Dream Ballet (1998 Royal National Theatre) a similar staging to the film clip above: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gzSK-YmDROc

real friends. His idea of utopia becomes a little dystopic for the audience. The structure of the song and the use of direct audience address from the character may also cause the audience to like and empathise with the character. The Engineer begins the number talking directly to the audience about his childhood struggles and soon loses himself in his own fantasy as he details all the things he wants to have, believing in that moment that he already has them. In the original production of the show The Engineer actually chases after the disappearing dream as the song ends shouting 'don't go! No please wait!'[4] As the music slows and only the brass and drums can be heard, the Engineer puts his head into his hands and notices money on the ground left over from the dream, he picks it up and laughs, as the clarinet plays a sneaky repetition, and kisses it. The song ends on a hopeful note and one sudden chord is played by the orchestra before black out. In the revival version of the number The Engineer sings to the audience once more 'that's what I smell in the air, my American dream!' He puts his cigar back into his mouth and punches the air excitedly in this ending of the number. This moment could well be a utopian performative in the context of the show. The megamusical is providing the audience with all of the spectacle that it is known for.

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Sargent's definition, like Dolan's, clarifies that utopia itself is not positive or negative by definition, that it is based on fantasy and that it is simply the 'no place' which society hopes will be something greater, makes it the positive utopian dream-world. As mentioned earlier within this chapter, Sargent expressed that utopia is hoped by the 'dreamer' or reader to be a radically better place than their current reality. Escapism is why people watch musicals according to Richard Dyer and this is perhaps why productions like megamusicals are successful forms of entertainment in our society:

[4] Accessed here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MYrD_dAey9k

> Two of the taken-for-granted descriptions of entertainment, as 'escape' and as 'wish-fulfilment', point to its central thrust, namely, utopianism**.** Entertainment offers the image of 'something better' to escape into, or something we want deeply that our day to day lives don't provide (Dyer, 1977, 273).

Musicals like *Brigadoon* and *South Pacific* work with this haven-like, escapist reality quite consciously for their audiences and use it in their plots to give the spectator a real glimpse of what utopia may look like. *Brigadoon* is a musical about a small village which only appears every 100 years, for one day. A spell was cast over the village in order to keep it pure and unhindered by the outside world. If anyone leaves the village the spell will be broken and this perfect village will vanish. When Tommy and Jeff happen upon the village they get a taste of true utopia and are able to escape their normality for one day. The musical then follows a love story between Tommy and Fiona. Dream songs like 'Almost like Being in Love' and 'Waiting for my Dearie' are sung and the show not only provides us with characters that dream of a better life but also a physical place the characters can have their dreams come true, Brigadoon. Similarly *South Pacific* implements the same ideas, characters who dream of a better life and a physical place within a story provides it in physical form.

In the Rodgers and Hammerstein musical *South Pacific*, two couples struggle to make their relationships work on a paradise island during World War Two. The musical begins with the male soldiers on an island off the coast of Japan singing about the lack of female interaction they are experiencing in the opening number There is Nothing Like a Dame'. The musical's premise is that those on the first island wish to travel across to the other island they see on the horizon known as 'Bali Ha'i'. Bali Ha'i, is the stuff of dreams to the soldiers; where men can be with 'dames', eat well, sleep well and make more money from the local culture's 'bore's tooth bracelets' and 'shrunken head charms'. The men all dream of physical pleasure, proving once again than utopian ideals stem from familiar desires and very rarely aim to make any

uncomfortable changes that benefit the long term, but simple changes that provide a quick-fix kind of happiness.

Moreover, the local islander Bloody Mary, describes an idyllic yet mystical island in the song 'Bali Ha'I'. The island is personified as a powerful entity which captures men and even whispers to those it tries to lure in. The soldiers look over to Bali Ha'i imagining all the wonders it may hold. When many of them get there, however, the reality of their dreams is somewhat different from their original expectations. Bloody Mary wishes for Lieutenant Cable to marry her daughter and in turn Cable wishes to feel at home and marry the girl of his dreams; ultimately, neither of their dreams come true and the overarching war results in his death. The lyrics of 'Bali Ha'i' are included below:

Most people live on a lonely island

Lost in the middle of a foggy sea,

Most people long for another island

One where they know they would like to be (Bali Ha'i, *South Pacific*, 1949).

'Bali Hai' is another example of a dream song in the musical and I understand it to be an example of a utopian performative. It may have a similar effect to when The Engineer in *Miss Saigon* directs his song to the audience as 'Bali Hai' is also more personal in language and perhaps the audience question whether they are how the song suggests, 'most people' are. Characters like Lieutenant Cable who go in search of their desires are another example of how utopia appears in the megamusical and as Bloody Mary sings: 'If you don't have a dream, how you gonna have a dream come true?' (Bali Hai, *South Pacific*, 1949). The promise of the realisation of our dreams allows us to delight in them all the more, as ideas. As described by Dyer, we as spectators have a *need* to envisage our utopic visions (Dyer, 1977). Almost 10 million people attended London musicals in the UK in 2018 according to The Society of

London Theatre.[5] Just over 4 million attended straight plays and 1.9 million bought tickets for opera, dance or performance entertainment of other kinds. I would argue that the musical's popularity is largely based on how it utilises utopian performatives to make its audience *feel* what is happening on the stage.

Karel Brušák states in 'Imaginary Action Space in Drama' that there are 'three basic constituents within the dramatic space, the stage, the scene and the action space' (Brušák, 1991, 146). The action space as Brušák describes is the space where the narrative takes place, this may include staging, props and set to help draw this picture for the audience however sometimes it's necessary that the audience frame 'imaginary action space' on the stage, this is space that the audience cannot physically see but have been told that it is there, perhaps by a character. Bali Ha'i is an imaginary action space in the opening scene of the musical, not only because we as an audience are asked to imagine it, as it is not physically there but also because Lieutenant Cable is imagining Bali Ha'i. Bloody Mary describes it in song to him and as an audience we live through this experience and in doing so we frame the imaginary action space as well as the physical action on stage. Utopia can be presented in the megamusical as a physical place, an imaginary action space or as a song or dance which refers to either of these expressing the hope to get to a place or peace of mind. Other attributes of utopia in the megamusical include utopia as a safe-haven and the musical language of utopia which I will discuss. Brušák's understanding of Imaginary and physical spaces on stage helps build a foundation for the work for the various spaces which occur inside the megamusical. Within the final chapter we will look at how Tompkins understands constructed and abstracted space and I find Brušák's work is a good foundation when discussing how these dynamics work on stage

[5] Graph of statistics Accessed here: https://www.statista.com/statistics/502115/united-kingdom-uk-london-theatre-attendance-by-genre/

for the audience. His work is not attached to utopian or heterotopian studies and can be applied, therefore, without the confusion of which of the two theoretical frameworks I am discussing.

As discussed within the thesis introduction, the megamusical offers an audience a larger-than-life experience[6] which is usually an idealised way to experience the world. Dolan agrees that all forms of theatre are a utopian experience and I argue that this utopian experience is heightened all the more with the megamusical's ability to depict life in an exaggerated way. The megamusical can be read as utopian as it follows many of the utopian attributes which I understand cause its success. It provides a view of an ideal world where in one action space people break into song and dance about an issue or scenario on their mind. In another space the audience must frame this song and dance as the character's thoughts spoken aloud, so we can make a clear picture of what's happening within the musical's narrative. We are given clues throughout with the score which sets up motifs that provide hints as to what emotions we may expect from the characters next. The music of a megamusical prompts the audience's social dreaming, this will be looked at further in the chapter.

Another attribute to forming utopia would be utopia as a safe place. It is interesting to note how utopia is often depicted as a safe-haven within megamusicals. Many characters who exude pathos in a musical narrative often hope for a safe place to call home, where they can be free from harm. The musical number 'Castle on a Cloud' (Kretzmer, 1985) is a dream song from Mackintosh's *Les Miserables* (1985) which dwells on a young girl's dream to find herself safe in the sky where she will be cared for:

There is a castle on a cloud
I like to go there in my sleep
Aren't any floors for me to sweep
Not in my castle on a cloud

[6] Sternfeld's definition of the megamusical as a spectacle, as seen in the opening of the thesis.

I know a place where no one's lost
I know a place where no one cries
Crying at all is not allowed
Not in my castle on a cloud

There is a lady all in white
Holds me and sings a lullaby
She's nice to see and she's soft to touch
She says Cosette,
I love you very much (Castle on a Cloud, *Les Miserables*, 1985).

This concept of utopia as a safe haven is present within many hit musical numbers I will discuss shortly. Utopia as addressed earlier as understood by the megamusical can be broken down into three main elements, love, safety and success. The other dream songs mentioned have referred to love and success, this dream song is focussed predominantly on safety. If we use this number to unpack the three main attributes of utopia in terms of how they appear in the megamusical we can see that Cosette dreams of a mother-like figure to love her, she also dreams to live in a beautiful home which will keep her safe, where no one will cry because only happiness is found there.

Some musical characters wish for one element of utopia more than the others, but it is interesting just how many dreams feature safety above all else. 'I Dreamed a Dream' (1985) features this same element of wishing for a safe-haven along with numbers like 'A Whole New World' (1992) from *Aladdin* and 'Home' from *Beauty and The Beast* (1993) both of which feature the concept of returning to or finding a safe haven. Aladdin sings to his love Jasmin: 'No one to tell us no, or where to go, or say we're only dreaming' (A whole new World, *Aladdin*, 1992). Safe from the authorities that seek to harm them, the pair fly off on a magic carpet. In the Broadway production of *Beauty and The Beast* Belle sings: 'What I'd give to

return to the life that I knew lately […] build higher walls around me change every lock and key' (Home, *Beauty and the Beast*, 1993). Here Belle sings of wishing she was home but learning how to protect herself and know that her heart is always safe at home even if she is not. This is a dream song about how Belle creates a safe-haven for herself while trapped.

Concepts of love and safety come together in these numbers and materiaFl wealth and success are ignored when the character is striving for freedom. As an audience we also expect and wish that the musical will end well. Author Rachna Chhabria states in her blogpost 'Why Do We like Happy Endings': 'we feel satisfied when things work out well, this feeling is subtly transferred into our own lives; we feel things will eventually work out for all of us too' (Chhabria, 2010). Therefore any struggles in the plot are also utopian in nature if they all come to the perfect utopic ending. Perhaps the audience feels they have overcome more if the ending is happy despite the tragedies within it. The imperfect moments in a musical, dystopic moments even, once resolved make the utopia all the more perfect. The Beast in *Beauty and the Beast* acts abhorrently towards Belle but is forgiven in the end when he feels loved and the utopic image is restored. When Tommy leaves Fiona in *Brigadoon* this can be interpreted as dystopic as we may struggle as an audience to see how they can be reunited but with the show earlier mentioning miracles Tommy's love brings Brigadoon the enchanted village back ninety-nine years early and he is reunited with his love Fiona. Perhaps when the bad 'no places' are present in the megamusical this makes the good 'no places' more powerful thus making the megamusical's potential for social change greater. The notion at the end that love can cause miracles makes *Brigadoon* as a show and a village all the more utopian. Love is the dream, the ideal of the utopian megamusical and safety and success play a part usually in asking the audience what they deem most important in creating paradise. When the audience see how Belle or Cosette are trapped maybe they look within their social dreaming at how they themselves are trapped in a job or relationship for example. Director John Truby states in the

interview, 'How to Make Your Audience Care about Your Characters' that, 'what makes an audience care about a character comes down to two things, the weakness of that character and that character's goal' (Truby, 2012). Though I do not think it is as black and white as Truby states here I do think that the character's desires speak to the audience's empathy as well as their overall nature and how they are seen by the other characters on stage. Megamusicals not only provide emotive characters but they use music to evoke emotion which I will focus on in the next section of this chapter looking at how music is the language of emotion for the brain. Millie Taylor in *Studying Musical Theatre: Theory and Practice* states:

> Scientists discovered that the brain of a person watching a dancer lit up in almost the same way as the dancer's own brain was activated while dancing. Similarly, the brain of someone listening to a song is activated in almost the same way as someone who is actually singing. The brain of an audience member at a musical is therefore being activated by observing dance, by the gestures and emotions of the acting and singing and by listening to the intellectual communication of narrative and song. Those audience members are not simply using their intelligence to understand the consequences of the events of the plot but they are recreating the experiences of the characters in their own minds and bodies (Taylor, 2014, 243).

Taylor's understanding can be linked to Dolan's concept of *reliving* horrors at the theatre. If our brains work vicariously (lighting up in similar ways as the performer) we may actually relive moments we have been through as Dolan states but in a far more literal and neurological way as well as perhaps experiencing new ones. If what we experience in the musical causes us to relive our horrors but also causes us to live new experiences through the characters then musical theatre is certainly shaping who we are as we truly feel connected to what's on stage, as it happens to us in tandem. We are therefore not only social dreaming but living the utopia ourselves neurologically. This is what separates utopian literature from utopian theatre. As Sargent understands, we read about utopia and begin to dream about our own version of it or what it would be like to live in that place, however from what Taylor states, being an audience member of musical theatre actually makes our brains live in the narrative. These psychological responses are another reason that the musical form sparks social dreaming. Through this the

audience become invested and strongly feel the emotions of each character, our brain gets to feel what it is to live in that place and scenarios all whilst sat in the audience. I suggest that Dolan's understanding that we *relive* horrors at the theatre is more relatable if we understand it as we empathise. For example, we cannot relive the French revolution, but we can empathise with a cultural story we may have learnt in school and are now presented with on stage. This reaction to cultural memories will be explored further in the next portion of the chapter on Nostalgia and mythologies. As our mirror neurons provide their own reactions we may react to the emotions and situations on stage with our own real feelings. We are therefore reacting empathetically to a story we already know with the real emotions triggered by our cognitive responses making us far more active as an audience member than perhaps first anticipated. Taylor goes on to state that:

> Theatre allows audiences to experience another time and space and another mode of being, but musical theatre releases a greater ability to feel the emotions of that time and place and to empathise with situations and characters (Taylor, 2014, 243).

In Istvan Molnar Szakacs and Katie Overy's article 'Music and Mirror Neurons from Motion to 'E'motion' they state: 'Music has a unique ability to trigger memories, awaken emotions and intensify our social experiences' (Szakacs, Overy, 2006, 235).

We react to the emotions on stage with our own emotions. These emotions may be triggered by a memory and our own mirror neurons react in how they expect us to feel in that moment. I will discuss how the music of the show affects the brain's mirror neurons and the part of the brain which processes language. Memories are triggered by nostalgic moments present within the show that perhaps make the audience feel safe, familiar and transported to a happy past moment.

In the previous sections I have discussed the kind of moments which may trigger social dreaming and affect the emotional state of the audience. In *The Three Faces of Utopianism Revisited* Sargent also explains in depth his definition of utopianism and how it applies to his

concept of social dreaming where the utopia exists in the minds of those imagining it when inspired by utopic spaces they may read about in fiction:

> I define the broad, general phenomenon of utopianism as social dreaming, the dreams and nightmares that concern the ways in which groups of people arrange their lives and which usually envision a radically different society than the one in which the dreamers live. But not all are radical, for some people at any time dream of something basically familiar (Sargent, 1994, 3).

Dreaming of something familiar and connecting with what is on stage may be down to the audience's cultural mythologies as explored by Roland Barthes and the nostalgic feelings created by the musical may be responsible for how we view those presented in it.

Nostalgia and Mythologies

'Nostalgia gives our life texture and reminds us that we are valuable people, it reminds us of who we are and who we chose to be and why' (Gallarde, 2015). Roland Barthes in *Mythologies* explores how 'dominant ideologies can express themselves as simply the way the world should be' (Macat, 2015). The dominant ideologies of shows will be explored within the case studies of this thesis as ways cultural mythologies present themselves through utopian attributes. Rebecca Ann Rug in *What It Used to Be: Nostalgia and The State of The Broadway Musical* states that:

> *Nostalgia* was coined in the seventeenth century by a Swiss physician as a translation of the German *heimweh* (homesickness). Homesickness generally wears rose-colored glasses, and in this respect, nostalgia retains the etymological link, as a longing for something in the past that never actually existed, at least not as remembered. All memory is selective, but nostalgic memory selects only the carefree, blissful past. The effects of nostalgia in individual psychology have fascinated analysts for decades; no less fascinating are its uses and effects in popular culture (Rugg, 2002, 46).

Nostalgia as Rebecca Ann Rugg explains cherry picks the positive parts, so we see the past through rose tinted glasses. If people are presented through the lens of racial or gendered ideologies that conform to our mythologies of them perhaps it feels safe, normal and enjoyable for the audience as the content is playing on our memories of what we (as the audience) think we know. If the past is better than our present then perhaps our social dreaming will be filled with nostalgic memories of our past for us to enjoy.

Nostalgia is an intrinsic part of utopianism in this sense, as familiarity is caused by something we have known. Using these mythologies, stories based on what we learn from our past to form the musical's plot and characters can run the risk of causing offensive stereotypes. If nostalgia means remembering the past in a blissful and carefree manner, we are remembering our past in a utopic vision. Audience members may feel nostalgic, happy, and bittersweet when they see *Matilda* the musical for example. *Matilda* is an example of how nostalgia is used within a musical form. The show is based on a book written 30 years ago which many of the parents of the families attending the show will have read, or be aware of, the show features children in a school setting being disciplined and rebelling. In Love's review *Musical we Love: Matilda,* nostalgia in musical audiences is explored:

> *Matilda'*s real sucker punch is saved for after the interval, as the *When I Grow Up* number hits the stage with a sudden, unexpected wallop of sentimentality. Just like Dahl's prose, the musical boasts a direct line back to childhood, leaving younger audience members grinning with recognition and their adult counterparts misty-eyed with nostalgia (Love, 2014).

Nostalgia causes us to look at what we actually want, desire and dream by making us look at what we loved in the past and question its relevance to how we feel now. If the megamusical depicts hopes, dreams and ideals in order for us to connect with it, be entertained by it, it needs to appear familiar to trigger this feel-good nostalgia in us. Most megamusicals are set within a point in history of which we may have cultural memory, therefore feel nostalgic towards the

plot, as it is a familiar story told to us during childhood or a well-known political event. For example the French Revolution in *Les Miserables*, the Vietnam War in *Miss Saigon*, the founding of the USA in *Hamilton.* The problem here lies in the consequence of a megamusical providing us with the familiarities of a past which can be seen as socially unjust than the one we live in today, therefore utopianism inside the megamusical directly affects the perpetuating of old ideologies like race and gender stereotypes. For example, many of the obvious reasons *Miss Saigon* may be a negative example of utopia for its audience is down to utopia being a place 'considerably better than the society in which the reader lives' (Sargent, 1988, 11). If these stereotypes and mythologies are played out in this larger than life manner, the musical form is perpetuating these views in a positive way to entertain its audience. Moreover, the audience are feeling good (in their social dreaming), while they watch misleading and ethically questionable representations. In Barthes' *Mythologies* the reader is made aware of certain signs that are put in place to trigger fond memories, feelings of nostalgia within the brain quickly, this could be as simple as seeing how in Barthes' essay, 'The Romans in Films' *(Mythologies)* he explores how one culture views and portrays the culture of another, in this instance Romans in films: 'In *Julius Cezar* all the men are wearing fringes, some curly, some tufted, none are bald, although there are plenty [bald Romans] to be found within Roman history' (Barthes, 1957, 26).

