

Tutti accusan le donne: Schools of Reason and Folly in *Così fan tutte*

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I begin at the end—or, at least, near the end: Don Alfonso's pithy lesson which begins "Everyone accuses women, but I excuse them" and concludes "Women are like that." Mozart also begins with the end: with the musical motto that later sets "*così fan tutte*"—the aphorism which only in the final stages of composition furnished the title of an opera first entitled *La scuola degli amanti*. On the face of it, the lesson of this "School for Lovers" seems quite simple: an aging philosopher, with the help of a chambermaid, has two young men disguise themselves and seduce each other's beloved in order to learn the fickle nature of love. But as in many schools, simple lessons hide even greater truths. Previous explorations of the opera have noted the existence of a tradition of "school" plays to which Da Ponte intended to contribute, but in the never-ending search for sources for the libretto scholars have paid more attention to the Procris myth and what is usually termed the wager theme—twin aspects of a more basic test of love.¹ A work such

1. E. H. Gombrich, "*Così fan tutte* (Procris Included)," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 17 (1954), pp. 372-74; Andrew Steptoe, "The Sources of *Così fan tutte*: A Reappraisal," *Music & Letters* 62 (1981), pp. 285-86.

as *Così*, a school which seeks to accuse and acquit an entire sex seemingly in one breath, demands scrutiny from all possible angles, and in this case a review by the board of education seems in order. Table I lists the works which shall present the main focus of my exploration.

Table 1: Mozart and the School Tradition

Author	Title	First Staged
Molière	<i>L'École des maris</i>	1661, Paris
	<i>L'École des femmes</i>	1662, Paris
Sheridan	<i>The School for Scandal</i>	1778, London
Mazzolà/Salieri	<i>La scuola dégelosi</i>	1778, Venice
Da Ponte/Mozart	<i>Così fan tutte, ossia la scuola degli amanti</i>	1790, Vienna
Da Ponte/Martin y Soler	<i>La scuola dé maritati</i>	1794, London

The grandparents of the “school” tradition are a pair of comedies by Molière. *The School for Husbands* (*L'École des maris*, 1661) concerns two brothers in love with a pair of young sisters.² The elder brother Aristo allows his ward Leonora all the freedom she wishes, while his younger brother, Sganarel, keeps strict watch over his ward Isabella. Sganarel is easily duped into passing letters between Isabella and her suitor Valere, and egotistically misinterprets her “fidelity to him in love”; he is finally persuaded himself that it is Leonora who plans to elope. Overjoyed at the chance to humiliate his brother, he

2. All translations of *The School for Husbands* are taken from *Eight Plays by Molière*, trans. Morris Bishop (New York, 1957); those from *The School for Wives* are from Molière, *Comedies*, in Everyman’s Library, ed. Ernest Rhys, no. 830 (London, 1929).

procures the notary who weds Valere and the disguised Isabella, after which Leonora promises to wed Aristo.

Though Sganarel's method ultimately fails, we may note the extent to which his supposedly liberal brother accepts its premises. Aristo is more resigned to Leonora's freedom than accepting of it; he refers to the failings of youth, suggesting that maturity (and marriage?) will bring a change (I.ii, 213). Women emerge as frivolous and untrustworthy, interested only in balls and fancy clothes (see, for example, III.x, 239), while men search for a rational means of controlling them. In the end, male reason proves as susceptible to feminine wiles as the King of Navarre's all-male "academy" did to the Princess of France and her retinue in Shakespeare's *Loves Labours Lost*—a thematic cousin of the school plays.³

In *The School for Wives* (*L'École des femmes*, 1662), we meet the middle-aged bachelor Arnolphe, who has spent his life shunning marriage while mocking cuckolds and, we may assume, creating a few himself. In hopes of avoiding such a fate, he has placed his ward Agnes:

In a small convent, off the beaten track,
I had her educated by my system.
That is, I furnished them a set of rules
To cultivate her simple-mindedness.

3. I use the spelling from the title page of the First Quarto edition (1598) and its richer ambiguity. Shakespeare's play, long considered one of his less successful works, provides other interesting parallels to the tradition I discuss below. *Loves Labours Lost* features not only the triumph of women over male reason (effected quite early in the play), but also the subplot opposing the naturally capricious dairymaid Jaquenetta to her unsuccessful but wiser (?) suitor Don Adriano de Armado. Molière's *School for Wives* is based on a Spanish story, while the source for Shakespeare's play has yet to be identified; the above parallel may bespeak a common ancestor. The lost *Loves Labours Won* might well have continued this basic theme. For support of its (conjectural) existence, see G. R. Hibbard on "The Text" in Shakespeare, *Love's Labour's Lost*, ed. G. R. Hibbard (Oxford, 1990), pp. 81-83.

