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The Ballad of Baby Doe:

Historical Accuracy and Gender Ideology in the Characterization of Augusta and Baby Doe

Kari Ragan Hoffmann

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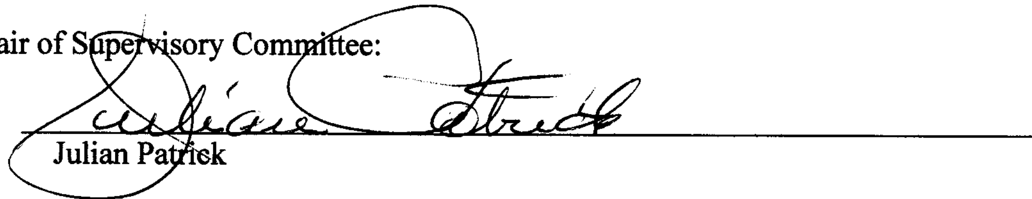

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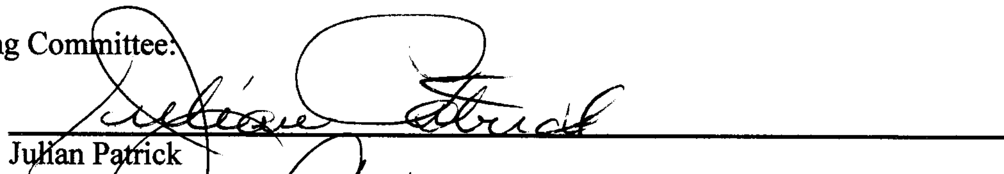

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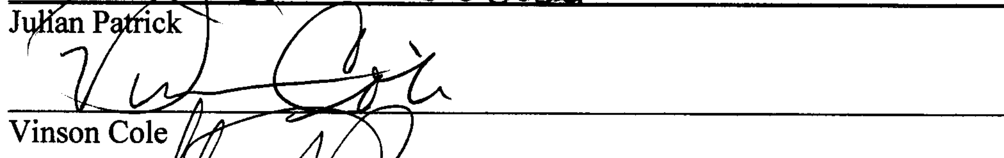

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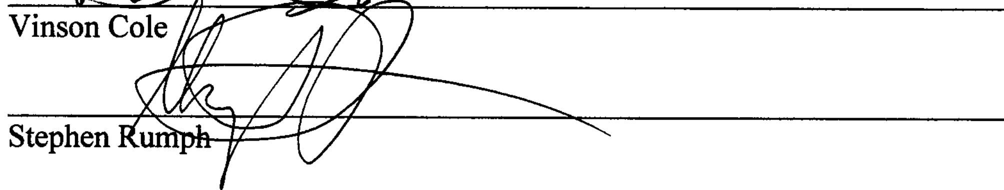

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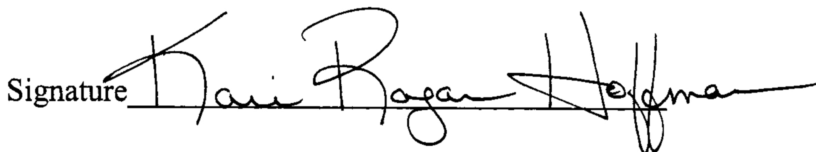

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Abstract

The Ballad of Baby Doe: Historical Accuracy and Gender Ideology in the Characterization of Augusta and Baby Doe

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In 1956, *The Ballad of Baby Doe*, an American opera by composer Douglas Moore and librettist John Latouche, premiered in Central City, Colorado. This quintessential American opera is all the more powerful because of its true-life origins, a facet which enriches the story greatly.

Although the story is based on the real lives of the Tabors, and makes only minor adjustments to the historical accuracy in order to fit operatic convention, it unfortunately perpetuates gender ideology by choosing to portray these women with great dichotomy from who they truly were. Suzanne Cusick, noted feminist musicologist encourages us to "read with different eyes the sources others have read before (us), to ask different questions of the traditional archival sources and thus to find some of the answers." When applying this concept to the two principal heroines, Augusta and Baby Doe, there is a great deal of comparative analysis with regard to cultural convention, misogynist attitude and the perpetuation of gender ideology between their historical characters and their operatic portrayal. Furthermore, music is a powerful medium and it is imperative to consider its influence on the listener with regard to the cultural and social ramifications.

In *The Ballad of Baby Doe* we are presented with two paradoxically portrayed females who in reality were historically similar in their power, strength and independence as women living in the Victorian era. However, for the purposes of making a more effective drama, Moore and Latouche depict them as complete opposites musically and textually and further perpetuate gender ideology.

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INTRODUCTION

In 1956, *The Ballad of Baby Doe,* an American opera by composer Douglas Moore and librettist John Latouche, premiered in Central City, Colorado. This quintessential American opera is all the more powerful because of its true-life origins, a facet which enriches the story greatly. Moore and Latouche made only minor adjustments to the historical accuracies in order to fit operatic conventions. The foreword to the opera score reads: "The dramatic treatment of Tabor's life, and the two women who dominated it, closely follows the pattern of fact. Any shifts in time element and character emphasis have been made to shape the robust chronicle of these lives into the framework of the musical theatre."[1]

The opera uses as its backdrop, the gold and silver mining era of Colorado in the late nineteenth-century to tell this compelling story. The principal characters are Horace Tabor, who made millions on mining before losing it all in the silver decline; his devoted wife Augusta, whom he ultimately divorces, and the young and beautiful Lizzie McCourt

[1] Douglas Moore, *The Ballad of Baby Doe*, libretto by John Latouche, Piano/Vocal Score (New York: Chappell Music Company, 1958), foreword.

(Baby) Doe, with whom Horace falls in love and marries. The opera captures the essence of this historic time in Colorado's dramatic era, as well as the larger American scene, by utilizing certain figures of our nation's history such as William Jennings Bryan and President Chester A. Arthur. In addition, the struggle and effects of the gold and silver coinage debate and the political issues of the time are brilliantly projected through the character of Horace Tabor.

As John Moriarty describes: "Using the story of the Tabors as a springboard, the opera deals with universal truths and values. It is a story of undying love (Baby's), suffocating pride (Augusta's) and hubris punished by the gods (Horace's). Thus the story of the two Mrs. Tabors becomes Aristotelian in scope, a classic framework reinforced by the vain and superficial heroine's redemption through love."[2] It is these "universal" truths and values, to which Moriarty refers, that shall be examined in this study, specifically, with regard to the two principal female characters, Augusta and Baby Doe. There is a great deal of misogynist ideology within the cultural context of *The Ballad of Baby Doe* that warrants closer scrutiny.

Suzanne Cusick, feminist musicologist, has come to the conclusion that we must be encouraged to "read with different eyes the sources others have read before (us), to ask different questions of the traditional archival sources and thus to find some of the answers."[3] In order for tradition to be challenged we must investigate the truthfulness of the original conceptions. Cusick further believes that "we have been nearly paralyzed by

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[2] Duane A. Smith and John Moriarty, *The Ballad of Baby Doe: "I Shall Walk Beside My Love*" (Boulder: University of Colorado Press, 2002), 59.

[3] Suzanne Cusick, "Thinking from Women's Lives: Francesca Caccini after 1627," *Musical Quarterly* 77 (1993): 486.

an inchoate fear that both the negative, constricting life plots and the negative critical judgments we have defensively attributed to misogyny would prove to be true."[4]

Although Cusick was making reference to women's biographies, she speaks of a universal idea in feminist scholarship. There is a need to investigate the truthfulness of ideas or notions that have been subconsciously accepted. In her article "Thinking from Women's Lives" Cusick discusses Dominick La Capra's classic essay "Rethinking Intellectual History," which further supports this idea. He suggests that we should "read every historical document and every part of the historiographical tradition as literature, not 'fact'." [5] In other words, everything that is written encodes its own ideological agenda and perspective.

The principal sources composer Douglas Moore and librettist John Latouche used in writing *The Ballad of Baby Doe* were pamphlets and short stories written by Colorado historian Caroline Bancroft, the self proclaimed "Tabor authority of the world."[6] However, during the process of writing the commissioned opera there became a great deal of legal wrangling with Bancroft over copyright issues so Latouche made certain to reference with newspaper articles any information ascertained from Bancroft's writings.[7] Since the Tabors' lives were splattered across the newspapers for many years, making local and national headlines, there were a great many resources with which to work.

However, we need to be aware of certain aspects of these articles because of the existence of prejudices and ideology unconsciously included in the writings. Because *The*

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[4] Ibid., 485.
[5] Cusick, "Thinking From Women's Lives," 502.
[6] Smith and Moriarty, *The Ballad of Baby Doe*, 4.
[7] Lewis J. Hardee, Columbia Library Columns Volume 23, Issue 2(November, 1973): 4.

Ballad of Baby Doe is based on historical characters from the Victorian age, there is the added element of preconceived notions, which would have infiltrated the perception of these articles from both the writer and reader's outlook, specifically with regard to women's behavior. While the newspaper articles provide an historical perspective to the events of the time, they tend to perpetuate a doctrine of beliefs held by society that does not challenge the truthfulness about that which they have read. As a result, one's attitudes are influenced by current cultural ideals such as: how women were expected to behave; what was acceptable decorum; what were women's relationships to men and their place within the society and family. How do Moore and Latouche portray these historical women in the opera? What do we learn about the characterization of women as portrayed by these two men? How does the issue of power and women play itself out?

With regard to *The Ballad of Baby Doe*, following Cusick's admonition to "read with different eyes" would mean "listening with different ears," for the genre of opera includes music, a powerful medium and important element to convey ideas. Music profoundly impacts our listening in ways that we may not realize. Moore's personal philosophy understood the influence of music on its listener while including the belief that opera's main purpose was to entertain:

> Opera is the old idea of a play that is sung. It must be a play whose dramatic values are enhanced by music. Music is the most powerful emotional force there is. You get a situation enforced by music and you have the greatest theatrical expression that there can be. The great moments of opera are the most moving things that there are anywhere, and what you have to do with opera is move

> people. Opera has to be a great, true situation with conflict between characters, enhanced by the power of music. [8]

Because music exerts such powerful emotional force the medium can unknowingly perpetuate gender ideology and cultural convention. For instance, the contrast between the music of Augusta and that of Baby Doe shapes our perception of those women. Unbeknownst to the listener, the music helps to influence our emotional connection with each character. For example, Augusta's music is often edgy and chromatic while Baby Doe's music is comprised of harmonic melodies. These types of musical components help shape our ideas and judgments of Baby Doe and Augusta. Unfortunately, none of these elements represent the complex historical women found in the true lives of Augusta and Baby Doe.

Susan McClary, in her foreword to *Cecilia Reclaimed,* states that, "It is high time we began to investigate the history of music as it has participated in articulating and transmitting social beliefs, anxieties, hopes, and desires. Not because of the taint of misogyny (although we must continue to point this out whenever it occurs), but because in denying the representational dimensions of music, we also deny its very real power as a cultural medium."[9] The schematic of operatic convention employs all facets in making music a powerful medium and thereby participates in perpetuating notions of gender ideology for better or worse.

[8] Jay Harold Weitzel, "A Melodic Analysis of Selected Vocal Solos in the Operas of Douglas Moore" (Ph.D. diss., New York University, 1971), 35. Obtained during a personal interview with Douglas Moore.

[9] Susan C. Cook and Judy S. Tsou, eds., *Cecilia Reclaimed: Feminist Perspectives on Gender and Music,* with a foreword by Susan McClary (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994), xi.

One further element of note that speaks to cultural and social ramifications of this discussion is the way Moore and Latouche so vividly capture the era of Colorado in the 1880's. The Wild West lives in both language and music as listeners are transported in time. Moore believed that finding suitable subjects was a serious problem for the opera composer. In an interview he once stated, "An ideal plot demands rich, emotional content and psychological tension between the characters."[10] He believed it was difficult to make historical figures, like Lincoln, to be human beings. Moore continued, "What I like to do is to get figures that are a bit larger than life. That's why I like Baby Doe and Tabor, because they are figures that lend themselves to the extravagance of opera. Opera has got to be extravagant in order to support the idea of singing rather than speaking."[11] The Tabor's, although common everyday people, were certainly "larger than life" in their rags to riches to rags story, which is why Moore was inspired to compose this opera.

In fact, Douglas Moore had become fascinated with the story of Baby Doe many years before the opera was commissioned. Moore recounts, "When I first read the newspaper accounts of the death of Baby Doe in 1935, I began to think of writing an opera about her. Here was a woman once famous for her beauty, who had been married to the richest man in Colorado, whose wedding had been attended by the President of the United States, and who had been found frozen to death in a miserable shack beside an abandoned silver mine." He continues, "Investigating the story with a friend, I discovered other fascinating characters: Horace Tabor, who literally stumbled upon millions and lost them in his fanatical devotion to silver; Augusta, his first wife, who had sustained him

[10]Weitzel, "A Melodic Analysis," 35. Obtained during a personal interview with Douglas Moore.
[11] Ibid.

through the years of poverty, only to be mortified by his divorcing her when the young and beautiful Baby Doe appeared. I found myself always returning to the theme and wondering how it could be realized in an opera."[12] It took nearly twenty years for this vision to be realized, and in 1953 he was commissioned by the Central City Opera Association to create an original American opera that ultimately became *The Ballad of Baby Doe.*

There are many elements in *The Ballad of Baby Doe* blended together that need to be re-examined as Suzanne Cusick suggests, with "new eyes, asking different questions" so that we are able to unravel the permutations of subconscious prejudices and stereotypes. How have historical accuracies been manipulated through musical form and gender ideology and how can we enlighten these prejudices with a new approach?

Mary Ann Smart, another noted feminist musicologist, believes we should look beyond the surface to explore what is happening:

> The very predictability and absurdity of opera's plots allows them to exert sinister force on the unconscious: music facilitates a state of identification, and once the spectator is sedated by this immediacy, the plot creeps up and gently does its cultural work. . . The sinister cooperation extends even further, in that music is not only capable of smoothing over the awful fates of female characters: the wish to experience musical intensity can even make us desire their sacrifices.[13]

She speaks not only to the power of operatic plots and musical scores but cultural preconceptions and prejudices that exist in all of us.

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[12] Douglas Moore, "How *The Ballad of Baby Doe* Was Written," notes with recording The Ballad of Baby Doe (Deutsche Grammophon 2709-061), with the New York City Opera Orchestra and Chorus conducted by Emerson Buckley, with Beverly Sills, Walter Cassel, and Frances Bible.

[13] Mary Ann Smart, ed., *Siren Songs: Representations of Gender and Sexuality in Opera* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 5.

In *The Ballad of Baby Doe* we are presented with two paradoxically portrayed females who in reality were historically similar in their power, strength and independence as women living in the Victorian era. However, for the purposes of making a more effective drama, Moore and Latouche depict them as complete opposites musically and textually. A comparative analysis, both historical and operatic is warranted in order to understand how cultural convention and gender ideology are achieved in *The Ballad of Baby Doe*.

CHAPTER ONE

THE *'TAMING OF THE SHREW'*

The Ballad of Baby Doe begins in 1880 at the peak of Tabor's success. As the curtain raises, a grand celebration for the opening of the Leadville Opera House that Horace Tabor built is in full swing. It should be noted that November 20th, 1879 is the actual date of the Tabor Opera House, so this is a minor factual departure. Most importantly, this scene identifies the wealth and power of Horace Tabor in the opening chorus as the townspeople sing his praises:

> Tabor owns the op'ry house,
> Tabor owns the big hotel.
> Tabor owns this honkey tonk,
> Tabor owns the whole damn town.