Here Barthes observes that we are conditioned as societies and cultures to view others, outsiders in a way that elevates us especially as richer countries. Repeated stereotypes are nostalgic and therefore safe and accepted making them a good foundation for us to social dream. Musicals and megamusicals in particular are entertaining because they hone into stereotypes, using our already culturally embedded prejudices to create characters and scenarios for which we will come back for time and time again. Stereotyping may allow us to process people quickly. According to John Stossel and Kristina Kendal in their article 'The

Psychology of Stereotyping' 'We categorize people automatically, unconsciously, immediately, based on a person's race and based on a person's sex' (Stossel, Kendal, 2006). Film, TV and Theatre use stereotypes so their audiences can understand the plot and characters quickly and form connections. Once we have formed these connections over time they become part of our mythologies, the stories we understand of the world that feel legitimate to us. We can understand Barthes Mythologies through the lens of nostalgia, the stories that are familiar and therefore comforting to us a social group may cause more socially unjust dilemmas.

The social justice issues of the utopian megamusical will also be looked at in more depth within the case studies of the thesis, but for now, nostalgia is another reason why audiences enjoy the megamusical and are affected emotionally by it and this can be executed effectively or entertainment, as seen in the *Matilda* example. Nostalgia is then the key to turning the utopian megamusical into a dystopian society. The representations in megamusicals can either play into our mythologies repeating ideologies that have been built over time. This is what many now believe are the reason for domestic abuse and racial attacks, as understood by Jess Fong (2017) and Ginny Hwang (2016) in their talks on representations of Asian women. The megamusical has the capability to promote in-depth character identities or two dimensional tropes like the Dragon Lady and the China Doll which will be explored in the next chapter of the thesis.

Nostalgia is a key element because it is what an audience appear to use as how they define themselves and others and it helps build a picture of society in our minds. All of the elements mentioned previously are brought to the audience, in the case of megamusicals, by song. Song can also trigger nostalgia and ties together all the theatrical elements of the megamusical creating an emotional story for the audience's brains to follow. In the next section how the music of the megamusical showcases utopian attributes and utilises nostalgia to keep the spectator engaged in the show, will be discussed.

What's The Score Utopia?

Early Broadway musicals like *Show Boat* (1927) allowed families to enjoy song, dance, a social community and an engaging plot and the music within these shows set the form aside from any other family entertainment (Young, 1994, 9). Dyer in his article *Entertainment and Utopia* states that music personifies emotion and in turn this ignites the audience's feelings, when listening: 'We feel music (arguably more than any other performance medium) yet it has the least obvious reference to reality – the intensity of our response to music can only be accounted for by the way music, abstract, formal though it is, still embodies feeling' (Dyer, 1977, 274).

Dyer articulates his argument by drawing on Susanne K. Langer's *Feeling and Form* which aided in developing the concept of how music affects the mind and emotions of the listener:

> The tonal structures we call music bear a close logical similarity to the forms of human feeling – forms of growth and of attenuation, flowing and slowing, conflict and resolution, speed, arrest, terrific excitement, calm or subtle activation or dreamy lapses – not joy and sorrow perhaps but the poignancy of both – the greatness and brevity and eternal passing of everything vitally felt (Langer, 1953, 27).

Langer's description of music informs my understanding that the score of the megamusical is an integral part of the reference to utopia threaded throughout. It is not only causing the audience to feel emotions positive or negative but it also reminds them of their past and past emotions meaning that the music works to trigger nostalgia also making it an active participant in what develops and informs our social dream. Langer goes on to say that:

> Such is the pattern of music, or logical form, of sentience; and the pattern of music is that same form worked out in pure measures, sound and silence. Music is the tonal analogue of emotive life (Langer, 1953, 27).

Within Michael Saffle's book *Aesthetic and Social Aspects of Emerging Utopian Musical Communities* music itself is explored as a utopian entity: 'Music creates an autonomous world of sound with its own sets of law and relationships, its own order, its own conceptions of

tension and release. All music worthy of the name is utopian' (Saffle, 2010, 322). I have found that the most compelling way in which the megamusical provides utopia is through its music, it is the main utopic thread running through megamusicals.

Margaret Vermette writes in her book *The Musical World of Boublil and Schönberg:*

> Music can heighten and reinforce emotion in drama because music is heard on a different emotional level than dialogue. Music enriches drama by raising the ordinary to the exceptional and it has a way of making it seem more real than reality. (Vermette, 2006, 11)

Vermette explains how the emotions evoked by the music of a musical allows 'you to reinterpret your own life,' and states that '[m]usical theatre is unifying because it allows the audience to feel together, those emotions that are usually felt alone' (11). I understand the music of the megamusical as utopian; due to this it becomes a 'no place'. Music itself as the 'autonomous world of sound' is the 'no place' entity which encompasses all of the megamusical, stitching it together so we may (as the audience) decipher feelings and meaning from the show. The feelings as explored earlier are triggered by the music as the brain processes the sounds emotionally.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have explored the various ways the megamusical draws on utopia, the ways it depicts utopia inside form and content and how these utopian performatives trigger social dreaming. This gives us some insight into how the megamusical has the potential to affect social change. Utopia in a megamusical usually focusses on the dreams and ideals of the characters presented through dream songs, dances and their imaginations depicted on stage. Love success and safety are three main elements which appear throughout megamusical narratives and aim to allow us to connect and empathise with the character and the action on stage. The utopian megamusical shows itself to its audience as the desirable place to be. With expensive sets and famous cast members this all singing and all dancing,

spectacle/extravaganza is seemingly paradise in terms of theatrical form. Megamusicals are meant to entertain and this section does not strip them of this fact. But if the megamusical through its music and narrative has the ability to impact the way we view our own reality and other cultures within our social dreaming then surely it has the responsibility to depict socially just representations through its devices such as sung-through score, dream songs, dances and scenarios which are made to shock and move us emotionally. I understand that when watching a megamusical due to its utopic nature the following occurs: A utopian performative happens on stage. This triggers our social dreaming. We connect to this experience neurologically which triggers our emotions and memories. The above gives us insight into how audience members could be influenced to affect social change outside the theatre.

Due to our cultural background, the mythologies we believe and the way Western society Others other cultures, the megamusical provides a view of what we deem perfect, entertaining and moving. But this may be a mirror view of our own cultural story and our view of utopia may be someone else's dystopia in regards to social justice. The megamusical is utopic in the sense that is provides the audience with more of everything they already love about musical theatre (Sternfeld, 2006, 2). In the sung-through megamusical the performers sing when they communicate, the orchestra like a consistent friend guides you through the narrative triggering your brain to release dopamine as you watch. The spectacular moments of megamusicals such as the giant chandelier in *Phantom*, the helicopter in *Saigon*, and the barricade in *Les Miserables* are physical structures which represent the depth of the show's story (symbolism) and the scale of the musical's wealth. Utopianism presents itself in the megamusical through dreams and ideals, love, success and we as an audience relate and relive these human emotions and experiences. The aim of the chapter is to provide an introduction to the utopian ways of the megamusical so we can read the social effects of this in the following case studies, *The Saigon Controversy as a Product of Utopianism* and *Hamilton as a Heterotopia.*

CHAPTER TWO: The Saigon Controversy as a Product of Utopianism

Introduction

When discussing utopianism and its effect on the megamusical, specifically in regards to issues of social justice, *Miss Saigon* simply cannot be ignored. As discussed in chapter one and the introduction of this thesis, *Miss Saigon* is a Cameron Mackintosh megamusical written and first performed on the West End in 1989. Within this chapter I will discuss the utopic elements of the show which are perhaps to blame for the social controversy which spans from its debut to now. When I describe the show as a product of utopianism I am referring to the show's content as being influenced by outdated ideologies about the Orient (Said, 1978, 9) that are still perpetuated in Western media today. The show was later taken to Broadway in 1991 after its success on the West End (1989). The production is an adaptation of Puccini's opera, *Madama Butterfly*. Unlike *Butterfly* which is set in Japan *Miss Saigon* is set during the Vietnam War and follows – similarly to *Butterfly* – the tragic love story of an American G.I and a young Vietnamese prostitute. Kim is a 17 year old girl who has started working in a brothel where she meets white American G.I. Chris. The pair soon fall in love but when Chris leaves for America as the war ends Kim is left in Saigon pregnant with his child. Like Puccini's *Butterfly* Kim also kills herself to ensure her son's future will be in America with his Father. The show is set at a time of war for the East and West and the show sets up the clear cultural differences of each 'side' from the beginning. Unlike the conflict represented in Mackintosh's earlier production, *Les Miserables*, the war taking place within *Saigon* is far more recent for most of the show's audience, at least at the time it was debuted. Many audience members would have been able to relate to the show's depiction of modern war as well as some of the more timeless depictions of love and loss.

> *Miss Saigon* is a quintessential megamusical. Most megamusicals especially those written after the first wave of the 1980s, demonstrate many but not all the features of a megamusical. But *Miss Saigon* has it all. It features a sung-through score from the creators of *Les Miserables* [and] it was produced by the leading force of the megamusical, Cameron Mackintosh. It featured expensive elaborate sets including one hugely famous *coup de théâtre*, a helicopter that landed on stage and flew away again (Sternfeld, 2006, 293).

Sternfeld describes *Miss Saigon* as the perfect definition of a megamusical. Her description of the show captures the excitement it caused when it debuted. I argue that the show is utopic in form and content however the outcome of the 'utopic' content (mainly the controversy surrounding the show) can be dystopic for social justice. I have attached an example below which explains the distinction between the show's utopian performatives and their implications:

1. The utopian performative on stage - Kim singing a dream song like *Movie in My Mind*
2. The song portrays Kim in The China Doll stereotype (Lee, 2018, 2).
3. The utopian performative has perpetuated a harmful stereotype in order to give the audience 'clarity to the rest of their lives' (Dolan, 2005, 19).

I think these moments in *Miss Saigon* only further the belief of legitimacy (Westacott, 2018) in the social myths that are perpetuated in the show. In chapter one I unpacked the various ways the megamusical exhibits utopian qualities, which influence its audience, to make their own utopic visions. Perhaps the visions created by the audience also cause them to perpetuate the stereotypes shown as opposed to making social change outside the theatre. In the first chapter I looked at the effect of utopianism on the megamusical as a whole, whereas in this chapter I will be applying my findings in chapter 1 more specifically. The controversies of the show can be broken down into these main issues:

1. The show provides a stereotypical depiction of Vietnam and its people
2. The show's casting decisions have been deemed offensive

3. Yellow-facing was used in the show's debut performance

The depth of the controversy can be explained when reading these areas as products of utopianism. The show stereotypes people and culture due to the collective social dreaming of the West, the Western utopic vision of the East presented on stage. This social dreaming is influenced by Orientalism. The character of Kim is in many ways the way in which the West view Eastern women, as explored in Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1979). East Asian (EA) women are seen in the media as being emotional or over sexualised, or the mystical and evil 'Dragon Lady' (Westacott, 2018) trope as explored by Peter Westacott in his TED Talks lecture on EA representations. Sexism and racism play a large part in the representations of people and place in the musical.

The casting issues highlight the western show business's need to keep musicals familiar so that they are successful as explored in the nostalgia section of the last chapter. Due to the lack of representation in popular media, perhaps a lot of the West cannot relate to the real Vietnam, so making it more relatable, by adhering to familiar stereotypes, was most likely the reason for this decision. The casting issues are specifically to do with white-washing, a practice where white actors are cast to play other ethnicities in film, TV and theatre. This was the case when Caucasian actor Jonathan Pryce was cast in *Miss Saigon* to play the Eurasian character of The Engineer. White-washing combined with yellow-face, where the white actor is made to look Asian can also be seen within the film *Breakfast at Tiffany's* when white actor Micky Rooney played the character Mr Yunioshi and was made up in prosthetics similarly to Jonathan Pryce for *Miss Saigon*. More recently white actor Scarlett Johansson was cast as Japanese soldier Major Mira in the film *Ghost in the Shell.* In 2016 *Dr Strange* cast white female actor Tilda Swinton to play The Ancient One. This character is traditionally male and from Tibet. Westacott states that: 'the only time Asians are visible in the media is when they fulfil a stereotype' (Westacott, 2018) otherwise white-washing is used. The point being that Asians

aren't filling these main roles which try to depict them but are most likely placed in roles which are smaller and based on a stereotype.

Yellow-facing supports the idea that one culture is more worthy than another and that a race's facial features are their only defining aspect.

> 'By representing racial minorities through negative stereotypes, it raises the question as to whether "these people" have a right to the societal resources available to those who are part of a productive populace.' (Castaneda, 2018, 7)

When Jonathan Pryce wears yellow-face, the creators are perpetuating the idea that there is an ideal way to present East Asians without casting them in the roles themselves, 'reducing our race to just our facial features' (Westacott, 2018). Westacott also states:

> The paradigm of media is a very powerful medium which influences how we see the world around us and how we form expectations of social norms and groups of people and when the only portrayals of Asians are the same stereotypes there's less of a range of behaviours to form those mental structures' (Westacott, 2018).

From this, we can explore how the familiar and the ideal relate directly to how we form our utopic visions and how this affects the megamusical, *Miss Saigon* in particular. As Westacott states: 'when all you're seeing of Asians is one stereotype over and over, we begin to see these stereotypes as legitimate' (Westacott, 2018).

In this chapter I will reference Jessica Sternfeld's *The Megamusical* and particularly the chapter 'Megamusicals of the 1990s: *Miss Saigon'* (Sternfeld, 2006). This insight will aid in the understanding of the megamusical as a form and how we can understand its attributes as those affected by utopian ideologies. Utopianism that creates a dystopia is often caused through idealism which influences the social dreaming of the spectator, as explored in chapter one. This understanding comes from Roland Barthes' *Mythologies* as he explores how one culture treats another perhaps in a demeaning way due to age old stories, ideals and myths that we keep in

circulation in order for us to form a cultural identity and create mystery and rumours around those we deem Other. Lyrics to the show's wedding song, *Dju Vui Vai,* were evidently gibberish and we can infer from this decision that it is more important that the show provides their Western audience with what they *think* a traditional Vietnamese song should sound like than to provide correct translations that may take away from the utopic vision (negative stereotypes) the West have of the East. These stereotypes have become familiar, nostalgic and safe for the West and therefore more likely to create a successful megamusical in the form of entertainment and escapism for the audience. Although Miss Saigon debuted almost 30 years before *Hamilton* the revival of the show in 2014 holds many of the same issues. I have taken into consideration that the source text was written over 100 years ago and is reflective of that time in many ways however, the show's evolution from 1989 to 2014 is small in terms of casting issues and content therefore comparing it with *Hamilton* which debuted in 2015 is fair.

Orientalism in the Form of White-Washing and Yellow-face

According to Edward Said in his book *Orientalism:* 'The Orient was almost a European invention, and had been since antiquity, a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences' (Said, 1978, 9). Said adds to the understanding that the stereotype of The Orient is caused by Western culture: 'Orientalism is the Western style for dominating, restructuring and having authority over the Orient' (Said, 1978, 11). When discussing how language causes a barrier between cultures Said says:

> We need not look for correspondence between the language used to depict the Orient and the Orient itself, not so much because the language is inaccurate but because it is not even trying to be accurate. What it is trying to do…is at one and the same time to characterize the Orient as alien and to incorporate it schematically on a theatrical stage whose audience, manager, and actors are for Europe, and only for Europe. (Said, 1978, 71)

It is this understanding that I aim to use as a foundation for exploring *Miss Saigon* as I argue that the West has placed the East in the category of Other and claims aspects of the culture if

it is nostalgic and disowns other aspects which do not fit the mould. Sternfeld's *The Megamusical* reads:

> Actors' Equity backed the views of its protestors from within and condemned the casting of *Saigon's* Pryce 'painted in yellow' in their words. (Sternfeld, 2006, 297).

Controversy descended on *Miss Saigon* that would become better known than any other aspect of the show. Musicals have often intentionally or not, attracted publicity from the way they have been cast (Ellis-Peterson, 2015; Bakare, 2019; Wilford, 2019; Barume, 2017); in the case of *Miss Saigon* the issues were not merely the stuff of gossip but involved politics and race relations, and led to changes in how producers and directors thought about casting. In July 1990 the Asian division of the ethnic minorities committee of Actors' Equity, the union of Broadway performers, filed a complaint against the casting of Jonathan Pryce (Sternfeld, 2009, 296). Casting Caucasians in Asian roles is understood 'as a racist practice of removing visible minorities in popular media by making their skin appear lighter, or even replacing them altogether with white actors' (Nelson, 2016, 3).

This controversy is an example of how the Orientalism of the West (the Othering of the East) has grown to impact casting decisions and the overall view of Asian performers. The complaint filed by the Asian Division of Ethnic Minorities which was spearheaded by playwright David Henry Hwang stated:

> [t]he casting of Jonathan Pryce a white man, as the half Asian Engineer was offensive. British Equity pointed out that they had searched for an Asian actor to play the role but did not find a suitable one, cast Pryce and received no complaints from their union members or the Asian community. Pryce wore makeup when the show first opened suggesting his character was of colour and has Asian eyes, which again garnered no protest until the American controversy began. Pryce then ceased using the make-up (Sternfeld, 2006, 296).

Miss Saigon is not the only piece of theatre to cause offence and gain interest from a casting scandal. More recently the RSC's *Orphan of Zhao* caused concern with its casting decisions. Matt Trueman from *The Guardian* wrote:

> A group of East Asian actors is seeking an apology from the Royal Shakespeare Company for its controversial casting of *The Orphan of Zhao*. Last week, the RSC faced criticism on Facebook over a 17-strong company featuring only three actors of East Asian heritage that will perform James Fenton's adaptation of a piece that is often referred to as the Chinese *Hamlet* from December. However, the Stage reports that British Chinese actor Daniel York, the vice-chair of Equity's ethnic minority committee, has called for an apology and a public debate with RSC representatives, including artistic director Gregory Doran (Truman, 2012).