And God be praised, the process was successful....
 [in] Making a bride to fit my specifications (I.i, 36-37)⁴.

Agnes, innocent in the ways of love, falls for Horace, a man her own age. The irony of *The School for Husbands*, where Sganarel helped cuckold himself, is reversed, as Horace confides in his unrecognized rival; but Agnes's simplicity and Arnolphe's foolishness work to the benefit of the young lovers. A final *deus ex machina* involving long-lost children and ancient arranged marriages allow them to marry.

As in the earlier "school," a foolish old man is taught the folly of locking up his beloved—the folly of attempting to contain folly. Arnolphe, like Sganarel, is blinded by faith in abstract Reason:

For I know all the tricks, all the devices
 That ladies use to victimize their husbands,
 And I know how they work their sleight-of-hand,
 And so I've taken adequate precautions (I.i, 35).⁵

As in *The School for Husbands*, no one ever questions these premises, only the extreme solution. As in *Così*, reason is instructed to accept women as they are—frivolous and capricious.

But since it's fate that designates our wives,
 One should take marriage as a game of dice;
 When you don't get the numbers that you want,

4. "Dans un petit couvent, loin de toute pratique,/Je la fis éllever selon ma politique,/ C'est-à-dire ordonnant quels soins on emploirait/Pour la rendre idiote autant qu'il se pourrait./Dieu merci, le succès a suivi mon attente:/ ...Pour me faire une femme au gré de mon souhait" (pp. 549-50). All original French texts for *L'École des femmes* are taken from Molière, *Oeuvres complètes*, Vol. I, ed. Georges Couton, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, no. 8 (Paris, 1971).

5. "Je sais les tours rusés et les subtiles trames/Dont pour nous en planter savent user les femmes,/Et comme on est dupé par leurs dextérités./Contre cet accident j'ai pris mes sûretés" (*L'École des femmes*, pp. 547-48).

Play with the utmost caution, take no chances,
And change your luck by prudence and delay (IV.viii, 78).⁶

Though the sexually humiliated parties in Molière are not married, the titles of the plays and the nature of their plots allow us to identify one central theme. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick has described cuckoldry as, "by definition a sexual act, performed on a man, by another man. Its central position means that the play emphasizes heterosexual love chiefly as a strategy of homosocial desire."⁷ In an analysis of William Wycherley's *The Country-Wife* (1675), Sedgwick notes:

The play teaches that women are in important senses property, but—as in [Shakespeare's] Sonnets—property of a labile and dangerous sort.... To misunderstand th[is]...means, for a man, to endanger his own position as a subject in the relationship of exchange: to be permanently feminized or objectified in relation to other men.⁸

In Molière's school plays, the foolish bachelors are symbolically feminized when they learn that the rationality they thought separated them from their wards' caprice is only a sham. The women in both plays begin as little more than their guardians' possessions and become means of social advancement. In *The School for Wives*, the revelation that Agnes is the fiancée contracted by Horace's father allows Horace to receive both inheritance and bride, and vault over the social climber Arnolphe. Likewise, Aristo's victory in *The School for Husbands* is not merely moral, but a re-assertion of primogeniture when his younger brother is made to look foolish.

6. "Mais, comme c'est le sort qui nous donne une femme,/Je dis que l'on doit faire ainsi qu'au jeu de dés,/Où, s'il ne vous vient pas ce que vous demandez,/Il faut jouer d'adresse, et d'une âme réduite/Corriger le hasard par la bonne conduite" (*L'École des femmes*, p. 603). Compare the opera's penultimate quatrain "Fortunato l'uom che prende . . ." (see below, p. 94).

7. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York, 1985), p. 49.

8. Sedgwick, pp. 50-51.

The first translation of Molière into English in 1739 seems to have been the spur for an explosion of plays on the "school" theme in England in the latter half of the century. This proliferation comes, not surprisingly, at what some consider the height of the Age of Reason—the era of the French *Encyclopédie*, published between 1751 and 1776.⁹ (The plays listed in Table 2 are a representative sample of the genre.)