Horace Tabor's portrayal from the outset of the opera is significant because this is a man for whom Augusta's life will be destroyed and Baby Doe's dreams will become reality. It is important that he is a man of stature, which makes it believable to have two such women desire him in a way that the outcome has such profound consequences. The

beginning of the opera acknowledges that Tabor is well known among the people and most importantly that he is wealthy, respected and powerful.

As the celebration unfolds, Horace Tabor joins this jovial bunch of choristers outside the saloon, and with rousing music reflective of an 1880's Colorado mining town, he tells of his great pride in the opera house. The scene continues with more praises for Horace, utilizing simple melodies, frequently syncopated rhythms and an easy-going musical flavor reminiscent of the American folk tradition that helps to capture the mining towns of Colorado.

In the rousing opening chorus Horace continues:

> You can give the credit to my wife, Augusta.
> She kept on whining this town should have some culture.
> Gives her and the ladies a chance to get all dolled up.

Although it sounds like he is praising Augusta, he is actually drawing attention to her "whining." This is the first of many backhanded compliments in the opening scene and begins a pattern of establishing his wife of twenty-five years, Augusta, as demanding and unloving. He continues:

> A fine gal is my wife Augusta.
> Never hope to meet a finer.
> Ties me to her apron strings
> Case I dig my way to China!

The assumption is made that if she "ties me to her apron strings" she somehow emasculates him and usurps his power as a man. Ultimately, these characteristics arouse empathy for Horace and begin a precedent that allows the audience to understand better why Horace divorces Augusta for Baby Doe. In the cultural context of the period, women of power threaten men and need to be put in their place.

He takes the insults one step further in another verse:

> I took the devil for a partner,
>
> But my wife she was so spiteful
>
> Satan said "I'm going home. Life in hell is more delightful."

The implication being that life in hell is better than sticking around with Augusta. Yet again, these words are unkind, unflattering and establish a context about his wife before she's even entered the stage.

When Augusta enters, the opening chorus has evolved into a full-blown song-and-dance. The celebration is abruptly interrupted both choreographically and musically with a dissonant interval of a minor second, and Augusta's rebuke of Tabor, wrenching the key from E-flat major to C minor (see Example 1):

Example 1: Augusta's Entrance, Act I Scene 1

Complex harmonies and dramatic melodic lines, as seen in Example 1, establish Augusta's often demonstrative and austere character in the opera. There is a great deal of

dissonance in her harmonic progressions and her melodic line is often quite angular and disjunct with large intervals adding to the effect of an edgy woman. Touches of dissonance underpin text or mood during tense dramatic moments. During Augusta's introduction to the audience, there is no sense of softness or warmth to her character, which is magnified by the erratic melodic line and prosaic text setting.

Furthermore, the timbre of the mezzo-soprano voice, which is dark and rich, works effectively in making Augusta's text less accessible. The thickness of the mezzo color can sometimes make the projection of words more difficult when combined with a low tessitura and full orchestration. In addition, David McKee remarks: "Augusta's prevailing time signature is 4/4, which—besides suggesting a foursquare outlook—lends a militaristic cast to her music, as does her *leitmotif*, with its double-dotting and staccato quarter notes." [14] The timbre, melodic line and rhythmic elements of Augusta's music contribute to the difficulty of the audience relating to her and therefore feeling less sympathetic to her character.

The libretto further portrays Augusta Tabor as demanding:

> Horace what is this? Have you taken leave of your senses? Just one evening can't you act with a bit of dignity, Can't you manage to cooperate in our efforts to provide some change of tone in this money grubbing town. Some touch of beauty and refinement? The ladies and I worked hard to secure artists of the highest caliber for this concert, and you men walk out in the sight of all, making us look silly there sitting in the box alone; all the more ridiculous when we find you cavorting with these harridans, dancing with these jezebels—an insult to your wives!

Horace's musical reaction to Augusta in this exchange is revealing. The militaristic aspect of the rhythm of Augusta's music dissipates when Horace begins to

[14] David McKee, "Baby Doe," 43.

sing, as the horns diminish and the violins take the harmonic lead. The violins with their sweeping lines sound romantic in nature. This contributes to his sounding more contrite than the aggressive Augusta. In addition, his melodic line, evoking images of the jovial opening scene, is a reminder of his good humor and free spirit. Clearly, Horace is represented as wanting to continue having a good time while Augusta's more serious nature has already emerged. Emphasizing the differences between Horace and Augusta through harmonic expression is one way that music permeates our unconscious and subtly achieves the perpetuation of cultural conceptions.

Within the first twenty-four pages of the opera, standard gender stereotypes have been established. The culmination of these implied characteristics makes it easier to understand why Horace leaves Augusta later in the opera. The powerful and wealthy man is married to the nagging shrew. Therefore, the stage has been set to sympathize with Horace. And yet, Augusta is powerless to change the course of their lives for it is her power, intelligence, sacrifice and tenacity that have brought them the life they desired. But, when the curtain rises on Act I Scene 1 of *The Ballad of Baby Doe* we know nothing of her many sacrifices.

AUGUSTA THE PIONEERING WOMAN

In truth, the story of Augusta Pierce Tabor is more complex than her portrayal in the opera. Born in Augusta, Maine, on March 29, 1833, she had a middle-class New England upbringing with a father who had liberal attitudes toward women allowing her a variety of cultural and educational opportunities. Augusta and her sisters were raised to

be self-confident and know their own worth. This allowed them to live confidently in what was predominantly a man's world. The Pierce family was strong supporters of the rights of women and because of this fact, Augusta and her sisters grew up feeling of equal status to the men in their lives. In addition, Augusta was chronically ill throughout her childhood and tenaciously fought for her survival until her health was restored in her twenties. This challenge helped her to develop a strong and determined spirit, a characteristic that would serve her well throughout her life.[15]

By contrast, her strength and spirit are reflected as harsh and demanding in the opera, rather than supportive and determined. Ironically, these personal traits would prove to be fortuitous and ultimately the undoing of the marriage of Augusta and Horace both historically and in the opera, although at one time Horace must have admired these qualities of self-assurance in Augusta.

Horace Austin Warner Tabor was born in Holland, Vermont, on 26 November 1830. He was 27 years old when he married Augusta on 31 January 1857. Shortly after their wedding Horace and Augusta headed to Kansas, but after two failed years of crops and news of the Pikes Peak gold rush, they headed to Colorado in May of 1859.[16] There would be many years of hardships before Horace found his good fortune. In the meantime, it was Augusta's stalwart character that would carry them through. Upon their arrival in the various camps, Augusta cleverly set up shop baking goods and doing the laundry for the gold miners. One miner is quoted as saying that "Augusta was the only woman in the camp that summer, and revered accordingly, not for feminine charm or

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[15] Smith and Moriarty, *The Ballad of Baby Doe*, 24-25.
[16] Burke, John, *The Legend of Baby Doe* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1974), 42.

beauty but for her strength of character. She settled disputes, bound up wounds, dispensed advice."[17] This was a pattern that followed her on their numerous relocations throughout Colorado and the California Gulch; and the money she earned providing these services kept her, Horace and their son afloat financially.

Eventually, Horace and Augusta settled into a comfortable routine, owning a general store. In addition, Horace served as postmaster, and even became involved in local politics. However, personal characteristics had already developed during the years of hardship for Augusta and Horace. Ultimately, these traits would be the ruin of their marriage in later years. Randie Lee Blooding describes their circumstances just before their fate changed: "Horace lived on Augusta's strength as she became comfortable and confident in guiding his life. She displayed conservative, sound business sense, balancing Horace's tendency to speculate. Due to Augusta's strength and drive, the Tabors were already middle-class merchants when Hook and Rische entered the picture."[18]

In April of 1878 their long awaited good fortune arrived in the way of two unlikely prospectors, August Rische and George Hook. As Horace often did, and at great annoyance to Augusta, he twice gave Rische and Hook the needed supplies for digging in the gold and silver prospects in exchange for a portion of their mining efforts, an enterprise called grubstaking. After digging down 26 or 27 feet, they hit a vein of extremely rich silver carbonate ore.[19] Within months Tabors' financial situation took a dramatic turn. Horace was able to invest in several mines as his income soared beyond

[17] Ibid., 45.

[18] Randie Lee Blooding, "Douglas Moore's 'The Ballad of Baby Doe': An Investigation of Its Historical Accuracy and the Feasibility of a Historical Production in the Tabor Opera House" (Dissertation, University of Ohio, 1979), 4.

[19] Smith and Moriarty, *The Ballad Doe,* 38.

his imagination. The story became legendary, propelled along by constant newspaper coverage. Tabor had stuck it out for over twenty years and finally found the fortune thousands had only hoped for. It made for good print.

As Tabor's fortune grew, so did the chasm in their marriage. The free-spending Horace was in great contrast to the conservative Augusta who never became comfortable with the new lifestyle in which Horace thrived. However, since the opera begins in 1880, over twenty years into the Tabors' marriage, there is no awareness of the pioneering days that shaped the lives of these two people. Horace is now seen as the life of the party and Augusta as the bitter and demanding wife.

THE TOUR DE FORCE

In Act I scene 3, Augusta sings her first extensive aria in the opera. This has a twofold importance: primarily, it reinforces the rigid personality already established from her introduction; and second, it conveys the disintegrating relationship between Augusta and Horace. The scene begins with Augusta searching for Horace. Ever the woman in charge, she instructs the maid as to her daily dusting, while at the same time belittling Horace for his messy desk and the management of his business affairs. Augusta goes so far as to call him "idiotic" when she discovers a check that divulges his intent to buy, yet, another mine.

Amongst the papers Augusta makes a most important discovery: she comes across a pair of white lace gloves that she mistakenly thinks are a gift for her. The recitative style monosyllabic text setting sung by Augusta in the beginning of the scene softens and

dramatically changes. For the first time, Augusta's music and personality expose a different layer that is momentarily uncovered. The prosody of American speech, so sensitively captured by Moore, changes at this moment of discovery. The solo violin set against the harp's arpeggiation in 3/4 time provides a glimpse into the heart of a younger and less austere Augusta while she recalls a time when Horace surprised her with extravagant gifts (see Example 2). Of particular importance is the fact that this is the only time in the opera that Augusta sings small melismatic flourishes on a single word, reflecting the sense of freedom she feels when she believes she is loved. Her music is momentarily less rigid, and ironically she sings her highest note of Act I, an A flat 4.

Example 2: Augusta's Youthful Recollection, Act I Scene 3

Susan McClary suggests that coloratura passages often represent some degree of escape from order, repression, form and loss of senses in her discussion of "mad scenes"

in Bel Canto Opera.[20] There seems to be a connection between coloratura and heightened emotion. Moreover, coloratura liberates the singer from text and allows one to escape into a purely musical mode of expression. While Augusta's aria hardly compares with, say, Lucia's mad scene, for example, these same principles can be applied. In her only moment of happiness experienced in the context of the opera, Augusta is momentarily free from the confinement of music or language that predominates in the rest of her role. Although the musical flourish is brief, it is strikingly different from the rest of her music and therefore emphasized. The arpeggio provides an insight into Augusta's more youthful character not conveyed in the context of the opera (see Example 3).

Unfortunately, the fact that the melismas are abbreviated solidifies that her temporary freedom is still contained within her austere character, by which she is now defined. Coloratura passages often reflect a specific aspect of a character through word and music, whether the melismas express anger, joy, sorrow or rebellion. Moore's use of this contrivance is insightful in this scene, reflecting Augusta's momentary escape from her rigidity.

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[20] For a detailed discussion on mad scenes from a feminist perspective refer to Susan McClary's *Feminine Endings*, Chapter 4, Excess and Frame: The Musical Representation of Madwomen.

Example 3: Augusta's Musical Flourish, Act I Scene 3

Furthermore, the libretto of Augusta's arioso divulges an additional perspective into their marriage. The statement she makes about having to 'scold him' for his extravagant spending has interesting implications. The word 'scold' would imply a maternal relationship to her husband, suggesting she treats him like a child at times rather than a marital partner. This notion passes without fanfare but is an important element into the eventual demise of their relationship both in the opera and real life. Yet again, an illuminated character trait, which allowed them to survive and even thrive during the difficult years now seems overbearing and inappropriate.

Unfortunately, as the scene continues to unfold, Augusta finds a card identifying the gloves as a gift intended, not for her, but, for Baby Doe. With great suddenness the horn section, reflective of Augusta's demanding nature, takes over musically with an

allegro feroce in 4/4 time (see Example 4). Her edgy temperament rapidly reemerges as she realizes the rumors of an affair are true.

Example 4: Augusta's Arioso, Act I Scene 3

Thus begins a heart-wrenching aria describing the years of labor she and Horace shared now suddenly obliterated by the younger, more beautiful Baby Doe who has entered their lives. It is worth noting that this is the only time in the opera that a glimpse into the years of hardship emerges:

Augusta: I suppose she's young and pretty,
Giddy too and frivolous to have such slender hands.
Look at my hands! They're old and red and twisted.
On them is written, in ev'ry aging wrinkle,
The record of the bitter years these hands have worked to help him.
Hands rough with working, cooking, scrubbing, mending.
Hands that even held an axe and lifted rocks to build a home;
Hands hard with labor with digging fields and tending kids,
Hands that are twisted by winters in the wilderness,
Working side by side with him to build a life together.
No, they're not pretty hands.
Not like hers! Not like hers!

Mary Ellmann, in her book *Thinking About Women*, discusses two common stereotypes of women's reaction to such a situation; passive or hysterical. The following scene does not fail to perpetuate this cliché. Augusta becomes quite heightened emotionally, especially after Horace enters the parlor. In the ensuing scene he and Augusta have their one and only extended conversation together (see Appendix 1).

Augusta's music returns to her angular melodic lines, utilizing larger leaps in opposite directions, creating an affect of a rigid and unyielding woman. Her tone becomes more demanding both textually and musically. In contrast, Horace's melody is initially composed of stepwise motion, making him sound calmer and more conversational. However, as the scene proceeds, his agitation is reflected by musically mirroring the adjunct vocal line of Augusta.

This scene provides examples of Horace's language perpetuating gender stereotypes by using phrases such as: "Now tell me what in tunket makes women so damn nosy?" and "You're not ruling the roost!" He angrily tells Augusta that his personal affairs are none of her business. He even accuses her of being the kind of women who likes to hold a man back and tie him to the ground because it makes her feel bigger to see

him knuckle under. He takes the stance of patriarchal admonition affirming that a woman's role is submissive to that of a man. Augusta responds to Horace by further belittling him for his 'shenanigans' and admonishing his behavior; "It's revolting, it's disgusting for a man of your age, Mister Tabor." The accusations culminate with Augusta's threats to drive Baby Doe out of town, even if it means the ruin of both her and Horace.

Latouche's libretto, while accurately capturing the time period and their relationship, perpetuates ideological issues of gender throughout the opera, and it does so nowhere more visibly than this scene. In addition, the heightened music perpetuates the stereotype of the hysterical woman reflected in Augusta's high tessitura of an A5 at the end of the duet. It is interesting to note that this is the highest note Augusta sings in the entire opera, which would signify Augusta's rejection of the patriarchal domination exemplified by Horace. The high tessitura, angular contour and disjunct vocal line are all elements that define an irrational or hysterical woman.