Similar to the case of *Miss Saigon's* Yellow-facing, the RSC's *Orphan of Zhao's* lack of Asian representation for a Chinese story is another way Asian performers have been overlooked and Othered in the arts. Despite the obvious concern caused it was reported that:

> The company has defended its casting on the grounds that *The Orphan of Zhao* is one of three plays being performed by the ensemble. York told the Guardian last week that the problem was by no means confined to the RSC: 'The whole industry is reluctant to cast East Asians in non-race specific roles. We are generally only thought of as the Chinese takeaway man or the Japanese businessman.' he said (Trueman, 2012).

York expresses above that Asian performers are cast in roles which stereotype them and that there is a belief that white is the default race for non-race specific roles. It is in the stereotyping, yellow-facing, overlooking and Othering of Asian performers that highlights how Orientalism as alive and well in the theatre industry today. Asian-Canadian performer Broderick Chow writes in his article 'Here is a Story for me: Representation and Visibility in *Miss Saigon* and *The Orphan of Zhao',* that in reflecting on his experiences as a performer in *Miss Saigon* he has 'advocated for presence and visibility as a space in which the agency of the minority performer can emerge. While we as Asian-Canadian actors, recognised it may not be exactly *a story for us* it was a story we could *embody*. Here was *visibility*' (Chow, 2014, 512). Chow also expresses in this article that *The Orphan of Zhao's* casting was particularly harmful as 'it

silenced its East Asian actors and hid them in plain sight. In this way, it replicates the way East Asian subjects are hidden and silenced within contemporary British society in general' (Chow, 2014, 508). Chow's perspective is that *The Orphan of Zhao* has been 'calculated so at to deny visibility to the persons it supposedly represents' (Chow, 2014, 512).

As Vietnamese-American actor David Huynh explains in his lecture[7] 'Asian Enough?', 'casting white actors in East Asian roles takes the foundation of our identity like our cultures, traditions, origin, and our religion and treats it like a costume' (Huynh, 2016).

White-washing is widespread in *Miss Saigon* in its use of yellow-face in the form of white women in straight black wigs to its use of prosthetics on Jonathan Pryce. It is controversial also that Mackintosh placed Filipino actors in a position where they not only had to represent another culture but that the Vietnam they portrayed was one in war and pain. As we can see from the Vietnamese and Asian-American response to the show, it is clear that many in these communities do not respect the show or think it has a place is representing Vietnam in the 1970s. Huynh said in his talk 'Beyond orientalism', 'Yellow-facing dehumanises us and makes us feel like outsiders and feeds the idea that we don't belong' (Huynh, 2016). Westacott drawing on what Huynh had said, added that society is impacted by white-washing and yellow-facing so much that The West believe in the stereotypes and use them to form judgements on a daily basis. Westacott stated that:

> As humans we unconsciously engage in a series of complex cognitive processes that allow us to analyse and quickly react to incoming information from our environment. The way Asians are portrayed in media shape those schemas and this categorisation of behaviour influences every aspect of our cognition. In our day to day interactions we automatically access the information imbedded in those schemas to draw inferences [and] make predictions about the people from their race. The media shapes our world view and therefore shapes society, by refusing to use their platform for social good film industry insiders are complicit in maintaining a racist system (Westacott, 2018).

[7] Accessed here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wc-Mzf3ztcs

If how the media portrays race and gender effects our world view then megamusicals are responsible for these representations also. The Model Minority myth is perhaps the most common representation that is placed on to East Asian men and women alike. Positive attributes like, being clever, being a high earner, dedicated and multi-talented are placed onto Asians. However if Asian children and adults fall short of this expectation they are disregarded socially. This is discussed in Alice Li's TED Talks lecture *Asian Americans are not the Model Minority*. Li states that one of the ways this stereotype is dangerous, 'is when governments and charitable organisations are distributing resources, the common assumption that all East Asians are high earners makes it easy to overlook the many East Asians who are in need' (Li, 2016).

> Another way the 'complimentary' stereotype is harmful is discrimination. An American analytics survey found that '31% of Asian Americans in the work place said they have been discriminated against.' (Li, 2016) This was the highest of any minority group in the survey. Despite such a large percentage of cases only 3% of the cases were reported as perhaps due to the Model Minority myth 'Asian Americans feel they will not be believed' (Li, 2016) (Oshige McGowan/ Lindgren, 2003, 26)

The Model Minority myth is another example of how representations/ideologies of race affect the way the race is treated by society whether that be in the guise of a compliment or physical abuse.

> The model minority stereotype depicts Asian Americans as a group that has succeeded in America and overcome discrimination through its hard work, intelligence, and emphasis on education and achievement - a modern-day confirmation of the American Dream. (Oshige McGowan/ Lindgren, 2003, 1)

Like with the 'model minority myth' concept some stereotypes are positive and can seem like they're celebrating a culture but these 'positive stereotypes' can have damaging effects. For the producers, in order for a show to be lucrative they must appeal to the Western audience's utopic vision. This is perhaps why these stereotypes find their way into the content of the megamusical, they fit into the definition of the western/American dream. Within the next part

of the chapter I discuss other ways the musical promotes myths over diverse and nuanced representations of people and their culture particularly in lyrics.

Wedding Songs and War Cries

As I proposed in chapter one, the idealism (hopes and dreams) which comes from utopianism makes the spectator feel at ease in the company of familiar desires, cultural and societal goals. In regards to the controversy surrounding this show in particular, there are many issues with spectators viewing *Miss Saigon* as a positive, ideal depiction of a race and culture. If we as a Western audience view East-Asian cultures with our own utopian ideals, aspirations and cultural assumptions this creates a firm divide which can be deemed as racist and prejudiced, meaning that our own utopia creates a dystopic vision of another culture. One culture's heaven may create another's hell, as explored in chapter one, through Sargent's understanding of contradicting feelings towards one man's utopia being another's nightmare. If one society's happiness is based on identifying others as below themselves, then this begins to disturb and distort the view one culture has of another in even their most utopic vision of it. In this instance we are discussing how the West creates a story for the East. The next chapter explores this dynamic more specifically toward Asian women.

Along with much controversy (Degabriele, 1996) over the sexist depictions of the leading Vietnamese character Kim, and arguably for many critics the prejudice regarding Vietnamese culture in general throughout the show, the show's wedding song for the Vietnamese marriage of Kim and Chris *Dju Vui Vai* has been accused of being no more than gibberish, by Vietnamese audience members who claimed the lyrics were not Vietnamese. Clearly for the creators of the show the sound of the song's lyrics were more important than accurately representing Vietnamese culture. In contrast to this decision, the show explores the devastation of war and

the hardship for Vietnam at this time in the number *Bui Doi*. Let us compare *Dju Vui Vai*. The Western culture (particularly the writers of the show) depict Vietnam for the benefit of their audience in comparable ways by perpetuating stereotypes and White Saviours. In the wedding song the lyrics are effective in sounding Eastern to an audience that the creators of the show expect will not understand Vietnamese. This is insulting to the culture they are portraying and the spectators who are being misled. Utopia presents itself here as a beautiful Vietnamese wedding song in this scene where finally the audience get to see Kim and Chris married and happy. It has been stated by Vietnamese-American activist Denise Hanh Huynh that the song is insulting:

> The Vietnamese song the show claimed all women sing at all wedding ceremonies was actually just gibberish, even in the script itself. I naively thought it was poor pronunciation. That there is any debate about whether the show is racist would be laughable if it were not so depressing. That this is not satire and that the Ordway has the audacity to suggest people, especially Vietnamese people, should think songs like these are beautiful is insulting (Hanh Huynh, 2015).

Exploring the type of controversy the show has endured and why, is key to understanding how and if utopianism has played a part in the show's creation and reception. If we analyse the lyrics of *Dju Vui Vai*, we can see that lyrically, it is a spiritual blessing ceremony song and not one that (in the show's narrative) Chris perceives as a real and legal marriage as it is not the traditional American ceremony he views as binding. Before the song begins Kim lights some incense and bows to what appears as a shrine to suggest to the audience that this ceremony is one of Kim's culture. I have included the lyrics below:

[GIRLS]
Dju vui vai
Yu doi my
Dju vui vai
Vao nyay moy
[KIM]
Will you give me life smile today
Look with favouring eyes on this man
Show your daughter's heart your forgiveness
And send to us

From your home above
Your blessing on our love (Boublil, 1987)

In act two Chris has remarried, the audience can read this as Chris's way of undermining Kim's culture as it seems he never believed he was married to her at all. However for Kim, their wedding was 'blessed by the gods' and real. As Aaltonen explores in *Time Sharing on Stage* 'The Foreign' (the other culture) is misrepresented when a 'dominant culture' rewrites a source text 'entirely from the perspective of the dominant culture' (Aaltonen, 2000, 113). '[When] everything is reduced to the perspective of the target culture it turns the alien culture to its own ends' (Aaltonen, 2000, 113).

In chapter one I explored how Barthes in *Mythologies* discusses the depiction of other cultures as seemingly dependent on the status of the culture portraying them. This was seen through his example of the Roman in the film being exactly how the West wanted him to appear and not how the Romans would have represented themselves. I will now look into the show's number *Bui Doi* as a way to analyse how utopianism has affected the portrayal of Vietnam in a contrasting way to how the Vietnamese language is undermined within the wedding song Mentioned above.

Contrastingly to the artificial language used for *Dju Vui Vai*, *Bui Doi* is actually a Vietnamese term used to describe the children born during the Vietnam War by American fathers and Vietnamese mothers. It translates to 'Dust of life' and this number is staged with projected video footage of the real children of Vietnam just after the war. This number appears to ground the musical and provides the audience with an insight into the reality of this time in Vietnam. This is an emotionally driven song and it does not make light of a time of the Vietnam War or trivialise Vietnamese culture as we have seen from the wedding song *Dju Vui Vai*. The harrowing side of war is explored in this number by the language used in the lyrics and the

footage shown on stage. The real children of the Vietnam War depicted in the video played on stage reminds the audience of the true nature of this time. However there are complexities to this on-stage device. There are serious ethical concerns toward showing footage of the children of The Vietnam War and perhaps White Saviour and ally theatre behaviour are evident here as theatrical devices. I have included an extract from the song below:

They're called Bui-Doi.
The dust of life.
Conceived in Hell,
And born in strife.
They are the living reminder of all the good we failed to do.
We can't forget
Must not forget
That they are all our children, too.
Like all survivors I once thought
When I'm home I won't give a damn
But now I know I'm caught, I'll never leave Vietnam. (Boublil, 1989)

I have inserted below an excerpt from a BBC review of the show Referencing *Miss Saigon* 2014, this extract reviews the scene in which *Bui Doi* takes place and reminds us that Tam is the Bui Doi character in the show:

> Special mention must go to little Tam. Local children are playing the part of Kim's son 'conceived in hell, and born in strife' throughout the run and Tuesday night's youngster gave a charming performance for one so young. Hugh Maynard played Chris's friend John who added a wonderful touch of soul to my favourite song, Bui Doi, which drives home the message that it's the children who continue to suffer after the cessation of hostilities. (Lewis, 2014)

Bui Doi is a song which gives the American G.I characters a sensitivity that is not brought out in any other parts of the musical. It connects them to the audience on an emotional level as it explores their feelings towards the war and its victims. It tries to show the more human dimension of war but in doing so it appeals to the White Saviour Complex by showing real struggling children. This could have been used to make the show appear as socially intelligent and charitable as well as making the characters on stage seem more appealing. The cyclorama behind (in the revival production of the show) is still the orange colour of the sun that seems

to connect America to Vietnam however, the skyline of high rise buildings now fills the backdrop showing the wealth of difference between these two cultures. Men with suits fill the stage and sing *Bui Doi* as John enters to lead the foundation speech by singing the rest of the song as the footage of the children plays. The song's lyrics are ethically problematic when applying them to the White Saviour Complex, as the children are described as 'the living reminder of whatever we failed to do, we cannot forget that they're all our children too' (Boublil 1989). Problems arise when the West began to view the East as theirs to rescue and make more white in culture. For these reasons *Bui Doi* provides the audience with the perpetuated myth that the West must save the East and more specifically Eastern children need Western saviours.

Within the show character Kim's Asian-American son Tam represents in many ways the unification of these two cultures and within the final scene is dressed in a baseball cap and Mickey Mouse T-shirt. In most productions of the show he is wearing either a Disney shirt, shorts and cap, or shorts and a brightly coloured shirt.[8] Tam's becoming more American is a way the show provides a view of white-washing that depicts it as a real issue. However, for Tam, one stereotype is replaced for another as he is depicted as a product of western commercialism, in the very cliché Mickey Mouse shirt and baseball cap. Tam as American is significant when Kim sings in *This is the Hour* (Schönberg, 1987) 'look at what you see and remember me' at least in the 2001 Broadway ending of the show. He's already slipping away from her and his culture as he stands in the typically American kid's outfit as she asks him for 'one more kiss and a goodbye'. Tam represents the white-washing effect that the United States had on the countries they infiltrated. Tam's costume at the end of the show makes it clear to the spectator that he is to be raised as an American child and this should be a happy ending for

[8] Multiple versions of the shows ending can be seen here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BufKvZMDUfE

Tam however the unresolved sounding chromatic melodies and diminished chords of the end score[9] suggests that Tam will obviously be forever plagued by the death of his mother and the culture of which he can no longer be a part. The ending could also suggest that the show knows that this is a complex issue by showing in the score that perhaps the future isn't as promising for Tam as Kim had hoped and that her death was unnecessary.

Perhaps if Kim herself had been portrayed outside of the confines of the China Doll or Dragon Lady stereotypes that the show is full of, audiences could see the complexities in her character and in the time the show is set. The Female Asian portrayals will now be analysed.

The Utopic Woman: Female Asian portrayals

I suggest that utopic stereotyping is present within the show in the representation of EA women. For example, as well as being presented as a prostitute, Kim is presented as a beautiful, kind hearted, loyal and loving representation of a Vietnamese woman. Joey Lee in their article 'East Asian China Doll or Dragon Lady' states:

> In popular media to develop a culture of paranoid xenophobia[,] they do so through popularizing the two Hollywood archetypes of the submissive, delicate, and overly emotional China Doll, and the threatening, cold Dragon Lady, popular media produces binary representations of East Asian women. This forces them to be either soft and docile, or hard and aggressive, without space for anything complex or human in the middle ground. The representation of East Asian women in popular media is harmful through its exaggerated portrayal of the China Doll and Dragon Lady to further exoticize and dehumanize East Asian women, ultimately ensuring the dominance of the West. (Lee, 2017, 1).

[9] See Finale- *Miss Saigon* (2014) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AEc8ACrcW1U at 2 minutes 30 seconds strings and clarinet can be heard in a soft rising and falling scale which seems to foreshadow the tragedy. By 2 minutes 50 symbols crash and strings become louder, drums join to add to the tension. Kim's final line 'how in one night have we come so far' is sung as she dies in Chris's arms and the violins begin the soft sad melody from 'Sun and Moon'. Brass, symbols and the large drum end the Finale in a crash.

This creates a grey area of identity as explored by Canwen Xu in her lecture 'I Am Not Your Asian Stereotype' in which she explains how she would disregard and change any part of herself that adhered to a racial stereotype in order to be accepted. Xu states:

> Society tells us that our foreignness is the only identifying characteristic of us, they strip away our identities one by one so that we are until we are foreign but not quite foreign, American but not quite American, individual but only when there are no other people from our native country around (Xu, 2016).

Both Lee and Xu describe this black and white identity that EA women are meant to have and if they don't, their identity is grey and lost on society because it doesn't match up to the perpetuated myths that have created these expectations.

A harmful stereotype perceived as a positive attribute is what I term utopic stereotype. The role whilst also being derogatory towards Asian communities provides the West with an ideal/dream therefore the negative stereotypes which surround Kim like her co-dependency and unbalanced emotional state, spirituality (which appears to be a belief system created by the writers) along with the fact that the character has never been played by a Vietnamese woman, could suggest that all East Asian women are like Kim and Kim is one of many orientalist female representations. As many of the representations of EA women in film, TV and theatre are like this perpetuating these stereotypes may lead Westerners to never question the validity. For example:

> Western representations of Asian femininity have often been misrepresented as inferior and cloaked in the mystery of sexual exoticism. The 'Madama Butterfly' myth and the misrepresented gender identity of Asian and Asian American women are reinforced and perpetuated in and by creative art forms such as literature, film, television and theatre (Kim, 2010, 121).

In the children's film *Mulan* the depictions of traditional Japanese Geisha are used to show Mulan as the sexualised, perfect Chinese woman, *Madama Butterfly* the opera that inspired *Miss Saigon* provides a similar view of Asian women as weak (like butterflies) and as innocent as them also, butterflies kept as boxed, treasured items are described in the Opera also. In TV

shows the stereotype is perpetuated all the more. The Korean character Sun in the American TV series *LOST* is abused by her husband and again is the perfect example of a house wife along with being emotionally and physically weak, motherly and subservient to all. Teeman's article 'Sexism, Race and the Mess of Miss Saigon on Broadway' reads:

> It is the relentless victimhood of Kim in *Miss Saigon* that is disturbing. Her story doesn't have an arc. Throughout we watch her entire lack of agency, the total persecution and exploitation visited upon her and abject circumstances, culminating in her suicide—and with no respite from that. Happiness is never a possibility for her. Any kind of empowerment is never a possibility for her. She is trodden on over and over again. Kim's solo songs, 'I'd Give My Life To You,' 'Sun and Moon,' (a reprise in act two), and 'Little God of My Heart' are ones of sacrifice and the impossibility of dreams or love being fulfilled. She is often lying down, looking up, and cowering (Teeman, 2017, 3).

Below is a statement from the 'Don't buy *Miss Saigon'* website:

> First of all, the musical romanticizes and distorts the nature of prostitution. It would have us believe that in one night a seventeen-year-old Vietnamese prostitute falls in love with a white American adult G.I. It then uses this pairing to create a so-called tragic love story. That such a premise is ludicrous and, at best highly improbable, does not bother the creators of this musical nor the applauding audiences. Nor does it seem to trouble them that the white American G.I. is committing an act of statutory rape (Mura, 2013).