Table 2: The British School Play (A Selection)

Author	Title	Date
Arthur Murphy	<i>The School for Guardians</i>	1767
Mrs. Elizabeth Griffith	<i>The School for Rakes</i>	1769
Hugh Kelly	<i>The School for Wives</i>	1774
Richard Brinsley Sheridan	<i>The School for Scandal</i>	1778
Mrs. Hannah Cowley	<i>A School for Greybeards; or, The Mourning Bride</i>	1786
Charles Dibdin and Isaac Bickerstaff	<i>The School for Fathers; or, Lionel & Clarissa</i>	1791 (opera)
William Whitheat	<i>The School for Lovers</i>	1793

In Sheridan's *The School for Scandal* (1778), the brothers Joseph and Charles Surface are both candidates for the hand of Sir Peter Teazle's ward Maria. Charles is considered a rake, "the most dissipated and extravagant young Fellow in the Kingdom" (I.i, 228), but it is the outwardly respectable Joseph who pays court to Sir Peter's young wife—the prize pupil of Lady Sneerwell's 'school for scandal'—and intrigues to blacken his brother's name in order to secure the inheritance which their

9. See, for example, Harold Nicolson, *The Age of Reason: 1700-1789* (London, 1960).

Uncle Oliver is to bestow.¹⁰ Sir Oliver Surface, absent many years in India, impersonates both moneylender and borrower to discover his nephews' true characters. Thus Charles receives both the inheritance and Maria's hand, Joseph is disowned, and Lady Teazle returns to her husband, promising fidelity.

The school is here made a tangible object—the group of gossips and character assassins who gather in Lady Sneerwell's parlor. As in Molière, women are depicted as dangerously capricious, men as rational. Sir Peter is a literary heir to Arnolphe and Sganarel, an old bachelor with a young wife, "a Girl bred wholly in the country—who never knew Luxury," but who then "plays her Part in all the extravagant Fopperies of the Fashion and the Town" (I.ii, 237). He triumphs where his predecessors failed by avoiding the feminine world of the school—an obvious matriarchy in whose scandals men are forever the victims and women the instruments, emblems of the property and title Sir Peter ultimately preserves (and Joseph Surface fails to attain). In fact the "rogue" Charles proves the most trustworthy character in the play, his gaming room a center of male honesty. Sir Oliver, like Alfonso in *Così*, embodies successful Reason in the manner of the Enlightenment *philosophie*, testing his nephews rather than relying on the reputations determined in feminine society.

The School for Scandal was performed in translation in Vienna, and Mozart and Da Ponte could well have been familiar with it.¹¹ Mozart had met Sheridan's brother-in-law Thomas Linley (1756-1778) in 1770, when both were young virtuosi performing in Italy, and may have kept in contact with him

10. All references are taken from Richard Brinsley Sheridan, *The School for Scandal*, in *Plays*, ed. Cecil Price (London, 1975), pp. 217-300.

11. Michael Kelly recalls at least one contemporary production of *The School for Scandal* in Vienna, with Friedrich Schröder as Sir Peter Teazle; see Kelly, *Reminiscences* (2nd edn., London, 1826), I, p. 209. See also Andrew Steptoe, *The Mozart-Da Ponte Operas: The Cultural and Historical Background to Le nozze di Figaro, Don Giovanni, and Così fan tutte* (Oxford, 1988), p. 141.

through their mutual friend Michael Kelly (the original Don Curzio in *Figaro*).¹² We can also assume he knew at least one of the contemporary German school plays: Christian Gottlieb Stephanie's *Die neueste Frauenschule oder Was fesselt uns Männer?*¹³ In any case, Da Ponte and Mozart most certainly knew their Molière, whose *Le festin de pierre* was one of the sources for *Don Giovanni* and a copy of whose plays was listed in the posthumous catalogue of Mozart's library.¹⁴

Da Ponte and Mozart, well schooled in the schools, could thus draw on a considerable background. Their School for Lovers must be reckoned a continental cousin of the English schools, related through descent from Molière and Enlightenment thought. But *Così fan tutte* is as much a school for opera characters as for lovers; the full "schooling" comes only with the mediation of music.

12. Elizabeth (who later became Mrs. Sheridan) and Mary Linley were well-known singing sisters, akin to the famous *dame Ferrarese*—Louise Ville-neuve and Gabriella del Bene—of the opera, who were rumored (erroneously) to be siblings.

13. His sister Nannerl mentions the play in a letter of 18 December 1780; see letter no. 564 in *Briefe und Aufzeichnungen*, Band III, ed. Wilhelm A. Bauer and Otto Erich Deutsch (Kassel, 1963), p. 61-64. Gottlieb Stephanie "der Älterer" (1733-1798) was the father of Gottlieb Stephanie "der Jüngerer," the actor and librettist of *Die Entführung*.

