

FIDELITY IN THE MOZART – DA PONTE OPERAS

by

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of the Requirements for the Degree
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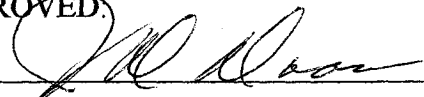
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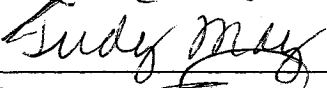
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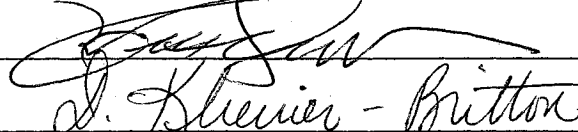
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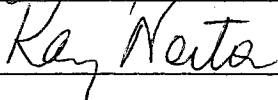
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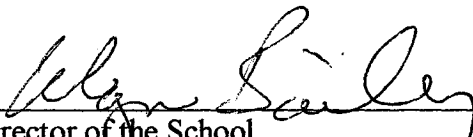

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ABSTRACT

Fidelity is a crucial element in opera; however, the emphasis given to this faithfulness varies widely. An examination of the collective ethos in the Da Ponte operas of Mozart shows a fidelity imbalance stratified by gender and social status, and consequently illuminates many issues of sexuality in eighteenth-century Enlightenment society. The philosophical movement known as Enlightenment is characterized by individuality, independence, practicality, and logic. Writers such as Rousseau, Locke, Voltaire, and the notorious de Sade advocate a type of “practical morality,” or a morality that does not interfere with the natural desires of the self. Such a philosophy, when applied to relationships, does not necessarily support a strict monogamous bond but, rather, allows for a certain amount of sexual freedom. However, eighteenth-century adherence to this principle was not universal. In the libretti of *Le nozze di Figaro* (1786), *Don Giovanni* (1787), and *Così fan tutte* (1790), upper-class older men and lower-class younger women subscribe to the enlightenment viewpoint, seeing infidelity as a fact of life that need not be a source of anxiety. In contrast, the upper-class women and the lower-class younger men remain strictly committed to fidelity and recognize the perils of promiscuity. Furthermore, a dichotomy of viewpoints coincides to gender and social divisions regarding adulterous fault, sexual scandal, loyalty expectations, and the use of sexuality to gain power. This research is an attempt to aid scholars and performers studying these operas or their individual roles and to provide the tools to better view the issues of fidelity through the lens of Enlightenment morality without retroactively attaching contemporary ethics to eighteenth-century relationships.

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Introduction and Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to provide a comparative analysis of fidelity, within the confines of three libretti: *Le nozze di Figaro*, *Don Giovanni*, and *Così fan tutte*. Through this process, several paradigms emerge that reflect the social and sexual culture of the late eighteenth century: covert morality often conflicts with overt morality, accountability is an issue only for what was perceived as “the weaker sex,” and desire becomes companion to reason.

The drama in all three of these operas, as in most examples of this genre, is driven by relationships. In offering a new perspective on these relationships, this analysis can provide tools for performers, directors and scholars wishing to study these operas or individual roles. The characters themselves are revealed in clearer detail as their morals are juxtaposed with the collective philosophies of the Enlightenment, and these characters’ expectations for their relationships are examined and consequently stratified by gender and social positioning.

This is not an attempt to unearth new research in the areas of gender, sex or relationships in the Enlightenment, but rather to provide insight into a crucial aspect of love and commitment as portrayed in art and therefore to substantiate the existent research on the prevailing ideology of an era. The genesis of this work therefore is the libretti. Most comparisons and discoveries will be derived from these primary sources, with secondary sources offering context and additional support. A comparative analysis with the musical aspects of Mozart’s scores, albeit interesting and provocative, is beyond the scope of this particular study and will not be included. The study will include,

however, a social context for the libretti and an examination of the ways resultant observations are consistent with other eighteenth century sources in literature, philosophy and the dramatic arts.

Review of related research

Within the last thirty years, there has been a proliferation of texts dealing with gender, sexuality, and social issues within the context of existent viewpoints of history. These sources have begun to reshape the canon of historical review to provide not just a new view of history, but a new view of “her-story” as well. This burgeoning body of research has extended into music and, emerging from this dialectic between gender studies and opera, is this particular study of eighteenth-century fidelity as seen in the Mozart-Da Ponte operas.

Scholarship on the Enlightenment era as a whole is abundant. As a philosophical movement it is standard material in most related textbooks and in both musical and non-musical histories. Authors such as Peter Gay in his text, *The Enlightenment: A Comprehensive Anthology*, have selected primary source materials and arranged them with major topic headings for ease of research.¹ Such text selection does, however, reflect a personal viewpoint of the Enlightenment and should be approached accordingly. The body of writings of the philosophers at the time, while vast, is widely available in translation and provides a fundamental basis of research.

¹ Peter Gay, ed., *The Enlightenment: A Comprehensive Anthology* (New York: Simon and Schuster) 1973.

Some more recent texts address general views toward women and sexuality during the Enlightenment. These texts draw from the wealth of primary sources, including those that are widely available as well as the more obscure ones, and provide excellent insight into the special topics from the era. Mary Seidman Trouille's text, *Sexual Politics in the Enlightenment: Women Writers Read Rousseau*, provides a feminist viewpoint on the extensive collection of essays and texts written by the significant Enlightenment philosopher and novelist.² Merry E. Weisner's *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe*, contextualizes Enlightenment views by discussing women's roles and their social and self-images in the eras leading up to and including the eighteenth century.³ Weisner's book also includes ideas and laws governing women at the time. As in any era, atypical sexuality and practices form counterpoints to the more widespread model. *Sexual Underworlds in the Enlightenment*, which was edited by G.S Rousseau and Roy Porter, is a collection of essays that addresses those on the sexual fringe in the eighteenth-century, including that which may have occurred, but was seldom discussed.⁴ *Sexual Knowledge and Sexual Science: The History of Attitudes to Sexuality*, edited by Roy Porter and Mikuláš Teich, also puts sexuality in context. This collection of essays provides an overview history of sexual knowledge and sexual advice.⁵ Thus, it describes

² Mary Seidman Trouille, *Sexual Politics in the Enlightenment: Women Writers Read Rousseau*, (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1997).

³ Merry E. Wiesner, *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe* 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

⁴ G.S. Rousseau and Roy Porter editors, *Sexual Underworlds of the Enlightenment* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1987).

⁵ Roy Porter, ed., *Sexual Knowledge and Sexual Science: The History of Attitudes Toward Sexuality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

what would have likely been the sexual understanding of both the creators of the operas and their characters. In addition to the basic knowledge and the espousals of the Enlightenment philosophies, there existed concurrently a multitude of texts and moral narratives that dealt directly with the expectations of women in terms of marriage and their relationships. Vivian Jones's text, *Women in the Eighteenth Century: Contructions of Femininity*, is an excellent example of a collection and discussion of primary source materials ranging from moral narratives to pamphlets, conduct manuals, articles and other sources.⁶ At the time they were written, these selections, were intended to educate women on their social expectations and duties, and provide a structure for the female's overt identity. Also included with the more conservative texts are examples from a more radical feminist view of Enlightenment. Feminine issues were very complicated, and there was a struggle between the social image of virtue and the practical acceptance of promiscuity. Leslie Richardson's article "*Who shall Restore My Lost Credit?': Rape, Reputation, and the Marriage Market*"⁷ provides an excellent illumination of these complexities and the plight of women struggling to socially succeed in the eighteenth century.

All of these aforementioned sources do not speak directly to the issues of fidelity in the Mozart-Da Ponte operas. Rather, they provide social context for the characters in

⁶ Vivian Jones, *Women in the Eighteenth Century: Contructions of Femininity* (London, New York:Routledge, 1994).

⁷ Leslie Richardson, "'Who Shall Restore My Lost Credit?': Rape, Reputation, and the Marriage Market." *Studies in Eighteenth Century Culture*, 32 (2003): 19-44.

the time they were conceived. A few sources deal more directly with sexuality in the Mozart settings, but none specifically compare issues of fidelity in the libretti and its reflection of society. Most of the relevant research on all of these operas appears to be divided into categories of sexual issues. *Le nozze di Figaro* is noteworthy for the illustrations of the relationship between power and social class; *Don Giovanni* fuels extensive research regarding the nature of seduction, betrayal and redemption (or lack thereof), and the analysis of *Così fan tutte* creates a forum for discussions of morality in terms the physical and ideological seduction of youths.