Just because musicals ask their audiences to suspend their reality in order to enjoy their far-fetched nature does not excuse the socially unjust depictions in them. Kim being under 18 causes the depiction of her as a prostitute to be a moral and legal issue and her relationship with Chris to be an abusive one. Her age may be overlooked due to her race due to the China Doll stereotype. Lee discusses how 'East Asian women are unable to grow out of the 'cute, girly' trope, locking the diverse communities of people into infantile images, further widening the autonomy and power differences between the East and West' (Lee, 2018, 3). This stereotype portrays EA women as young 'innocent and obedient and eager to pamper any man' (Lee, 2018, 2). Perhaps this is why when audiences are faced with an EA teen her identity is taken over by the stereotype of the China Doll so the reality of her as a child or teen is overlooked. Simply put, if Kim appears to fit into the stereotype in other ways (being a prostitute who is

kind and serves the men around her) details about her like her age, are not of concern as she is only ever viewed through these very black and white attributes. Lee states that 'In the media, White male characters exploit the diminutive obedience and servile desire of the China Doll archetypal character repetitively, normalizing the use of Asian women for selfish gain' (Lee, 2018, 2). If this is the case it is most likely the reason why Kim being under eighteen is overlooked by the creators and viewed as something which merely makes her more innocent and therefore appealing perhaps. The depiction of gender is a large issue for those who wish *Miss Saigon* to end. The show is accused of portraying 'Asian and Asian American women as sexual objects in a way that affects directly how they are treated daily in American society' (Mura, 2013). This shows that the China Doll stereotype is present in the show and that it is having social impact. The musical has been dissected in Tzu-I Chung's journal article 'The Transnational Vision of Miss Saigon: Performing the Orient in a Globalized World'.

> Asian female others' hypersexuality and foreignness establishes the white wife [Ellen] as the female norm and the "pillar of motherhood, family, and nation". Asian and Asian American female bodies in this narrative thereby serve as the constituent element and radical other that is fundamental to the formation of US Americanness. (Chung, 2011)

The representations of Asian women in the show are problematic due to the above reasons but also how these representations are compared with the sexist depictions of white American women even if these are seemingly positive depictions.

The reason for the controversy however was not in the show's decision to portray negative or evil characters but in their inability to show balance and equality. The reason that this needs analysing when discussing utopia in performance is that many spectators pay for a ticket in order to find escapism and entertainment, as the musical provides a space for us to escape reality; taken to a dream world where the colours are bright and evoke passion and the splendour of music is accessible. Musicals rely on 'a transcendental space of performative bliss

to (dis)solve their characters' problems. There's nothing, we learn time and again, that cannot be put right by transcending reality into performance' (Heldt, G. 2013, 138). We are therefore forming positive connotations towards negative perpetuations. The utopian performatives happen, we transcend into social dreaming and feel the bliss of escapism. However, particularly in the case of *Miss Saigon,* the audience's status quo is potentially reinforced and their perceptions of East Asians and other cultures could then remain the same or perhaps even influence how they treat social groups outside the theatre. It may seem that the concept of an individual experiencing utopia at the theatre is not about them witnessing the ideal for the benefit of all, but much more about what is most familiar for them in the context of their current reality.

'The Broadway audience' says Ehrehardt, 'is 77.3% Caucasian. The % of the general population of the US is about 62%. So again, the Broadway Audience is quite disproportionately Caucasian. The mainly white audience that pay for tickets to *Miss Saigon* not only enjoy it because it is set in a musical reality where everything is beautiful and larger than life but they also experience an ego-boost that their country is superior not only economically but superior in raising young people and giving relationships a chance at stability. Below is a statement from the protesters at *Don't Buy Miss Saigon* which discusses what Kim's suicide represents to those 'moved' by the show:

> She's Vietnamese. Yes, it's a tragic loss, but isn't it noble of Kim to recognize how superior life in America is to life in Vietnam, how America is a place without racism in comparison to the racist Vietnam, how important a white American father is in comparison to a Vietnamese mother? (Mura, 2013).

The utopia for the spectators in this scene is in knowing that 'the land of the free' has her arms open awaiting a loving family (Chris, his wife and his illegitimate son). America is the safe-haven utopia (discussed in chapter one) that lures Kim and her other friends toward it similarly to how Bali Ha'i is used within *South Pacific*. Kim's friends in the *Dreamland* brothel can be

heard saying to the American soldiers, 'take me to America!' before Kim and Gigi sing about America as a safe and rewarding place to be in 'Movie in My Mind'. In the 2014 production of the show, as discussed earlier, the cyclorama depicts a deep orange/red sunset perhaps symbolising the hope of a better future in America is used for the 'I'd Give My life For You' number also as The Engineer, Kim and Tam make their way to Bangkok in the hope of a better life. In the final scene as Chris holds Kim's lifeless body in the dimly lit bedroom, Ellen comforts Tam facing the cyclorama, looking to their future[10]. The utopic nature of this scene moves spectators to tears as they witness the sacrifice of a mother and the promise of a better world away from Vietnam. The show glamorises and romanticises the actions of an abused individual. In order for the show to be a success in regards to utopic vision, Kim has to be a heroine and show strength even if she has been portrayed in a weak light the entire musical. Kim is a depiction of the utopic woman. As a character she provides the audience with the familiar view of wife, mother and lover whilst also embodying the mystery of another culture. Kim is then an example of the Model Minority myth and the China Doll, two stereotypes placed on East Asians I have previously discussed. However these overly idealised notions of East Asians are in fact the West's dream-like view of Vietnam and Vietnamese people and this perpetuates a narrow lens for EA identities as explored by Lee and Xu. This dream-like view causes the West to stereotype the East and fragment the identities of East Asian people. It places the East in a box or familiar frame (Barthes, 1957) which is based on the myths which surround the Orient (Said, 1978).

These myths can also be referred to as utopic visions as they are the dream-like way in which one culture views another. When a stereotype is based on cultural myth that is deemed positive

[10] This scene can be viewed on the DVD version of the show. The same cyclorama depicting the sunset orange can be seen here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B6PoGJ-YKa0
A similar staging of this scene can be seen here in the 2000 Manila production of the show https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cwB3Zxh2gSE

I view these as drawing on utopianism or being one culture's utopic vision of another. In Xu's talk she explains that her being clever at maths was put down, by her peers, as being because she is Asian and not because she worked hard at maths. These stereotypes where the East Asian person in question is assumed to have positive qualities due to their race simplifies and flattens their identities. These stereotypes are easily perpetuated in the musical setting and adopted for the plots and characters of the show as I have mentioned above. The dynamic of *Miss Saigon* provides the audience's social dreaming with old ideologies that will continue to hold positive social change back and perhaps even increase the chance of abuse towards Asian women in particular. Asian student Ginny Hwang discusses in her talk *How to Break the Social Stigma of Asian Women* that old stereotypes of Asian women have caused '61% of Asian women in the US to be sexually or physically abused by their partners.' (Hwang, 2016) That's 30% more than the lowest demographic on the graph shown in the talk.[11] These statistics were taken from Donna Lee's article 'Intimate Partner Violence Against Asian American Women: Moving from Theory to Strategy' includes the statistics. (Lee, 2015)

> If this is meant to be an elaborate feminist fable, a searing indictment of racism and exploitation, it was lost in the scenes of men fucking and buying women in the Saigon bar scenes. It is lost even in the crude drawing of Kim as a 'good' prostitute (like Julia Roberts' character in *Pretty Woman*) compared to the more predatorily sexy prostitutes around her (Teeman, 2017).

This perpetuation of the good/bad prostitute, the innocent virgin, the idea that a woman's worth is a direct correlation to her virginity is present in the musical. Kimberlé Crenshaw explains intersectionality as 'the various ways in which race and gender interact to shape the multiple dimensions of people's experiences' (Crenshaw, 2013). In many ways Kim is the ideal way of depicting an East Asian woman from the perspective of the West as she is the 'china doll'

[11] Accessed here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XCnbKMB2Iq8

representation the West are used to seeing. Hannah Kim states in the journal article *The Madama Butterfly Controversy:*

> Female Asian performers have been in existence since the earliest arrivals of immigrants. However, the majority of substantial roles were denied to them and they were forced to live with the stereotypes that were created by male Caucasians and perpetuated by female Caucasian performers in yellowface. Asian women were seen two-dimensionally: either as a submissive 'lotus blossoms' or fearsome 'dragon ladies.'' (Kim, 2010, 122)

Kim also gives insight into how EA males are represented:

> Chinese men were viewed as exotic, effeminate and of inferior race. Elaborate 'scientific' explanations of non-white 'inferiority' and the belief that minorities should be kept in their place were widely accepted in the late nineteenth century, providing ideological justification for treating not only Asians but other people of color in a discriminatory and exploitative manner (Kim, 2010, 122).

Saigon's Kim as a woman falls under various sexist stereotypes, as an EA woman she faces intersectional discrimination. Here are some of the juxtapositions which explain the intersectionality within Kim's character: Kim is a prostitute, but as she is EA she becomes an innocent prostitute. Kim has spiritual beliefs, but as she is EA these beliefs become undermined by the audience and are deemed silly, G.I Chris even makes a point in the show to laugh at her belief in the gods, and disregard her wedding ceremony as pretend. Kim is loving, but as she is an EA woman her loving nature is depicted as subservient, over emotional and in the end, suicidal. Kim's attributes have been distorted by the stereotyping of her race and gender.

The implications of this depiction of Kim are that they not only stereotype a culture and its women but that they perhaps ask an audience to become moved by a love story which is socially flawed/outdated. As the audience are inspired by the action on stage, the love story and the music, their social dreaming is being triggered by the dystopic content of the megamusical.

Representations of EA women have been noted as ‘the oppressed ones’ while also ‘regarded as being submissive, voiceless, seductive and promiscuous’ (Shabanirad, 2015, 22). The depiction of Kim within *Miss Saigon*, the glamorisation of war, the implied notion that Vietnam is mystical and Kim angelic could solidify culturally inherited stereotypes. The show’s musical numbers show even more of its utopic nature as I will discuss below.

The Sound of *Saigon*

I will now discuss the show’s numbers that highlight utopianism clearly. It is not the intention of this chapter to analyse every song in the musical however, I do wish to highlight the musical’s numbers which present utopic visions and ideals and explore the faith the characters seem to have when believing in their own utopic dream. One concept comes to mind when listening to the show’s songs, ‘The American Dream’. The first solo number of the show ‘Movie in My Mind’ details the utopic ideal of living in the United States but it not only focuses on the material values of living in a rich country, also the safety and love of a family and free country. Below is an extract from the song that highlights the unattainability of a life that is only a dream, or movie for many of the women working in the Saigon brothels.

Gigi: He takes me to New York
He gives me dollar bills
Our children laugh all day
And eat too much ice cream
And life is like a dream
Dream
The dream I long to find
The movie in my mind
Kim: I will not cry, I will not think
I'll do my dance, I'll make them drink
When I make love it won't be me
And if they hurt me I'll just close my eyes, and see
The movie in my mind. (Boublil, 1989).

This song is sung in the Dreamland Club, the brothel Kim is to work in now. The club is a dream land for the Americans who seek a night of pleasure from the alcohol and women and

the club is also the place where the women dream of their perfect world outside its walls. Stereotypically, their dreams happens to rely on western men saving them. Kim sings of picturing her dream to get through the emotional pain of prostitution and living in poverty. If we compare this to the number 'The American Dream' at the end of act two we can see the show's evolution in terms of what defines the American dream or utopia.

The American Dream
ENGINEER
I'm fed up with small-time hustles
I'm too good to waste my talent for greed
I need room to flex my muscles
in an ocean where the big sharks feed
make me Yankee, they're my fam'ly
they're selling what people need

what's that I smell in the air
the American dream
sweet as a new millionaire
the American dream
pre-packed, ready-to-wear
the American dream
fat, like a chocolate eclair
as you suck out the cream (Boublil, 1989).

In this number the American dream is interpreted through The Engineer's accumulation of material wealth. The opening number 'Movie in My Mind' refers to the American dream being the freedom to a family of one's own and the love of a partner. The safety of the dream in their heads coming to life. The American dream is more to do with freedom and love than the fast paced material lifestyle it becomes by the end of act two for The Engineer at least. These ideals are separate utopias but still classed as the American Dream, perhaps it would be more suited to refer to them as multiple American dreams rather than it as a singular experience. Both numbers also reinforce the stereotypes of East Asian women as innocent and naive and Vietnamese men as controlling, perverse and greedy. With this in mind it begs the question, what does the character's idea of utopia say about them as people in the story? The Engineer's

idea of utopia is (as earlier stated) a material one. He wishes to be rich and live the easy life in America, which he describes as being the 'dream'.

'The Movie in My Mind' number describes the 'dream' to be a kind place where the women can have traditional American families with husbands who will fight for them, keep them safe and where their worries will be small i.e. their children eating too much ice cream. The instrumentation within Kim's section of 'Movie in my Mind' is softer sounding.[12] At 2:15 Kim begins to sing, the strings are plucked and the light flute which normally accompanies her is heard, the piano has disappeared for a more stripped back section for the song as Kim represents innocence the score complements this and seems to represent Eastern culture with the lack of piano which accompanied Gigi in the first half of the song; the emphasis in the second half is placed on plucked strings and wood-wind. In the American dream number The Engineer believes he will leave and this is shown in the instrumentation as there are many American sounding elements to the music, the brass (trombones and trumpets) which accompanied Chris in his number *Why God Why* in act one, within this number the brass accompanies The Engineer, as if he has somehow become an American character due to his dream. Swung rhythms are present in this number and elements of the traditional Broadway musical like chorus dancers in sparkly costumes are present to emphasise The Engineer's new American life, which of course is only a dream.

Throughout the musical *Miss Saigon* the idea of a 'dream' is seen in the objectives of all the characters. For example, Kim often refers to her destiny as being in the gods' hands. She sings in 'I'd give my life for you': 'Gods of the sun bring him to me' referring to Chris as to her he represents the sun. Seeing the characters' dream, helps the audience relate to them all the more as we can all resonate with having dreams and goals. The dreams depicted may remind us of our own or trigger the imagination to dream of what we desire. As stated in chapter one, dreams

[12]Accessed here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_AEVVFGB08E

are a way utopianism presents itself in the musical, they are a utopian performative and trigger our social dreaming. We draw patterns and connections from what we see on stage and apply it to our own lives.

Lyrically the love song ‘Sun and Moon’ explores the similarities and differences of Kim and Chris as people; like the sun and the moon they are different and separate but seemingly need one another, or at least Kim needs the sun to give her light, life. Kim begins the song, which shows the audience that she is leading this metaphor for them both. Kim is yet again described as mysterious and is personified as the moon which as an image is loaded with myth and magic. The depiction of Kim as the moon adds all the more to the Western depiction of EA women and her as nurturing and ethereal. The sun similarly is often associated with gods and worship as well as being ‘life giving’ itself. It is fitting to her stereotypical China Doll portrayal that Kim would put Chris on this pedestal, this song early on within the musical shows the audience that the couple’s view of one another may not be as compatible as initially presented and could become damaging for Kim. Obviously the moon relies on the sun to give it light therefore the audience are told from the beginning that Kim will put all her hopes on to Chris and look to him for guidance yet soon be left in the dark without him. This number is the heavenly, utopic vision of a couple in love, they stare longingly into one another’s eyes as they sing it holding on to one another. The instrumentation of the song starts soft with light strings, taps of the kettledrum and the song crescendos in the middle to the two singing together accompanied by the brass and strings before its final diminuendo to the light flute and Kim repeats the opening accompanied by the string bass, pizzicato violins and chimes to finish which adds a dream-like ending to the number. The fact that the song doesn’t end as strongly as it peaks perhaps foreshadows the doomed nature of their love, no matter how their personified selves complement one another.

Kim: You are sunlight and I moon
Joined by the gods of fortune
Midnight and high noon
sharing the sky
we have been blessed, you and I

Chris: You are here like a mystery
I'm from a world that's so different
from all that you are
how in the light of one night
did we come so far?

Outside day starts to dawn

Chris: Your moon still floats on high

Kim: The birds awake

Chris: The stars shine too

Kim: My hands still shake

Chris: I reach for you

Both: And we meet in the sky!

Both: Made of sunlight,
Moonlight. (Boublil, 1989)

I have analysed the dynamic and anticipated dynamic of the characters within this song and the utopia presented on stage through the song's lyrics. In this next song the faith and the belief in a utopia despite the dystopic nature of events is explored as Kim believes Chris will return:

Kim: I still
I still believe
You will return
I know you will
My heart
Against all odds
Holds still
Yes, still
I still believe
I know as long as I can keep believing
I'll live
I'll live
Love cannot die
You will return...you will return
And I alone know why (Boublil, 1989).

I have included the lyrics from Boublil and Schönberg's song 'I Still Believe' so as to highlight the utopian imagery in it. The lyrics of the song show that Kim is strong willed and a woman of faith, which is a point often raised within the musical, she wishes to have a religious wedding and often speaks of heaven, omens, 'the gods of fortune' and the power of the moon. She feels betrayed by Chris but still, and this being the key word, 'still' believes despite being abandoned, that he will return. Kim states that 'love cannot die' and is certain in all of her language that she 'knows' why he will return, but knowing and believing are somewhat different from one another and the hope seems lost at this point in the show especially when we see Ellen and Chris in their bed. The instrumentation of the song has a lot to offer the audience. During the opening of this song Kim is accompanied by soft strokes of the violin, piccolo flutes and chimes which sound faux oriental[13]. Childlike and innocent Kim's accompaniment highlights her fragility and almost makes us pity her 'ignorance is bliss' mentality as she refuses to lose faith in Chris. She is determined to hold onto her dream, as if 'still' believing even when it seems hopeless, fuels the utopic vision to come true, as she wills it. Here in the music we hear juxtaposing parts from Ellen (Chris's new wife) and Kim. Ellen 'still believes' that 'nothing' will keep her and Chris 'apart.' The dreaming imagery continues in this song as earlier explored, as Ellen sings: 'Chris what's haunting you?' Ellen likens Chris's love for Kim as a haunting dream that she wishes would pass. The pipes and soft chimes that accompanied Kim in the beginning of the number are replaced with piano, cello and a strong string bass. The bass strings, becoming louder and more significant in Ellen's half of the song show her strength and stability as the American woman Chris is now married to. The bass portrays Ellen in a position of power over Kim as she is seen laid in bed next to Chris which in the staging of the musical is placed higher than Kim on the stairs and scaffolding

[13] See: *I still Believe* (1989) recording at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5cXfmsTz_4c

which also adds to the positon of power and wealth the pair (Chris and Ellen) are in. For Ellen, she recognises, even though close to Chris physically that his mind on Vietnam and suspects from his talking in his sleep that he misses another woman (Kim). Towards the last third of the number the women sing together, Kim is an octave higher than Ellen and this call and response between the two voices make their pleas, all the more desperate.

Close harmonies like Ellen's and Kim's are pleasing to the brain and show the character's share something, in this case the characters have a shared struggle in their love triangle. Lisa Grossman in her article 'Why Harmony Pleases the Brain' states:

> The key to pleasant music may be that it pleases our neurons. A new model suggests that harmonious musical intervals trigger a rhythmically consistent firing pattern in certain auditory neurons, and that sweet sounds carry more information than harsh ones. Since the time of the ancient Greeks, we have known that two tones whose frequencies were related by a simple ratio like 2:1 (an octave) or 3:2 (a perfect fifth) produce the most pleasing, or consonant, musical intervals (Grossman, 2011).