14. *Le festin de pierre* was also the source of scenes interpolated into the opera in at least one contemporary production at Hamburg. See Otto Erich Deutsch, *Mozart: A Documentary Biography*, trans. Eric Bloom, Peter Branscombe and Jeremy Noble (Stanford, 1965), pp. 385ff. On Mozart and Molière in general see Deutsch, p. 588. Sganarel's parting words in *The School for Husbands*—"After this, wretched is he who puts his trust in woman; the best of 'em are constantly hatching mischief; they were made to damn the whole world" (III.ix, 471)—find an echo in the recitative preceding Figaro's "Aprite un po' quegl'occhi" (IV, no. 27): "Ah, che fidarsi a donna, è ognor follia." Perhaps this textual debt can be added to that due *Le misanthrope*, as discussed in Daniel Heartz, "Citation, Reference, and Recall in *Così fan tutte*," in *Mozart's Operas* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1990), pp. 229-53.

On 7 May 1783, Mozart wrote his father about the opening performance of the Italian opera company in Vienna, taking note of the new court poet Lorenzo Da Ponte and of bass Francesco Benucci (later the first Figaro and Guglielmo) and expressed the hope that Varesco could provide the libretto for a new, seven-character Italian comic opera:

...the most important thing is that it must be completely *comic* throughout. And if it is possible it should bring in *2 equally good female roles*. The one must be Seria, the other however Mezzo Carratere. But most of all, both roles must be completely equal. The third female role can however be completely Buffa, as with all the male roles if it is necessary.¹⁵

Though no Mozart opera fits these specifications exactly, *Così fan tutte* seems the closest relative of the opera that prompted Mozart's recipe—Salieri and Mazzola's *La scuola de' gelosi* (first performed in Venice in 1778).¹⁶ This opera must be considered an important source for Da Ponte's well-known borrowings, especially given its popularity and proximity in the repertoire to other works important to the Mozart-Da Ponte collaboration. (This importance is exemplified by its alternation with Paisiello's *Il barbiere di Siviglia* (the Beaumarchais connection) at the *Burgtheater* later that year, and with Salieri

15. "...das nothwendigste dabey ist, recht *Comisch* im ganzen....und wenn es dann möglich wäre *2 gleich gute frauenzimmer Rollen* hinein zu bringen.— die eine müsste Seria, die andere aber Mezzo Carattere seyn—aber *an güté*—müssten beide Rollen ganz gleich seyn.— das dritte frauenzimmer kann aber ganz Buffa seyn, wie auch alle Männer wenn es nöthig ist." From a letter of 7 May 1783 (no. 745) in *Mozart, Briefe III*, pp. 267-8.

16. Heartz considers *Don Giovanni* to be the resulting work (personal communication); Stefan Kunze, in *Mozarts Opern* (Stuttgart, 1984), pp. 436-7, favors *Così*, but neither opera has the right number of characters. (*Don Giovanni* and *Così* have eight and six, respectively.) Even *Figaro* seems to owe some debt to Mazzola, as I shall discuss below.

and Casti's *La grotta di Trofonio*, which Steptoe, p. 291, has listed among the sources for *Così*.¹⁷

The plot of this school turns, as in *Così*, on two couples. The corn merchant Blasio, evidently not having read Molière, jealously locks away his wife Ernestina—unsuccessfully, of course, for she dallies with Count Bandiera (tellingly described in the 1779 Venetian libretto as *un 'marito moderno'*). Another character, the Lieutenant, advises the Countess Bandiera and Blasio to pay back their spouses' infidelity by pretending that they, too, have outside interests. The plot proves successful, and the two couples are reunited.

The Count's introductory number (Act I, sc. vi) is an ancestor both of Leporello's catalogue aria and of scenes in *Figaro* and *Don Giovanni*. "A me par che il mondo sia/Di ragazze d'ogni sorte/Una vasta galleria," he sings, as the Countess listens in the shadows.¹⁸ Da Ponte has two special connections to the work. First, the fame of his mistress, Francesca Adriana Gabriella del Bene—the first Fiordiligi—for whom was written at least one substitute aria in *La scuola de' gelosi*, which she performed in her earlier years in London.¹⁹ Da Ponte also made his own adaptation of the Mazzolà text for Martin y Soler's *La scuola de' maritati* in London in 1795.²⁰ More interesting for our present purposes is the crucial step made between the earlier school plays and *La scuola de' gelosi*. The role of the school—assigned to the moral in Molière and to the defeated

17. Further information on Viennese performances of *La scuola de' gelosi*, including casts for some performances, can be found in Otto Michtner, *Das alte Burgtheater als Opernbühne von der Einführung des deutschen Singspiels (1778) bis zum Tod Kaiser Leopolds II (1792)* in Theatergeschichte Österreichs, Band III, Heft I (Vienna, 1970).