It is clear that the marriage is irrevocably broken. Historically, research confirms that as Augusta aged she became harsh in both appearance and behavior. While her New England upbringing was liberal in regard to the education of women, there was still a fundamental conservatism in her behavior and values. The quintessence of Augusta that once allowed her and Horace to survive during the difficult years is now the very element that divides them.

In real life, Augusta and Horace became friends with the mail carrier Samuel Leach. His letters from 1862 to 1863 provide great insight into the personalities of the

Tabors. For example, he once wrote, "they are considered well to do here and they certainly are thrifty like down eastern Yankees."[21] In one particular letter from 10 March 1863, Sam describes an ensuing argument he witnessed between the Tabors, in which Horace admitted wanting to make enough money so that he could live comfortably in hotels in New York or Washington three months a year. Augusta had a very different idea of their eventual years of retirement. As leach writes:

> His wife spoke up and said that she had no such thought but that they both ought to work and save as long as they were able to do so to make sure that they would be provided for in the lean years when they reached old age. She said he liked his leisure too well and did not exert himself as fully as he might do but took too much time off as it was for fishing, hunting and playing cards. She said he was too easy and if it were not for her looking out for him they would not have a dollar in the world. [22]

Another conversation Leach shares:

> The evening ended with Augusta lecturing Horace on his spending habits and how he ought to be more careful about business and not so leisurely about life. She further claimed that he did not exact himself as he should and that if she hadn't looked after the family affairs they would not have a penny. (Leach stated that he believed Augusta's claim to be true) [23]

Once they became millionaires, the differences in their outlook of lifestyle were profoundly amplified. By all accounts, it was their undoing since neither was willing to compromise their basic principles. The Tabor's marital climate was appropriately captured in the operatic scene about the gloves and reflects the eventual demise of their relationship.

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[21] Smith and Moriarty, *The Ballad of Baby Doe*, 33.
[22] Ibid.
[23]Blooding, "Douglas Moore's 'The Ballad of Baby Doe,' 39.

For Augusta, the character culminates in Act II with her dramatic final aria (see Appendix 2), "Augusta! Augusta! How can you turn away?" It must be noted that historically there is inaccuracy in regard to the timeline for this scene. In the opera, it takes place in Augusta's Denver parlor in the year 1896. In truth, Augusta died on 30 January 1895 in Pasadena, California, where she lived out her years a very wealthy woman. Regardless of the implausibility of the year, the emotions so aptly conveyed are quite reasonable in respect to what is known about Augusta's state of mind.

In the lead up to this aria, Augusta, who is now divorced, has been asked to help Baby Doe and Horace with financial problems. Although Baby and Horace are now married, they are suffering monetarily from the decline in silver prices. In this aria, Augusta berates herself for her unwillingness to help Horace and Baby Doe. Although she has moved on with her life and is financially successful, she is still crippled emotionally by the failure of her marriage.

Augusta's spectacular final aria utilizes a great deal of chromaticism as the principle element of her vocal line. Susan McClary, in the forward to Catherine Clément's *Opera, or the Undoing of Women,* provides insight by exploring the use of chromaticism in the great female opera characters. She suggests that female chromaticism ultimately leads to either tonal domination or the death of the character.[24] The fact that Augusta's demise transpires as a result of her demanding and inflexible character and the inability of Horace to control her, is represented musically in her chromaticism. She will not adhere to the diatonicism of Horace's harmonic structure and rejects his patriarchal

[24] Catherine Clément, *Opera, or the Undoing of Women*, with a foreword by Susan McClary (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), xiii.

repression by maintaining her sense of independence as reflected by this musical device. As Blooding notes, "minor 2nds are paramount in Augusta's aria, where the sliding chromatic movement adds to her characterization."[25] In a sense, this results in Augusta's death, not literally but figuratively, since Augusta's rejection of tonal domination leads to the breakdown of her marriage to Horace. Never coming to a diatonic conclusion, her character ends up sad and alone with no real cadence to her outcome. Ultimately, Augusta's tonal ambiguity allows her to be dismissed for a younger, more amenable Baby Doe, whose simple and diatonic melodies do not confront the patriarchal control represented by Horace's diatonicism. According to Clément:

> That is what catches them (operatic heroines) in a social system that is unable to tolerate their presence for fear of repudiating itself. Always, by some means or other, they cross over a rigorous invisible line, the line that makes them unbearable; so they will have to be punished. They struggle for a long time, for several hours of music, an infinitely long time, in the labyrinth of plots, stories, myths, leading them, although it is already late, to the supreme outcome where everyone knew they would have to end up.[26]

In other words, an opera that allows some tonal ambiguity must ultimately end on a cadence in the tonic triad to provide harmonic closure and resolve the instability of chromaticism.[27] In this case, the result is Augusta's being left for another woman and living out her years in isolation, banned to the banality of a woman who exerts too masculine a character.

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[25]Blooding, "Douglas Moore's 'The Ballad of Baby Doe,'" 201.
[26]Clément, *Opera, or the Undoing of Women*, foreward, xiii.
[27] Ibid., Susan McClary uses this idea in discussing *Carmen*.

Historically in the Victorian era, the failure of the marriage would have ultimately been considered Augusta's responsibility. Regardless of the estrangement between Augusta and Horace over his extravagant spending and unfaithful behavior, she did not want a divorce. Despite Augusta's desire for reconciliation, the divorce proceeded. In January of 1883, in a public courtroom full of observers, Augusta demanded to know what she would now be called. The judge advised that she would be called "Tabor." Augusta replied to the judge, "I will keep it until I die. It was good enough for me to take, and it is good enough for me to keep. I thought to thank-you for what you have done, but I cannot. I am not thankful, but it was the only thing left for me to do. I ask you to put it on the record; **not willingly asked for**." [28]

Ausma Balinkin describes the estrangement between the Tabors this way:

> Augusta's sound judgment is of little help when her own happiness is at stake, for she lacks instinctive cleverness and her ability to choose the correct course of action. While she recognizes a problematic situation, she cannot cope with the problem after she has diagnosed it. Thus she knows that her marriage is threatened by the changed life style of the Tabors, but, like the real Augusta, she fails to grasp the source of the trouble --her own inflexibility... her inability to adjust to Tabor's way of living has driven him away from her and into the waiting arms of Baby Doe who shares his hedonistic penchant for luxury.[29]

During the estrangement of the Tabors, there were threats, innuendo, and scandal, some of which played out in the newspapers and had profound political and personal effects. However, there are personal letters that provide further insight into the complex character of Augusta and enlighten the developing conception.

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[28] *Leadville's Story of Baby Doe Tabor*, produced and directed by David Wright, Volume III, University Systems, Inc., 2001, DVD.

[29] Ausma Balinkin, *The Central WOMEN Figures in Carl Zuckmayer's Dramas* (Bern: Switzerland, 1978), 44.

In a letter dated 25 April 1882, Horace's sister writes to him about her recent visit:

> . . . of course, I see the Leadville papers and know of the course Gusta is taking and must say she has much audacity. I do not blame you for leaving her. You could not bear her fretting and complaining any longer. I saw enough when I was in Denver. Never satisfied with one thing you did or anything you got for her. Neither house, carriage, diamonds nor anything you did ever pleased her. I have gotten tired of her letters of complaint to me and have not written her for some time.[30]

This letter supports the more demanding aspects for which Augusta became known. However, two letters written by Augusta to Horace are in sharp contrast, conveying a softer and more vulnerable side of Augusta. The first was written on 3 September 1881:

> Dear Husband, I am in town and would like very much to go to the Tabor Grand and witness the glory that you are to receive. Believe me that none will be more proud of it than your broken hearted wife.
>
> Will you not take me there and by so doing stop the gossip that is busy with our affairs.
>
> God knows that I am truly sorry for our estrangement and will humble myself in the dust at your feet if you will only return. Whatever I said to you was done in the heat of passion and you know the awful condition that I was in when it was said—pity I beseech you and forgive me and let us bury the past and commence anew and my life shall be devoted to you forever. Your Loving Wife.[31]

The second letter was written January of 1883 after their public divorce proceedings;

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[30] Blooding, "Douglas Moore's 'The Ballad of Baby Doe,'" 21.
[31] Wright, *Leadville's Story of Baby Doe Tabor*, Volume III.

> Dear Husband, I am happy to say that I am not divorced and that you are still mine...When I went into court and swore that I that (sic) had not concented (sic) to it willingly and I have since accertained (sic) that the divorce is null and void. Now this is the 26th anniversary of our wedding...there is no need to having our case dragged (sic) through court again. And I am your wife I shall stand upon my rights.[32]

Ultimately, as the sordid details and the many conflicting accounts of the scandal were played out in the newspapers, the people of Colorado saw Augusta as the victim and Horace as the villain. In the end, both of Augusta's letters were to no avail, and she eventually accepted the situation.

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[32] Ibid.

CHAPTER TWO

'ALWAYS THE REAL THING BABY'

Within the context of the opera, we are presented with Augusta's antithesis in the character of Elizabeth McCourt "Baby" Doe. Similar to Augusta's operatic entrance, which defines her as the shrew, Baby's stage entrance exemplifies her nature from the moment she walks on stage. She is a sweet and charming woman with a vibrant and enchanting personality. Baby's personality is magnified because of its stark contrast to Augusta, an important distinction with regard to the opera and the portrayal of these two women.

Musically, this divergence manifests itself in several areas. For example, Augusta's entrance music is dissonant and angular as previously discussed, while Baby Doe's sentimental melodies are warm with diatonic contours and simple, unchanging meters. Our introduction to Baby comes in the form of a waltz tune, her signature tempo, with the first encounter between her and Horace (see Example 5).

Example 5: Baby Doe's Entrance, Act I Scene 1

The character of Baby Doe was written for a coloratura soprano, a Fach, whose purity in sound, further contrasts with the fuller and deeper lyric-mezzo color of Augusta's voice. Additionally, because the coloratura voice has a lighter timbre the diction is often easier to understand, thereby allowing the audience to make an emotional connection with her character. The lovely waltz tune is accompanied by words warranting sympathy for this young woman who is alone in a new city:

> ***Baby***: I beg your pardon. Can you direct me to the Clarendon Hotel? I've just arrived from Central City, so I don't know my way about. Cousin Jack there knows little English I have to find the way by myself.

Standing before him, Horace discovers a young, beautiful woman in need of help. He responds to Baby in the same waltz tempo and melodic line:

> ***Horace***: Yonder is the Clarendon and welcome to our city. My name is Horace Tabor. If I can be of any help I hope you'll let me know.

This charming but brief interaction provides the basis for the drama about to unfold. Unfortunately, it ends with another of Augusta's austere interruptions and the audible annoyance in her voice which clearly foreshadows events about to unfold: "Horace, we're waiting!" Baby Doe and Horace have one last, brief exchange

foreshadowing the importance of this unexpected first encounter. The sexual connection between Horace and Baby Doe has been forged and their fate sealed.

While this is an opera based on historical characters, elements of personalities have been magnified for dramatic affect. Just as we knew nothing about the real Augusta upon her entrance in the opera, the pioneering woman who endured great hardships, the same is true to our operatic introduction to Baby Doe.

A CHILD OF BEAUTY

Although Baby Doe appears to be Augusta's antagonist in the opera, historically they shared many similarities. Elizabeth Bonduel McCourt (Baby Doe) was born in 1854 in Oshkosh, Wisconsin to Peter McCourt, Sr. and Elizabeth Nellie. "Lizzie" was the fourth child born of thirteen children, although several died in infancy. By all accounts she was a beautiful child with curly golden hair and striking blue eyes, likened to a cherub. Her parents were devout Irish Catholics who had immigrated to Wisconsin where Peter McCourt found prosperity as a tailor. With a partner, Mr. McCourt eventually opened a clothing and custom-tailoring establishment.[33] Lizzie spent a great deal of time at this store honing her skills as a charming and flirtatious young lady. John Burke describes such a scene this way:

[33]Judy Nolte Temple, "Fragments as Diary: Theoretical Implications of the Dreams and Visions of 'Baby Doe Tabor'. In *Inscribing the Daily: Critical Essays on Women's Diaries*, eds. Suzanne L. Bunkers and Cynthia A. Huff (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1996), 73.

> Then as later she avoided the company of her own sex as much as possible. She loved to linger behind the counters with their scent of tweed, worsted and broadcloth intermingling with that of cigar smoke-hearty masculine smells. She had long ago decided that her ambitions would not take her in the direction of ladies' sewing circles, quilting bees, or parish teas. And more than anything, being a daddy's darling, spoiled as none of her sisters were by Peter McCourt and her brothers, always conscious of her effect on men, she was delighted when one of the customers, passing to or from the sitting room, would stop and tell her father, "Beautiful daughter you have there, McCourt. Aren't you afraid someone will steal her away?"[34]

Even as a child, Lizzie's identity was found in her beauty and in her ability to charm the men who surrounded her. The fact that her beauty was so highly regarded is an important element to Baby Doe's characters both historically and operatically. Tribute was often paid to her looks, as can be read in this note by a complete stranger:

> Pardon, if you care, the intrusion of this note and the very great presumption of the writer—I am well aware that I am trampling under foot all well-defined laws and rules of etiquette and good manners. I am the gentleman who sat second seat back of you and finally went forward with book in hand to read on train this a.m. I noticed you when you first entered the car and was greatly impressed by your very interesting face. Sitting directly back of you I had fair opportunity to study it unobserved and speculate in my own mind as to the many noble qualities of heart and mind its owner must possess.[35]

However, Baby Doe was more than just the beauty for which she was noted. One of the most foretelling stories about the strength of character and personality of Baby is an account of her entering a skating contest sponsored by the Congregational Church in 1876-77. The contest was essentially for young Protestant men and as a Catholic female

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[34] Burke, John, *The Legend of Baby Doe* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1974), 10.
[35] Blooding, "Douglas Moore's 'The Ballad of Baby Doe,'" 6.

she created quite a spectacle as an unexpected entry. Lizzie won not only 1st prize in the ice-skating contest, but the admiration of Harvey Doe, a young man from a prominent Protestant family in Oshkosh, whose father was a prosperous lumber merchant.

After an appropriate period of courting, Harvey Doe Jr. and Elizabeth McCourt (Baby Doe) were married on 27 June 1877 and left immediately for Central City, Colorado, where they began to work a family mining claim given to them by Harvey's father. However, it did not take long for the new bride to discover that because of Harvey's lack of work ethic and inability to make a living the mining efforts were failing. Instead of giving up, Baby chose to dress in miner's clothes and work alongside the men in an effort to save the mine. Temple discusses the sensation this created: "According to legend, Elizabeth's beauty earned her the affectionate nickname of 'Baby' from the miners, and her labors (in overalls) beside her lackluster husband gained their admiration."[36] This caused a great deal of distress around the as yet, unliberated town of Central City. The endearing nickname "Baby" stuck and was used frequently by both Elizabeth's mother and, later, her husband Horace.

By March of 1880, after several tries to make her marriage work, and failing their attempt to make the mining properties successful, Baby divorced Harvey. She then moved to Leadville, Colorado, which had a reputation as a free-spirited city and a great deal of success with the silver rush. This is the point at which Baby Doe is introduced into the opera. Ironically, just as Augusta's years as a pioneering woman are not included in the opera, neither are the strength and independence of Baby. She must have possessed

[36] Temple, "Fragments as Diary," 73.

these qualities to have divorced her husband and moved to a strange city alone in the Victorian era.