Both Kim and Chris's dreams are relatable to the audience, to people. This section also highlights Kim as the utopic woman yet sadly another representation of the China Doll myth. These songs trigger utopic thoughts in the minds of the audience and watching the 'utopian performatives' (Dolan, 2006) in the form of 'dream songs' from the characters on stage fuels the social dreaming of the audience all the more. This chapter shows how the megamusical perfectly executes scenes that are meant to captivate and entertain but run the risk of perpetuating harmful myths. A utopia perhaps turned dystopic.

Conclusion

In this case study I have read the controversies which surround *Miss Saigon* through the lens of utopianism and provided insight into how the show is affecting issues of social justice. The

stereotypical view of East Asian people depicted in the show, the casting decisions regarding the lack of Vietnamese actors, the choice of casting Jonathan Pryce for the role of a Eurasian character, the yellow-facing of this actor and the way in which EA women are represented have been explored as products of utopianism and a utopian mentality. Sargent expresses in his study *Women and Utopia* that: 'we are given the (usually male) authors' views of the best or significantly better society, their views of what roles and status women should have in a good society, hence we are often given very direct descriptions of the best role and status for women' (Sargent, 1973, 302). I understand that the utopian depiction of women has fed into the stereotyping of them that appears on stage. Out of Edward Said's understanding of how the West conceptualises 'the Orient' as one flat culture of lower status I see a pattern emerging in the way the characters and culture were being represented within the show. Idealising and dreaming are two parts of utopianism that I explore in conjunction with the Western view of the East and how the characters, songs and plot are being represented to the Western audience. Overly idealised notions of the East are commonplace and this Western perspective is evident in the musical. Analysing songs in the musical first I expanded on the controversy surrounding the wedding song, *Dju Vui Vai* which was not written in Vietnamese as the show leads its audience to believe. *Bui Doi* is a song which does use Vietnamese language to describe the children (the dust of life children) who are born out of the war with American fathers and Vietnamese mothers. This song is a dream song which asks the audience not to forget these children and the hardship of Vietnamese families at this time yet the representation of these people and their culture is not true to them so this song comes as a bit of a contradiction. Issues of consent when using documentary footage arise and the footage echoes White Saviour Complex as it perpetuates the idea that if you are not white you must need white influence or guidance. White-washing and intersectionality are discussed as a way of understanding the depiction of Tam and Kim within the musical. Kim as discussed is depicted as fragile,

(similarly to *Madama Butterfly*) innocent, motherly yet she is also a prostitute and seventeen years old. Controversy rose from this depiction and many believe that Kim groups all East Asian women in one box as she is similar to other stereotypical depictions in the media and on stage. To the West Kim is ideal as she is the familiar depiction of EA women that, like Westacott and Huynh agree, is perpetuated by all media and therefore accepted as legitimate by society. The utopianism of the West, our nostalgia, our ideals and dreams play a large part in what we define and include as utopias in a megamusical. I explore the music of the show and look particularly at 'Sun and Moon' and 'I still Believe' as two numbers I think best explore the utopian metaphor and the faith and belief associated with dreaming. In the next chapter I will be discussing how *Hamilton* is a musical that creates various heterotopic spaces.[14] These heterotopias will be explored as reasons the musical is more likely to affect social change.

In the next section I argue that *Hamilton* has a great capability of affecting the audience with its views more so than other musicals as it makes the audience feel part of the great social change by showing how it might work. The show provides the kind of casting, music and stories it wishes to see on Broadway by setting an example. The show has been a large part of social media discussion and is very much part of pop culture today. It has been a topic of serious moral and political debate for many and a chance for many to celebrate diversity on the Broadway stage. This retelling of American history juxtaposed with the contemporary score makes the show a perfect example of a heterotopia. History is a key point in Foucault's definitions of heterotopias as he suggests that we use history to define our present, his example being a museum or art gallery depicting the past to guide and inspire us now.

[14] Defined in brief within the introduction and in full within the next chapter.

CHAPTER THREE: *Hamilton* as a Heterotopia

Defining Heterotopia

In this chapter I shift my focus from utopia to heterotopia. Reading the megamusical through the lens of heterotopia allows us to understand its potential for social change as 'heterotopia requires an understanding of utopia, the more commonly described term.' (Tompkins, 2014, 17). To bridge our understanding of the megamusical as utopic to heterotopic, I will provide Michel Foucault's full definition and exploration of heterotopias, the actualised utopic spaces within society. I will be referring to *Hamilton* throughout this chapter as a megamusical despite it not being part of the main surge of megamusicals in the 1970s and 80s. Jessica Sternfeld defines a megamusical to be 'large in several aspects, they are epic sweeping tales of war, romance, religion and are often set in the past' (Sternfeld, 2006, 2). She goes on to say that 'audiences tend to relate to the broad universal issues' presented in megamusicals (Sternfeld, 2006, 2). Due to these specifications I would argue that *Hamilton* is an example of a contemporary megamusical. Looking at the megamusical through the heterotopian lens undermines the idea that the form is mere 'frivolous entertainment' or a 'pleasure machine' (Rebellato, 2011) due to its potential for social change. The utopian performatives (Dolan, 2005) set up in heterotopic spaces in *Hamilton* may actually 'shape history' as Dolan suggests utopian performatives can. The show's use of a double revolving stage allows it to provide a scene within a scene enabling the audience some symbolic layering through the clever physical design of the turntables. This can be seen as a scenographic portrayal of the heterotopic structure of the show. Before I delve into the show and its heterotopic qualities I will first define heterotopia itself.

On an etymological level heterotopia means 'other place': *hetero* meaning *different* or *other* and *topia* meaning *place*. In medicine heterotopia is when tissue belonging to another

physiological site coexists with tissue from the original site. For example, grey matter heterotopia is when parts of brain tissue exist in the new location of the tissue they attach themselves to. Heterotopias in the philosophical sense are alternative societies or spaces, similarly to the brain tissue existing inside a new space, surviving on the outside mass. These alternative spaces are inspired by the surroundings they are situated. I defined utopia in chapter one as the 'not' or 'no place.' Heterotopia as the different/other place means it is a *unique* physical space that works within the usual surrounding to create a new one. As Foucault understands it, heterotopia is actualised utopia. Foucault describes the reflection within a mirror as the placeless place, this place is created by the viewer and the world behind them. This reflection may or may not be just what the viewer would like to see, but nevertheless the new realm is created in the mirror and a heterotopia is formed. Tompkins explains heterotopias on stage as:

> A zone or realm that can be located physically in performance and that suggests [for the audience] an alternative to the status quo. This experimental zone provides a means to test out alternatives that might prompt audiences to think (and act) differently about matters outside the context of the performance'. (Tompkins, 2014, 32).

I view *Hamilton* as the experimental zone discussed above by Joanne Tompkins in her book *Theatre's Heterotopias*: *Performance and the Cultural Politics of Space*. Tompkins also states that heterotopias on stage:

> may appear as tangible, definable spaces […] whereas at other times they may generate more of the feeling of a space or 'world' picture that is created by an entire production, in conjuction with the 'world' beyond performance. (Tompkins, 2014, 28).

Hamilton provides these physical spaces like the set and costume and juxtaposes them with more *feeling* based heterotopias we will discuss, an example would be how America is viewed in the show as being more than just a geographical point and how *time* is used as a spatial function to allow the characters to be omnipresent. *Hamilton* as a heterotopia becomes clearer as I unravel Foucault's definitions and apply them to the musical.

Foucault's Heterotopias in Real Spaces

> Utopias are sites with no real place. They are sites that have a general relation of direct or inverted analogy with the real space of society. They present society itself in a perfected form, or else society turned upside down, but in any case these utopias are fundamentally unreal spaces (Foucault, 1984, 1).

As Foucault explains, utopias tend to describe places that are fantasies; *hoped* to be, rather than existing in actuality, as stated in Chapter 1 when discussing Dolan's view of utopias, they are 'the realm of the not yet set' (Dolan, 2005, 7): the imagination and the social dreaming rather than social reality. What is the outcome, when a culture's utopic views create safe-havens, utopian spaces which sit within reality like microcosms of what we hope the world would be? I will be using Foucault's analogy of the mirror to give a foundation to how I explore *Hamilton,* throughout the chapter. I view how the audience act/change after seeing the show as the mirror reflecting the mirror, causing a heterotopia. Foucault's understanding of the mirror may help conceptualise this:

> The mirror is, after all, a utopia, since it is a placeless place. In the mirror, I see myself there where I am not, in an unreal, virtual space that opens up behind the surface; I am over there, there where I am not, a sort of shadow that gives my own visibility to myself, such is the utopia of the mirror. But it is also a heterotopia in so far as the mirror does exist in reality, where it exerts a sort of counteraction on the position that I occupy (Foucault, 1984, 4).

I will apply Foucault's mirror analogy to *Hamilton* and inform my interpretation of the heterotopias in the show. The 'shadow which gives my own visibility to myself' (Foucault, 1984, 4) can be applied to how audience members empathise with characters as explored in chapter one when discussing mirror neurons (Taylor, 2014). The 'shadow' of the past is

presented in *Hamilton* in order to shine a light on the present but I will discuss this in more detail further in this chapter.

Heterotopias, as understood by Foucault, are utopias that live in our everyday realities, which we either need special permission to access, or are able to access due to extreme/specific circumstances like death, crime or a rite of passage. He split his understanding of heterotopias into six principles which I will discuss below.

Foucault's 1st principle: Examples of 'heterotopias of deviation' (Foucault, 1984, 4) within society include: rehabilitation centres, prisons, psychiatric wards and retirement homes. 'Heterotopias of deviation. [T]hose in which individuals whose behaviour is deviant in relation to the required mean or norm are placed' (Foucault, 1984, 5).

Foucault discusses in the first principle that heterotopias are places made in society to take in individuals who require new rules to live by in order to adhere to society outside the bubble in which they are placed. The centre of reform, for example, means to give a better insight to an individual into the world outside it by creating a new space, similar to the mirror.

2nd principle: Foucault explores cemeteries as heterotopias and their changing functions with society's evolution. He explains how cemeteries are a sign of culture, religion and society all in one, the largest tombs back in the 18th century hoped to be seen from heaven and enjoyed by the angels so that the bodies inside would be favoured upon and taken to heaven sooner. The meaning of these tombs became associated with class divide and as an expression of respect for the grieving. The cemetery is also described as being a part of everyone in the surrounding town or city, everyone's relatives laying to rest there.

> The second principle of this description of heterotopias is that a society, as its history unfolds, can make an existing heterotopia function in a very different fashion; for each heterotopia has a precise and determined function within a society and the same

> heterotopia can, according to the synchrony of the culture in which it occurs, have one function or another (Foucault, 1984).

3rd principle: The third principle regards the theatre and how it is a 'rectangle in which many realities happen inside one' (Foucault, 1984, 6). To produce several places in one real place is the theatre's heterotopic ability. Foucault explores how the first oriental gardens of the East were created to replicate the four corners of the earth that could be cherished as we should cherish the world and watch it grow. The proscenium arch structural aesthetic of the garden evolved into rugs and carpets being brought into the home to replicate grass and nature inside, again this microcosm of the world within a world, bringing the outside in, evolved into traditional theatre and soon cinema as we view these worlds from a seat which looks through a window. Again I can infer from Foucault's work that society changes the traditions of culture thus changing the image inside their utopic vision:

> The heterotopia is capable of juxtaposing in a single real place several spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible. Thus it is that the theatre brings onto the rectangle of the stage, one after the other, a whole series of places that are foreign to one another; thus it is that the cinema is a very odd rectangular room, at the end of which, on a two-dimensional screen, one sees the projection of a three-dimensional space, but perhaps the oldest example of these heterotopias that take the form of contradictory sites is the garden (Foucault, 1984, 6).

4th Principle: Foucault explores society's obsession with slices in time, remembering the past in the form of museums, libraries, and galleries and in a contained accumulation of time we can live in the utopia that is nostalgia. Fairgrounds, circuses, and holiday parks allow us to escape reality and embrace the most utopic parts of society that are not allowed into our everyday unless they create their own heterotopic bubble we can pay to be a part of and enjoy:

> Heterotopias are most often linked to slices in time—which is to say that they open onto what might be termed, for the sake of symmetry, heterochronies. The heterotopia begins to function at full capacity when men arrive at a sort of absolute break with their traditional time. This situation shows us that the cemetery is indeed a highly heterotopic place since, for the individual, the cemetery begins with this strange heterochrony, the

> loss of life, and with this quasi-eternity in which her permanent lot is dissolution and disappearance (Foucault, 1984, 6).

5th Principle:

> The heterotopic site is not freely accessible like a public place. Either the entry is compulsory, as in the case of entering a barracks or a prison, or else the individual has to submit to rites and purifications. To get in one must have a certain permission and make certain gestures. Moreover, there are even heterotopias that are entirely consecrated to these activities of purification—purification that is partly religious and partly hygienic, such as the hammin of the Moslems, or else purification that appears to be purely hygienic, as in Scandinavian saunas. (Foucault, 1984, 7).

This fifth principle can be applied to watching megamusicals and *Hamilton* as audience members need a ticket to reserve a seat and these tickets can be high in price signifying to the buyer that this is a unique and sought after experience.

6th Principle:

> The last trait of heterotopias is that they have a function in relation to all the space that remains. This function unfolds between two extreme poles. **Either their role is to create a space of illusion that exposes every real space,** all the sites inside of which human life is partitioned, as still more illusory (perhaps that is the role that was played by those famous brothels of which we are now deprived). Or else, on the contrary, their role is to create a space that is other, another real space, as perfect, as meticulous, as well arranged as ours is messy, ill constructed, and jumbled. This latter type would be the heterotopia, not of illusion, but of compensation (Foucault, 1984, 8; my emphasis).

As I will discuss, *Hamilton* 'creates a space of illusion that exposes every real space' (Foucault, 1984, 8) by creating a new place to depict this time in history which never before existed in this way and bringing to light the social inequality of race, gender and class.

Hamilton for Social Change

> Hamilton might begin in 1776, but Thomas Kail (the show's director) said he and Miranda always intended for the show to feel relevant, holding up a mirror to society. (Peterson, 2017).

Holding up a mirror to society in the context of *Hamilton* causes the audience to question social justice and perhaps even how they can help to change it. The show, heterotopically, reflects modern society back to us through the lens of the past. Articles have discussed if the show does in fact 'change the world' (Soloski, 2016). In his article 'Sixteen Ways' *The Guardian*, Soloski observes:

***Hamilton* has increased genuine diversity on Broadway:**

> This year, 14 of the available 40 nominations for Broadway performance went to actors of colour, a welcome change from #OscarsSoWhite. Of those 14 spots, 7 went to *Hamilton* actors. Most musicals feature either a majority white cast or one that revolves around a single, particular group. But *Hamilton* fills its stage with a panoply of races and ethnicities, many of whom have not been afforded the same opportunities as their non-white counterparts. Though the show recently ran into mild controversy for a casting notice that encouraged actors of colour, anyone who has seen the musical or heard the soundtrack knows that this emphasis on diversity has created a uniquely galvanic cast (Soloski, 2016).

This statement supports that the show is creating real positive social change. The show directly reflects how things can be made better and more diverse within society.

Tompkins explains that 'it is possible that a performance might affect audiences significantly by demonstrating how change for the social good might take place off the stage' (Tompkins, 201, 29). I unpack in this chapter the various moments in the plot, music and changes in the characters of *Hamilton* that demonstrate how social change can be enacted and how this may impact us to change society outside of the theatre. Robert Pfaller in his book *Interpassivity* explains how this social dynamic may mean audiences feel sufficiently empowered by watching and therefore the eagerness to create social change outside of the theatre may not be present. In the chapter 'The Work of Art That explains itself: The Aestetics of Interpassivity' of Pfaller's book he describes an example of interpassivity happening socially:

> A man goes into a bar and orders a beer. Then he pays for the beer and asks someone else to drink it in his place. When the beer has been drunk by the other person, our hero leaves the bar with a certain sense of satisfaction. (Pfaller, 2017, 18)

We can apply this example to how we read theatre for social change. Perhaps the person who bought a ticket to see *Hamilton* thought they were doing enough to support the show and for social change by sending you in their place. Perhaps the audience members of *Hamilton* feel they are doing enough for social change by simply watching. The audience become comfortable with their contribution to civic responsibility through this vicarious experience.

One of the larger and most current issues *Hamilton* portrays is the subject of immigration and it empowers immigrants by reminding them that Hamilton himself was in this position also. Hamilton's success is questioned in the musical's opening line 'how does a bastard, orphan, son of a whore and a Scotsman, dropped in the middle of a forgotten spot in the Caribbean […] grow up to be a hero and a scholar?' (Miranda, 2015). Hamilton in this song is applauded for being a 'self-starter' and working hard despite his uneasy beginnings as an immigrant who moved from the Caribbean to the USA. In 2017 the *Hamilton Mix Tape* created by the show's writer and producer Lin-Manuel Miranda was released after the show. The album accentuates what the show stands for, all the more with the song *Immigrants, We Get the Job Done* (2017). The song begins with the spoken words, 'In a country founded by immigrants, immigrant has become a bad word' (K'naan, 2017). The song's release on YouTube also includes a link to donate to 'Lin-Manuel Miranda's Immigrants' with a chance to win tickets for the show if you do. With this in mind, the show is not simply pro-immigration but actively fighting the social stigma and physical conditions for immigrants through charitable organisations and art in the form of a mix tape with a message.

> We never imagined casting the show in any other way – never for one second,'' director Thomas Kail said. ''We are very conscious of what we are doing here. This is not colour-blind casting, it felt essential (Peterson, Kail, 2017).

Hamilton made its Broadway debut in 2015. It is a story of 'America then, told by America now' (Miranda, 2017). The founding fathers and the life of Alexander Hamilton are explored in this musical through a rap and hip-hop soundtrack and by an ethnically diverse cast. Creator of the show Lin-Manuel Miranda said in a BBC interview, 'I recognised in the story of Hamilton the story of so many of the immigrants who are coming to the United States today, and so I used the music that I love, to tell this story' (Miranda, 2017). The show's casting decisions and choice of a hip-hop and rap score has been much of the reason for the intense reactions in terms of how the show has affected theatre and the world positively. 'Michelle Obama described it as ''the best piece of art in any form'' that she 'had ever seen in [her] life' (Davies, Obama, 2017). The show not only takes a look at historical politics but is supported by the political figures of today. Barak Obama has recently played a role in the remix soundtrack of the show. Miranda released monthly remixes of songs - or 'Hamildrops'. In what has been labelled 'the final Hamildrop', Mr Obama performs George Washington's farewell address from second act number 'One Last Time. (Gerken, 2018).