18. Later in the same aria, "Quella è grave, questa è snella, Bianca è l'una, l'altra è bruna" is an obvious textual cousin to Leporello's "Nella bionda egli ha l'usanza, di lodar la gentilezza; nella bruna, la constanza; nella bianca, la dolcezza; vuol d'inverno la grassotta, vuol d'estate la magrotta...". The hidden Countess forced to witness her husband's infidelities provides a link to the disguised Countess forced (delighted?) to participate in the mock infidelity of *Figaro* act IV.

gossips in Sheridan—is here embodied in a character who strictly stands outside the action. The Lieutenant plays the role of *philosophe*—a step beyond Sheridan's Sir Oliver and towards Da Ponte's Don Alfonso²¹—in dispensing wisdom and advice, even citing a moral quite close to one from Molière:

Chi vuol nelle femmine
Trovar fedeltà,
Non cerchi di toglierle
La sua libertà.

(He who wishes to find fidelity in woman should not seek to take away her liberty.)

The Lieutenant is a prototype for Alfonso and for Despina, teaching both the acceptance of infidelity and the role played by caprice in keeping a partner in line. Like Alfonso, he is a fourth-party intriguer in a swap of romantic partners, though his reconciliation of the original couples is (unlike Alfonso's) a correction of their own mistake.

In *La scuola de' gelosi*, the cuckoldry plot is suggested in the very title, and the schooling by the Lieutenant made secondary to the need of the wronged spouses for redress. Mozart and Da Ponte, however, bring the teacher to the fore—the opera begins on what is obviously a response to a remark by Alfonso—and make cuckoldry the point rather than the premise of the lesson. Mozart is thus faced with the need to depict musically both a

19. The aria, "Partirò del caro sposo," was del Bene's favorite in *La scuola de' gelosi*; apparently it was intended for a dramatic situation akin to that of the Countess Almaviva's "Dove sono." (III, no. 20) It is listed in Rudolph Angermüller, *Antonio Salieri: Sein Leben und seine weltlichen Werke unter besonderer Berücksichtigung seiner "großen" Opern*, Teil I, Schriften zur Musik, ed. Walter Kolneder, Band 16 (Munich, 1974), p. 168. Neither libretto which I consulted (Venice, 1779 and Ferrara, 1782) lists this aria, though its sentiment seems to suggest placement in Act II, sc. xv—already the site of a replacement aria in the Ferrarese production.

20. Michtner, p. 151.

21. On Alfonso as *philosophe*, see Hertz, pp. 232ff.

subtler cuckoldry theme and a peculiar means of teaching reason and folly.

Cuckoldry had long been depicted by the symbolic placing of horns on the cuckold's head, with jokes of all sorts relating these horns to the musical instrument. Mozart turned immediately to this device when faced with the thwarted cuckoldry plot of *Le nozze di Figaro*, doubling the vocal line with the horns in Figaro's Act I "Se vuol ballare" (I, no. 3) and explicitly identifying what Figaro only hints in his "Aprite un po' quegli'occhi" (IV, no. 27): "Il resto nol dico, già ognuno lo sa" ("The rest I won't say, everyone knows it already"). The closest parallel in *Così* is in Guglielmo's Act II "Donne mie" (no. 26), horns underlining the obvious subtext of this complaint about faithlessness. Further illustration of this theme in the opera is more subtle. In the terzetto, "È la fede delle femmine" (I, no. 2), Alfonso's paraphrase of a Metastasian conceit—woman's fidelity as the Arabian phoenix—provokes an outburst in which Ferrando and Guglielmo identify the phoenix with Fiordiligi and Dorabella. This outburst climaxes on a fermata over what is unmistakably a horn call (ex. 1)—an invocation which must, under the circumstances, have been intended as a sign of cuckoldry as much as for the phoenix hunt. The most famous use of horns in *Così* is no doubt the *concertante* duo that accompanies Fiordiligi's Act II rondo, "Per pietà" (no. 25)—a plea for understanding in the face of the temptation to cuckold. This instrumentation must be seen as at least in part ironic, especially when we note how Mozart carefully

Example 1: *Così fan tutte*, Act I, no. 2.

avoids using horn in Ferrando's immediately preceding aria, assigning their sustaining role instead to the trumpets.²² Mozart is thus able to signal the cuckoldry plot without undermining the emotional progression which the school-plot demands.