A WOMAN OF SUBSTANCE

Baby Doe's well-loved aria in Act I, "Willow Song" provides the first extended glimpse into her operatic character. The aria begins with Baby Doe sitting at the piano, singing a simple melody recalled from her youth. The orchestration is light at first, reflecting the simplicity of the song and then swelling to lush, romantic coloring as the aria progresses. As David McKee notes: "Moving in small, stepwise progressions, Baby Doe's music is largely diatonic, its coloratura understated, the proliferation of black notes lending it a folkish hue. The 'Willow Song' is shaped in the eight-bar increments of popular song."[37]

The folkish quality of her music is part of what makes *The Ballad of Baby Doe* a wonderful example of an American opera; it additionally lends itself to building a relationship with the audience because of its simplistic tunes. Kathlynn Emel notes Moore's style: "(He) wrote melodic lines and accompaniment in a manner reminiscent of sentimental operettas in vogue sixty to eighty years ago, his purpose being to suggest this period."[38] "Willow Song" is a prime example of this style and is successful in allowing the audience an emotional connection with the endearing Baby Doe (see Example 6).

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[37] McKee, "The Ballad of Baby Doe," 43.

[38] Kathlynn Emel, "Douglas Moore's The Ballad of Baby Doe" (Masters Thesis (Covering Paper) Central Washington University, 1981), 18.

Example 6: Baby's Melismatic Passage, Act I Scene 2

The use of melismatic passages creates another element of interest in "Willow Song." Her coloratura voice sings beautiful melismas containing the highest notes of the opera. At this point Baby is at her most independent, and the fioratura is representative of this fact. Just as melismas represent Augusta's brief departure from rigidity, Baby's melismas identify a sense of freedom. She is not connected to a man or a relationship, and momentarily stands on her own. Furthermore, the fact that she sings her highest note, a D6 above the staff, supports her feeling of autonomy (see Example 7). It is interesting to note that these musical elements occur early in the opera before the restrictions that come from dependence on a male counterpart. Male dominance has not contained her fiery spirit at this point. Although the fact that she has just left her first husband and moved to a new city has not been divulged, musically the arpeggiated vocal line, melismas, and high notes of "Willow Song" are reflective of her momentary freedom from the containment that was the consequence of patriarchal control.

Example 7: Baby Doe's Use of Tessitura, Act I Scene 2

As a result of the tender character to Baby's music we hear a softer side of Horace in his heartfelt aria "Warm as the Autumn Light" that follows Baby's "Willow Song." Although his aria changes meter to accommodate the prosody, it is always sung with a seamless legato line helping the audience to understand that Horace is falling in love with Baby Doe. "The expansive cantilena of this aria is partly a function of Moore's metrical *souplesse*- 12/8, 6/8, 9/8 and 3/4 are juxtaposed in four consecutive measures at one point. (Similar flexibility of pulse keeps the opera's lengthy stretches of heightened recitative lively and engrossing.) The coda that accompanies Tabor's kissing of Baby Doe's hand signifies the moment where the drama's seal is set."[39] It is in the musical tenderness they show each other, and how they mirror each other musically that their fate is understood.

Furthermore, we begin to identify the warmer, kinder, and more likeable Horace as opposed to the rebellious, angry husband of Augusta. This scene is essential in foreshadowing the character changes, musically and textually, allowing the audience's acceptance of this adulterous affair and the demise of the shrewish wife.

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[39] Ibid., 43.

Scholars have debated whether Baby arrived in Leadville to seek her fortune in the arms of the now famous Horace Tabor, or whether they merely met by coincidence. It is implied that the reputations of Baby Doe and Horace have preceded their first meeting. In the interlude between Baby's aria, "Willow Song," and Horace's aria, "Warm as the Autumn Light," they sing:

> ***Baby***: Oh, Mister Tabor you startled me! I had no idea anyone was listening.
> ***Horace***: Baby Doe! Baby Doe! Baby Doe! That's the prettiest name I ever had the luck to hear!
> ***Baby***: You know my name. How is that possible?
> ***Tabor***: Baby Doe, the miner's sweetheart. I'm just a miner too!
> ***Baby***: But you are Horace Tabor, fabulous Horace Tabor, and no one ever mentioned you're still a young man. Amazing Horace Tabor, with hair like a raven's wing. Eyes afire with dreaming like a boy of seventeen.

Are we to assume that Horace and Baby Doe knew each other by reputation previous to their encounter? Moore and Latouche certainly imply this by the exchange. Some debate among aficionados of the opera has been warranted by this question. One must conclude that either this is a "love at first sight" encounter or Baby Doe is actually a gold digger who premeditated this meeting, in fact, moved to Leadville to facilitate an introduction.

Since there is no historical evidence of their first meeting or any pre-meditation on the part of Baby Doe, we shall never know the truth. According to Randie Lee Blooding, he defines at least three different stories with regard to this fateful event. One story is that Baby Doe, having arrived in Leadville with the intention of facilitating an introduction to Horace, met him in the Saddle Rock Restaurant one night after an opera performance. The second legend is that they were introduced by Horace's close business partner, William Bush, who had met Baby in Central City. The third is that Horace

introduced himself to Baby Doe on the streets of Leadville.[40] Moore and Latouche chose the final synopsis for their first encounter in the opera as Baby meets Horace on the street and asks for directions to the now infamous Clarendon Hotel.

The historical Baby Doe and Horace Tabor must have heard of each other. His Leadville silver find in the late 1870's made national news. As Baby was interested in investing in various mines, and had in fact owned a mine with her first husband, one must assume Tabor's reputation was known to her. Moreover, Horace had a brother in Central City whom he often visited at a time when Baby Doe was living there.[41] They must have crossed paths even if they were never formally introduced.

Furthermore, Baby Doe's beauty was legendary in Colorado, and a young woman, who "donned miners clothes" and worked along side the men in a mine her husband's family owned certainly would have been worthy of gossip. Is it possible Baby came to Leadville in the hope of meeting the legendary Horace Tabor? It is likely that Baby meant to better her position in life, and by all accounts she used her endless charms on men to get her way.

With regard to the opera, however, Duane Smith and John Moriarty see this as a necessary assumption: "It must be accepted that Baby Doe deliberately goes after Horace for the wealth and position he represents. A commonplace operatic love-at-first-sight situation would not have been worthy of John Latouche, nor would it have led to any

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[40]Blooding, "Douglas Moore's 'The Ballad of Baby Doe,'" 12.
[41] Wright, "Leadville's Story of Baby Doe Tabor," Volume I.

kind of interesting development. On the other hand, a relationship that begins as a rather tawdry affair and that turns into something quite different is entirely stage worthy."[42]

When one filters the conversations between Horace and Baby Doe through that perspective, we can understand the brilliance and forethought of Moore and Latouche in shaping the opera. Without passing judgment or making their intentions certain, if one knows the story, certain implications can be found. Upon re-examination of their first encounter in Act I scene 1, a different sentiment can be ascertained. After Baby asks for directions, she sings provocatively "indeed we'll meet again Horace Tabor" (see Example 8). This simple statement takes on new meaning and importance with possible implications about Baby Doe's intentions.

Example 8: Baby Doe's Foreshadowing of Events, Act I Scene 1

Moreover, the scene in the Clarendon Hotel lobby, which follows Baby and Horace's first encounter, also has interesting connotations. Baby's "Willow Song" is a simple melody recalled from her youth, not really having anything to do with the drama that unfolds in the opera. However, one must wonder if she is aware Horace is watching her as she sits playing the piano and singing. If that is the case, the aria becomes a song

[42]Smith, *The Ballad of Baby Doe "I shall Walk Beside My Love,"* 51.

of seduction rather than a recollection of her youth. The possibility of premeditation on Baby's part with regard to Horace creates an interesting perspective from the audience's point of view.

In Act I scene 4, Baby sings another beautiful aria called "The Letter Aria." This song is even more revealing and provides greater insights into her portrayal in the opera. In this aria Baby is writing a letter to her mother, telling her of the unfolding events:

> Dearest Mama, I am writing for I'm lonely and distressed. I am staying here in Leadville without Harvey, by myself. Everything is over now between us, he has left me and it's better that way too. I never loved him, we weren't suited. When two people feel that way they shouldn't stay together.
>
> Mama dear, you often told me that I was beautiful, and that my beauty deserved to find a man someday so rich, a man so powerful, that he could give me anything and make me like a princess in olden days, and so I waited hoping someday he would come.
>
> Dearest Mama, now I've found him, and he loves me truly too. Every moment we're together we both know it had to be. But dear Mama he's not free to marry, it is wrong for us to feel the way we do. I know he needs me, and that I love him, but I have to give him up and we must part forever.

There are three important revelations: first, that she never loved her first husband Harvey; second, that she was raised with the understanding that her beauty would bring great rewards; and third, the nature of Baby's integrity as she realizes that, in spite of her and Horace's feelings for one another, the relationship cannot continue because he is married.

Whether Baby Doe and her first husband, Harvey Doe were ever truly in love will be forever lost to history. Research shows that Harvey came from a well-to-do Protestant family in Oshkosh, Wisconsin. Their marriage would have been viewed as a great success by Baby's family. According to Temple, however, "she disrupted the wealthy

Protestant family of Harvey Doe by marrying the favored son and not renouncing her Catholicism."[43] There is some indication that due to Harvey's coddled upbringing, he did not have the strong character for which Baby would have hoped. Their brief marriage seemed to have endured great strife.

From an historical perspective, Baby is said to have understood the effect her beauty would have on those around her. She knew how to use her many charms. Therefore it would have been in character for Baby to tell her mother that she recalls being told her beauty would bring her a rich and powerful man. Unfortunately, from the feminist perspective, this reinforces the notion that women are identified and rewarded for their beauty, as if this were her only attribute worthy of bringing life's successes.

Ruth Solie identifies two versions for women's stories: "And what are the available female stories? Again at the mythic level there are but two: "happily ever after" or "she came to a bad end." Both of these stories focus tenaciously on the appropriateness of the heroine's behavior-she is either rewarded for virtue (with marriage) or punished for transgression (with death); neither story is of the slightest use in explaining or evaluating a life whose very triumphs result from the refusal to behave in "appropriate" ways."[44] In the case of *The Ballad of Baby Doe*, Baby's beauty equates to the female story of "happily ever after" as a result of the man she marries. Her story is then filtered through his life and accomplishments, rather than through her own achievements. It was internalized in Baby Doe to take care of men, and to be adored and rewarded for her

[43]Temple. "Fragments as Diary," 73.
[44] Ruth A. Solie, "Changing the Subject." *Current Musicology 53* (Fall 1992): 56.

external beauty. Therefore, she has no sense of needing to create her own successful life experience outside of the context of her husband.

In contrast, Augusta represents the opposite perspective Solie suggests; the she-came-to-a-bad-end story. Her liberal upbringing meant women could accomplish their own dreams and there was no need to submit to stereotypical feminine traits. She was raised to believe women were seen as equals, and in the opera this characteristic becomes more masculine in pretense. Although Augusta does not die within the scope of the opera like many women who succumb to the stereotyped "bad end", ultimately she does become isolated and alone, equating her to the same outcome. As Ruth Solie suggests, "Women whose aspiration is that their work should be indistinguishable from men's, or who place their faith in the gender-neutrality of "excellence," or who do in fact behave just like their male counterparts . . . their lives have continued to be found wanting in "womanhood." Not to belabor the point, most "great" women will turn out to have been "bad" women, according to one or another of society's dictates."[45]

In that case, doesn't Baby Doe also fall into the "bad woman" category that society often dictates? Historically, she was perceived to be a calculating and gold-digging hussy intent on winning the heart of Horace Tabor. It would take many years before evidence to the contrary, for when Horace lost all his money the community watched Baby Doe stand by him through poverty and death. Eventually they realized there existed a possibility that this was a relationship founded in love not fortune.

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[45] Solie, "Changing the Subject," 57.

In fact, the final section of Baby's "The Letter Aria" reveals a woman of integrity and morality. She realizes, although her feelings for Horace are genuine, she must leave him because it is wrong for them to continue the affair. Moore and Latouche portray a woman who, while having an adulterous relationship, wants to do the right thing. Once again, this gains the audience's sympathy so that the infidelity is replaced with the notion of true love and sacrifice.

'THE LEADVILLE *LIEBESTOD*'

Like Augusta, Baby Doe sings a remarkable and heart wrenching final aria. The end of Act II scene 5 provides one of the most beautifully written operatic finales, and includes her final song. It is set on the stage of the Tabor Grand Theater in 1899, nineteen years after the opening of Act I. This is an appropriate setting for Horace's death scene and Baby's final song, since the opera house represents the triumphant rise and dramatic fall of Horace's remarkable life.

As the scene begins to unfold, Horace enters the opera house initially unrecognized by the stage doorman since he has aged a great deal from his height of success. Horace is obviously ill and begins to have flashbacks of his life represented in the form of "ghosts of the past" who list his achievements and failures. His failure to Augusta must still be on his mind since she mediates throughout most of Horace's final scene. In her first appearance, Horace confuses Augusta with his mother, who must have assessed him as a failure as a young boy, just as Augusta echoed later in his life:

Tabor:	Fightin' in school again and stealin' too, I hear. You're the image of your Paw, a worthless no account. Why can't you be like your brother Lem, a hard working God fearing man? But no you're like your Paw, Jack o' Dreams drowned in whiskey.

Eventually, he recognizes the voice as Augusta's, who is now revealed with a younger, gayer appearance:

Tabor:	Good afternoon, Miss Pierce.
Augusta:	You may call me Augusta. We've known each other a year now.
Tabor:	Augusta! Augusta!
Augusta:	Named for the city of my birth. How do you like Augusta, Maine?
Tabor:	I like the city, but even more do I prize its lovely daughter. Ma'am, I'm just a stone cutter working in your father's quarry. But I've got ideas in my head. I'm goin' to be someone, someday soon!

The distant past evolves into the more recent past when he first became rich. Musical recollections from the beginning of the opera recall the height of Tabor's success. Augusta allows Horace a glimpse into his future, telling him that his daughter Elizabeth will run away and change her name so nobody will call her Tabor, and his other daughter, Silver Dollar, will become an alcoholic, drug addict and woman of ill repute.

Augusta's final words to Horace sum up not only her place in his life, but also in the opera: "Look at me, Horace. You see me through your eyes. You do not see me truly as I was." Because of Horace and Augusta's unwillingness to compromise their fundamental beliefs, they were never able to embrace each other wholly. As Balinkin comments, "The problematic woman figure (Augusta) shows a rigidity which mirrors the worst shortcoming of the protagonist: neither is able or willing to adjust to the other."[46] Certainly, in the case of *The Ballad of Baby Doe*, we see Augusta through the eyes of Moore and Latouche and not truly as she was.

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[46] Balinkin, *The Central WOMEN Figures*, 32.

Baby Doe enters the stage, not as a ghost like Augusta, but as herself in the present:

> ***Baby***: Horace, Horace, they told me you were ill!
> ***Tabor***: Baby, have you come to tell me I have failed you, failed you as well?
> ***Baby***: Dearest, I have come to take you home.
> ***Tabor***: There's tears on your face. I can touch the tears. Then you are real! (Speaking to the ghost of Augusta who is no longer there) What have you to say of her? You cannot divide us.
> ***Baby***: No one can divide us. I will always walk beside you.
> ***Tabor***: And you'll remember me
> ***Baby***: And I'll remember you
> ***Tabor***: Always and forever?
> ***Baby***: Always and forever.
> ***Baby***: You look so weary. Rest a little. It's been a long day.
> ***Horace***: You were always the real thing, Baby. The only real thing.