Miranda makes his political views present on and off the stage, which is another reason I feel the show is heterotopic as the audience are witnessing concepts of the external world played out in the internal bubble of the show. A microcosm is formed, yet this new space created is then meant to inspire the larger world around it. A microcosm mimics the characteristics of the external place or concept whereas a heterotopic space ends up **affecting the outer space** as well as encapsulating many of its characteristics. People of Colour take ownership of this retelling of Hamilton's life and the start of the USA, which is an important step for equality for Broadway and social justice as a whole. The audience of the show are taken into the microcosm and then empowered and inspired to affect social change after noticing the similarities of the

past to the present. Miranda explains his reason for the multiracial cast to the BBC before the show's West End debut, he said:

> [w]e used every tool at our disposal to eliminate the distance between a modern audience and something that happened 200 years ago. Casting [the show] to look the way our country looks eliminates distance […] suddenly the characters are not [necessarily] invincible anymore, they're real people. (Miranda, 2017).

Binelli describes Miranda's wish to represent the real America in order to make the show accessible and engaging to all:

> Lin-Manuel Miranda says that when he was working on the show he conceived it as a concept album, so he was only thinking of voices, not appearances. But once he had spent time thinking about the voices he wanted, it became more logical for him to cast non-white performers. And he acknowledges that part of what he is trying to do is teach American history through the lens of what America looks like today, in a way that is relevant and engaging to all. (Binelli, 2016).

In order for Miranda to make the show engaging, the show had to take inspiration from the past to inform the present. Watching *Hamilton* puts the spectator inside a heterotopic space, this space is within the larger heterotopia of the megamusical forma and the theatre itself. Noticing something external as heterotopic is similar to looking into a mirror in the room. Watching *Hamilton* is like standing in a room filled with mirrors, where the reflections and realms are endless and you are a part of it. To simplify, the show consists of many 'no places' there where they are not. As in Foucault's definition of the mirror as a heterotopia he states that he 'sees himself there, there where [he] is not' (Foucault, 1984, 3). In seeing himself where he isn't he creates an actualised 'no place' or 'placeless place'. The show is full of juxtapositions I have read through the lens of Foucault's mirror in order to explore it as a heterotopia. The first juxtaposition of the show is the show's contemporary hip-hop music in an 18th century setting. The music is there in the 18th century, where it is not, creating a mirror-like effect for the audience. As we know, the show cast People of Colour in lead roles, these characters reflect

the way America looks now; reflects its diversity. Time within the show is not linear, the characters reference the audience's present (the character's future) when speaking directly to the audience.[15] The characters are then in multiple times at once, there where they are not. The rotating ring centre stage is surrounded by a bigger rotating ring. This is a scenographic device which showcases the heterotopic mirroring at work. This allows the actors to be moved around the stage while they stand in place, give the illusion that they're walking a distance as the set changes around them and have scenes within scenes occurring simultaneously. A

As the musical is inspired by Hamilton's life and various events it presents itself as didactic, similar to the space of a museum or art gallery. The self-reflective spatial arrangement of the show works on many levels. The show invites us back in time, highlighting how far and how little we have come socially and politically, we can see proof that this translates to both American and British audiences as the success of the show can be seen for both West End and Broadway theatres. The show's fusion of contemporary musical genres is important to how it communicates its ethos of equality with its audience. In Foucault's terms, the music of this show is the frame or edge which separates the mirror from the external world. *Hamilton* guides us through the space of the past through the music (emotional language) of our present. The music embodies the contemporary but also makes the audience think about their future, this can be heard in the number 'The Schuylar Sisters':

> We hold these truths to be self-evident
> That all men are created equal
> And when I meet Thomas Jefferson,
> I'm 'a compel him to include women in the sequel! (Miranda, 2015).

[15] *The World Was Wide Enough*. Burr refers to how the audience view him now: 'Now I'm the villain of your history, the world was wide enough for both Hamilton and me.' https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BQ1ZwqaXJaQ

A nod to rising feminism which was the future in the context of the show's narrative (the vote for women not coming in until 1920) provides the audience with a sense that we still need to be aware of women's rights, that it is still relevant. There was ardent debate at the time regarding women's rights and women were almost given equal rights in the constitutional amendments, so this simple line holds a lot of historical truth. (Lepore, 2018) The contemporary way the song is sung combined with the hip-hop abbreviations such as 'Im'a' instead of 'I'm going to' represent the people currently making waves for women's rights. In the final number 'Who Lives, Who Dies, Who Tells our Story' Eliza Hamilton sings:

I raise funds in D.C. for the Washington Monument
I speak out against slavery. (Miranda, 2015)

Another social justice issue is referenced here to provide us with the understanding that the women of Hamilton's life are the reason his legacy lived on. The implication again is that within the heterotopic construct these layers cause the audience to think about how the action on stage relates to their life and society.

Hamilton read through the lens of the heterotopia explains how the show has had such a positive effect socially. I have made a list of the ways in which *Hamilton* qualifies as a heterotopia for its audience.

- The show is set in the past

- The historic bubble created then presents current issues, a new view through the lens of an old one
- It uses contemporary music in this depiction of the past, juxtaposing past and present throughout as a tool for social change
- It places People of Colour in roles they would not normally be associated with, combating the current issue that POC are not cast enough on Broadway or Hollywood, historic POC figures are not discussed enough, if at all, in schools
- The show provides a utopic view of America and the dream for it to be independent, whilst also providing a dystopic view of the battle to get it its independence

The show's heterotopic nature is seen in its theatrical elements. For example, the soundtrack is inspired by various genres of music and the costume is also inspired by both 'historic and contemporary fashions' (Kucharski, Tazewell, 2016). Therefore, the theatrical elements provide a world within a world. Foucault explains heterotopia as a world in a world in his 3rd principle when he discusses the garden and the theatre. Foucault states that heterotopias are real spaces that act as other spaces alongside spaces in society. *Hamilton* is a space where social change is explored in the 'space' of the megamusical form in a theatre. The physical real space in which *Hamilton* lives would be The Richard Rogers Theatre on Broadway. The real yet imagined space it exists is in the time the show is set and the time the show is performed. This juxtaposition makes the show heterotopic. I have included in the next section information regarding the show's casting decisions which will help inform the chapter.

Casting a light, exploring casting decisions for Broadway vs *Hamilton*

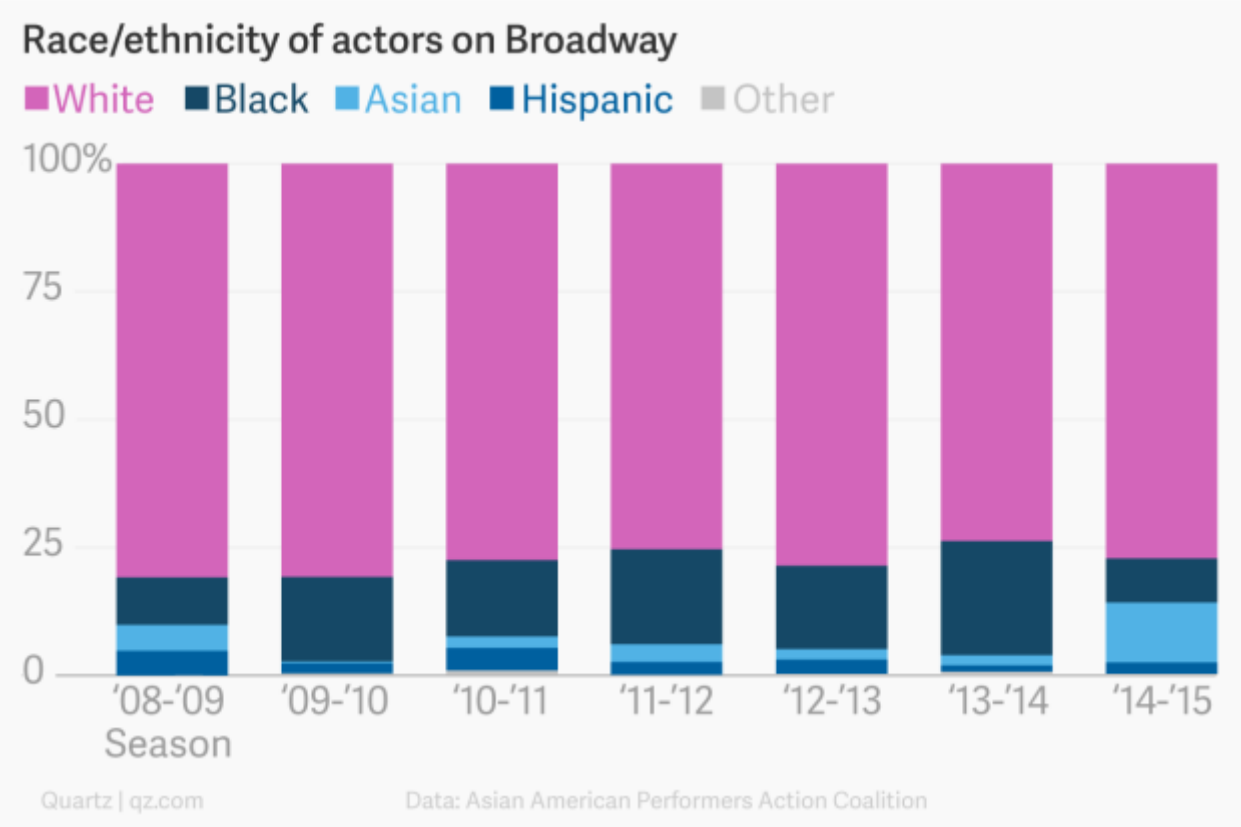
Miranda's choice in having King George and Samuel Seabury (both enemies to Hamilton and the future of America) played by white men shows a change in power for the audience who are likely to know, due to its presence online and in the media, that this musical makes comment on racial discrimination in casting and narrative. The show is heterotopian in the way it makes a villain of a white actor in the role of King George as opposed to providing stereotypes. It was evidently important for Miranda to make exception for these characters to be cast as white actors as the enemies to Hamilton in order for the audience to draw parallels between what they usually see at the theatre and what *Hamilton* offers. Ethnic minorities have been known to be the untrustworthy villains of musicals over the years, such as, *Oliver Twist's* Fagin as the miserly Jew, The Engineer conman and misogynist in *Miss Saigon*, Master Little from *The King and I* who along with being an antagonist is clumsy and overweight. Miranda clearly enjoys flipping the racial power dynamics on their heads within his shows as is evident when exploring the racial casting in Miranda's first show, *In the Heights* which, as we will discuss

further within this chapter, focusses on a Hispanic-American community. The table below shows that the majority of Broadway's audience are white. Below this, a table shows that the majority of actors on Broadway are also white.

	White	Asian	Black	Hispanic	Other	
International	75.3%	8.5%	1.8%	9.0%		5.4%
Domestic	83.0%	3.9%	4.8%	4.9%		3.4%
New York City	71.4%	9.1%	7.0%	6.8%		5.6%
NYC suburbs	84.5%	4.2%	3.4%	5.1%		2.8%

(Figure 3.1)

Source: 'The Demographics of the Broadway Audience' by The Broadway League Research Department



(*Figure 3.2)*

This information adds to the understating that *Hamilton* is unique in its casting and representation of race. 'In the context of the enduring racism in today's society, *Hamilton* has made waves given its casting of black and Latino actors as America's founders. This 'race blind' casting has received warm critical acclaim from advocates of racial equality in history and popular culture' (Keller, 2018). It is certainly the start of ending racism within the casting process which in the past has been shallow and unfair.

For example, the show is taking from previous shows (lack of diverse casting as seen above) in order to create a new one of equality. It draws from the 'us versus them' mentality in order to provide a view about equality and taking back ownership of American history for People of Colour. Below is the view of the show's Thomas Jefferson, Daveed Diggs:

> 'I walked out of the show with a sense of ownership over American history,' said Daveed Diggs, the black actor who played Thomas Jefferson and the Marquis de Lafayette in the original Broadway cast. 'Part of it is seeing brown bodies

> play these people.' As Miranda himself explained, 'This is a story about America then, told by America now' (Keller, 2018).

Again, as we can see from the quotation above, the emphasis in response to the show is placed on how the show uses American history to explore America now. This is particularly interesting when reading the megamusical as utopian and heterotopian. *Hamilton* provides a view of human issues through the lens of American history. It uses the sounds of today (hip-hop and rap soundtrack) and the concerns of inequality and politics inside the bubble of the familiar story to all Americans, the implication is that it is up to us (the audience) to decide the fate of our nation in terms of social justice and the stories we create for the future, this applies to both West End and Broadway versions of the show. As we have discussed in this thesis, music is the emotional language of the show that has potentially the most impact on the audience out of all the theatrical elements presented by the megamusical (Vermette, 2006, 11). The show's music becomes the audience's way in to the characters' minds yet it also breaks the fourth wall, giving the actors a chance to speak to us directly about our (humanity's) past and present. This will be the focus of the next section.

The Hip-hop Heterotopia

> Hip-hop first emerged in the 1970s as a counterculture rooted in the issues and aspirations of primarily black and brown people, a hybrid music that drew inspiration from divergent cultural streams. Hip-hop culture has always been driven by an often materialistic ambition to move from margins to the centre of American music, art, and fashion. (McAlister, 2017, 279).

Marvin McAlister's 'Toward a More Perfect *Hamilton*' discusses one of the main reasons the musical is able to tell such a complex story is through its music choices:

> Miranda and his team realized they could have never staged so much of Ron Chernow's densely packed Alexander Hamilton (2004) biography without hip-hop's verbal dexterity, polyrhythm, and polysemy. Public Theater artistic director Oskar Eustis believes Miranda succeeds in doing 'exactly what Shakespeare does. . . . He takes the language of the people and heightens it by making it verse.' (McAlister, 2017, 280).

The combined nature of the roots of hip-hop (to become recognised and identified as worthy of success) along with its storytelling ability makes *Hamilton* a musical that is able to stand up for minorities and social justice issues. Miranda speaks of the music of the show as eclectic and describes his creation of the concept album which he wrote before the production as inspired by hip-hop, rap, R&B and 1960s pop. The eclectic nature of the show's score makes it work well as a heterotopic space, it is encapsulating in one place many places. The score, being an amalgamation of contemporary sounds becomes the voice of the present filtered through historic context:

> Of all the genres in pop, hip-hop is the one most obviously from the street. A voice for the underprivileged. The spectre of something obviously put together with the best intentions but potentially agonising looms over the whole concept of *Hamilton*, earnest historical story and all. In theory at least, it sounds like the kind of thing a teacher of the call-me-by-my-first-name variety might drag their class along to see. The soundtrack has sold around 1m copies, has topped the hip-hop chart and the Broadway chart and was as warmly received by rap fans as aficionados of the Great White Way (Petridis, 2017).

The show focusses on Hamilton's political and social life and uses a mix of contemporary music genres ranging from hip-hop, rap, and reggae, jazz and pop. Miranda said he was inspired by The Beatles for tracks like *You'll Be Back*, *I know Him* and *What Comes Next* sung

by King George. It seems only fitting that the show is scored in this way due to Miranda's vision of having America's past told by the minorities he felt deserved a platform to express an interpretation of their own history. With the US and UK government's want to tackle immigration laws being a topic of concern worldwide most recently Miranda's way of speaking about the social injustice of the present by placing its racial issue in the 1700s is a positive way for him to make the musical current and accessible. The songs themselves aim to inspire hope and motivation in the audience with numbers like *My Shot* and *The Story of Tonight* which focus on personal goals and leaving behind a legacy. Using elements of the modern day in order to explain the past and vice versa is not an uncommon artistic decision for megamusicals, however Miranda's fusion of eras is rather specific as he has set the musical up to combat representation on Broadway. Miranda has made his political and social views clear and made a show which showcases that and this is what sets it aside from other utopian megamusicals in terms of its potential to cause social change. Miranda's social dream to 'change the face of Broadway' (Today, 2016) is the show, this is another reason why the show is actualised utopia and therefore a heterotopia. This link is a short interview with Miranda which details some of his background and current political work on raising awareness for Peurto Rico's 'desperate financial crisis' (Today, 2016).

'Heterotopias are alternative spaces distinguished from the actual world but that resonate with it' (Tompkins, 2014, 5). Miranda's decision for providing a mix of musical influences for the score make it a better influencer of social change as 'intercultural performance constructs heterotopias because new spaces of potentiality emerge from performative explorations of cultural difference' (Tompkins, 2014, 178). Tompkins also states that 'heterotopias may also refer to times from the past that have relevance to the present: the effects (ideological, emotional, and affective) they produce move and shift in and through time' (Tompkins, 2014, 178). Because of its heterotopic nature and themes, *Hamilton* pushes society to make positive

social change. If we view *Hamilton* as a heterotopia it is easier for us to see how the audience may feel when viewing it and why the varied sung and rapped-through genre is so necessary to its popularity and to voice its messages.

As stated earlier sung-through musicals are part of the megamusical form as they keep the musical reality seamless for the audience. The idea that *Hamilton* would be performed in the rap-through style allows the storytellers (People of colour) to be at the forefront of the audience's mind as the music is synonymous with modern day culture making it and the musical accessible. The way that the story is told may be more important than the history itself, after all everyone in the USA has been told this story within school and in the UK in particular the musical score helps keep the story relevant and understandable for an audience who may be hearing the story for the first time. The rap-through score also aids practically in getting a complex story which spans Hamilton's life into a two--hour show.

Hamilton's heterotopia is inspiring entertainment outside of the theatre. Currently more ethnic minority based media like the hit TV series *Black-ish* have been actively inspired by the show and released a musical episode for the show's season four premier. The episode features the cast in 18th century attire singing the number *We Built This*. The show, set in the present day follows the story of a wealthy man and his loving family who begin to question if their success is taking them away from their black roots and heritage. After 6 months of *Hamilton* hitting Broadway the creators of *Black-ish* decided to portray the cast singing in the same hip-hop/rap style with the staging being the inside of a traditional wooden house in the 18th century African slavery in the USA. The cast of *Black-ish* begin by sweeping the floor of the staged house in time to the synthesized hip-hop intro. A baby cries in time to the introduction and the strobe-like light flashes with the beat as it drops and the vocals begin. 'Bloody hands' from working the Sugarcane plantations and the cotton fields are referenced to highlight the strain placed on black people at this time. The performers' rap that the White House, Wall Street and railroads

were all built by slaves but the credit was given to the rich, white proprietors. To end the short song they sing in unison ‘my life would be different if I didn’t have cinnamon pigment’, finishing the song with the title line ‘we built this’. Anthony Anderson, who plays main character Andre Dre Johnson in the show, told The ABC news article ‘*Blackish* Takes on Columbus Day with *Hamilton* inspired musical episode’:

> ‘We get our *Hamilton* on, man,’ Anderson said. ‘We have two huge musical numbers that are flashbacks to us working on a plantation. So it'll be interesting to see how audiences respond to that (Nathanson, 2017).