But why the continued interest in schools? For all the ado about schooling in these plays, the plots seem less redolent of learning than of folly, which is not so much attacked as revealed. We find a clue in the title given to Schikaneder's German translation of *La scuola de' gelosi* (Augsburg, 1786): *Das Narrenschiff* (*The Ship of Fools*)—this title is derived from the Count's allegory of madness and from the madhouse scene concluding Act I). As Foucault remarks in his *History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, the celebration of Reason naturally calls forth a complementary interest in what he calls Unreason.²³ The Ships of Fools that carried madmen from port to port were simultaneously means of physically banishing Unreason and celebrations of folly that attracted large crowds wherever they docked. The Enlightenment developed a fascination with folly and often tied it to love—witness Erasmus, and Louise Labé's "Debate of Love and Folly" as to which one brings about the other. The era could do little more than identify the utter Unreason of love—but then again, Newton only discovered gravitation and did not explain it. Identification of a natural law was sufficient; the circumscribing of Unreason thus became a means of attaining Reason. If the twin themes explored here are bound in part by the English word "cuckoo," which can represent both madmen and cuckold, they are even more broadly connected by this exploration of Unreason.

One interpretation of *Così* has argued that its essential conflict is between the lover's sentimentality and Alfonso's reason;

22. Similar trumpet lines in the second part of Fiordiligi's aria, "Come scoglio" (I, no. 14), do not have the same effect, since the trumpets signal a more traditional martial atmosphere at its very beginning.

23. Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, trans. Richard Howard (New York, 1973).

another that the opera is, on the whole, rational.²⁴ Both interpretations seem to ignore Despina, who provides as much guidance to the young women as Alfonso does to the young men. She is no mere tool of Alfonso, even less a tool of reason or sentiment—quite the opposite. The frivolity she preaches is a reason born of folly, just as Alfonso's folly in perpetrating cuckoldry is folly born of reason. Despina is Alfonso's alter ego, the noble savage to his Rousseau, living in the state of nature he observes and elevating caprice as an ideal. To understand their twin lessons, their two schools, we need only compare Despina's justification for replacing an absent lover—“È legge di natura, e non prudenza sola” (“It's a law of nature, not merely prudence” [I.xiii])—with the opera's Alfonso-inspired penultimate quatrain:

Fortunato l'uom che prende
Ogni cosa pel buon verso
e tra i casi e le vicende
da ragion guidar si fa. (II, no. 31)

(Happy is the man who looks on the bright side of everything, and in all circumstances and trials lets himself be guided in reason.)

Alfonso's reason battles Despina's natural law to a standstill as we are all instructed to accept woman's folly.

But Despina and Alfonso teach through music as well as words, and most of all in the most individualizing of operatic numbers, the aria. *Così* is so ensemble-heavy at the outset (nine of the first ten numbers) that arias paradoxically become signif-

24. For the former, see Cornelia Kitsch and Herbert Zeman, “Das Rätsel eines genialen Operentwurfs: Da Pontes Libretto zu ‘Così fan tutte’ und das literarische Umfeld des 18. Jahrhunderts,” in *Die Österreichische Literatur: Ihr Profil an der Wende vom 18. zum 19. Jahrhundert (1750-1830)*, ed. Herbert Zeman (Graz, 1979), I, pp. 355-77. The latter appears in Massimo Mila, “Razionalismo di *Così fan tutte*,” in *Mozart, la vita e le opere*, ed. Franco Armani (Milan, 1955), pp. 195ff.

icant by their rarity. By asserting two opposing styles—*seria* and *buffa*—and corresponding instrumental sounds, Despina and Alfonso provide opposing musical models for reason and caprice, and establish the former as the proper masculine tone, the latter as the natural feminine (admittedly, a contradiction of the model Mozart proposed to his father). A brief survey of some of the arias in *Così* will serve to demonstrate the stylistic duality and its consequences for the individual representatives of the sexes.

Alfonso's lone aria, or mini-aria, "Vorrei dir" (I, no. 5), short as it is, becomes a school for all those that follow, in part as a model for expression of both sincere feeling and emotional outburst. But its implications extend much further, as a glance at the next aria, Dorabella's "Smanie implacabili" (I, no. 11), will show. Stefan Kunze has noted its similarity to Alfonso's and called the latter "a school example of the agitato type."²⁵ We may follow his lead and add that Dorabella adapts not only the time and meter, but the very style and breadth of Alfonso's discourse. His model for agitated speech in the separation of syllables by rests ("bal - bet - tando") inspires her opening, "Sma - nie im - placabili"; the accompaniments present the same bass downbeats against agitated offbeat violin figures (ex. 2). Most surprising is the echo of Alfonso's thought pattern: his 38 measures are answered by the 39 measures of her first period. The opening of her aria is almost a recomposition of his model. Dorabella's hysteria, however—her tendency to protest too much—pushes *seria* style to the limits, toward the realm of *buf- fa* and the model Despina will next provide.