With the erratic beat of the timpani echoing his heartbeat, Horace dies in Baby's arms as she sings her final aria, "Always through the Changing." During this aria, the passage of thirty-six years is understood when she removes the hood of her cloak to reveal white hair and a much older Baby Doe. An image of the Matchless Mine is projected onto the stage as Baby sings her final words:

> Always through the changing of sun and shadow, time and space,
> I will walk beside my love in a green and quiet place.
> Proof against the forms of fear, no distress shall alter me.
> I will walk beside my dear, clad in love's bright heraldry.
>
> Sound the battle's loud of alarms. Any foe I shall withstand.
> In the circle of his arms I am safe in Beulah land.
> Passion fades when joy is spent, lusts is lure for gold and crime,
> Beauty's kiss is transient. Love alone is fixed in time.
> Death cannot divide my love, all we sealed with living vows.
> Warm I'll sleep beside my love, in a cold and narrow house.
>
> Never shall the mourning dove, Weep for us in accents wild.
> I shall walk beside my love, who is husband, father, child.
> As our earthly eyes grow dim, still the old song will be sung.
> I shall change along with him, so that both are ever young, ever young.

Baby's final aria in the opera reveals what the townsfolk of Leadville, Colorado, came to understand historically; Horace and Baby Doe had a true and enduring love for

one another. Furthermore, we come to appreciate that behind her beauty and charm was a woman of abiding strength. Both in history and the opera, Baby comes to stand by the Matchless Mine, which has monumental significance with regard to the story of the Tabors. As the legend goes, Horace told Baby to hold on to the Matchless Mine on his death bed, believing it would one day bring them wealth and restore them to their previous social status.

Throughout the opera Baby Doe has been sweet and supportive, singing diatonic harmonic structures in the form of waltzes, and dismissing any ideas that she should control Horace's behavior such as his excessive spending. Yet, we now see a woman willing to endure thirty-six years of poverty to honor the love she once shared with Horace. Musically, Baby's final aria "Always Through the Changing" contains some of her most harmonically complex sonorities, especially in contrast to the rest of her music. In particular, the section where she sings: "Death cannot divide my love; all we sealed with living vows" (see Example 9). During the thirty-six years that transpire during the aria her maturity of character is reflected through the developing musical components.

Example 9: Baby's Final Aria, "Always Through the Changing" Act II Scene 5

Ultimately, Baby learns to accept Horace in a way Augusta never could, in her own words, she accepts him as "husband, father, and child." Blooding summarizes: "In the final aria, Baby Doe must convey an everlasting faith in the memory of her husband and their life together. She wins the sympathy of the audience because her love was not rewarded with a return of money. She receives the audience's respect for her determination in forsaking the material world for her ideals."[47] In 1935 Lizzie McCourt "Baby Doe" Tabor was found frozen to death at the Matchless Mine after maintaining a long vigil from the time of her husband, Horace's death in 1899.

[47]Blooding, "Douglas Moore's 'The Ballad of Baby Doe,'" 49.

CHAPTER THREE

NEVER THE TWAIN SHALL MEET

For the purposes of operatic plot development, Baby Doe and Augusta have two pivotal meetings that add to the heightened dramatic affect and further the emotional complexities. They come in the form of two public confrontations between the leading ladies. Historically, there is no evidence to support such encounters between Augusta and Baby Doe. Yet, a Rocky Mountain News article of 1935 states that such a meeting took place in 1884 when Augusta visited Baby Doe at her private quarters, not in public. Furthermore, they both attended the wedding of Maxy, Horace and Augusta's son, although no confrontation is recorded.[48]

In the opera, Baby Doe and Augusta's interactions magnify their many differences, specifically with regard to the writing of Douglas Moore and John Latouche. Augusta, the very complex, sexless, and rigid woman who embraces masculine traits is effectively contrasted with the simple, beautiful, supportive, undemanding, and sexy

[48]Blooding, "Douglas Moore's 'The Ballad of Baby Doe,'" 17.

Baby Doe who exemplifies the feminine characteristics valued by cultural convention. Balinkin describes two very specific women found in Carl Zuckmayer's version of the Tabor story, *Das Leben des Horace A.W. Tabor* which can be applied to the operatic version: "There is the young, uncomplicated girl who is free from inner conflict. Willingly she accepts her destiny which demands that she carry out a selfless mission of love. In pursuing her mission she finds her own fulfillment in the perfect peace and harmony of death. Unmistakably distinct from the child-woman is the complex, flawed personality whom inner discord directs inward and towards self-isolation. She reaches out not to give but to receive."[49]

THE FIRST MEETING

Act I scene 3 provides the first opportunity for an encounter. Baby Doe has just finished singing "The Letter Aria," which informs her mother of the current situation. Baby has resolved to end her relationship with Horace knowing their being together cannot be justified. Augusta furiously enters the lobby of the Clarendon Hotel having just confronted Horace about the discovered gloves. The ensuing scene reveals the stark contrast in the characters of these women both musically and textually. Baby's beautiful music, filled with period flavored tunes, is brought to an abrupt cadence upon the entrance of Augusta, whose music contains a militaristic rhythm utilizing a great deal of melodic minor seconds familiar to her harmonic structure.

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[49]Balinkin, *The Central WOMEN Figures,* 44.

Augusta: Excuse me, but aren't you missus Harvey Doe?
Baby: Yes, I am.
Augusta: I'm Augusta Tabor, Missus Horace Tabor.
Baby: Yes, I know.
Augusta: I'll save you time and mine by telling you frankly I know all about you, about you and Horace. I've come here to warn you that there will be trouble, serious trouble if there's not an end to it.
Baby: Yes, you're entirely right.
Augusta: I'm glad you're reasonable, that's more than I can say for any of the others. I suppose he's told you that there have been others?
Baby: Yes, he has, but what I feel is different from women like that.
Augusta: Is it really! I fail to see the difference.

After these initial words, Baby returns to her signature 3/4 waltz tempo and diatonic harmonic progressions in the following arioso. Believing that Augusta surely would understand the unique privilege of serving a man of such greatness, Baby hopes to enlighten Augusta to the needs of her own husband:

> **Baby**: I knew it was wrong, but I was so deep in trouble and he was my haven. You know how fine he is, how tender and strong. We have done nothing we should be ashamed of. I needed help and he was kind to me, but that was all, Missus Tabor, please believe me, that was all!
>
> I'm not good at judging people. Live and let live is my motto. Have a good time if you can. But how can one judge, or question or doubt for a moment, a man of such greatness? Unusual men all have unusual ways. All we can do is to try to be worthy. That is our duty that is our privilege.
>
> Now I am leaving, Missus Tabor, but I beg you try to understand.
> He must be free to follow his destiny, for he is above all conventional way.

Augusta, having a different regard for the situation, responds accordingly:

Augusta: Privilege! Unusual! Ha! You don't know him! The man is a child. Horace is a weakling. Too big for his britches. The mine was pure luck. He didn't discover it. He grubstaked two old drunks, and you know Lady Luck and drunks. They stumbled on a mine and Horace bought it from'em. The mine was so rich that even a spendthrift like Horace couldn't spend all the money it made.

It's I who have to manage; it's always been that way. Horace may complain about me; say I'm harsh and stingy too. But my dear, he'll never leave me. Without me he'd be lost!

And so you're leaving, Missus Doe. You won't be seeing him any more. We'll, I can't say that I'm sorry, and I'm glad you've got some sense. We probably won't meet again, so I should say good-bye.

After Augusta's monologue and exit, Baby fervently tears apart the letter to her mother. She now realizes that leaving a man such as Horace in the arms of Augusta would be a mistake. Baby believes it is her destiny to understand and take care of him. Shortly thereafter, Horace enters, having been told that Baby Doe was leaving town, but with great relief discovers she has decided to stay. They declare their love for one another and decide that this love will endure all, including the judgments of others.

The complexity of Augusta's music is greatly contrasted with the simplicity of Baby Doe, elevating a strong dichotomy between them. Moore excels in composing in a way that permeates our subconscious and affirms opinions already established, because his depiction of characters is easily identifiable. Augusta's music, like her personality, is more structurally complex. It features accented dissonance, which reflects the friction Augusta brings to her scenes (see Example 10).

Example 10: Augusta Confronts Baby, Act I Scene 4

Rhythmic lines are often dotted and melodic lines are angular, creating a more disjunct vocal line in any given phrase. Monosyllabic text setting sung by the darker, more masculine timbre of the mezzo-soprano voice, adds to Augusta's melodic line sounding more aggressive.

In contrast, the simplicity of Baby Doe's character is reflected in her diatonic melodies with her predominant waltz time signature. Except for moments of heightened emotion, Moore continues to use a monosyllabic text setting making the entire opera more conversational and stylistically less like grand opera. Starkly different from Augusta's monosyllabic text setting, though, is that Baby's music is combined with simple, flowing, melodic lines which employ stepwise motion or intervals of a third. Her

melody is very likeable warranting a warm response from the audience (see Example 11). As previously mentioned, the coloratura soprano provides significant contrast with the mezzo soprano timbre. This makes Baby easier to understand and in the context of these melodies and harmonies, invites the audience into the warmth of her sound.

Example 11: Baby and Augusta's Encounter, Act I Scene 4

THE SECOND MEETING

The second encounter between Augusta and Baby Doe occurs near the opening of Act II. The year is 1893; ten years after Baby Doe and Horace were married. Everyone is at the governor's ball in Denver. Augusta arrives in the hopes of warning Baby of their impending financial ruin due to the recent decline in silver. While at first Baby believes Augusta has come in anger, she eventually realizes Augusta has come out of genuine concern.

There are several important elements to this encounter. First, the passing of years has softened Augusta's heart. Her voice takes on a warmer, more welcoming tone, and

her melodic lines are much gentler, especially when she acknowledges that Baby has been happy all these years because of her and Horace's great love for one another (see Example 12).

Andante espressivo

Yes, you have been hap - py, Too hap - py, I fear. You see, my

dear, a love that is larg - er than ev - 'ry day Of - fends most peo - ple. Most peo-ple

Example 12: Augusta and Baby's Second Encounter, Act II Scene 1

Second, the two women admit long held repentance. Augusta goes so far as to acknowledge that her marriage to Horace was problematic long before Baby entered their lives and Baby apologizes for any wrong she has done to Augusta.

However, when the conversation turns to discussing business affairs, the softening of Augusta dissipates, and the stern woman returns. This is reflected in Augusta's music that brings back musical elements already familiar from previous scenes, sung resolutely as in Act I.

Of great interest in this scene is Baby's admission that she has "no head for bus'ness." She is surprised when Augusta discloses that Horace is mortgaged to the hilt

due to bad business decisions, one of which is hanging onto the Matchless Mine. But Baby feels powerless to intervene. As a matter of fact, this operatic admission is quite contrary to the historical Baby Doe. It is well acknowledged that she helped Horace with his business dealings through the troubled 1890's, especially when Horace was away in Mexico in his last-ditch effort to find a paying gold or silver mine. As Burke notes, "She most certainly conducted Horace Tabor's Colorado affairs while he was in Mexico trying to resurrect (unsuccessfully) an old Mexican mine in hopes of reviving his own fading fortunes. Tabor, for instance, wrote Baby Doe in February 1894 advising her not to worry as creditors pressed in on her: 'I know you will do all in your power for us none can do more'...she had given Horace one more chance to save his business empire."[50] A great deal of credit must be given to Baby Doe during this time, 1893-1894, when their fortune was quickly fading. She was separated from her husband much of the time, and creditors were hounding her while she tried to maintain their Colorado holdings.[51]

The idea of managing business affairs provides another example of cultural conventions toward women, as demonstrated by the characters of Baby Doe and Augusta in this opera. For example, Baby Doe is depicted as being unable to manage money, whereas in reality she was very much involved in their financial dealings. Since operatic context identifies her as having a feminine nature and demure personality, they affirm this notion that she couldn't possibly understand the complexities of Horace's business affairs. She therefore must yield to her husband's desires in such matters. In Baby's own words from Act II; "He (Horace) knows what is best."

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[50] Burke, *The Legend of Baby Doe,* xi.
[51] Smith, *The Ballad of Baby Doe*, 70.

By contrast, Augusta imposes herself by being very involved in handling money both in history and in the opera, embracing yet another male trait which would have been frowned upon. In truth, it is Augusta's business sense that allowed her and Horace to survive more than twenty years of pioneering. In fact, after her divorce Augusta maintained a sense of wealth through smart personal investments and died a millionaire.

Baby Doe and Augusta have been shown to share other commonalities. They were both proven to be very resilient women. Smith discusses this aspect of their personalities: "Augusta survives, one might say thrives, under the hardships of pioneer life," while Baby Doe "can be as tough-fibered as circumstances would demand, as gentle and considerate as they would allow. She can take extremes in stride; she moves from poverty to wealth and back again easily, rebounding after each setback."[52]

While Augusta thrived during the pioneering days, showing a strong backbone and willingness to persevere, she never became comfortable with the extravagant lifestyle she and Horace achieved. Balinkin makes the important observation that, "(Augusta) proves unbending when adjustment is needed in the opposite direction: she cannot cope with Tabor's sudden wealth. Her attitudinal rigidity is mirrored in her appearance: while the signs of prosperity abound all around her, she remains virtually unchanged . . . unable to adjust to changed conditions, she clings to the past, making sure that she never loses sight of the symbols of the hard pioneering days."[53] This becomes Augusta's downfall, she grasps only the simplest aspects of resiliency while Baby Doe adjusts to the more complex aspects, showing flexibility and an ability to adapt to new situations.

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[52] Smith, *The Ballad of Baby Doe,* 49.
[53] Balinkin, *The Central WOMEN Figures,* 48.

In contrast, Baby Doe is not only independent but displays remarkable resiliency to her dying breath. She came from a middle-class upbringing when she married Harvey, a young man from a wealthy family. After a period of financial struggles early in their marriage she ends the union, but not before working alongside the men to try and make the mine, and possibly the marriage, a success. When both the marriage and the mine failed, she made her choice and moved forward. Upon marrying Horace Tabor, she came into extravagant wealth for the first several years of their marriage, but eventually their American dream dissolved into extreme poverty. It is ironic that the woman who left her first husband, in part because he was not willing to make the sacrifices necessary for them to have a luxurious lifestyle, in the end so diligently hung onto her second husband's dream, even at the sacrifice of life's basic necessities, not too mention luxuries.

So the operatic portrayal of the passive, rather weak Baby Doe is certainly not an accurate assessment of her real personality. The last scene of the opera is the only one to give a glimpse into what was nearly a lifetime of struggle and hardship for Baby Doe as an adult, particularly during the last thirty-five years. As conveyed in the final scene, she stood by her love for all those years, her belief unbroken. Both of these women were strong in their own right; how they chose to utilize their strengths is where one finds the most significant differences.