Of these sources, the most relevant is one written by Charles Ford, *Così?: Sexual Politics in Mozart's Operas*.⁸ This text provides insight into the effects of the Enlightenment philosophy on the individual as well how such philosophy affects the viewpoints of sexuality. Furthermore, it is an exceptional source for some of the more general sexual issues that emerge in these three operas. Fidelity is touched upon, but it is not truly explored, nor are its manifestations in the libretti compared. In addition, while Ford provides preliminary social and philosophical research, he justifies his specific observations more musically than socially.

Ultimately, a window has been left open for a discussion of fidelity in the Mozart-Da Ponte operas. A significant body of research lays the foundation for the background of the study, but prior to this point, an in-depth examination of sexual expectations and the practice of faithfulness in these operas within a social context has not yet been undertaken. The existing research when combined with the primary material of the Da

⁸ Charles Ford, *Così?: Sexual Politics in Mozart's Operas* (New York: Manchester University Press, 1991).

Ponte libretti justifies any hypotheses regarding the characters' actions or dialogues and allows for a better understanding of the characters' dilemmas. Issues of fidelity in the eighteenth-century are clarified, and, in doing so, a more multi-faceted and sympathetic interpretation of the characters and their predicaments can be obtained.

Methodology

The fundamental sources for this research are the three the libretti of Lorenzo Da Ponte as they were used by W.A. Mozart, namely *Le nozze di Figaro* (1786), *Don Giovanni* (1787) and *Così fan tutte* (1790). The libretti themselves do not stand as separate entities nor were they ever intended as such. They were created or adapted with the idea that they would be attached to a musical collaboration. Therefore, the musical scores become the primary source for the text within them. As with many operatic works in the standard repertoire, a plethora of editions are available. Those published by Bärenreiter, Ricordi, Schirmer, Kalmus and Peters are most common. Among the sets of scores, there are various discrepancies. The most significant difference is the matter of scene divisions. For this document and its appendixes, all text extractions and scene numbers are consistent with the *Neue Ausgabe sämtlicher Werke*⁹ for Mozart. This comprehensive collection is the most critical edition currently available without gaining access to the original manuscripts. The *Neue Ausgabe* provides only the original Italian

⁹ Mozart, W.A. *Neue Ausgabe sämtlicher Werke*, Werkegruppe 5: Opern und Singspiele, band 16, *Le nozze di Figaro*; band 18, *Così fan tutte ossia la scuola degli amanti*; Band 20 *Don Giovanni* (New York: Bärenreiter Kassel, 1973, 1991, 1968, respectively).

text; English translations were compiled and translated by the author for the purpose of this study.

The method of research for this subject began with an examination of any and all lines of text within the three libretti that deal with fidelity.¹⁰ Once these were compiled, they were organized into emergent ideas, motifs, and questions and then examined in terms of social context, class and gender. Hypotheses that resulted then became the basis for study and were substantiated and elucidated by eighteenth-century and Enlightenment scholarship.

For this discussion, fidelity or faithfulness will be confined to reciprocated romantic commitment between two individuals not limited to marriage, but excluding one-sided infatuation. In other words, the relationships of Dorabella and Ferrando, Fiordiligi and Guglielmo in *Così fan tutte*, all of whom are not married, will be included; however, Cherubino's unrequited lust for the Countess in *Le nozze di Figaro* will be excluded. Breaches of fidelity may be physical or emotional, and both aspects will be explored.

¹⁰ The decisions regarding text selection as well as the any emergent thoughts and inferred trends are wholly those of the author. Certainly other passages and issues could also be gleaned from the same libretti.

Society and Context

The Changing View of Enlightenment

The Age of Enlightenment encompasses the greater portion of the eighteenth century and extends roughly from the publication dates of Issac Newton's text *Philosophiae Naturalis Principia Mathematica* in 1687 and John Locke's texts *letters on Toleration* (1689), and *An essay on Human Understanding* (1690) to the end of the eighteenth century with the French Revolution (1789-1799). Yet, as an era, it is unique in human history; it is not defined by solely by events, but rather by a philosophical movement. However, the interpretations and understanding of these philosophies and the ramifications thereof have shifted in recent years. For the most part, historical reflection up to the later portions of the twentieth century had been concerned with how this philosophical movement affected the Christian, Western-European male. The canon of historical research did not readily include viewpoints such as the feminine response to Enlightenment or the effect of Enlightenment on the lower classes, non-Western-European cultures or indigenous peoples. These groups had previously been defined as being outside the central human community.

Earlier definitions of the Enlightenment era were seemingly concrete and universal. The highly influential text by Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) epitomizes the prevailing sentiment. In 1784, Kant took part in a prize competition to answer the question "What is Enlightenment?" The opening portion of his response has been quoted numerous times and has provided a foundation for historical scholarship.

Enlightenment is man's emergence from his self-nonage. Nonage is the inability to use one's own understanding without another's guidance. This nonage is self-imposed if its cause lies not in lack of understanding but in indecision and lack of courage to use one's own mind without another's guidance. *Sapere aude!* (Dare to

know!)” Have courage to use your own understanding,” is therefore the motto of the Enlightenment.¹¹

Through the writings of Kant and the other defining philosophers such as Montesquieu, Locke, Voltaire, Rousseau, and Hume an image was created for the era. Enlightenment came to be defined as “The Age of Reason.” It was an age characterized by the desire to be governed by the independence of one’s own rational mind rather than by faith or superstition. An Enlightened individual believed that, through the power of reason, one could be liberated from the constraints of custom and authority. Science defined truth, and nature beheld the ultimate truth. “Whatever is, is Right” became a pervasive mantra.¹²

While modern scholarship acknowledges a majority of the aforementioned ideals, writers are beginning to place more emphasis on the inconsistencies that arose with the collective philosophies, and the problems that were inherent in the new way of thinking. Many of these issues were cited by the philosophers themselves; however, they were not among the ideas typically extracted by the creators of the historical canon. Contemporary research is now focusing on debates such as the balancing of unrestricted inquiry with the need to assume stability in the state and society, and the dilemma of finding a place for other groups including women, lower social classes and non-white races, and cultures.

¹¹ Immanuel Kant “What is Enlightenment,” trans. by Peter Gay, in *Enlightenment: A Comprehensive Anthology* ed. Peter Gay (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1973), 383.

¹² Alexander Pope, “An Essay on Man, Epistle I,” from *The Works of Alexander Pope*, 10 vol. [1871] in *Enlightenment: A Comprehensive Anthology*, ed. Peter Gay (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1973), 213.

Enlightenment and Gender

Issues of gender spurred heated debate in the eighteenth century. The misogynistic philosophies of writers such as Jean-Jacque Rousseau have survived and become standard hallmarks of the Enlightenment era; however, a feminist viewpoint also existed. These authors actively pointed out the many flaws in so-called rational thought. Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797), in her text *The Vindication of the Rights of Women*, exclaimed, “Who made man the exclusive judge, if women partake with him the gift of reason?”¹³ She imbued women with the same aptitude for logic as their male counterparts and was not tolerant of the forced intellectual submission of her time. Mary Astell (1666-1731) was another early advocate of rectifying the imbalance of the sexes. In her text ‘*Sophia*,’ from *Beauty’s Triumph: or, The Superiority of the Fair Sex invincibly proved*, which was published in 1739 and reissued in 1751, she argued that women are not subordinate to men, but that in many ways they are superior.

Men seem to conclude, that all other creatures were made for them, because they themselves were not created till all were in readiness for them. How far this reasoning will hold good, I will not take upon me to say. But, if any weight at all, I am sure it must rather prove, that the men were made for our use than we for their’s, as we were not produc’d till they were form’d to receive us, and till it was judg’d by the Creator himself, that they could not be happy without our Society.¹⁴

Astell went on to argue that any imbalance in perceived intellect was in fact an imbalance in education.

¹³ Mary Wollstonecraft, “Vindication of the Rights of Women” [1792] ed. M.B. Kramnick (London, 1982), 87; quoted in Dorinda Outram, *The Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 80.

¹⁴ May Astell, “‘Sophia,’ from “Beauty’s Triumph; or, The Superiority of the Fair Sex invincibly proved,” [1751] Part One, “Woman not Inferior to Man,” [1739] in *Women in the Eighteenth Century: Constructions of Femininity*, ed. Vivien Jones (London, New York: Routledge, 1994), 225. Emphasis in original.