This comes in her aria, "In uomini" (I, no. 12). Unlike Alfonso, Despina is entirely sincere, telling a truth rather than feigning emotion. But what sort of truth is it? It is not content but character that proves more important. Despina is the quintessential *cameriera*, clever but uneducated (despite her Latin locutions). She is a folk character in the tradition of Zer-

25. Kunze, p. 492.

a. "Vorrei dir" (Act I, no. 5)

Allegro agitato

I Don Alfonso

fa-to! Vorrei dir, e cor non ho, e cor non
vns.
va. div.
vc., cb. pizz.

ho: bal - bet - tan - do il

b. "Smanie implacabili" (Act I, no. 11)

I Allegro agitato Dorabella

vns.
va., vc., cb.

Sma - nie im - pla - ca - bi - li,
che m'a - gi - ta - te

Example 2

lina, speaking in rustic six-eight meter; her musical language is a pastoral style drawn from her appeal to a rustic sort of natural law. The Allegretto of her aria opens with a bagpipe drone; the use of winds, especially a stereotypically pastoral oboe, starkly contrasts to the orchestral string quintet that accompanied Don Alfonso. If Despina's orchestral sound is that of a shepherdess, Alfonso's remains rooted in the chamber or coffee-house, a sonic ideal that points to his aristocratic position. Even Despina's strings suggest the hurdy-gurdy rather than the opera orchestra.

Despina is also a teacher of capriciousness. The fermata she introduces on the repetition of "fedeltà" is certainly ironic—an irony pointed up by the immediate rhythmic shift to triplets; her very notion of fidelity is capricious. Caprice is further illustrated by the trills that ornament her concluding phrase—a frivolous playing with the notes (ex. 3a). The nonsense syllables that complete the rhyme seem part of her credo, reducing it to a wordless if more "natural" sentiment. Stripped of words, the means of expressing rational thought, she distances herself from the male world of reason, replacing it with the natural law of caprice she tries to teach Fiordiligi and Dorabella.

Despina's Act II aria, "Una donna a quindici anni" (no. 19) shows she is nothing if not consistent, preserving the meter and magnifying the earlier caprice. The trill of "In uomini" becomes part of the melody from the beginning, transformed into a written-out turn: ornament as melody (ex. 3b). Yet it is the ending that truly turns our heads. The quasi-*seria* close—inspired no doubt by Despina's likening herself to the queen—seems a momentary "slip" out of character. Before her exit, however, she regains her natural, *buffa* voice, a gesture reminiscent of Dorabella's earlier descent from *seria* to hysteria and parody.

Dorabella's second aria, "È amore un ladroncello" (II, no. 28) proves her Despina's star pupil, abandoning her original *seria* style for the rustic six-eight meter and a capricious fermata borrowed from Despina's "fedeltà" (ex. 3c). Dorabella even goes

a. "In uomini" (Act I, no. 12)



b. "Una donna a quindici anni" (Act II, no. 19)



c. "È amore un ladroncello" (Act II, no. 28)



Example 3

a. "Come scoglio"
(Act I, no. 12)b. "Rivolgete a lui lo sguardo"
(Act I, no. 12)

Andante Maestoso

tutti (f)

Allegro

tutti (f)

Example 4

her teacher one better by singing to wind accompaniment alone at the opening of the aria, recalling the stereotypical *pastorale* and distancing herself from Alfonso's string quintet. In short, she adopts the capricious tone and style both teachers expect of a woman.

Guglielmo shows an inclination to talk to or about women in their own terms—this even in the abandoned Act I aria, “Rivolgete a lui lo sguardo” (K. 584; no. 15a), whose opening trumpet fanfare answers that of Fiordiligi's immediately preceding “Come scoglio” (ex. 4). Its replacement, “Non siate ritrosi,” and the Act II aria “Donne mie” are bound closely to Despina's style and instrumentation: both open with the rustic sound of flute and bassoon octaves, a pairing found in the Allegretto of Despina's second aria and (with oboe added) in “In uomini.”

Ferrando, however, follows Alfonso's model throughout; all three of his solo numbers open with strings alone, as in “Vorrei dir.” Even in “Ah, lo veggio” (II, no. 24)—salvaged from an abandoned rondo finale for the Clarinet Quintet, K. 518—his admittedly awkward vocal line is doubled first by the violin. At no time is he capricious or hysterical; even in his Cavatina, “Tradito, schernito” (II, no. 27), he shows remarkable restraint, dissolving into hope rather than anger. He, unlike Guglielmo, is calm in the Finale; inclined towards Alfonso's musical discourse from the very beginning, Ferrando becomes a complete convert to his philosophy with the acclamation of “*Così fan tutte*”—to the accompaniment, we must note, of strings alone.