As has been shown historically, another commonality between Baby Doe and Augusta is that they were both independent women. Balinkin believes that, "These women dominate the male-female relationships –not because they are women, or because

they wish to dominate, but simply because they are placed in the position of dominance by the men's emotional dependence upon them."[54] Augusta was the dominant personality throughout her marriage to Horace. Unfortunately, Augusta was so highly independent that she became isolated. Horace was emotionally dependant on Baby Doe as well, but in a much different way. Baby Doe, as depicted in the opera, offered Horace solace and encouragement. Balinkin suggests: "In her own gentle way, Baby Doe, too, is the dominant personality in her union with Tabor. She supplies the self-confidence Tabor so sorely needs in the unaccustomed atmosphere of his new wealth."[55] Horace was either criticized by Augusta or encouraged by Baby Doe, but either way, both of these women, with their strong personalities, overshadowed Tabor in their relationship. Both women endured great hardships and, thanks to their resilient natures, survived in their own ways.

There are without doubt resemblances between Baby Doe and Augusta as historical characters. However, their personal strengths become something quite different in the hands of Moore and Latouche. Augusta's resiliency, intelligence, and perseverance are portrayed as rigid, controlling, and inflexible. Her masculine traits, free from female sexuality, reduce her to a life of isolation and estrangement. She is the shrew who drove her husband away. By comparison, Baby Doe's capable, charming, and spontaneous nature allows her to be portrayed as a gold- digging hussy who used her beauty for manipulative purposes. Her feminine characteristics become offensive because of her innate sexuality, and as the more beautiful of the two she is portrayed in the opera as naive in matters of money.

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[54] Balinkin, *The Central WOMEN Figures,* 78.
[55] Ibid., 79.

As John Burke writes, "There is no doubt that she (Baby Doe) flouted the sexual mores of her day and challenged the traditional role of the woman and wife. Her actions threatened her contemporaries, at least in their imaginations."[56] Even before the opera, Baby Doe was identified by her looks and the cultural conventions she threatened because of her spirited nature.

In the foreword to *Cecilia Reclaimed,* Susan Cook and Judy Tsou reflect on the issue of music and gender: "To reclaim Cecilia, as our title suggests, we acknowledge from the outset that gender, commonly understood as the social construction of sexual difference, has influenced all aspects of musical culture. Throughout history, changing, even contradictory, definitions of "the masculine" and "the feminine," incorporating as well cultural notions of creativity and genius, determined who did what in music and what was done in the name of music."[57]

So what are the musical influences and cultural notions at work in *The Ballad of Baby Doe*? For the most part, Augusta has been established as a strong-willed, demanding wife who does not support her husband's interests, lifestyle, or newly found values. In modern terms she would be called a "ball and chain." In the opera, Horace suggests she wants to "tie him to her apron strings." In other words, she is deemed masculine in her attitudes, posture and behavior, and therefore deserves desertion.

Baby Doe, although engaging in an elicit affair with a married man, wins our sympathy because she understands the heart of this man. She is vulnerable, and therefore more feminine; demure, therefore more malleable; supportive, therefore more deserving

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[56] Burke, *The Legend of Baby Doe,* xi.
[57] Cook and. Tsou, *Cecilia Reclaimed,* 1.

of love and thereby worthy of being rewarded by Horace's love. Unless, of course, you believe, as some, that she was an opportunist who premeditated meeting Horace and wanted to use her femininity and cleverness to acquire whatever she desired in life. However, Moore composes Baby Doe's music to denote sympathy. Even the title of the opera, *The Ballad of Baby Doe* requires some sense of loyalty to our heroine despite her impropriety.

Douglas Moore is said to have been infatuated with the real stories of Baby Doe for many years before writing this opera, whereas Latouche tended to be more enamored of Augusta. Possibly the subtlety and beauty of Baby Doe's music are to reflect the passive way in which she lulled those around her with her feminine wiles. As Smith suggests, we must accept the notion that Baby Doe goes after Horace for his wealth in the opera, as this makes a more interesting dramatic element for Moore and Latouche to write.[58] Writing a common love triangle would not have created the same level of drama. In the words of David McKee, "Horace, Augusta and Baby exemplify an archetypal love-triangle in the plainest way--a hero caught between women who represent respectively the power of love and the demands of social obligations . . . . If Augusta's thorny and disapproving attitude toward 'Haw' Tabor's profligacy helped propel him into the arms of Baby Doe, the latter's coquettishness and uncritical adoration of Horace only accelerated his road to ruin."[59] While both women evolve with slight transformations during the course of the opera: Augusta becomes softer toward the end and Baby Doe

[58] As discussed in citation 42.
[59] David McKee, "The Great American Opera?" San Francisco Opera Magazine 78 no. 3 (2000): 10.

demonstrates strength with the passage of time, nevertheless, the overall impression of these two women has already achieved its cultural work.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE EMOTIONAL MEDIATORS

In the operatic environment, there is often a small group or chorus who act as the emotional mediator for the audience, commenting on events unfolding or reacting with sympathy, alarm or judgment. They communicate about the circumstance on stage, and one can glean a great deal of cultural framework through their observations. Their presence plays a primary role in painting the principal characters in greater depth. In *The Ballad of Baby Doe,* the most important emotional mediators are found in the four women friends of Augusta and less significantly in two saloon girls, all of whom make specific remarks with regard to Baby Doe and her social position. They make it clear throughout the course of the opera that Baby Doe is an unwelcome guest in their town. Moreover, they provide a judgment that reflects the historical fact with regard to the treatment of Baby Doe. While the music draws the audience into adoring Baby Doe and seeing her through Horace's eyes, the women are offering an alternate choice of opinion, one that is more closely related to Baby Doe as she lived in history.

This has two significant properties to it. First, Moore and Latouche were trying to relate the historical lives of the Tabor's while creating operatic drama. History shows that Baby and Horace were very much shunned from high society after their marriage, specifically by the women of the community. There is a well regarded story about Horace and Baby Doe's official wedding that illuminates this fact.[60] Horace was a member of the U.S. Senate for a thirty day term and was residing in Washington, D.C. Baby and Horace decided to marry in grand fashion during this period of time. While President Chester A. Arthur and many political leaders attended the grandiose and scandalous wedding, the political leader's wives refused to attend such an event. In fact, they are said to have received the invitation and returned it torn in half, leaving their husbands to attend alone. The women viewed Baby as a threat to their social attainments and the success of their own marriages. This treatment of Baby Doe continued with a vengeance when she and Horace returned to Colorado.

Second, using the women as the emotional mediators and having them disregard Baby Doe with innuendos and threats, warrants sympathy from the audience. When someone is being bullied it is human nature to come to their defense. This is another example of how Moore and Latouche use music and text to act upon their listeners with subconscious suggestions, influencing sympathies and judgment. Once again, this brings the audience into the fold of Baby Doe and Horace's love so that their adulterous affair is overlooked.

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[60]Horace and Baby Doe were married in St. Louis previous to the D.C. wedding. Horace had obtained a clandestine divorce from Augusta of which she was unaware.

While the rousing opening chorus provides an insight into the position of Horace in the community, Kate and Meg, the two saloon girls, are the first emotional mediators with regard to Baby Doe. They appear early in the opera, Act I scene 2, just before Baby arrives at the Clarendon Hotel and sings her first aria, "Willow Song." While only a brief conversation, the audience is allowed the possibility of an alternate opinion about Baby Doe, who thus far is portrayed as the vulnerable woman, alone in a new town:

Kate: Her with a servant boy and all, what airs!
Meg: Did you see her making up to Tabor?
Kate: Asking for the Clarendon!
Meg: Baby Doe! Aint' that silly?
Kate: That's what the miners call her. She's so *sweet*!
Meg: Sweet! That little stuck-up thing. Baby Doe? Ain't she got a husband somewhere?
Kate: Harvey Doe, up in Central City.
Meg: Guess he can't afford that kind of baby.
Kate: Tabor'd better watch out. She'll make trouble. She's no better than us, Baby Doe!

In addition to the implications Kate and Meg have made, that Baby Doe will be neither liked nor wanted in their community, they support the notion that Baby Doe's reputation precedes her arrival in Leadville, which speaks to Baby's premeditation.

However, the crux of the emotional mediation takes place with Augusta's four friends during two crucial scenes. Soon after Augusta and Horace's confrontation in Act I, we realize Horace and Baby Doe have fallen in love. Augusta's friends join her in the sitting room of her Denver house. Agitating about the unfolding events they insist that Augusta must do something, and even encourage her to speak to the newspapers in order to create a scandal that would ruin Horace. When her response implies that she intends to do nothing, they reply:

> It's not only yourself but us you should think of.
> If she's allowed to flout decent standards none of us will be safe.

Ultimately, they are concerned for their own well-being. They continue:

> It's a downright danger to decent women folk.

Baby Doe, of course, would be the representation of an indecent woman. She somehow creates a threat to decent women and the fabric of their society. The conversation escalates until the friends divulge the rumor that Horace plans to divorce her. At that moment, Augusta realizes that such a scandal is unacceptable to her Victorian principals, and declares that if the rumors are true Horace will come to "rue the day." Augusta's threats never come to fruition in the context of the opera, although, the cultural work provided by the gossipy women has magnified the misogynist view of Baby Doe's character. It is rather tragic that the female characters in the opera perpetuate this perspective.

At the top of Act II, Augusta's meddlesome friends reappear. Ten years have passed and the occasion is a celebration to honor Horace Tabor at the Windsor Hotel in Denver. The passage of time has done nothing to soften the assault of Augusta's gossipy friends on Baby Doe:

> Well the effrontery of that woman! Done up like a Christmas tree.
> Making big eyes at every man she sees.
> No decent woman would wear such a gown. Distasteful!

Even with the discouragement of their husbands, the wives unkindness towards Baby Doe continues unrelentingly. They refuse to return to the ballroom now that the Tabors have arrived. The men encourage the women to acknowledge that Baby Doe has been a

good wife and mother, but the women claim that the marriage will last only as long as Horace's money.

Filtered through the perspective of the Victorian era, the accuracy of these women's attitudes is understandable. Moore and Latouche wrote *The Ballad of Baby Doe* during the 1950's and one can imagine that the attitudes would not have been very different all those years later. Even now, society will scorn a woman for an adulterous affair, while for a man there is an attitude of "boys will be boys." The double standard penetrates the essence of our culture, perpetuating the notion and prejudices against women. In the end, both historically and operatically, Baby Doe was merely tolerated by other women in the society while Horace continued warm friendships, until, that is, he lost his fortune.

One final observation should be given with regard to the emotional mediators in the opera. The "card scene" in Act II scene 2, provides an important look into the men as the emotional mediators. Horace's four cronies, who accompany him throughout the opera, have a conversation about the current business and political dealings. As Blooding discusses, "The names used for these characters in the opera can be traced to a group of men with which Horace associated during this phase of his life. The opera characters do not necessarily correspond to the real men, but the similarity of the names offers possible guidelines for characterizations . . . Using historical figures to fill the roles of the cronies

would lend authenticity to the roles."[61] The correlation contributes to the historical accuracy of Moore and Latouche's account.

The card scene is probably the most revealing of how Horace was perceived. Ironically, this scene was actually as a result of revisions made after the first performance in Central City, Colorado, to bridge the gap between Horace at his peak of success (the Windsor hotel scene previously described) and the political rally at the Matchless Mine when Tabor was impoverished.[62] The card scene enlightens the audience to the declining relationships between Horace and his friends due to their political dissidence regarding the silver decline. It is ironic that the women in the opera spend their time gossiping about Baby Doe, while the men gather to discuss business not social prejudices. Gender stereotypes abound even among the emotional mediators in *The Ballad of Baby Doe.*

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[61] Blooding, "Douglas Moore's 'The Ballad of Baby Doe,'" 7.
[62] Smith and Moriarty, *The Ballad Doe: "I Shall Walk Beside My Love,"* 54.

CHAPTER FIVE

AMERICAN MUSICAL INFLUENCES OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

> The end of World War II witnessed a divided American society within a divided world. Alongside the desire for peace grew the feeling of despondency brought on by the cold war waged between the United States and Soviet Russia. The Berlin blockade of 1948 and the formation of NATO strengthened this feeling. The testing of bombs, each successive one more powerful than the last, hung like the sword of Damocles over the heads of everyone. The thought that tomorrow we might all be dead haunted every mind. When our anticommunist stance drove us into the Korean War of 1950-53, the American dislike of communism changed into obsessive hatred. McCarthyism sought out and damned communist and innocent liberal alike. The Eisenhower administration infected with a similar virus confronted Russia with promises of massive retaliation for its perceived aggression. The hydrogen bomb exploded in 1952; Sputnik was launched in 1958; the Vietnam War tore America apart from 1961-1973; and the OPEC oil embargo of 1973 helped to weaken America's flourishing economy. [63]

While we try to understand the stylistic nature of *The Ballad of Baby Doe*, in relationship to gender ideology and musical presupposition, it is of value to contemplate the sociological and musical influences that may have affected the composer. American composer, Douglas Moore wrote *The Ballad of Baby Doe* in mid 1950s. Therefore, one must ask what was going on musically in America then: What was happening culturally

[63] Nicholas E. Tawa, *A Most Wondrous Babble: American Art Composers, Their Music, and the American Scene, 1950-1985* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1987), 1.

in our country? What national and international influences musically and socially might have affected the compositional style of Moore? A noted music critic of the time had this to say about *The Ballad of Baby Doe:* "It ran counter to all the highbrow fashions of the past half century, as well as to a great deal of current fashion in the realm of music education, which had not changed and remained valid, in spite of the teachings of modernists."[64] Audiences still appreciated what was familiar to their musical tastes.

It has long been accepted that *The Ballad of Baby Doe* is a quintessential American opera. Rebecca Paller describes the music as a: "brilliant marriage of the toe-tapping affability of musical comedy and the tragic stature of grand opera-filled with sentimental parlor songs and rousing ensemble numbers, precision marches and lilting waltzes."[65] In the numerous articles and books on the subject of American opera, it sometimes is referred to as "the great American opera" or categorized as music critic Lionel Lackey suggests: ". . . one of folk operas, epics in music embodying the personality traits, humor and temperament of their people against a musical background representative of their national idiom." He continues: "If opera is to be accepted by the American immigration boards, it must show its willingness to cast off its foreign airs and graces, put on work clothes and labor side by side with its new countrymen. Since *The Ballad of Baby Doe* has done all this, with a bright, cheerful smile, it can expect an enthusiastic welcome."[66] These comments had great foresight into the positive response the opera received.

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[64] Tawa, *A Most Wondrous Babble*, 195.

[65] Rebecca Paller, "I Can't Live Without...Baby Doe." *Opera News 52* (April): 512.

[66] Lionel Lacky, "Opposing voices debate the virtues of Douglas Moore's most popular work on its return to the New York City Opera," *Opera News 33* (8 March 1969): 9.

There were specific factors that contributed to the desire of American composers to discover a nationalistic voice. Elise Kirk in her book *American Opera* identifies one clear reason that enticed American composers: "Simple, folklike American concert music was, of course, an outgrowth of the period from 1936 to 1942, the years of the Great Depression's Federal Music Project that encouraged reaching to the far corners of America in the "simplest possible terms," as Aaron Copland once said." [67] This brought a great deal of success to the forefront in American opera through the 1950's. While accepting that *The Ballad of Baby Doe* is indeed an iconic success of American opera, one still must acknowledge musical influences outside of America that impacted Douglas Moore.