Let it be observed, what a wretched circle this poor way of reasoning among the *Men* draws then insensibly into. Why is *learning* useless to us? because we have no share in public office. And why have we no share in public office? because we have no *learning*. They are sensible in the injustice they do us, and are reduced to the mean shift of cloaking it at the experience of their own reason. But let truth speak for once: Why are they so industrious to debar us that learning, we have an equal right to with themselves, but for fear of sharing with and outshining them, those public offices they fill so miserably?¹⁵

The crux of this debate about women's place in society hinged on defining what was, or was not, natural. Enlightenment philosophers based ultimate wisdom on nature, but determining what was natural as opposed to what was customary caused the dilemma in defining gender roles. Certainly, roles of childbirth were naturally confined to women; however, through their roles in the home as childbearers and caretakers, women also became the custodians of virtue and religion and were excluded from education. The question then became: Was this natural or merely customary in society? Women were expected by many to be superior in virtue, but inferior in intellect, which by the arguments of Astell and others caused problems in logic and reason. The rightful status of women as equals or subordinates was justified and debated and women themselves were on both sides of the controversy. Many happily accepted their station in life, but a select few fought to vindicate their gender.

This aura of debate and the desire to delineate the difference between customary social divisions and natural social divisions fuels an era that is striving for Enlightenment. It was an era of paradoxes. Individuals may have been inclined to support one side or the other on any given subject, but there was a diversity of philosophies across gender and class lines. The eighteenth century, through modern scholarship, is therefore

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 228, emphasis in original.

characterized by a watershed in the interaction and manner of debating ideas, opinions, and social and political structures.

What is Fidelity?

Enlightenment philosophies provide an ideal arena in which to study fidelity, but first it is necessary to explore the nature of the term. Fidelity is an allegiance—a commitment to constancy. In love and marriage, it can be the defining factor that sculpts the expectations of the relationship. However, interpretations of fidelity extend well beyond individual contracts of love and commitment; within a population, they reflect a hierarchy of sexual power, societal ethics, and gender and class divisions. In the context of a given era, fidelity illuminates and substantiates the collective philosophies of that era, and by examining fidelity, one examines humanity.

The covenant of vows and their fulfillment gives only partial insight into the time period. True insight comes from the particulars surrounding faithfulness or the lack thereof. The ethics and philosophies of a culture emerge as the answers to a series of questions. The first group of these questions centers on devotion. Is one individual faithful to another out of love and personal connection, or out of a socially imposed morality? In other words, do the individuals *want* to be faithful, or do they feel that they *should* be faithful in order to maintain a social position of honor and integrity? Is constancy important in the eyes of the self, in the eyes of the partner, or in the watchful eye of society? There are also issues regarding the state of marriage at the time. How is fidelity related to love, and what is the difference in cases of adultery when the bonds of

matrimony are entered out of love versus those entered for financial or social reasons? How is fidelity measured, and does the overt appearance of a commitment fulfill the contract of marriage? Questions of equality are also raised. In a male-female relationship, are the expectations of fidelity equal for both individuals, or does one gender have more sexual freedom than the other? Fidelity also has the potential to be stratified by social class. Do some classes have more socially stringent expectations for faithfulness than others, and what happens when a sexual liaison crosses class lines? Furthermore, there is the question of value. How important is fidelity? In a society driven by religion or morality, fidelity can be of paramount importance, but in a society driven by logic, reason, or nature, it may be considerably less important, and may even go against the governing philosophies that mark the era. In the latter case, one may advocate a more practical monogamy that is governed by an adherence to natural desires as opposed to socially imposed ethics. Finally, there is the matter of consequence. What are the penalties for a breach in fidelity? Are the ramifications personal, social, or legal, and are these consequences doled out equally or is one group more likely to assume responsibility than the other?

The answers to these questions can be found most poignantly in art. Art reflects the society in which it was created and gives direct and indirect clues into the ideals of the artist and his or her projected audience. The three libretti for the opera-buffa written by Lorenzo Da Ponte (1749-1838) for his musical collaborator Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791), are excellent examples of socially reflective art. The characters are multifaceted individuals with rich emotional lives and complex relationships. They

represent various age groups and social standings, and they deal with eighteenth-century issues from seemingly authentic eighteenth century perspectives. By studying these characters and their circumstances, we can better understand the ethos of the society in which they were created – the society of the Enlightenment.

Fidelity in the Mozart-Da Ponte Operas

Così fan tutte, *Le nozze di Figaro*, and *Don Giovanni* :

A Stratification of Infidelity

The three Mozart-Da Ponte operas were chosen for this study for a number of reasons. To begin with, they represent a finite collection of operas which were written at the culmination of the Enlightenment era by a pair of collaborators. Therefore, they can provide relatively concise insight into a narrow time frame. Furthermore, they exemplify *opera buffa* or *drama giocoso*, and, within this genre, they present some of the most complete and honest characterizations of the time. However, the most persuasive argument is that these three operas provide clear stratifications of infidelity.

Così fan tutte represents fidelity in transition. It is the best study of the first lessons in love and relationships. The two pairs of lovers (Fiordiligi and Ferrando, and Dorabella and Guglielmo) are both naively and fervently faithful in the beginning of the opera. Through the course of the plot, they come to understand the Enlightenment philosophy through their more experienced teachers, Despina and Don Alfonso. With this understanding, comes a loss of innocence and an acceptance of a more practical reality. They transition from an absolute belief in fidelity to a culturally dictated acceptance of infidelity.

In contrast, *Le nozze di Figaro* displays the workings of fidelity and infidelity in a full spectrum of situations. This libretto presents the widest variety of relationships and greatest diversity of class and gender. The characters represent a cross-section of society within the confines of one household, and they display a broad scope of the issues and

ramifications of infidelity. Here infidelity becomes much like a cubist painting by Picasso; one can view multiple perspectives of the single entity at once.

Don Giovanni exhibits infidelity in the extreme. The title character's wanton disregard for women and his compulsive sexuality make the Don a representation of infidelity exceeding the socially acceptable level. The libretto features three central female characters, all of whom are sexual victims of the leading character. These women are assailed by three types of socially unacceptable treatment. Donna Elvira is the archetype for the abandoned wife, and Zerlina and Donna Anna represent possible rape at the peasant and aristocratic levels, respectively. Don Giovanni's actions are considered outwardly unacceptable by society, but the victimized women still have to struggle with social restraints, stereotypes, and expectations in order to preserve their honor and social standing.

From an aggregation of these three libretti, fidelity can be studied and cross-referenced. Similar characters and situations create a commonality of philosophies, and through an analysis of these shared principles and behaviors one can gain cultural insight. Fidelity or infidelity is revealed not in black and white or right or wrong, but in a full spectrum of gradations and repercussions.

Honor: Saving Face vs. Saving Relationships

In the European Enlightenment culture, fidelity was strongly tied to honor. Honor determined an individual's place within social class structures and its importance was eminent. For women, the rules of social conduct demanded an overt appearance of piety

and sexual restraint in order to maintain their own honor and that of their families. In reality, a clandestine affair was of minimal concern, but the slightest hint of an open scandal could be ruinous. Love was desirable, but not a necessary component of marriage; honor, however, was imperative. For these reasons, most individuals were much more concerned with the ways their actions, or those of their partner, would affect their honor as opposed to the ways their actions would affect their personal relationships.

The ideals Da Ponte's of characters reverberate with those of their eighteenth-century counterparts. Throughout all three texts, both male and female characters express their concerns regarding the integrity of their honor and the maintenance of a pristine social façade. In *Così fan tutte*, for example, the two sisters Dorabella and Fiordiligi, are fervently faithful to their lovers. They renounce the advances of the "Albanians" and claim eternal devotion to their sweethearts in their recitatives, ensembles, and in Fiordiligi's fiery aria, *Come scoglio* (Act 1, sc. 11 no. 14). The sisters chastise their pursuers for endangering their honor: "*Sarà ver; ma tante smorfie fanno torto al nostro onor* [That may be so, but such goings-on imperil our honor.]" (Act I, sc. 16) Furthermore, they fear for their reputations and the effect such gossip would have on their lovers: ". . . *Credi tu che vogliamo favola diventar degli oziosi? Ai nostri cari sposi credi tu che vogliam dar tal tormento?* [. . .Do you think that we would want to be a target for idle gossip? Do you think we wish to cause our dear lovers such pain?] (Fiordiligi, Act II sc. 1). The sisters are pious, constant, and unwavering until their maid, Despina, offers them a possible alternative: "*Anche per questo c'è un mezzo sicurissimo; io voglio spagar fama che vengono da me*" [also for this there is a secure means; I will

say that they came to see me] (Act II sc.1). Once Despina has offered to accept responsibility for the comings and goings of the two suitors, the dilemma of what others might think has cleared, and the girls are suddenly free to pursue their flirtations. In the ensuing duet, "*Prenderò quel brunettino*" [I will choose the brunette one], the once-virtuous girls have not only decided to break their vows, but are playfully telling each other which of the two suitors they will choose. Despina's offer has liberated them from social restraints and any personal devotions become, at least temporarily, trivial.