Fiordiligi's arias never leave the *seria* style, but one crucial difference separates her from the male world of reason. If the wide leaps of “Come scoglio” (ex. 5a) perhaps look back to the sevenths at the end of Don Alfonso's aria, as in the case of Dorabella's first aria, they nonetheless bring us to the realm of hysteria. Even the more placid “Per pietà” makes notable use of this split-register effect (ex. 5b). In a somewhat different context, Catherine Clément has noted one effect of such portraits:

Beaten, tortured, defeated, down, the next day the hysterical (all fresh and ready to go) takes on a new battle and produces a new symptom.... The prima donna, whom you just saw weeping real tears and suffering with all her bodily force, gets back up, smiling, scarcely affected.... Indifferent to her sufferings, the hysterical creates new ones.
Men will tell you women are like that.²⁶

Clément's reference to *Così* is no accident. Da Ponte and Mozart do, indeed, seem to suggest women are like that: either capricious or hysterical, either Dorabella or Fiordiligi. And the latter case brings us even further into the realm of Unreason; as one commentator has noted:

The highs and lows [of Fiordiligi's vocal line]...signify a split between the two aspects of [her] personality....Though the psychiatric terminology may not be very helpful, one can detect in her musical self-presentation a tendency to schizophrenia.²⁷

Mental dysfunction is of a mild sort here, but madness is an explicit element in another contemporary opera. In Dittersdorf's *Die Liebe im Narrenhause* (1786), the father of Constanze wishes her to marry the asylum director Bast, in part for financial reasons but also because he wishes to live amidst the lunatics and be entertained by their antics. Constanze's young lover Albert feigns insanity in order to rescue her, and ultimately they have a double wedding with her servant Clärchen and an inmate who is cured from his delusion that he is Orpheus by little more than the need for dramatic symmetry. In the course of the action, male madness is depicted in very different terms than female. A pair of (male) poets behave in a number of ridiculous styles, while Orpheus shows his loss of reason by attempting to communicate by playing the violin rather than speaking (shades of Despina's wordless caprice!). Albert feigns madness

26. Catherine Clément, *Opera, or the Undoing of Women*, trans. Betsy Wing, (Minneapolis, 1988), p. 180.

27. Irving Singer, *Mozart and Beethoven: The Concept of Love in their Operas* (Baltimore, 1977), p. 97.

a. "Come scoglio" (Act I, no. 14)



a. "Per pietà" (Act II, no. 25)



Example 5

by proclaiming himself “the poet Marc Anthony” and misquoting (or perhaps over-quoting) the overture to *Figaro* (ex. 6). Perhaps he is deluded that he is Mozart. A female inmate, however, displays her madness in a manner close to that of *Così*: she sings in an overblown *seria* aria that seems doubly ridiculous in the *Singspiel* context. The language of female Unreason is thus depicted by the language of hysteria—one short step from the method of *Così*.

In Mozart’s opera, folly and reason mix as men learn their lessons while women are proved hysterical or faithless. We may

Allegro
 vn.
 vns.
 ffor.
 hns.
 basso

Example 6: Dittersdorf, *Die Liebe im Narrenhaus*, Septet, Act I, no. 13

now finally step back and conduct our review of *Così* and its predecessors. The image of the Ship of Fools conjured by Schikaneder's German version of *La scuola de' gelosi* seems especially apt when we consider that Foucault describes the *Narrenschiff* as a symbolic journey of madmen in search of reason. The boat that departs to the tune of "Soave sia il vento" may not contain the bodies of Ferrando and Guglielmo, which at that moment are being stuffed into Albanian disguises, but it does ship out the mad belief in fidelity they have set out to test. Its return brings a new sense of reason founded on the homosocial stability of Alfonso's moral: a Reason which everyone finally proclaims has triumphed over an Unreason it itself created. Balance somehow returns to an unbalanced world.

If I accuse not women of caprice, but Molière, Sheridan, Da Ponte, Mozart, and the other teachers of misogyny, I do not wish us to lose the other lessons of their works. Mozart's music expresses at least the possibility of harmony; we can certainly do worse than learn from Alfonso's final suggestion we not take anything—especially ourselves—too seriously. The real Ship of Fools is any vessel that carries us from one scholastic stereotype to another, one which attempts to lift to the level of law any school of reason or folly.