Just as the sexist stereotype of a woman may place her within the 1950s household, the racist stereotype of POC may place them in the slavery of the 1700s. The clever way in which *Hamilton* combats this stereotyping is that it places People of Colour in the time in which we all understand to be a great time of suffering and has us see them taking ownership, telling the story through their music, their culture; so society begins to celebrate rather than commiserate and respect rather than pity.

In the Heights **in the Background**

> Miranda’s first musical, *In the Heights*, which he began writing during his sophomore year at Wesleyan [,] drew on hip-hop and Latin music to tell the story of the Manhattan neighbourhood where he was born, Washington Heights. (Binelli, 2016).

In the heights was Miranda’s first Broadway hip-hop musical written in 1999 and debuted on Broadway in 2008. The show was successful, winning four Tony awards along with ‘best

original musical score' and is set to hit the screens as a movie musical in 2020. This hip-hop musical follows a Hispanic-American community in Washington Heights. Miranda portrays a Dominican-American bodega owner who introduces us to his Abuela (grandmother) and the other residents on the corner where he lives, in the show's opening number 'In the Heights'. The urban backdrop and staging is colourful and has a *Rent* the musical type feel, with how it focusses on the urban youth of the States. 'Miranda (as Hamilton) and Odom, Jr. (as Burr) also share an affinity for the musical *Rent*, the Pulitzer-winning show that contemporized the face of musical theatre almost two decades earlier' (Giola, 2015).

(Figure 3.3) Rent off Broadway revival, 2012

(Figure 3.4) In the Heights on Broadway, 2008

In the Heights is also similar to other, what I refer to as, urban musicals in the sense that it represents how the working class of the USA wish their life would be in response to their actual surroundings. *In the Heights* provides utopia on stage for the audience as we watch the characters wish for a better life for themselves. In the above images we can see similar scenography. The levels used in the set are present in both as a scaffold, steps or balcony as part of a larger building. A sense that the space has been claimed by the two groups is also clear in both photographs whether that be in the use of the fairy lights hung above the apartment in figure 3.3 or covering the dancing in the shop doorway shown in *In the Heights* (figure 3.4). The microcosm of the character's world is present in both images. In figure 3.3 we can see that the apartment sits small surrounded by the larger scaffold and city around it. The tiny shops in figure 3.4 are dwarfed by the larger New York skyline we see as a backdrop.

In her book *Theatre's Heterotopias,* Tompkins focusses on how heterotopias change the way the audience view 'both concrete and metaphoric spaces' on stage (Tompkins, 2014, 71). New York as a physical space informs it as a metaphoric space. For example New York may be depicted on the backdrop or as a scaffold, as seen in *Rent*, this is the physical space of New York for the audience. This space then informs the metaphoric connotations the audience may draw from it, of New York itself. *Hamilton* provides a view of metaphoric and physical America on stage which poses alternative opinions for the audience. Tompkins's explains how heterotopic spaces on stage usually conjure up connotations the audience may reflect upon. Heterotopias according to Tompkins rely on 'constructed space' and 'abstracted space' (Tompkins, 2014, 76). Abstracted space is Tompkins's understanding of the 'no place' or a 'conjured location' (Tompkins, 2014, 37); 'constructed space' is her term for the good place/utopia when an actual location occurs on stage. Throughout *Hamilton* the show's physical theatrical devices are juxtaposed with their metaphoric or abstracted meanings, it is

here where the show's heterotopias are present and it is this dynamic Tompkins's thinks 'prompts rethinking' in the audience (Tompkins, 2014, 37).

Hamilton has been compared to hip-hop musical *Holler if Ya Hear Me* (2014). A musical written in memory of the famous 90s hip-hop artist Tupac. The musical received 'mixed reviews' and recorded a cast album which was never released, the musical's script was said to have let the lyrics and songs, written by Tupac, down. The storyline was described by critics as 'un-engaging' with characters 'who had little depth' (Soloski, 2014). The show did shed light on urban communities and the struggles of poverty, however, according to many reviews it created two dimensional characters that perhaps even perpetuated racial stereotypes. The show was writer Todd Kreidler's first and only musical. Kreidler is a white playwright which may be part of the reason a lot of the depth of the characters was lost. Kreidler unlike Miranda doesn't have any first-hand experience in this regard and may then rely on stereotypes. Again, similar to the representations in *Miss Saigon,* stereotypes may have overshadowed the characters in *Holler if Ya Hear Me* also. It seems the musical lacked research in order to rush Tupac's name out into theatres. Perhaps it was thought that Tupac's music would hold the show together but given that the songs were not originally intended for a musical, it's no wonder that the show lacks depth and that the cast recording was never released. In many ways I view *Holler If Ya Hear Me* as a better representation of a utopian musical than a heterotopic one. The show provides a white view of black and urban culture and invites the audience to look through a nostalgic, white-privilege-tinted window instead of offering the emersion that *Hamilton* does. *Hamilton*'s music was written for the show and is an intrinsic part of it, *Holler If Ya Hear Me* ~~'s~~ is a juke box musical written with Tupac's songs.

> Rather than focus on Tupac Shakur's short and tumultuous life, which would have provided some structure, 'Holler If Ya Hear Me' integrates – or at least attempts to integrate – Tupac's songs into an aimless and confusing tale of gang violence in a generic urban landscape that is full of undeveloped characters. In other words, it's a really poor imitation of 'West Side Story' (AM NewYork, 2014).

The show's juke box structure seems to limit its heterotopian potential. The show would have been more impactful if it had either been about Tupac himself or focussed on People of Colour in this setting with the support of creators and writers of colour themselves. As it stands the show seems to assume that one black hip-hop artist's journey can speak for a whole community. I believe this undermines the representations of the characters in the show. This is one of the clear ways we can see a difference between *Holler* as a musical, like *Miss Saigon* which draws on utopia and *Hamilton* as a heterotopia. AM New York's review also states that the show 'is not socially conscious' (AM NewYork, 2014). One of the main reasons *Hamilton* has impact on the audience is due to its socially conscious plot, music and casting. A socially conscious show is important to my understanding of the heterotopia as it means that the show is inspired by and rooted in the issues of that which surrounds it. For example, the lack of representation seen in society, particularly on Broadway, inspired shows which aim to combat this, like *The Colour Purple* (2004) and *Hamilton* (2015). In the next section I am going to go into more detail on the heterotopias present on stage within the musical.

In *In the Heights* Miranda provides a depiction of how the Hispanic communities contribute and connect to the rest of the USA written from his own experience. Romantic relationships are explored in this musical and the use of Spanish and English lyrics are integrated throughout to provide a constant understanding of diversity and inclusion. The intercultural elements of the show are heterotopic as they provide a layering of worlds within worlds. However the show also explores the broken family dynamics and the exclusion of Benny, Nina's non-Spanish-speaking boyfriend, who is shunned by her father. Kevin, Nina's father is racially discriminative towards Benny as he is not Latino. It is clear that Miranda wrote *In the Heights* to explore the issues of social justice in the plot of the show whereas *Hamilton* explores these issues in a far more layered way. For example, *Hamilton* provides an interpretation of the

historic readings of the life of Alexander Hamilton with a cast of POC to explore how the past relates to the present in terms of violence, discrimination, politically driven wars and riots. *Hamilton's* narrative does not have to explicitly show issues of gender and race as it uses (albeit perhaps unknowingly) the heterotopic space to create this dynamic for the audience and it does so through the audience's preconceptions and prior knowledge. Due to advertising and Miranda's large social media presence, the majority white audience of Broadway and The West End may come to view *Hamilton* with the prior knowledge that the cast does not include white people (except for the villainous King George) and that the score is rap and hip-hop based. Perhaps the pre-conceived notions of the audience causes the heterotopic space to be more impactful as their knowledge of current social and political issues instils a sense of power and solidarity that what they know is being reaffirmed. The audience watch what is stated in the musical and how it can be interpreted and applied to the current state of the US/UK today. The audience have prior knowledge of the issues relevant to the plot and characters which makes the dynamic far more heterotopic as it relies on the audience having an outside view of *Hamilton*, Miranda, politics and history as well as the expectation for a Broadway musical.

Hamilton's **Heterotopias on Stage**

Hamilton is not Miranda's first hip-hop musical however and is not his only musical to give a platform and voice to minorities. Miranda is responsible for urban musical *In the Heights* which can also be read through the lens of the heterotopia.

This small world within a world visually presented in both *Rent* and *In the Heights* highlights the poverty of the characters and causes us to feel that they are trapped by their circumstances. It also means that for the audience there is the action space on stage (the apartment or the shop for example) and the imaginary action space (the place the audience envision lies behind the door) – to use Brušák's concepts. The way in which New York is viewed in both *Rent* and *In*

the Heights is similar to the way the characters in *South Pacific* conceptualise Bali Ha'i. Both Bali Ha'i and New York are seen as utopias, the place where people get what they want, and these places are both discussed by characters who are not yet inhabiting them meaning that for the audience the places exist in the character's minds, the imaginary action space. *Hamilton*'s imaginary action space is a little more complex as it is America itself, or at least the view that Hamilton has of America and the 'great nation' he wants it to be. *Hamilton*'s microcosm is executed differently as it makes itself present as the constant reference to the future. The literal and figurative call of the future is present in the show as we see the past with our eyes and hear the future through the music. If the past is the shabby wooden scaffold of the set, the ship, the ropes, the beams and the 18th century styled costumes then the present space of the musical is what we hear, the music, the articulation and contemporary way the actors rap and sing. In Joe Kucharski's article 'Tyranny of style', costume designer of *Hamilton* Paul Tazewell said:

> I collected an expansive array of images/research of 18th century clothing appropriate for the characters in this story as well as many of the portraits that were painted of the forefathers and surrounding people involved in the founding of our country. At the same time I was pulling together the same amount of contemporary fashion images that might have a style influence inspired by the 18th century while maintaining a very contemporary feel and silhouette. So we were weighing both directions, and a mix of the two (Kucharski, Tazewell, 2016).

The costume mirrors the music in this way as it juxtaposes past and present to make a new exploration of history for the audience. The way in which *Hamilton's* heterotopic space works is that it provides the audience's senses with fragments of past and present realities, as stated above in regards to the costumes, set and music. The building depicted on stage (the set) becomes a place where the heterotopia then exists and it holds the modern music and people playing real historical figures. Just as we can understand Foucault's mirror as a heterotopia, the frame or edge that the mirror sits within is another aspect of the heterotopic cycle itself. Just as the theatre, a constructed space which holds the megamusical that stages *Hamilton* creates a heterotopia the heterotopic spaces or mirrors in the show sit in this larger heterotopia.

The spectator witnesses on stage concepts which are pushing the boundaries of social expectations by first viewing them in their physical forms. The cast are pushing the boundaries for diversity within casting. The cast was earlier explored as a mirror as they are 'there were they are not' in terms of people of colour in this particular story and the Broadway stage. Therefore this placeless place is bringing to the surface, key issues for the audience in the form of these noticible juxtapositions. America as a utopia is another placeless place created by the mirror effect of the show. America or society is explored as a new place we can still adapt and grow by depicting America as a new country on stage. The audience may be inspired from these utopian performatives to create their own actualised utopias in society and affect social change. Another example would be, seeing a character as the physical space and how you view them as similar to yourself as the abstracted space. The implications of this dynamic for the audience may be that in witnessing 'how else space might be constituted' it could empower people to see that 'what does occur' can be different from 'what else might transpire' (Tompkins. 2014. 29). Hamilton is shot on stage, this is a constructed 'real' space for the audience in that he falls to the stage floor dead. However the connotations implied from this may be that we don't have to see our society or in fact ourselves become short lived. Burr and Eliza act like ghosts within the show when they reference the future and how they are viewed as historical figures by the audience in the present. This too, reminds the audience that the show is speaking to their individual experiences now. Most importantly, as suggested earlier, this dynamic suggests to the audience 'an alternative to the status quo' (Tompkins, 2014, 32). It is said that heterotopias may inspire social change. *Hamilton* suggests a 'why not' attitude towards having a diverse cast, rap-through in musical theatre and depicting history in a modern way and therefore changes the status quo.

In *Theatre's Heterotopias*, Tompkins argues:

> Like the art form of theatre itself [heterotopias] may appear to be at sometimes tangible, definable spaces or places whereas at other times they may generate more of a 'feeling' of an ethereal space or 'world' picture that is created by an entire production in conjunction with the 'world' beyond performance. (Tompkins, 2014, 28)~~,~~

Spatially there are three Americas in the show (when performed on Broadway) and they are as follows:

1. The America both the audience and performers live in (Broadway debut of the show specifically)
2. The young America of the 1700s
3. The America of the future (both in the narrative and the future of the country itself)

The show provides a view of America which makes the audience look at it from every angle. We see it as the young, outsider with the energy we want to be part of in *My Shot* and as the fighter for freedom and justice in the number *Story of Tonight.* As Tompkins states: 'by investigating the literal and metaphoric contexts they [the shows] provide we have the chance to discern, through performance, the existing social and political realities that structure our lives to chart alternatives to them' (Tompkins, 2014, 44). *Hamilton* provides a well-rounded view of America as Hamilton is not portrayed as being faultless, this is seen when the audience learn of his affair. Hamilton highlights America itself corrupting as he loses his way. Perhaps through the actions of Aaron Burr who, in the end, kills Hamilton, a violent America is explored. I infer from the representation of America and Hamilton that Alexander Hamilton's character embodies the hard-working, willing to learn America then and now, the message being if we want our country to change now, we need to work hard *now* and change ourselves first perhaps starting with how we view our history and who may represent it. I feel that this heterotopia is transferable to UK audiences due to the likability of Hamilton as a character and an awareness of America then and America now, this awareness may differ but I do not believe this takes away from how impactful this dynamic is at affecting social change. It ties in the outside experiences of the audience to their experience of the show now. Similarly to

Foucault's 2nd principle of the cemetery rooting everyone in the city together through their ancestry the musical has the foundation of places we view as utopic like New York. The opening song *Alexander Hamilton* confirms New York as a utopia when Hamilton sings 'In New York you can be a new man' (Miranda, 2015). The physical America is explored through the metaphoric Americas presented and within their interplay of the two spaces (constructed and abstracted) the heterotopia is said to influence the audience.

As Tompkins writes in her introduction to *Theatre's Heterotopia,* 'heterotopia when apparent in performance reflects or comments on a site in the actual world, a relationship that may come when audiences leave the theatre' (Tompkins, 2014, 5). In this sense, *Hamilton* comments on many sites in 'the actual world' such as the political and social state of America and casting on Broadway as well as representation on a whole.

Miranda speaks of Hamilton as being an immigrant[16] and resonates with that part of the character being the son to immigrants himself. Hamilton's work ethic, his ability to fight for what is right are the positive qualities of America. When Hamilton dies at the hand of Aaron Burr these qualities are crushed. However Hamilton speaks of leaving a legacy, and describes America as the 'great unfinished symphony.' This depiction of America we are left with at the end of the show can be read as a message that we (the audience) are meant to finish it, the song *Who Lives, Who Dies, Who Tells our Story* again refers to this concept of legacy. Embedded in the show heterotopically are these age old messages that correspond with contemporary issues. The way in which the musical plays with time is not just in when the musical is set and its fusion with a contemporary score. The score provides many reprises of numbers sung earlier

[16] See Chernow, R. (2005) *'*Like many self-invented immigrants, Hamilton had totally and irrevocably repudiated his past.*' (p. 580)*
Miranda speaks of Hamilton as a self-taught, Immigrant in this interview:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-NbEbkVrVWY&t=1634s

in order to evoke a sense of flash back, emotional journey and also the sense that the themes are doomed to repeat themselves over and over. For example, *Aaron Burr Sir* is the second number in the show, where Hamilton and Burr first meet. As the opening chords to *Aaron Burr Sir* play half-way through *The World Was Wide Enough* Burr sings the new melody and lyrics in the number, when coming to terms with his killing of Hamilton. This can be heard at 3:11 of the original cast recording of the song. Time is used as a musical device to bring Burr back to when he first met Hamilton and the guilt he feels having just killed him. The musical also uses time as a spatial device as Burr conceptualises his own future. He sings in the number *The World Was Wide Enough* that 'history obliterates and every picture it paints it paints me in all my mistakes.' He goes on to sing 'I am the villain of your history.' Burr is referring here to our view of him in the present. This breaking of the fourth wall and transcending of time help the audience to connect with Burr's emotions as we are reminded that this event actually occurred. *Hamilton* would not be heterotopic without these small moments taking place within the show as heterotopia relies on the multiple realities created within one space (Tompkins, 2014).

The impact, for the audience, is that they may empathise with Burr's regretful attitude toward his own past and view more of the issues presented in *Hamilton* in this regretful way, for example, how society have treated women in the past. The audience may also look to the outer layer of the performance as a politically driven one and look at how changes can be made in society. The audience may view *Hamilton* as an active example of how theatre can transcend the walls and relate to society now. For example after the show debuted many have asked Miranda to transpose the score so that women can play Hamilton and the show can be gender-blind as well as being racially inclusive.[17] *Hamilton* seems to be paving the way for musicals with an ethos of equality.

[17] See Miranda interview on this topic here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-NbEbkVrVWY&t=1528s

Conclusion

Watching *Hamilton* immerses one to the heterotopic experience. The show places its audience into a timeless time and a placeless place, a utopic space actualised on stage that we are expected to resonate with. Perhaps audiences have resonated with the show so well due to the issues presented being a reflection of society's current social dilemmas. Then (the 18th century) and now is juxtaposed with the concept of 'us and them' on stage as we watch the show deal with inequality by showing us an even more socially unequal time. The 18th century inspired costume the actors wear as they move to the sound of the 21st century (hip-hop) are the juxtapositions that make it heterotopian, along with it providing many theatrical elements, or as I have referred to them in this chapter, mirrors on one stage. Theatre as Foucault understands it is a heterotopic space in and of itself. I view the heterotopia of the show as various layers where one informs the other i.e. the physical and non-physical spaces which may make the audience reflect on society. For example the heterotopia of the theatre informs that of the megamusical form and that of the show. Perhaps these combined are what causes the heterotopia to have social impact. To simplify, if we went to see a straight play about Hamilton's life the theatre and play would still be heterotopic however the audience would not be internalised to the experience, as much, if it was devoid of music and dance as these theatrical elements add to how our brain neurologically responds, empathises and recalls memories as explored in chapter one. The show's music and dance celebrates culture and cultural differences and due to its emphasis on the concept of legacy as thematised in the show's final musical number.[18] The show tells its audience that we can all be a part of a better story for social good. The implication of the song *Who Lives Who Dies Who Tells Your Story* might

[18] *Who Lives Who Dies Who tells Your Story* number from Hamilton accessed here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_gnypiKNaJE

be, for the audience, that they themselves are responsible when it comes to what they want to see in their own life, socially, and society itself.