In *Le nozze di Figaro*, Basilio also references the need to save face in a relationship when he speaks to Susanna after suspecting her of having a relationship with Cherubino: "*...io mi credea che perferir dovrete per amante, come fan tutte quante, un signor liberal, prudente e saggio a un giovinaastro, a un paggio*" [I'd like to think that for a lover you would prefer, like any other woman, a generous, prudent and discreet nobleman to a youngster, a pageboy] (Act I sc. 7). Basilio is not horrified by what he suspects to be Susanna's affair, but he is surprised that she appears to have chosen someone who would not be prudent and discreet. Even as a member of the serving class, Susanna is a woman and therefore, as such, must maintain her honor. If the young page were to brag about his exploits, Susanna could be considered an undesirable employee of the household, and might not only lose her current employment, but also sacrifice her future chances of employment elsewhere. While it was not unusual for them to be engaged in affairs with the men of the household, women of the serving class needed to maintain discretion in order to maintain their positions.

For women of the aristocracy, honor determined their security within society. Their social reputations validated them as individuals and ranked them as desirable or undesirable contacts. A woman's sexual prudence affected not only her honor and social standing, but the honor and status of her husband as well. The Countess Rosina Almaviva addresses this fear of lost reputation as she pleads with her husband in the Act II, scene three trio of *Le nozze di Figaro*. She begs the Count not to "hazard a lady's reputation" when she fears that Cherubino is innocently locked in her closet. Later, in scene six, when they return with the tools to break open the door, the Count reiterates the importance of honor and reputation as he accuses the Countess of having sought to disgrace him with her affair: "*Un'fida, un'empia sei . . . e mi cerchi d'infamar*" [You are faithless, wicked and you have sought to disgrace me]. They do not discuss how an affair affects their trust, love or commitment to each other. The Count is focused on the social perception of this situation, not on his personal feelings.

In *Don Giovanni*, Masetto, the young bridegroom, appears to be more emotionally invested in his relationship. He loves his bride, Zerlina, and his suspicions fuel jealousy and heartache. However, it is still the dishonor for which he chastises his bride when he suspects her unfaithfulness. He refers to this act as a mark of shame upon his own head: "*Porre in fronte a un villano d'onor questa marca d'infamia*" [to put on my head this dishonor- this mark of shame] (Act I sc. 16). Thus, *her* actions have marred *his* honor.

The sexual escapades of Don Giovanni and Count Almaviva represent the opposite sides of the spectrum. Unlike the aforementioned women, who were merely suspected of deceit, these men are admitted and unabashed adulterers. They make little, if

any, attempt to be discreet about their affairs; yet their honor is never marred by their promiscuity. Their promiscuity is accepted.

The Count's advances toward Susanna are widely known throughout the household and among other members of society. However, his status is not diminished by his own adulterous tendencies. Only his wife and Susannah suffer from his actions and bear the sexual responsibility. Susannah must fight to preserve her honor and delicately ward off the unwanted advances of her employer while the Countess, as will be discussed later, languishes alone for her loss of love and absorbs personal fault for the waywardness of her husband. As dictated by their stations in society, both women react in the only manner that is considered appropriate and acceptable.

Don Giovanni, whose wanton infidelity borders on criminal extremes, also meets no direct social repercussions for his consensual affairs. His attempted or successful conquests are met with disdain only when they rise to the level of rape. His reputation for seduction is a matter of personal pride, not personal shame. It is only his victims that truly meet consequences for his sexuality. His actions mar their honor, but have little effect on his own. Yet, even the women who are directly affected are advised not to take his infidelity too seriously. Donna Elvira, who has a vehement reaction to the waywardness of her husband Don Giovanni, is counseled and somewhat mollified by Leporello. Through his famous catalogue aria, *Madamina! Il catalogo è questo*, he ineffectually attempts to temper the fury of Elvira by listing the extensive affairs of Don Giovanni: "*Eh, consolateve! Non siete voi, non foste, e non sarete nè la prima, nè la ultima; guardate, questo non picciol libro e tutto pieno dei nomi di sue belle; ogni villa,*

ogni borgo, ogni paese, è testimone di sue donnesche imprese.” [Calm Yourself! You are not, were not, and will not either be the first or the last. Look: this little fat book is entirely full of names of each of his sweethearts. Each town, each district, each region testifies to his affairs with women.] (Act I sc. 5, recitative prior to no. 4) Leporello’s intent is not to shame or dishonor Donna Elvira by informing her of her husband’s actions, but rather to make her understand that Giovanni’s unfaithfulness is not worthy of so much emotional distress; it is simply part of his character. Leporello’s feeble attempt is clumsy and lacks any genuine insight into the female mindset. Rather than truly comforting Donna Elvira, his aria becomes a point of ironic comedy in the opera.

The two unfaithful men in *Così fan tutti*, Ferrando and Guglielmo, also voice no concern anywhere in the libretto for the effects their actions may have on their honor. It is a moot point, not even worthy of mention by the young men. Furthermore, when the entire ruse is discovered at the end, they meet absolutely no outward consequence for their perfidiousness, thus reinforcing the fact that it is inconsequential. Their only lesson is the cold comfort gained when they are “enlightened” enough to forgive the same unfaithfulness in their lovers.

The notion of honor was highly gender-specific in the eighteenth century. While it could be affected by the integrity of one’s associations, the requirements to establish one’s own honor were based on gender and social class. Men of the upper class could define their honor by acts of physical bravery and loyalty. For the bourgeois and most of the working population it was honesty, good craftsmanship, and integrity that comprised

their honor, but for women of all classes, honor was a sexual matter.¹⁶ A woman's honor was entirely tied to her sexual purity. It was a double-standard that existed across class lines. Leslie Richardson stated in her article "*Who Shall Restore my Lost Credit? Rape, Reputation and the Marriage Market*," "a tradeswoman's chastity was considered a measure of her honesty, while no tradesman would be judged on his sexual continence."¹⁷ For a young woman in the marriage market, it was essential that she maintained her purity, or at least the illusion of her purity, in order to secure a desirable husband. Women of the servant class could lose their jobs over a scandal, and a married woman of the aristocracy, although maintaining her economic security, faced possible social expulsion if her affairs were not discreet.

A woman's honor was also directly tied to a man's honor. The unwed girl's actions affected the honor of her father or brothers, and if she was married, her honor was tied to her husband. Much like a financial investment, she could either be a credit or a liability and would affect the man's social standing accordingly. This connection can be seen in Masetto's scolding of Zerlina for Don Giovanni's advances, as well as the Count's chastising of his wife for disgracing him through what he assumes to be an affair with Cherubino. The man's honor is vested in the woman's sexual prudence and any promiscuity is a disgrace to his honor, as well. In contrast, a man's sexual escapades

¹⁶ Merry E. Wiesner. *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe, 2nd Ed.* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 40.

¹⁷ Leslie Richardson, "'Who Shall Restore my Lost Credit?': Rape, Reputation and the Marriage Market" *Studies in Eighteenth Century Culture* 32 (2003) 24.

have little effect on his honor and translate to his wife merely as her own inadequacy in keeping his interest. In both cases, she absorbs the fault.

Regaining Honor

Once a woman's honor was lost, it was extremely difficult to reinstate. For a woman, honor may have been all she had, and if blemished it could mean her ruin. If she were unmarried, she would be considered undesirable in the marriage market and could lose her chance at economic security and comfort altogether, as these luxuries were typically only obtainable through marriage. She would most likely become a liability to her father or brothers, or if she were married, she would bring tremendous shame to her husband's household.