First, one must understand how Douglas Moore became acknowledged as a composer who successfully wrote music using American themes and ideas. Andrew Stiller credits Vachel Lindsay (1879-1931) with whom Moore studied, with encouraging his student to use Americana as an artistic resource. Stiller believes this created the culmination of the best of Moore's compositions. In fact, most of his work after 1923 utilized American themes. Moore was educated at Hotchkiss School and Yale University where he studied with Horatio Parker the teacher of Charles Ives'. He continued to write songs while serving in the U.S. Navy during World War I. Afterwards he studied composition in Paris. When he returned to America, he studied with Ernest Bloch in Cleveland. However, Stiller believes it was Moore's time with Vachel Lindsay that brought about his mature compositional style. Even a year of study in Paris with Nadia

[67] Elise K. Kirk, *American Opera* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2001), 291.

Boulanger in 1924 proved unfruitful. In Moore's own words, he asserts that it was the material and subject matter that initially appealed to him and admitted that Vachel Lindsay "was primarily responsible for opening the door to his creative impulse when he made him aware of American subject matter."[68] While the other experiences broadened his musical awareness, he trusted his own instincts as an American composer.

While *The Ballad of Baby Doe* is broadly acknowledged as a successful American folk opera, it must also be understood that the "American style" possesses a very eclectic nature in and of itself. During the first part of the twentieth century America was desperately trying to find its "own voice." Composers were competing with a strong mainstream European presence and influence. However, as the decades passed there appeared a dichotomy in musical styles. Elliot Schwartz identifies three reasons for this: the unique geographical position of the United States between Europe and Asia; an aesthetic difference that separates American music from European art-music tradition, opened by such experimentalist American composers as Charles Ives, John Cage, Henry Cowell, and others; and political misfortunes in Europe that caused so many great composers to flee to America from Nazi rule.

Composers such as Igor Stravinsky, Arnold Schoenberg, Darius Milhaud, Béla Bartók, and other distinguished artists were arriving in America where they continued their composing careers and won important teaching positions in American universities.[69] This led to the diversity and eclecticism in musical styles in the United States. Many

[68] Weitzel, "A Melodic Analysis," 37.

[69] Elliott Schwartz, "*The American Century: Remembering the Past, Contemplating the Future.*" In *Reflections on American Music: The Twentieth Century and The New Millennium*, James R. Heintze and Michael Saffle eds., (New York: Pendragon Press, 2000), 320.

European composers were exploring atonal music and serialism, which was in stark contrast to the folk themes and American popular music often employed by Charles Ives and others. Nicholas E. Tawa summarizes the situation during the first part of the twentieth-century in America:

> Contemporary composers attempted to cope with the societal and artistic disorganization as best they could. Some held on to what they saw as the proven past, feeling it was their only security. Others rejected the vulgar outside world and warded off its influence. They responded to their own sense of space and structure, which they hoped would be solidly built. Still others claimed one could not fight modern existence, even at its most vulgar and most chaotic; therefore, they embraced it.[70]

All of this led to an unusual juxtaposition of musical styles simultaneously occurring in America around the 1950's when Douglas Moore was writing *The Ballad of Baby Doe.*

Even while American composers were trying to identify a nationalistic sound, they recognized European music as having a successful history. In the words of Elliott Carter, "it confirmed the disturbing fact that the world of serious music here is still thought of as an outpost of that European world which Americans have so often found more attractive than the reality of what they have at home."[71] Reflections of this ideology can be found in *The Ballad of Baby Doe*, most dramatically in Augusta's music.

Additionally, in order for music in the early part of the twentieth century to be considered contemporary high art, it needed to be reflective of its time. Tawa continues: "Somehow the music had to have undergone a sea of change making it unique. Such a doctrine made it easier to relegate into limbo the more conservative contemporary

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[70] Tawa, *A Most Wondrous Babble,* 3.

[71] This quote is attributed to Elliott Carter in Nicholas E. Tawa's *A Most Wondrous Babble*, 4.

composers, like Menotti, Dello Joio, Moore, and Bernstein. In this context, Lee Hoiby's protest over his unfair treatment is informative: 'I thought I would have a pretty easy time of it. My music was accessible. Audiences loved it. But I had a rude awakening. Critics did not like it; I was definitely out of step with the 1950's.'"[72] The critics and the audiences seemed to be responding to different music sensibilities during this time.

The critic definitely pitted the traditionalists against the modernists, and the modernists dominated in publicity about new music. While Douglas Moore, Samuel Barber, George Gershwin, Aaron Copland, and others were a part of the traditional mainstream and successfully composing, they were given far less consideration then the modernists. There was a dichotomy in musical output between the traditional mainstream and the modernist composer just as there was divisiveness among music critics, some supporting exploration and others rejecting it and preferring the traditional style.

Furthermore, one cannot deny the impact of Richard Wagner (1813-1883) and later German-Austrian composers on even the most American of American composers. As an outgrowth of Wagner's courageous heroines such as Elsa in *Lohengrin*, Brünnhilde in *The Ring*, and Senta in *The Flying Dutchman* near the turn of the century, American composers felt encouraged to create women characters with intelligence, strength and bravery. Kirk discusses issues of female heroines as impacted by Wagner's operas: "American opera heroines as strong leaders create speculation that not only Wagnerian heroines played a role in the ideology of composers but also the tenor of the times-- the new and growing assertiveness of American women and their quest for equal rights and

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[72] Ibid., 16.

suffrage."[73] This influence is certainly a minor element in *The Ballad of Baby Doe*, along with the Wagnerian use of *Leitmotif* and *Liebestod*, although these devices can be identified.

Kirk goes on to discuss the influence of Wagner on American composers:

> In their enduring romance with the Wizard of Bayreuth, American opera composers managed to keep the dramatic flavor of the melodrama alive for decades but always seasoned with their own individual attitudes. In their emphasis on the role of the orchestra to enhance drama; to explore the inner feelings of the characters-especially the heroines; and to draw the audience into scenes of action, serenity, or suspense, Paine Chadwick, Damrosch, and the other American Wagnerites anticipated the aesthetic approach of the American operatic style that would shape the nation's finest works in the decades to come.[74]

So while *The Ballad of Baby Doe* uses American themes, folk tunes, and musical sounds representative of the American culture during the latter half of the nineteenth century, there are eclectic musical influences. In *The Ballad of Baby Doe* we see the discussed exemplification of many of these musical characteristics during the first half of the twentieth century: for instance, Baby Doe is an example of the American folk tunes, and Augusta at times amplifies some characteristics of the modernist influence. Augusta's music has been discussed as dissonant, angular, and while tonally stable, definitely explores its harmonic framework. Musicologists discuss shades of Wagnerism when discussing *The Ballad of Baby Doe*. McKee mentions Augusta's *Leitmotif* in his 1997 article for *Opera News*: "Augusta's prevailing time signature is 4/4, which besides

[73] Kirk, *American Opera*, 126.
[74] Ibid.

suggesting a foursquare outlook-lends a militaristic cast to her music, as does her leitmotif with its double-dotting and staccato quarter-notes (see Example 13)."[75]

Example 13: Augusta's Leitmotif

Two important conclusions can be drawn to this comparison between Wagner and Moore: (1) Douglas Moore was a "traditional mainstream composer:"[76] he utilized compositional ideas that came from the exploration of a tradition from German composers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The use of a *leitmotif*, however intentional or predominant, still comes from the Wagnerian device. (2) The final scene of *The Ballad of Baby Doe* has come to be known as the 'Leadville Liebestod,' yet another reference to a Wagnerian idea. In fact, McKee makes note that "the 'Leadville Liebestod' shares the same key (B Major) as Wagner's classic, shifting the minor--the 'Tristan chord'-- whenever Baby Doe sings '*love*' (see Example 14)."[77] It should be noted that the "Tristan Chord" to which McKee refers in *The Ballad of Baby Doe*, while utilizing the same half-diminished 7th in B major of Wagner's harmonic structure, is built

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[75] McKee, "You've Come a Long Way, Baby Doe," 28.
[76] Traditional Mainstream Composer as defined by Nicholas E. Tawa in *A Most Wondrous Babble*.
[77] McKee, "You've Come a Long Way, Baby Doe," 43.

on a different note. In addition, while the use of this Wagner element is a minor element it exists nonetheless.

Example 14: The "Tristan Chord," Act II scene 5

Augusta's music, having the chromatic harmonic progression employed by late romantic music of German-Austrian tradition, is of great importance in alienating her from the listener. To the average American audience in the 1950's, the connection would have warranted a negative reaction since they would have reacted viscerally to post-war dissonances. Augusta is initially less sympathetic to the audience for reasons already discussed at length, and the dissonance, along with the use of *leitmotif's* would have been ideas intrinsically linked socially and culturally to a national style much maligned by the average American audience after World War II. In contrast, Baby Doe's music would have been familiar to an American audience of this time period, with its graceful waltz tempo, warm harmonic structure, and folk idioms.

While an in-depth study of twentieth-century compositional influences on Moore is outside the scope of this paper, the point can be made that in a time of eclectic compositional style in America; there can possibly be subconscious influences on

Douglas Moore's compositional style in *The Ballad of Baby Doe*. The argument is not that Douglas Moore primarily employed modernist musical ideas; rather, that in a society exposed to eclectic styles of music, even strongly American composers employed a dichotomy of musical form.

Furthermore, just as feminist ideology and cultural convention seep into works to create subconscious ramifications for its listeners, so do musical influences. In this case, the essence of a national style subtly and unknowingly was used to facilitate subconscious reactions to characters. Duane Smith quotes American composer and teacher Jack Beeson in a discussion of Moore: "He loved the way Moore upheld the opera's tuneful nature: 'It doesn't confront listeners with sounds they are unaccustomed to.'" [78] Moore is absolutely the quintessential American composer and it is only the subtleties to which I refer and the influences and ramifications of these subtleties. "Quintessentially America" means not only idealizing an American style by the use of folk idioms, thematic motives and melodies, but also the musical eclecticism that would have existed from European influences.

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[78] Smith and Moriarty, *The Ballad Doe: "I Shall Walk Beside My Love,"* 96.

CONCLUSION

Suzanne Cusick believes we must be encouraged to read with different eyes the sources we have read before. Ask different questions of the traditional, archival sources and find different answers.[79] Throughout history we have been shown, time and again, that it is only by challenging old traditions that we are compelled to change our perceptions. When applying this perspective to old musical forms, a great deal is revealed about cultural convention and issues of gender perpetuated stereotypes. Add to that the powerful subliminal element of music and the schematic of operatic convention and the result is the perpetuation of female ideology. Susan McClary suggests that through this process we find many examples of: "how a discourse as apparently abstract as music can be fundamentally informed by prevailing attitudes of "how women are," of how these attitudes are metaphorically articulated in musical imagery, and how these images can be wielded either as weapons of misogyny or as signs used out of context in ironic, self-

[79] Cusick, "Thinking from Women's Lives," 485, as discussed in Chapter One.

empowering strategies."[80] Since establishing music as having a powerful impact, one must acknowledge the influences it can have on cultural attitudes towards women.

We can no longer blindly accept, without critical reflection, the power of music and text and not be cognizant of cultural conventions of the period. Catherine Clément suggests, "It is the seductive pull of the music itself rather than the content of the verbal text that typically compels people to devote themselves to particular musical genres. And because most members of society have no methods for dealing cognitively with strictly musical imagery and meaning, listeners (and performers) get to experience intense emotional narratives without being consciously aware of what is at stake, thus without seeming to be accountable."[81] Having an awareness of counterproductive elements is the first step to making positive, cognizant changes.

The Ballad of Baby Doe tells the remarkable story of the Tabors' lives. The opera fittingly captures the real-life characters, and the musical score brings to life the essence of an important time in our nation's history with sentimental parlor songs, dance hall numbers, charming waltz tunes and folk melodies. These musical elements, married with the colloquial prosody so aptly used in *The Ballad of Baby Doe*, recreate American culture during the rise of the boom town age in the Old West. The rags-to-riches story of Horace Tabor and the two women who loved him makes for a compelling story. Augusta is not the parsimonious shrew as originally portrayed, and her antagonist, the charming Baby Doe proves that she is not a gold-digging hussy but instead loves Horace until her dying breath.

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[80] Clément, *Opera or the Undoing of Women*, xiv.
[81] Ibid.

Unfortunately, viewed from the perspective of gender study, the portrayal of Augusta and Baby Doe betray a pernicious and persistent gender ideology. Augusta represents a strong, powerful, intelligent woman who is not afraid to be the equal to a man in status, while Baby Doe is the manifestation of the feminine ideal as perceived by cultural convention. The young, beautiful woman is rewarded with love while the more powerful woman is punished with divorce and isolation. In the end, while Douglas Moore and John Latouche followed the historical plot of the lives of the Tabor's, they wrote an opera that perpetuated sociological injustices in regard to misogynist attitudes.

Through the melodic lines, harmonic structures, the textual inferences, voice Fach and characterization, Augusta and Baby Doe, realistically two strong women, are conveyed as having only a portion of the personal and intellectual elements of their true complex personalities. Augusta's mezzo-soprano Fach and disjunct vocal line, combined with the harshness of her character, give the impression of an embittered, unappreciative wife whose strong will causes her to lose the essence of femininity by employing masculine traits. These characteristics are magnified by the setting of the Victorian era during which Augusta lived and in which the opera is set. Her antithesis, Baby Doe, is chosen to represent, with great femininity and charm, the demure, supportive, "stand by your man" type of woman who other husbands would envy. Her signature waltz tunes, coloratura soprano voice and flowing melodic lines invite the listener to fall in love with her just as Horace does, but do not reveal the strength and independence she showed throughout her lifetime.

During the last two decades the feminist perspective in musical scholarship has provided new insights into old forms. Musicologists are writing about the treatment of operatic heroines, women's biographies, women's diaries and all elements relating to woman and music while uncovering the perpetuation of misogynistic attitudes. Noted feminist musicologists Susan Cook and Judy Tsou define the task as: "to right the inequities of male-female relation by rewriting aspects of our musical past; they ask new questions about musical practices, examine neglected primary source materials, and use gender to add untold dimension to our previous understanding of music history and musical activity."[82] The intention of this study is to add to the current dialogue by examining *The Ballad of Baby Doe* through a new perspective. Moreover, it is important that not only musicologists continue to probe old forms with new eyes, but singers, directors, conductors and performers uncover antiquated ideology and provide new direction. We must not blindly accept the perpetuation of misogynist perspective since we have the power through our art to influence attitudinal change. We must all continue to seek truth beyond definition, beyond tradition, beyond image, and by remaining cognizant of these factors we can continue to influence an outdated dogma while creating renewed ideology.

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[82] Cook and Tsou, *Cecilia Reclaimed*, 2.

EPILOGUE

THE HISTORICAL FINALE AFTER THE OPERA

Even those who seek to research from the highest scholarly perspective find it hard to separate truth from legend with regard to the Tabors' as fact and fiction have been irrevocably entwined. Douglas Moore and John Latouche are noted to have researched historical facts as much as possible while writing this opera. So much of the story was detailed in the newspapers across America. As Blooding states: "This attention by the press, coupled with the less than ethical reporting practices of the newspapers of the early West, led to many of the legends that grew up around Horace Tabor."[83] Unfortunately, not all is as it appears.