In this chapter I have interpreted *Hamilton* as a heterotopia in order to recognise the social potential of the show. Hip-hop musicals, such as *Holler If ya Hear Me* or Miranda's earlier *In the Heights*, have brought a new kind of storytelling that adheres to the original intention for this genre of music- to create a platform for People of Colour to identify themselves as worthy of success and recognition. I have applied Foucault's six principles of heterotopia to *Hamilton* and find that the show is a very intricate representation of heterotopia and a means to change the social norm from audience to society outside the theatre. It does this by providing a racially diverse cast who take ownership of historic roles which have in the past been white-washed. Foucault's sixth principle influences my understanding of the show as a heterotopia. *Hamilton* shows us society's illusions (which I understand are society's social injustices) in order to shine a light on the real spaces in our everyday which need change. *Hamilton* sets an example of this by the way the show is cast and the style it is presented in, its genre of music and references to the present day.

The references to now~~,~~ root the heterotopia to the present day and ask the audience to reflect on life outside of the show so that when they return they are renewed by their experience and equipped with the tools for social change. Heterotopias as understood by Tompkins in *Theatre's Heterotopias* 'ask the audience to test the validity of the categories it believes it lives by, it is not about life as it is lived at all, but about life as it might be lived' (Tompkins, 2014, 3). *Hamilton* plays with time to show how 'life may be lived' in the 1700s as posing the question of how we may change now, for a better future. Perhaps the heterotopia created by the musical causes its political and moral messages to be better felt and heard by the audience. Issues of immigration, sexism and racism presented by the musical are formed in a heterotopic way and therefore have the potential to make bigger waves for social justice outside of the

theatre. The show creates a bubble whereby all of the issues presented can be felt by the audience as they are taken back in time to review their present. Tompkins's *Theatres Heterotopias* highlights heterotopias in theatre as being alternative spaces on stage, spaces that although 'unreal' can create concrete results outside and inside the theatre. Foucault's understanding of the heterotopia is that it cannot exist without drawing a parallel from its source in some way. The source of a heterotopia is usually the society in which it sits and it is inspired by this outer reality. In this chapter I unpacked what the social and political implications of the musical being a heterotopia may be, supported by Tompkins's theories surrounding how the heterotopic space may provide for its audience an 'intensification of their knowledge' and 'influence their understanding of the relationship of the theatre and the world outside its walls' (Tompkins, 2014, 6).

Tompkins states in *Theatre's Heterotopias* that heterotopic spaces on stage 'act as experimental zones for possibilities to be tried out' (Tompkins, 2014, 27). *Hamilton* can be considered Miranda's 'experimental zone.' The show introduces People of Colour who represent white American history to Broadway. The show trials this with the fusion of a contemporary score that tells the two-hundred-year old story. Tompkins goes on to state that 'Crucially, heterotopias also have the **capacity to influence** an audience's understanding of the relationship between the theatre and the world outside its walls, such that theatre can continue and extend its function of both shaping and contesting its cultural context' (Tompkins, 2014, 27; my emphasis). Tompkins defines heterotopias in theatre as having the ability to shape and question the world outside the theatre. I have explored in this chapter that *Hamilton* is a heterotopia and that this is the reason for its ability to change the social norm regarding how we see race and culture. The fact that *Hamilton* is a heterotopia enables it to inspire, educate and create social change all the more.

Conclusion

The Megamusical for Social Change

In this thesis I have constructed utopian and heterotopian readings of the megamusical which help analyse the ways in which the megamusical may have a potential to effect audiences enough to create social change. The first section explored the megamusical through the lens of utopia and I presented ways in which we can see utopia in the form of the megamusical. The simple ways utopia can be seen in the shows mentioned are in the plot, music, characters and staging, as well as the other artistic elements of it, specifically the singing, dancing and acting. The goals and dreams of the characters help the audience connect with them. A love story in the plot where the audience resonate with the two lovers is an example of a utopic vision presented on stage, it may be that the music includes dream songs which feed into these human desires for love, success and safety. It may also be in the way the characters are represented themselves, beautiful, talented, desired by the other characters perhaps, innocent and in need of care. If the 'survival of the human spirit' (Dyer, Mackintosh, 2009, 277) is really what megamusicals show on stage then it is clear how the audience relate to the on stage action in an empathetic way.

I have also explored how the storyline may glamorise poverty, promote stereotypes and brush over the details of the part of history it represents, as in the case of *Miss Saigon* explored within Chapter 2. For example, the focus of *Les Miserables* is that of 'basic human desires like freedom and forgiveness' (Sternfeld, 2006, 2). Relatability and familiarity come first for the megamusical as stated by Cameron Mackintosh himself in Richard Eyre's *Talking Theatre.* Mackintosh states when discussing why people love *Les Miserables*: 'we all know a Javert, we have all seen an Eponine. It's very primal and therefore it becomes an emotional roller-coaster,

it's about the survival of the human spirit, which is the most basic instinct any of us have' (Eyre, Mackintosh, 2009, 277). The glamorisation of the French Revolution in *Les Miserables* and the Vietnam War within *Miss Saigon* is also another way the mythologies and nostalgia of the creators can be seen in the outcomes on stage. Megamusicals like *Hamilton* that wish to affect social change, have a good opportunity to utilise the influencing and inspiring attributes of music. The capability of music changing how audiences think and feel and go on to affect society has been explored by Taylor (2014), Vermette (2006). Heterotopias have been understood as spaces that inspire the audience to affect social change (Tompkins, 2014).

Music creates emotional responses, this is why megamusicals have been so successful and have their audiences crying (Sternfeld, 2006, 7) and in standing ovation. I explored in chapter one that familiarity is what all utopic thought is built upon, we can only form our social dreams because we have been triggered by something familiar that informs what we know we want. This is why the megamusical feeds into social dreaming so well because it is~~,~~ emotionally moving due to the music, familiar to us on a cultural and human level and as Dolan explores in theatre 'utopian performatives' are presented onstage that we interpret as fuel for our own utopic desires. The music of a megamusical is important to the argument that the megamusical is utopian. Foreshadowing is used in the score of a megamusical to affect how the audience feel, not only with how we conceptualise negative and positive tones of the music but also how our brains process music the same way they process language and release dopamine for a positive effect that could perhaps be the anticipation and confirmation of a key change. As the music changes modality, key or tempo upon anticipation and then confirmation of this from the music itself the brain releases dopamine filling the audience member with an excited, happy and/or relaxed feeling. I infer that this feeling is a positive environment for the social dreaming aspect the brain is also in while watching the show. The audience become active members in the megamusicals, they become a part of everything on stage. Millie Taylor explores the

capability of music on the brain. Taylor explains how mirror neurons in the brain of a musical theatre spectator is activated by the dancer, singer and performer as if they are also performing (Taylor, 2014, 243). The social dreaming of a musical theatre audience member is therefore much more informed with the brain having experienced the same emotions as those of the characters within the show, or a particular character they have resonated with more perhaps. The utopia of the megamusical affects the audience member inside and arguably outside the theatre also.

Utopia presents itself in the megamusical as it is the product of someone's dream and/or dream depiction of a story. The creators fit a story into the form of the megamusical in order for it to be represented through spectacle, to entertain people. The mythologies of our culture, the Orientalism of the West towards the East, the view of gender and race are ways in which idealism is highlighted in the utopia, they all present themselves as part of an ideal image made in social dreaming. In the opening chapter I expand this notion of social dreaming of Lyman Tower Sargent's and use it to describe the minds of the audience members attending a megamusical. They are watching someone else's utopian view (the creators of the show) and while doing this it sparks their own vision of, 'something better,' 'radically different' (Sargent, 1994, 3) or comfortably familiar. (Scruton, 2017). Sargent also understands that one person's utopia can be another's dystopia (Sargent, 1994, 5). The arguments against utopia cohere with the way some shows are represented and these representations can negatively impact society as I explore in chapter two, analysing the reasons for the *Miss Saigon* controversies through the lens of the utopia. To expand my argument that this utopia affects the audience outside of the theatre, I looked into the arguments against *Miss Saigon* which state that the presentation of EA women are negative for all EA women and that megamusicals perpetuate old ideals and racial stereotypes. We can also see that the effect of the megamusicals and media in the 1970s and 1980s have sparked a new wave of musicals which aim to represent minorities and 'real'

people such as *The Colour Purple* (2015 revival), *Waitress* (2015) and *Dear Evan Hansen* (2015). These musicals, although not megamusicals, all challenge the social norm. *Dear Evan Hansen* challenges stigmas against mental health, *Waitress* provides realistic representations of women and combats the motherly stereotypes that are often placed on to women. *The Colour Purple* allows the harrowing story written by black author Alice Walker to be told by a cast of People of Colour.

Finding Hope in the *Hamilton*

In the final chapter I expanded the argument that the megamusical has an effect on social justice outside the theatre through an understanding of the heterotopia. If the utopian performatives were constructed in heterotopic spaces the social implications from the audience to society outside the theatre could actually help society, rather than perpetuate outdated ideologies. In order to make a heterotopia the external world's dystopias inspire one to make an actualised utopia. This, as it appears on stage, is a much more thought-through and structured way of presenting a utopia which is tangible for the audience. The audience can see on stage (in the example of *Hamilton*) the way Miranda and the cast want Broadway and musicals to look and feel, by the amount of social constructs they break by putting on this particular show.

In the final chapter, *Hamilton* is interpreted / approached / analysed as a musical which presents heterotopic spaces which act like utopian performatives for the audience. I looked into the heterotopic spaces present in *Hamilton* as spaces which cause society to act on behalf of social justice and positive social change. As this musical is a product of its society in the sense that its aim was to promote accessibility and equality to a society that the creators felt was in need of this reminder. The musical sits as a 'counter-site' (Foucault, 1984, 3.). The show is then a heterotopia because it was inspired by something the show's writer Lin-Manuel Miranda wishes to change in society. The way heterotopic spaces appear in the show can be seen, as

discussed, in how the show uses spatiality in order to frame how the audience views America in multiple ways. The juxtapositions of past and present which run through the show's music, costume and casting remind the audience that we can learn from the past, we can create our utopias from our dystopias if we shift our perspective.

Hamilton turns our focus to social justice as Miranda offers a story for the women in Hamilton's life that would otherwise not have been represented or documented. In providing this story based on letters from Eliza (Hamilton's wife) the audience get greater insight into the women of then and this has even sparked discussion from feminist and actor Emma Watson, who interviewed Miranda regarding the female representations in the show. Within the interview, Watson was particularly interested in the reference to women's rights in the songs and the prospect of 'gender-blind' casting for future productions of the show. However the show's representation of women has been negatively critiqued on numerous occasions. Hamilton's all male creative team is a slightly hypocritical given its overall stance on social justice issues and there are some other snags too. Michael Schulman writes in his article 'The Women of Hamilton' that the show has an 'almost' feminist ending which seems half –hearted for a show which aims to shake up the social norm and promote equality. The three Schuyler sisters are the only female characters in the show and their presence has been argued as being mere extensions of Hamilton, which help to bring out his personal and more human side. In Clare Chandler's review of *Hamilton's* representation of women 'Let me be part of the narrative': the Schuyler Sisters 'almost' Feminist?' Chandler explores where the show may have missed the mark on being fully feminist.

The language used during Hamilton's affair scene in act two is also uncomfortable from a feminist perspective. In the song '*Say No to This'* the line 'my god she's looking so helpless' adds to Hamilton expressing how he can't resist her. There are connotations that helplessness is sexually desirable which has connotations of predatory behaviour. Though the rest of the

song suggests both of them want the affair, the repetition of the woman being appealing because of her 'helplessness' is somewhat disturbing. Another issue from a feminist position would be that the musical does not include a song sung by a female character that is not about a male character. The character arch's and objectives of the female characters exist for the male character's goals. Given the time in which the musical is set and the information we have on the female's connected to Hamilton, I can see why this is the case for the female characters in this show.

TV shows like *Black-ish* were also inspired to create their own musical performance involving their own hip-hop song *We Built This* which focussed on the slaves and the slave trade of the 18th and 19th century. As *Hamilton* provides a view of the past and future I feel it commands the audience to tackle their present. It asks its audience to make the changes they wish to see in the world, yet it also entertains them and takes them on an emotional roller-coaster as megamusicals are meant to (Sternfeld, 2006, 2). *Hamilton* in the context of this thesis is a musical which which uses the utopian megamusical form to construct complex social and political issues of past and present. *Miss Saigon* is a way in for reading megamusicals through the lens of the utopia which allows us to appreciate it as an outstanding form of entertainment and display of talent and skill whilst also having an awareness that its use of stereotype and disrespect for Eastern cultures is due to society's utopic view of these places and people.

Heterotopic spaces within the megamusical work in far more pragmatic ways which offer solutions and expansion Scruton states that 'utopia is either abstract and therefore nice, or concrete and believable and nasty' (Scruton, 2017). I agree in a sense from the work explored in this thesis that utopia as simply presented can become 'nasty' and I have explored this through the race and gender representations made on stage and their effects on society. If these are one culture's ideal representations then they are one society's utopic vision this is due to the subjective nature of utopias. Heterotopias exist in reality and work in its constructs yet

provide alterative places. For example, Foucault explains how the mirror creates a new placeless place when we conceptualise our own reflection's existence. Similarly *Hamilton* https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t0r7RkSA51Ycreates its own space, set of rules and purpose that we can view in the larger construct of the megamusical and the theatre itself. *Hamilton*'s content also provides constructed spaces we draw our own connotations from to form our understanding of our own society. A utopia is tied into playing on our nostalgic ideologies, the feeling of lack and wish for something better, the need to escape, whereas the heterotopia works within society to establish a new idea, experiment with trying social dynamics in new ways. With this said, it is to my understanding that the utopia and social dreaming of this utopia is how all heterotopias start. For example, *Hamilton* started as a concept album and then grew to become a physical depiction of America in the 18th century. The utopic attributes of a heterotopia are what cause the audience to feel entertained and lost in a whole new world.

Hamilton and *Miss Saigon* have a lot in common. They are both based on historic stories that have been adapted. They are both megamusicals which use music to tell their story, and they both exhibit utopian performatives which trigger social dreaming in their audience through their use of space, imaginary and physical. Given the impact of megamusicals on our brains and thought processes, it has been my aim to provide a way of reading them through the lens of utopia to better understand how they can use this to affect social change.

As the audience of *Hamilton* have a preconception of the show as a political and social production, I believe that this extra space, the space of the audience's own preconceptions means that they have already framed that the show is going to make them think of social justice, and know that they are sat with like-minded individuals. The communitas of the heterotopic space is strong as the audience are not only bonded emotionally as Dolan explains but also united in their shared views as they watch. Miranda is a popular celebrity and activist for social

change who seems to get his audience as well as politicians fired up. The *New York Times* journalist Patrick Healey wrote:

> *Hamilton* the hit Broadway musical about colonial rebels shaping the future of an unformed country, took an even more political turn at the end of its performance on Friday night. With Vice President-elect Mike Pence attending the show, the cast used the opportunity to make a statement emphasizing the need for the new administration of President-elect Donald J. Trump, a Republican, to work on behalf of all Americans […] As the play ended, the actor who played Vice President Aaron Burr, Brandon Victor Dixon, acknowledged that Mr. Pence was in the audience, thanked him for attending and added, 'We hope you will hear us out' (Healy, 2016) 'We, sir — we — are the diverse America who are alarmed and anxious that your new administration will not protect us, our planet, our children, our parents, or defend us and uphold our inalienable rights,' he said. 'We truly hope that this show has inspired you to uphold our American values and to work on behalf of all of us.' (Healy, Dixon, 2016).

Miranda is very active on and off stage in what he believes in and how he wants theatre, and in fact, the world to improve. The show utilises heterotopias as it presents utopic society by enacting utopia on stage for the audience to take note and make some of their own changes too. After the show's success on Broadway Miranda 'was in the White House testing the education curriculum for *Hamilton.*' 'He's sending 20,000 kids to go see *Hamilton* and go do work afterwards' (Today, 2016). Miranda's push for Hamilton's depiction of history and approach to social justice issues to be taught in schools could be another way the show is directly impacting people inside and outside the theatre. The video here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t0r7RkSA51Y (Gilderlehrman, *Hamilton Education Program, 2017*) shows the Hamilton Education Program at work. Teacher James G Basker, who facilitated the Hamilton Education Program said 'This [program] is philanthropy with a vision. It's making the arts at the highest level, available to kids who may never have felt themselves, included' (Gilderlehrman, 2017). Another facilitator of the program, Cecilia Maldonado said, 'I think it will steer the students into becoming activists [and] I think it has given the students a greater appreciation of what this country is and what it can be'. (Gilderlehrman, 2017) This musical seems to have been far reaching with its messages of

equality and social justice, speaking to the younger generations is a great way of making sure the show's principles have a ripple effect of positivity for all.

Can Megamusicals Spark Hope for Social Justice?

I believe that *Miss Saigon* could create a similar dynamic in terms of affecting social change through utopic and heterotopic spaces on stage if it changed its casting to one that wished to represent Vietnamese people in a truthful way as well as its representation of their culture at the time the play is set. I feel that the 2014 representation of the show starts to show signs of this with changes made to the lyrics in 'Movie in My Mind' and an additional song heard here, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_QYwTPo0ECg (*Maybe,* Miss Saigon, 2014) The song, *Maybe* gives Ellen more depth which from a feminist perspective is a song change much needed for the show. However no additional songs or song replacements were given to Kim and therefore her character as the China Doll stereotype is still very much alive (Lee, 2018). The small changes made to the revival of the show didn't seem enough for me to view it as a show which provides heterotopic spaces that its audience can be inspired by.

These elements cause empathy through their impact neurologically as they allow us to truly feel what is happening on stage. (Taylor, 2014) This is a powerful tool which megamusicals can use to convey issues that are happening in the audience's reality, inspiring them with the feeling that they can make positive change. In the future I hope to push this study even further and find out the answers to the bigger questions left over by this thesis: what social change is happening because of megamusicals and how *do* the audience actually feel when watching. This thesis should have provided the understanding that utopian performatives, though present in the megamusical may not always have positive effects for social change. The megamusical can use its theatrical elements in a way which promotes social change and it can still offer the audience a chance to escape and be entertained. *Hamilton* is an example of a musical whereby

using heterotopic spaces on stage provides a view of utopia that its audience feel a part of and can be inspired to adopt its ethos. By providing a view of the issues of social justice inside the megamusical form the audience may empathise and conceptualise these issues as problems which they can begin to fix outside of the theatre. To conclude, Megamusicals have the ability to make intricate and layered heterotopias through their use of artistic elements that audiences relate to. Heterotopias suggest by showing the flaws in society that we shouldn't stop questioning how society works. Building this actualised utopia onstage teaches us new perspectives that we can apply to own society.

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