How could a woman redeem lost honor? In most cases, the best way to deal with a breach of fidelity, or a sexual misjudgment, was to hide it. A secret deflowering was better than a public vindication since a public vindication implied a prior suspicion of misconduct. Upper-class women were expected to internalize their shame and allow the men to vindicate them. If honor was stolen from them, as in the case of rape, it could be taken to court. Rape was considered a capital crime at this time and a father could sue for "trespass and damage" to his property.¹⁸ Proving such incidents, however, was extremely difficult. The woman had to prove that she cried out and made attempts to repel her attacker, and she had to make such charges within a set amount of time. If the woman became pregnant from her rape, this caused further difficulties. It was believed

¹⁸ Merry E. Wiesner. *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe, 2nd Ed.* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 61.

by many at the time that a female orgasm was necessary for pregnancy. This was unfortunate for a rape victim as it signaled her enjoyment and, at times, effectively nullified her charge. However, women were usually more concerned with reinstating their reputations than punishing their aggressors. Some women even requested that their rapists be forced to marry them. By contemporary standards, this would seem unfathomable, but it was often the easiest way for a woman who was no longer a virgin to establish an honorable social identity as a married woman.¹⁹

In the libretti, only three women truly risk losing their honor – two as result of a possible rape and one due to abandonment. All three occur in *Don Giovanni* and are the result of the actions of the title character himself. Donna Anna and Zerlina are the victims of attempted rape and Donna Elvira is the abandoned woman. Donna Anna appears to be vindicated. She has admitted to no one that anything beyond simple aggression has befallen her (whether anything actually did occur is unclear in the libretto) and she claims to have performed all of the appropriate duties of crying out and fighting off her attacker. Fortunately, her betrothed, Don Ottavio, believes her, pledges to avenge her, and still wishes to marry her. The actions of Don Ottavio are nothing spectacular by modern standards and audiences would in fact be outraged if he abandoned her, but for his era, Don Ottavio's gestures are extremely noble and, particularly after the death of her father, represent perhaps the only chance for Donna Anna's social and economic salvation.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, 61.

Zerlina is also vindicated with relative ease. She cries out against her attacker while she is at a large social gathering with plenty of witnesses. This, in turn, enrages the other guests who quickly come to her aid. Even Masetto, who originally blamed his young bride for Don Giovanni's advances, seeks to kill the Don once he perceives Zerlina to be in danger of having her honor stolen. Masetto's reinstated faith in Zerlina and the couple's reunification allow Zerlina's honor to be restored so that she can recover socially. As long as a woman of the peasant class could retain her husband's faith, any other consequences would have been secondary.

Donna Elvira's actions are exemplary. She is tricked and abandoned by a man she believes to be her husband, and she does the unthinkable in social terms. First, she attempts to avenge herself by pursuing her wayward husband and forcing him to come back to her. She threatens that if he does not, he will meet with dire consequences: "*Ah se ritrovo l'empio e a me non torna ancor, vo'farne orrendo scempio gli vo' cavar il cor.*" [Ah, if I can find the villain and he will not come back to me, I will make an example of him, I will tear out his heart.] (I sc.5, no.3) Then, she willingly admits to her own dishonorable state in order to prevent her husband from taking actions against another young woman (Zerlina), thus relinquishing her own honor to save that of another. "*Ho perduto la prudenzale tua colpe ed il mio stato volgio a tutte palesar.*" [I have lost my modesty. Your guilt and my situation shall be known to all.] (Act I sc.10). Again, these actions are under-appreciated by the modern audience. Through the lens of contemporary society, Elvira seems unattractively desperate to regain the affections of Don Giovanni. It is difficult to comprehend why a woman would go to such lengths for a man who is

quite obviously a cad. However, when examining her in the context of her own society, she is unusually strong. Fighting for a woman's honor was a job that, by society's standards, was reserved exclusively for a man representing the dishonored women. Returning Don Giovanni to her side as her husband is her only option for social acceptance, other than committing herself to a life in a convent, and she battles vehemently for the first alternative. Furthermore, she is willing to sacrifice herself in order to save a stranger (Zerlina) from a similar fate. When put in historical context, she transforms from what by today's standards could be seen as a pathetic romantic to a heroic force with which to be reckoned.

A Question of Fault

Since the dawn of time, women have risked the physical consequences of an affair. An untimely pregnancy has always been irrefutable proof of a female's sexual activity and historically this potential has limited her sexual freedom. Since the female obviously carried the physical manifestation, it was a logical evolution of ideology for her to socially absorb the fault. Female sexuality became something to be restrained whereas male sexuality, which bore no outward consequence, was something to accept. Rousseau and Porter's text *Sexual Underworlds of the Enlightenment* substantiates this premise with a quote from Samuel Johnson who argued that, "sensible wives would turn a blind eye to their husband's infidelities; after all, no harm was done (the husband did not foist bastards onto his wife.)"²⁰ Such a sentiment prevailed in the eighteenth century.

²⁰ G. S. Rousseau and Roy Porter editors, *Sexual Underworlds of the Enlightenment* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 5.

Women were blamed for being the sirens who drove men's desires. In the eyes of society, they were responsible both for their own waywardness and for causing the advances of men. Women were trained to attract the appropriate men when they were in the marriage market and were responsible for maintaining the interest of their husbands once they were married. Women's conduct manuals and moral narratives of the time formed an entire sub-genre of literature which educated women on their duties of fulfilling the needs of men and the importance of moral restraint in terms of their own desires. Through such training and the pressures of society, women came to accept the burden of all sexual accountability. They carried the responsibility for maintaining virtue, eliciting wanted or unwanted advances, and they were also to blame when men lost interest in them.

This burden of sexual fault is evident throughout the Da Ponte libretti. As a case in point, one needs only observe the entire ending of *Così fan tutte*. Although Don Alfonso has set up the two young men, Ferrando and Guglielmo, to seduce the other's fiancée, once this is successful and both sets of partners have expressed feelings for their cross-matched lovers, only the women are blamed for this perfidiousness. Absolutely no fault is given to the men who willingly play the roles of seducers and whose hearts are, at least partially, committed to the other women. Dorabella and Fiordiligi claim full and complete fault: "*Ah, signore, son rea morte, a la morte io sol vi chiedo; il mio fallo tardi vedo; con quel ferro un ferite, che non merita pietà*" [Ah, signore, I am mortally guilty, and death is all I ask of you; with this sword pierce my breast which is not worthy of mercy] (Act II sc. 18). Masetto, in *Don Giovanni*, similarly blames Zerlina rather than

the Don for Don Giovanni's advances. He accuses her of shaming him and threatens her: "...porre in fronte a un villano d'onor questa marca d'infamia! Ah, se non fosse scandodlo, vorrei..." [to put on my head this dishonor- this mark of shame! Ah, if it were not for the scandal I would like to...] (Act I sc. 16). However, because she occupies a lower social status than the Don, Zerlina has very little power to refuse him. Still she claims that she has been tricked and accepts the blame. In her aria, *Batti, Batti*, she begs Masetto to punish her. "*Batti, Batti. O bel Masetto, latue povera Zerlina; stratò qui come agnellina le tue botte ad aspettar. Lascierò straziarmi il crine, lascierò cararmi gli occhi, e le care tue manine lieta poi saprò baciare.*" [Beat me, beat me my dear Masetto. Beat your poor little Zerlina. I'll stay here like a little lamb and await your every blow. I'll let you pull my hair out. I'll let you gouge my eyes out and then happily will I kiss your wonderfully sweet hands.] (Act I sc. 16 no. 12) Whether she actually wishes for a bludgeoning or she uses this clever ploy to soften his anger is not entirely apparent. In either case, however, Zerlina willingly accepts responsibility for the wanted or unwanted advances of Don Giovanni.

In *Le nozze di Figaro*, not only does the Countess acknowledge the faithlessness of her husband, "*Come il sono i moderni mariti : per sistema infedele, per genio capricciosi, e per orgoglio poi tutti gelosi*" [That is the way of modern husbands, on principle unfaithful, by nature fickle, and by all pride jealous.] (Act II sc. 1), but in her plaintive aria *Dove sono* and its preceding recitative she also mourns his departure and prays that her constancy and yearning would change him.

(recitative) *Oh cielo! A quai umil stato fataleio son ridotta da un consorte crudel! che dopo avermi con un misto inaudito d'infedeltà, di gelosia, di sdegno! prima amata indi offesa, e alfin tradita, fammi cercar mia serva aita!*

(aria) *Dove sono i bei momenti di dolcezza e di piacer? Dove andro i giuramenti di quel labbro mezzongner? Perchè mai, se in pianti e in pene per me tutto si cangiò, la memoria di quel bene dal mio sen non trapassò? Ah! se almen la mia costanza nel languire amando ognor mi portasse una speranza di cangiar l'ingrato.*

[(recitative) Oh Heaven! To what humiliation I am reduced by a cruel husband, who after having first loved me, then neglected me and finally deceived me in a strange mixture of infidelity, jealousy and disdain, now forces me to seek help from my servant!]