In fact, Eugene Field, editor of the *Denver Tribune* during the Tabor era, admitted that he exaggerated or fabricated some of the tales that were later printed as truth by other papers.[84] In addition, Caroline Bancroft (1900-1985), a Colorado historian, wrote several articles, pamphlets (booklets), and a book that outlined the Tabor's lives, and while she

[83] Blooding, "Douglas Moore's 'The Ballad of Baby Doe,'" 24.
[84] Ibid.

claimed to have extensively researched and adhered to fact, the juxtaposition of legend and history were already hard to separate. Further complicating matters was Baby's neighbor Sue Bonnie, who claimed to have been a close friend and a confidant of Baby Doe during the last years of her life. Bancroft interviewed her and ghost wrote a series of stories that appeared in *True Story Magazine* under Sue Bonnie's name. In the end, Caroline Bancroft was pressed on a particular part of her story about the Tabors and admitted that she "made it up . . . popular historians must take certain liberties with the truth for the sake of drama." [85] Even historians added to the confusion and perpetuated many myths.

One of the most profound and influential of those legends refers to the Matchless Mine. Horace was to have purported on his deathbed that no matter what, Baby should "hang on to the Matchless Mine" for he believed that eventually the value of silver would rise again. Adding fuel to this fire was Baby's continued fight, while nearly penniless from the time of Horace's death in 1899 until her death in 1935, to resume production at the Matchless Mine in spite of the dire consequences to herself. What could be more dramatic than the devoted woman living in a shack while maintaining vigil on the mining property, and then, in the end, dying there by freezing to death. When she died the headlines read, "Baby Doe Dies at Her Post Guarding Matchless Mine," "Queen of Colorado's Silver Boom Perishes After 36-Year Vigil," and "Baby Doe Tabor Freezes to Death While on Guard at the Matchless Mine." Blooding writes that Philip McCourt, Baby Doe's brother, was at Horace's deathbed and is noted as having said, "Tabor used

[85] Smith and Moriarty, *The Ballad of Baby Doe*, 64.

to say, 'We must keep the Matchless, Phil, there is still money in it,' and that's what he said when he died. When he died he told Elizabeth (Baby Doe) to hold on to it (the Matchless)."[86] This is but one of the many legends that continue to follow the Tabor saga so many decades later.

Smith points out that Horace did not own the Matchless Mine at the time of his death in 1899. "In a bewildering series of transactions long before Horace's death, the Matchless had been mortgaged, leased, involved in lawsuits over title and royalties, and, on paper, sold to several companies with stock sold to the public."[87] Baby Doe was able to live in the shack at the mine only through the kindness of some business associates who purchased the property.

In the opera, Douglas Moore and John Latouche essentially end the opera with the death of Tabor, except for the implication during Baby Doe's final aria that the passage of time has occurred and now thirty-six years later she still stands vigil at the Matchless Mine. Even with regard to her death there is myth. Bancroft perpetuates the description of Baby's death: "Her body, only partially clothed, was frozen with ten days' stiffness into the shape of a cross. She had laid down on her back on the floor of her stove-heated, one room home, her arms outstretched, apparently in sure foreboding that she was to die."[88] Even in death her story is told with great drama.

In truth, Baby Doe did not need to die alone and penniless; when Horace died, she was still quite a young woman. With her attributes of beauty and charm there certainly

[86] Blooding, "Douglas Moore's 'The Ballad of Baby Doe,'" 48.

[87] Smith and Moriarty, *The Ballad Doe: "I Shall Walk Beside My Love,"* 62-63.

[88] Caroline Bancroft, *Silver Queen: The Fabulous Story of Baby Doe Tabor* (Boulder: Johnson Publishing Company, 1950; Johnson Publishing Company, 1983), 4.

were men of wealth who would gladly have married and restored her previous position. Instead she spent what little money had been earned from selling her remaining jewelry trying to restore the Matchless Mine. Plagued by creditors, Baby eventually moved into a shack on the property of the Matchless Mine, which through a great deal of legal maneuvering had changed hands several times. As the years passed she became more reclusive and eccentric. In the final years of her life, she became a proud woman who would not accept help from others. She would make the long walk from the shack into Leadville with foot coverings made of burlap sacks and rope to get her meager supplies. She wore a large crucifix from her neck, creating quite a site. It would have been hard to imagine this woman was once the beautiful and wealthy Baby Doe, who supposedly once wore the jewels of Queen Isabella of Spain.[89]

Judy Nolte Temple, in her article about the diaries of Baby Doe, has discovered important but neglected information in respect to her reclusive life during the later years. For over one hundred years the Tabor story has fascinated and intrigued a great many people, and yet Baby Doe's personal writings are rarely mentioned. They have been titled *Dreams and Visions* and are listed in a five-volume Colorado Historical Society Index to the Tabor Collection.

[89] Horace was under the assumption that he bought jewels Queen Isabella sold to finance Columbus's voyage to America. Unfortunately, he never investigates their authenticity. The jewels were actually purchased in a New York pawn shop, not in Europe as Horace had been led to believe. (Burke, *The Legend of Baby Doe*, 114).

> Although archive workers chronologically organized the fragments, they do not form an immediately accessible story of Tabor's life. There are numerous "irrational" elements in the scraps: codes, elastic time, devils, a ubiquitous little girl who circles the Matchless Mine, obsessive colors, definite juxtapositions of real and imagined characters, rambling and repetitive phrases with no clue of a verb or object. Yet when looked at methodically, the scraps contain recurring themes and characters that form a couternarrative to the comfortably received "Bay Doe" of western myth.[90]

For a new outlook on the story of Baby Doe through her own *Dreams and Visions*, the article by Temple is quite insightful. She provides a fresh perspective into the use of different theoretical perspectives in the analysis of fragmented diaries:

> An obvious option would be to utilize one of several schools of dream theory to analyze or psychoanalyze Tabor's scraps as transcriptions of the dreams of a very troubled woman. As a feminist, I am wary of exposing Tabor to most psychoanalysis-by-patriarchy, the very patriarchal system that created "Baby Doe" in the first place.[91]

Horace Austin Warner Tabor's story during his years of wealth is well conveyed in the opera. Prior to his mining successes, Horace was a stonemason, prospector, merchant, postmaster and a politician. After his mining success, he built opera houses in Leadville and Denver, as well as hotels and other buildings in addition to donating land to the city of Denver. By 1896 everyone had virtually turned their backs on the now desolate Tabors who were living by candlelight after having their electricity turned off. Burke writes: "By 1893, Silver King Tabor was financially ruined because he had not diversified his investments, and he lost everything when gold became the sole national

[90] Temple, "Fragments as Diary," 75.
[91] Ibid., 80.

currency standard."[92] Through the kindness of others, Horace eventually obtained the position of postmaster, a job he held until the end of his life.

Horace, most of all, was a dreamer to the very end. He and Baby continued to be ostracized by the community, but when he died they finally paid tribute to the once prestigious man. Important political figures from all across the country honored his death with telegrams, and floral tributes overflowed from the Capitol building where Horace lay in state. The funeral procession is estimated to have had 10,000 people along the route.[93] The death of Horace Tabor represented not only the loss of his life but essentially the end of an era that was labeled the Wild West.

The tale of Horace Tabor's children is equally interesting. His son Maxey, born in 1857 before the Tabors headed to Colorado, sided with Augusta in the divorce and he went on to run successful businesses in Denver, though not much has been written about the continuing relationship between father and son.

Baby Doe and Horace had three children, two daughters and a son who died the day of his birth. Their older daughter, Lillie (a.k.a. Lily), was born 13 July 1884, and grew up with a lavish life. After Horace's death in 1899 she moved to the Midwest to live with relatives of Baby Doe and eventually married her cousin John Last.[94] She rejected the notoriety and wealth of her earlier life and refused to communicate with or acknowledge her mother. "A picture of 'Baby Tabor' appeared on the cover of Harper's Bazaar, 8 January 1887. Her christening gown alone is said to have cost $4,000. Perhaps

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[92] Temple, "Fragments as Diary," 74.
[93] Burke, *The Legend of Baby Doe*, 179-180.
[94] Blooding, "Douglas Moore's 'The Ballad of Baby Doe,'" 35.

it was this wealthy beginning that turned Lily against her family in later years."[95] In 1925 at the inquest of the death of her younger sister, Silver Dollar, she said:

> I haven't seen my sister for 26 years. Not since I was 14 and she was a few years younger. I did not approve then of the life my mother lived. I got my grandmother in Chicago to let me come and live with her. I went back, but seldom. I don't want to be reminded of my sister or of my mother. I wanted a quiet, decent, sheltered life. Why should I have pride and position, and like only quiet and nice things, and have a claim now in this kind of death.[96]

In 1935, upon hearing the news of Baby Doe's death Lillie denied that she was a daughter of Horace and Baby Doe and instead claimed that Horace's brother John Tabor was her father.

Silver Dollar, the younger daughter of Horace and Baby Doe, was born 17 December 1889. She had much more of her mother's personality and flamboyance than her sister Lillie. She was only nine when her father died, and she stayed in Leadville for fourteen more years after Horace's death. Her last few years in Leadville were tempestuous and she ultimately became an alcoholic having a tarnished reputation with men. Between 1914 and 1925 she moved quite frequently using assumed identities, and ultimately fell into the lifestyle of a drug addict and prostitute. Her life ended in a accident in Chicago. Her death was suspicious, but as it turned out she was drunk and got into a bathtub full of scalding water.[97] Baby always claimed that Silver Dollar was in a convent, so when the newspaper reporters came to the Matchless Mine to inform her of the scandalous death of her daughter, she denied the possibility that it could be her

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[95] Ibid., 34.

[96] Ibid., Citing Baby Doe Collection, Denver Post, March 8, 1935.

[97] Dave Kanzeg, Interview with Caroline Bancroft 1974 (article on-line), accessed January 2005, http://www.babydoe.org/bancroft.htm.

beloved Silver Dollar. Baby Doe kept the notion that Silver was living in a convent to the end of her life.

Why does the story of the Tabors warrant such great popularity? Kirk identifies, "It is a true tale of America's open frontier life, of rugged individualism and unlimited horizons. The powerful Horace Tabor and the women who loved him have become romanticized American folk heroes. But there is more to the story; Horace, Augusta, and Baby Doe are compelling human beings, struggling with their feelings and the crises in their lives like everyone else. The facts, and the ability of the composer and librettist to make the audience believe, are what make the work timeless."[98] It is human nature to be interested in the stories of other people's struggles, especially about such a historic time in our country.

The Tabors' story will continue to fascinate. There are museums, tours, historical societies, pamphlets, books, websites and even loyal fans of the opera called Doeheads, who will continue to share their story. The Tabors were a principal family who exemplify an important part of our American legacy and the dramatically changing times that came with the boom-towns of Colorado. Their story captivates our imagination and captures an era, and with the collaboration of music's powerful influence *The Ballad of Baby Doe* will continue to invite new listeners into their remarkable lives for generations to come.

[98] Kirk, American *Opera,* 279.

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APPENDIX 1

Act I Scene 3: Encounter between Augusta and Horace

Augusta: What are you looking for Horace? Perhaps I can help you find it.
Tabor: I'm looking for the check I made out last night, the down payment on that mine of Jake's.
Augusta: The Matchless Mine?
Tabor: Yes, the Matchless Mine.
Augusta: Well, you won't find it there because I've taken it. I know what you're apt to say: it's none of my bus'ness. That's where you're wrong! It's my bus'ness too! If I didn't know you and I didn't trust you, I'd expect you're up to something.
Tabor: Now tell me what in tunket makes women so damn nosy? How come you have the right to rummage through my papers? I won't hear another word about the way I handle my personal affairs.
Augusta: I'd like to know more about your personal affairs.
Tabor: If I'd listened to you, we'd still be scratchin' scrabble in a poky little shanty, livin' off saw belly and beans. Now, thanks to my foolishness, we're livin' high off the hog. Who squawked her head off when I staked old Hook and Rische? Who kept on naggin till the clink of silver coins ringing on the barrelhead drowned out her objections? Some kind of women like to hold a man back. Some kind of women want to tie him to the ground. It makes them feel bigger to see him knuckle under. But not me, Augusta. You're not ruling the roost!
Augusta: Would you like me to flatter you? Whisper helpless baby talk? Carry on brazenly as some women do?
Tabor: What women, Augusta? Stop looking so mysterious!
Augusta: This one, for instance, with the lovey dovey hands. Your dearest Baby Doe!
Tabor: Give me those gloves!
Augusta: So you've been seeing her!
Tabor: What if I have? Let's leave her out of this.
Augusta: It's revolting, it's disgusting for a man of your age, Mister Tabor, can't you realize your position, if you won't give heed to mine?
Tabor: Go ahead and hooler. Holler all you want to. Baby Doe's a sweetheart; I'll see her all I can.
Augusta: She's nothing but a strumpet.
Tabor: You got no right to say that,
Augusta: Ev'ry-body talks a bout her.
Tabor: Ev'ry-body's telling lies. She's beautiful and generous. All the warmth and tenderness I longed for she has given me. You should be ashamed of the coldness which divides us. What's the use of living like you're already dead?
Augusta: Cold, am I cold? We'll see about that? We'll see how decent people will take to your shenanigans. Just let her try to wreck my life, I'll drive that woman out of town. Even if it means the ruin of you and me as well.
Tabor: Augusta, wait a minute. What nonsense! It's easy to explain it all.
Augusta: This time you won't get off easy. This time you've gone too far.
Tabor: Augusta, I am sorry if I've hurt your feelings, Augusta! Wait! Wait!

APPENDIX 2

Act 2 Scene 4: *"Augusta! Augusta! How Could You Turn Away?"*

Augusta! Augusta! How could you turn away?
He was so dear to you when you promised always to cherish him.
What can have happened?
Can this be you, Augusta?
Do you not know Horace Tabor?
Is he less than a stranger?
Go to him now, Augusta.
Hold out your hand to him.
Forget you pride; he is in trouble.
Now your place is there beside him.

Alas, the years have twisted you.
You are sick and old.
Be kindly and be merciful before it is too late.
August Augusta! This is your failure too.
You bear his name.
Although he has grieved you he still is part of you.
All of the memories, all your joys together can't be uprooted now.
They are twined inside you.
The years of bitterness, years of emptiness and heartbreak,
All these must pass forgotten now,
Now that he needs you, Augusta.

Tabor, my husband!
Oh, my beloved!
Why, why did you ever leave me?
Now at last, now that Tabor needs Augusta I should go, but I am afraid.
Tabor once loved me.
Once again I hear him calling.
Calling on Augusta, Augusta,
But I cannot go.

APPENDIX 3

Augusta Tabor. Courtesy, Colorado Historical Society

Augusta Tabor

APPENDIX 4

Horace Tabor. Courtesy, Library of Congress

Horace Tabor

APPENDIX 5

Elizabeth "Baby Doe" Tabor. Courtesy, Colorado Historical Society

Baby Doe

VITA

Kari Ragan Hoffmann was born and raised in Richland, Washington. After a great deal of travel she now calls Seattle, Washington her home. At Indiana University she earned a Bachelor of Music Degree in Vocal Performance and a Master of Music Degree in Vocal Performance. In 2005 she earned a Doctor of Music from the University of Washington in Vocal Performance. Her performing career expands opera, oratorio and musical theatre with several symphonies and opera companies in the United States. In addition, she is a frequent recitalist having performed in both the U.S. and abroad. She has maintained a private voice studio since 1986, taught voice at the University of Washington during the summer of 2004 and was on the voice faculty at the University of Puget Sound during the 2004-2005 academic year.