(aria) Where are those happy moments of sweetness and pleasure? Where have they gone, those vows of a deceiving tongue? Then why if everything for me is changed to tears and grief has the memory of that happiness not faded from my breast? Ah, if only my constancy in yearning lovingly for him always could bring the hope of changing his ungrateful heart.]

(Act III sc. 8, no. 20)

In essence, she carries the burdens of his misdeeds in her own heart, long before her husband admits to any remorse. She blames herself, wishing her own acts could evoke a reunification.

Donna Elvira, in *Don Giovanni*, consistently expresses the same fervent devotion regardless of her beloved Giovanni's deeds. While she may be enraged at times, she never denies him salvation. She seeks to redeem him and accepts him even to the bitter end. Her desire to absolve the injustices committed against her with no demands for his accountability and her willingness to go to incredible lengths to make him return imply personal fault for his straying love.

In *Così fan tutte*, Fiordiligi also expresses extreme guilt. Her guilt, however, is for her blossoming feelings for the disguised Ferrando in her aria *Per pietà*. (Act II sc. 7, no.25)

*Per pietà, ben mio, perdona all'error d'un'alma amante;
Fra quest'ombre e queste piante sempre ascoso, o Dio, sarà,
Svenerà quest'empia voglia l'ardir mio, la mia costanza,
Perderà la remembranza che vergogna e orror mi fà.
A chi mai mancò di fede questo vano ingrato cor!
Si dovea miglior mercede, caro bene, al tuo candor!*

[Have pity, my love, forgive the fault of this loving soul;
among these trees and shady groves it shall remain hidden forever, O God.
My passion, my constancy will empty my veins of this impious desire,
will drive away the memory that causes me such horror and shame.
And whom did this empty worthless heart betray!
You deserved a greater reward, my love, for your sincerity.]

In this case, Fiordiligi represents an honest and strong sense of duty toward love. She feels remorse not for her reputation or his reputation, but for the heart of her beloved. Her tremendous guilt is not for any actions, but rather she feels she has compromised their bond by the new feelings stirring within her. It is interesting that her particular morality is deemed as youthful foolishness and that she is considered to be a student in *la scuola degli amanti*²¹ who must be taught otherwise.

“Reasonable” infidelity

The Age of Enlightenment was also the age of sexual enlightenment. During the eighteenth century the quantity of advice printed on sexual matters increased

²¹ *La scuola degli amanti* [the school for lovers] is the secondary title to *Così fan tutte*

dramatically.²² Regarding fidelity, two main genres of literature emerged with two very different viewpoints and two very different readerships.

The conduct manuals, moral narratives and other books and periodicals (the most famous being Addison and Steele's *Spectator*) were predicated on the idea of female duty to man and her subordination. They targeted a growing feminine readership and helped define the identity of a newly formed middleclass. Wetenhall Wilkes published his advice in 1766, and it illustrates the typical sentiment:

The duties of a wife to her husband, in every degree and state of life, can be no less than love, fidelity, and obedience to all his lawful desires, and prudent counsels; so that, according as she is disposed, in herself, to perform these duties, every circumstance of life is to give her pleasure or pain.²³

The second body of literature is aligned with the Enlightened school of thought and is meant to illuminate the minds of reasonable men. The Age of Reason is based on a foundation in science where logic and the understanding of nature prevail. Through discoveries, such as the highly influential taxonomy of noted biologist and botanist Carolus Linneaus (1707-1778), eighteenth century scholars began to recognize the fundamental sexuality of all living beings. Human sexuality became natural and reasonable as opposed to arcane. Restricted monogamy was not considered reasonable. It involved inhibiting the natural desires of the passions and to go against nature was certainly to go against logic. Through this viewpoint, infidelity and reason become

²² G.S. Rousseau, ed and Roy Porter ed., *Sexual Underworlds of the Enlightenment*. (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1985), 7.

²³ Wetenhall Wilkes, "A letter of Genteel and Moral Advice to a Young Lady" in *Women in the Eighteenth Century: Constructs of Femininity*, ed. Vivian Jones (London, New York: Routledge, 2000), 35.

natural bedfellows. Charles Ford observed this sentiment in the writings of David Hume (1711-1776).

If sexual desire was imbued with guilt, it was only because civil society had felt the need to constrain its impetuosity. Now that the developing sensibility of the ascendant bourgeoisie could be taken as a sign of civilized humanity's moral maturity, it seemed possible to loosen these constraints on nature for the sake of individual happiness.²⁴

This espousal of sexual freedom appears to contradict issues of honor and the preservation of integrity. However, the two ideologies were able to coexist because one serves as the overt, idealistic morality, whereas the other functions as a covert, practical reality. Certainly the Enlightenment literature does not advocate a reckless, adulterous lifestyle, but rather a civilized, reasonable amount of sexual promiscuity. Men are to remain faithful to their wives in terms their financial support and social responsibility and women are to remain faithful to their husbands through maintaining the appearance of piety and obedience. However, both men and women are instructed not to take harmless affairs and wayward sexuality too seriously, for it is only a natural folly.

The Da Ponte libretti support the latter Enlightenment school of thought. In both *Così fan tutte* and *Le nozze di Figaro* there appears to be a pervasive belief that a certain amount of infidelity is reasonable and sensible. Faithfulness is foolishness and youth or other unenlightened individuals should be instructed accordingly. Indicators of this sentiment are abound. In act four, scene six of *Le nozze di Figaro*, Basilio responds to what he feels is foolish jealousy from Figaro:

²⁴ Ford. 25-26.

In quegli anni in cui val poco la mal practica ragion, ebbi anch'io la stesso foco fui quel pazzo ch'or non son ma col tempo ecoi perigli Donna Flemma capitò; e i capricci ed punigli dalla testa mi cavò.

[In those years when reason, little practiced, carried little weight, I too had the same fire, and was the kind of fool I no longer am, but with time and dangers, Dame Discretion appeared and drove caprices and scruples out of my head.]

In *Così fan tutte*, Despina and Don Alfonso train their young apprentices to expect infidelity from the opposite sex. In her aria, *In uomini in soldati*, Despina laughs at her young mistresses' naive faith in their lovers. She instructs Dorabella and Fiordiligi that all men are unfaithful and that women should therefore be allowed to love in accordance to their whims as well.

In uomini, in soldati sperare fedeltà? In uomini sperare fedeltà? In soldati sperare fedeltà? Non vi fate sentir, per carità! Di pasta simile son tutti quanti; le fronde mobili l'aure incostanti han più degli uomini stabilità. Mentite lagrime, fallaci sguardi, voci ingannevoli, vezzi bugiardi, son le primarie lor qualità. Io noi non amano che il diletto; poi ci dispeghiano neganci affetto, nè val da' barbari chieder pietà. Pagiame, o femmine, d'equal moneta questa malefica razza indiscreta; amiam per comodo, per vanità!

[You think men and soldiers will be faithful? You think men will be faithful, you think soldiers will be faithful? Don't let anyone hear you for goodness sake! They are all made of the same dough; the fickle leaves, the inconstant winds have more stability than men. Lying tears, false glances, deceitful voices, treacherous caresses, these are their only outstanding qualities. They love us only for their own pleasure, then they despise and deny us love. Nor is it worthwhile asking mercy of these barbarians. Oh women, let us pay back in their own coin the pernicious, impertinent race of men; let us love to suit ourselves, for our own gratification.]

(Act I sc.9 no. 12)

Don Alfonso also condemns the foolishness of blind devotion in his brief aria (Act II sc. 13 no. 30). He claims that the lover who finds himself deceived in the end should not condemn the other's folly, but his own; whether young or old, beautiful or

ugly, all women are like that – “*così fan tutte*.” The final chorus of the opera sung by all the principle characters reiterates Don Alfonso’s sentiment:

*Fortunato l’uom che prende ogni cosa pel buon verso
e tra i casi e vicende da ragion guidar si fa.
Quel che suole altrui far piangere fia per lui cagion di riso
e del mondo in mezzo i turbini bella calma troverà.*

[How happy is the man who looks on the bright side of everything
and in all his circumstances and trials lets himself be guided by reason
Something that only makes others weep gives him cause to laugh
and amid the storms of the world he will find peace.]

(Act II final chorus)

Johann Pezzl, who belonged to the same Masonic lodge as Mozart, further reinforces this idea in his *Sketch of Vienna*. His text comments on the daily lives and philosophies of the Viennese from 1786-1790 and his observations are marked by a strikingly similar lesson in *Così fan tutte*. “Thanks to our malleable morals, our inclination to laugh at everything our refined way of thinking, we have been freed from the desperation of unrequited love... Nowadays there is no more pathetic figure than a languishing lover.”²⁵

The lesson for the lovers is clear. They are not to dwell on mere acts of infidelity, for their occurrence is unequivocally certain, and they will fair far better if they can find amusement in it. In this Age of Reason, they are taught that is foolish to stifle desire for the sake of civil society. If desire exists, then to go against it is to go against nature.

Even the story of *Don Giovanni*, which ostensibly speaks against the actions of wanton sexuality and, in many ways, more closely resembles the moral narratives, still does not fully admonish infidelity. Don Giovanni is ultimately punished for a multitude

²⁵ Johann Pezzl, *Sketch of Vienna* translated in *Mozart and Vienna*, H.C. Robbins Landon, (London: Thames and Hudson 1991), 113.

of sins: murder, assault, atheism, rape and sexual overindulgence. Had he returned to Donna Elvira after only having his affairs, she clearly would have forgiven his waywardness and *Don Giovanni* would have been a very short opera. For the Don, it was not adultery which caused his final ruin. His lack of fidelity is actually a minor detail. Rather, it was his unwillingness to repent that brought about his demise.

Reasonable infidelity in the Enlightenment era is a concept that is not singular to the Da Ponte libretti. Other contemporaries of Da Ponte teach comparable lessons. A notable similarity is found in Choderlos de Laclos' novel, *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*, which was published in Paris about the same time (1782). Here, the Marquise de Merteuil instructs the young Cécil Volange, who is feeling guilty about an affair:

If you could but persuade yourself to reason a little, you would soon find yourself to be glad rather than to complain. But you are ashamed and that troubles you! Hey! calm yourself; the shame love causes is like the pain; we only feel it once. We may feign it afterwards, but we do not feel it. However the pleasure remains, and that indeed is something.²⁶

Again, the older wiser Marquise instructs a young woman who is new to love. As with Fiordiligi, her guilt and moralistic views are deemed unreasonable and, while perhaps endearing, they are the foolish idealism of youth.

Donatien Alphonse François de Sade (1740-1814), otherwise known as the Marquis de Sade, repeatedly writes that love is not only a ridiculous enslavement, but also an erroneous misconceived approach to Enlightenment. He claims that love seriously endangers the autonomy of the self.

If this extravagance [sic] never did more than lead us to ardent intoxicated possession, it would only be an absurdity; but since it leads us to a certain

²⁶ Laclos, Choderlos de, "Les Liaisons Dangereuses," [1782] trans. 1925 by Richard Aldington in *Great French Romances*, selected with intro. by Richard Arlington (New York: Pilot Press, 1946), 426.

metaphysic that, by transforming us into the thing loved, makes its acts, wants and desires as dear to us as to our very own, by this alone it becomes excessively dangerous; for it takes us out of ourselves too much and causes us to neglect our own interests for those of the thing loved.²⁷

The Marquis's warning imbues love with a bitter taste. If one loves, then he loses self and in losing self, he loses reason. Therefore, if one is to gain reason he must join the ranks of Don Alfonso, Don Giovanni, and Count Almaviva and seek only detached, erotic conquests that remain free from emotional commitment. The Marquis de Sade, unlike the Marquise de Merteuil, limits the choice in sexual freedom to the male. A woman may have many partners, but only if the male chooses. The Marquise, on the other hand, overtly admits that the male thinks he has control, but in her view, the female has the power to manipulate him for her own pleasure using a more tacit approach.

Barbarina (*Le nozze di Figaro*) provides an excellent example of a female using her sexuality to gain power. She is merely the gardener's daughter, but she makes her plea with the Count in the presence of his wife. "*Eccellenza, voi mi dite se spesso, qualvolta m'abbracciate e mi bacciate: Barbarina, se m'ami ti darò quel brami.*" [Your Lordship, you have told me so often when you have kissed and caressed me: "Barbarina, if you'll love me I'll give you what ever you want"] (Act III sc. 12) She then continues "*Or datemi, padrone in sposo Cherubino e v'amerò con amo il mio gattino*" [Sir, do please give me Cherubino as my husband and I'll love you as my kitten.] (Act III sc. 12). The young woman cleverly manipulates the Count into allowing her to marry his young godson, who she knows is more concerned with sexual pleasure than with choosing an

²⁷ Sade, Marquis de, 1797 as quoted in Charles Ford, *Così? Sexual Politics in Mozart's Operas* (New York: Manchester University Press, 1991), 30.

honorable bride. The thwarted Count may subscribe to the Enlightenment philosophy toward sexuality and promiscuity in practice, but at this point he has been caught. Barbarina's actions thus result in successfully moving her family up the proverbial social ladder and earning the praise of her father. "*Brava, figliuola! Hai buon maestro che ti fa la scuola.*" [Well done, my child! You have learned your lessons well.] (Act III sc.12).

Lessons encouraging or simply observing promiscuity are relatively commonplace in the literature of the Enlightenment. The unusual nature of Laclos' Marquise and Barbarina is that they represent a strain of feminist Enlightenment which allows for female freedoms to equal those of men. A far greater portion of literature is aligned with the Marquis de Sade in his provocative text, *Philosophy in the Bedroom*:

Women should not be bound by the exclusive property rights of marriage, but be freely available to all men. Women were mere moments in the totality of an undivided nature to be harnessed as the objective incarnation of subjective male desires.²⁸

Certainly many women, even those favoring a more equal approach to Enlightenment, suffered from this misogynistic philosophy. For many, such demeaning commentary may have brought bitterness or apathy. The outspoken maid Despina clearly maintains resentment toward the men who have loved and left her, as evident in her aforementioned aria *In Uomini in Soldati*, which scorns the deceitful ways of men. She supports women as sexual equals in society and encourages her young mistresses to do the same. Her attitude toward men is simply the inversion of the claims by authors such as de Sade. "*Un uom adesso amante, un altro n'amerete; uno val l'altro perchè nessun val nulla.*" [Now

²⁸ Sade, Marquis de, *Philosophy in the Bedroom*, coll. in *The Marquis de Sade*, compiled and trans. R. Seaver and A. Wainhouse, (New York: Grove Press, 1965); as quoted in Charles Ford, *Così? Sexual Politics in Mozart's Operas* (New York: Manchester University Press, 1991), 138.

you love one man, then you'll love another; one is like the other because they are all worthless.] (Act I sc. 9)

Natural Balance of the Sexes

The scholar Jean-Jacque Rousseau played one of the larger roles in shaping the ideals of the Enlightenment Era, and in addition to his thoughts on politics and social order, his writing also commented on the appropriate balance between the sexes. He explained the imbalance in fidelity as nature. Through his novel *Emile ou de l'éducation*, he expresses the nature of man to be free and equal and it is the nature of women to be unequal, subordinate and dependent:

Since dependence is a state natural to women, girls feel themselves made to obey; they have or should have, little freedom... Destined to obey a being as imperfect as man, a woman should learn to suffer – even suffer injustice – at an early age, and to bear the wrongs of her husband without complaint. You will never reduce boys to the same point; their inner sense of justice rises up and rebels against such injustice, which nature never intended them to tolerate.²⁹

This philosophy reverberates with several of the Da Ponte characters. Perhaps most poignantly, it describes the plight of the Countess. In both of her major arias, *Dove sono* and *Porgi amor*, she laments the injustice brought on by her husband's sexual abandonment. Furthermore, in both cases she languishes alone as commanded by her social culture. However, through Mozart's tender musical setting and its poetry, the Countess generates empathy.

²⁹ Rousseau, Jean-Jacque, *Emile ou de l'éducation*, in *Œuvres complète* (Paris: Gallimard, Bibliothèque de la pléiade, 1969), v. IV, p 710-711, as quoted in *Sexual Politics in the Enlightenment, Women writers Read Rousseau* by Mary Suidman Trouille (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1997), 17.

Although the situation may have been presented as one that was commonplace and natural, our voyeuristic view into her bedroom and heart tolerates questioning about its justice. Rousseau's words also describe the Countess's operatic commiserators, Donna Elvira, Donna Anna and, to some extent, Dorabella and Fiordiligi. In addition, his sentiment elucidates the ending of *Così fan tutte*, explaining both the fury of the men who have suffered a betrayal—an injustice—and also the complacency of the women who, while they suffered a similar betrayal of trust, beg for forgiveness and never once accuse the men.

Social Divisions

Although not all characters pontificate about fidelity in these libretti, certain social groups emerge as the most consistently outspoken on the subject. These are divided along gender and class lines but are not stratified solely by one or the other. Those who frequently expound on the virtues of fidelity or the perils of infidelity are females of the upper class (Countess Rosina Almaviva, Donna Elvira, and Donna Anna), and males of the lower-class (Figaro and Masetto). Characters most consistently candid about infidelity as a fact of life are the lower class females (Despina and Barbarina) and the upper-class males (Don Alfonso, Don Giovanni, Count Almaviva, Dr. Bartolo, and Basilio). This dichotomy of class and gender is consistent with the very nature of the sexual act. Metaphorically, sexual relations imply a physical conquest of male over female or a surrendering of the female. It is only logical then, that the conquering would occur down the chain of class with the higher-class males having relations with the

lower-class females. This, in turn, creates anger and helplessness in the lower class males who can do nothing when their wives or sisters are preyed upon and it perpetuates the sense of abandonment common to the upper class women who are likewise helpless in controlling their mates.

Female Solidarity

Enlightenment may have brought individuality to man, but it seems to have brought solidarity to women. In all operas under study, the females bind themselves together as a unit against the male forces. In *Don Giovanni*, Donna Elvira helps Donna Anna and the two of them together try to rescue Zerlina. In *Le nozze di Figaro*, the Countess seeks friendship and a kindred spirit in her maid, Susanna, even though she is very person who is distracting her husband. Marcellina also offers her solidarity to Susanna in the final act of *Le nozze di Figaro*. Her bond of femininity is stronger than her bond to her son, Figaro, even though she is not certain of Susanna's innocence. "*Ah! quando il cor non ciarma personale interesse, ogni donna è portata alla difesa del suo povero sesso. Da quest'uomini ingrati a torto oppresso.*" [Ah! when the interest of her own heart is not threatened, every woman is bound to come to the defense of her own poor sex, so put upon by these ungrateful men.] (Act IV sc. 8 recitative prior to no.25) Likewise, the two sisters in *Così fan tutte* supply a united front against their unwanted suitors and sing almost all of their defenses in tandem.

The women created by Mozart and Da Ponte suffer injustices of infidelity by twenty-first century standards, but in their own era they were taught to accept social

mores and they found a common bond through them. They were taught to bear guilt, abandonment, and even abuse. They learned to maintain a reputation and overtly give power while covertly maintaining control. They are women defined by weakness but vindicated by their strength. They *are* like that –*così fan tutte!*

Conclusion

In summation, the study of fidelity in the Mozart-Da Ponte Operas, *Le nozze di Figaro*, *Don Giovanni* and *Così fan tutte*, elucidates the relationships and sexual expectations of the characters with the context of eighteenth-century society. Women of all classes maintained honor by their overt sexual piety. However, they were trained to accept a reasonable amount of infidelity in their husbands. They alone carried the social burden of sexual responsibility and were held accountable for men's wanted and unwanted sexual advances; in addition, they suffered the blame when these men lost interest. Men, on the other hand, did not have the same sexual restrictions. For them, honor was not related to their own sexuality, but rather the appearance of sexual piety in the women associated with them. Men's sexual desire was deemed natural and to go against nature was to go against reason.

In these three operas, true unblemished fidelity is seemingly unattainable, idealistic and unrealistic. The characters are taught that, in order to find happiness, they must learn to accept the waywardness of their partners. Men of the upper class subscribe to an ethos of reasonable infidelity for themselves and expect the appearance of fidelity from their wives. Serving class females have learned to accept infidelity as a way of life and upper class women have learned to carry any injustices from their husbands silently and in solitude. It is only the youthful lower class males that still are outraged by faithlessness and they are regarded as foolishly lacking reason.

The Age of Reason had a profound effect on fidelity. Men became individuals through the Enlightenment and sought to maintain their reason by refusing to let the emotional fog of love to cloud their intellect. Women, however found unity – a fidelity

of sorts for their own sex. They found strength and compassion in each other across the class lines and learned to endure and thrive under a veil of virtue.

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APPENDIX A

REFERENCES TO FIDELITY IN *LE NOZZE DI FIGARO*

Scene	Character	Aria or Recitative	Text	Text Summary or Translation
Act I sc. 1 no. 2	Susanna	duet	<i>... Il signore Conte stanco di andare cacciando le straniere bellezze forestiere ...</i>	Susanna tells Figaro that their convenient location for serving their masters is also convenient for the Count who has grown tired of scouring the countryside for beauties and wants to try his luck in his own palace with Susanna and take advantage of his feudal privilege.
Act I sc. 2 no. 3	Figaro	aria	<i>Se vuol ballare</i>	Figaro warns the Count that if he wants "to dance" his plots will be overthrown.
Act I sc. 6	Count	recitative	<i>Ah no, Susanna, io ti vo' far felice! Tu ben sai quanto io t'amo: A te Basilio tutto già disse, or senti. Se per pochi momenti meco in giardin sull'imbrunir del giorno... Ah, per questo favore io paghere</i> <i>Io non ho mai nella moral sentito ch'uno ch'ama la moglie odii il marito.</i>	Ah no, Susanna, I want to make you happy! You well know how much I love you: Basilio has already told you everything. Now listen, if you could give me a few moments in the garden, for this favor I will pay... (he is cut off)
Act I. Sc 7	Basilio	recitative	<i>Sortite, vi ministro dell'altri sfenatezza: io non ho d'uopd sella vostra morale, del conte,</i>	I've never heard the maxim that one who loves the wife must hate the husband.
Act I. Sc 7	Susanna	recitative		Get out, you base agent for another's lust: I don't need your maxims, your Count with his love

Act I. Sc 7	Basilio	recitative	<i>del suo amor. . . Non s'è alcun male, Ha ciascum i suoi gusti: Io mi credea chere preferir doveste per amante, come fan tutte quante, Un signor liberal, prudente e saggio, a un giovinastro, a un paggio Uom maligno!</i>	There's no harm done: each to his own taste: I'd like to think that for a lover you would prefer, like any other woman, a generous prudent, and discreet nobleman to a youngster, a page boy
Act I. Sc 7	Susanna	recitative		Malicious man! (Susanna is furious with his accusation and slander)
Act I. Sc 7	Basilio	recitative	<i>Così fan tutte le belle! Non c'è alcuna novità.</i>	Every woman is alike! There is nothing new about it. (Note: This is the origin for the title of Mozart and Da Ponte's last collaboration)
Act 1 sc. 8 no. 8	chorus	chorus	Giovani liete	Figaro brings in the chorus to sing a song while they scatter flowers before their noble lord whose generous heart has preserved intact the chaste purity of a still fairer flower (Making reference to Susanna and the abolishment of the feudal privilege). Figaro asks the Count to crown Susanna with a white veil as a symbol of virtue kept pure by the Count's gift.
Act 1 sc. 8	Count	recitative	<i>. . . e un dritto ingiusto ne' miei feudi abolendo a natura,</i>	It was an unjust privilege and by abolishing it in my domain I have

				<i>al dover lor dritti io rendo.</i>	restored to nature and duty their rights.
Act II sc. 1 no. 10	Countess	aria		<i>Porgi amor</i>	Oh love, bring some relief to my sorrow, to my sighs; O give me back my loved one, or in mercy let me die.
Act II sc. 1	Countess	recitative		<i>Come il sono i moderni mariti: per sistema infedeli, per genio capricciosi, e per orgoglio poi tutti gelosi</i>	That is the way of modern husbands: on principle unfaithful, by nature fickle, and by pride all jealous.
Act II sc. 3 no. 14	Count, Countess, and Susanna	trio			Cherubino is locked in the dressing room of the Countess. Susanna fears a scandal. Meanwhile, the Countess pleads with the Count not to hazard a lady's reputation. The Count decides to lock all bedroom doors, get his tools and personally unlock the dressing room door in order to avoid any scandal in front of the servants
Act II sc. 5	Countess	recitative		<i>Mi credete capace di mancare al dover?</i>	In response to the Count's accusations the Countess replies: Do you think I am capable of failing my duty?
Act II sc. 6 no. 16	Countess	finale		<i>Mi fa torto quel trasporto. M'oglitraggiare a dubitar.</i>	You are wrong to get carried away. Your doubt is an insult.

Act II sc. 6	Count	finale	<i>Un'infida, un'empia sei . . . e mi cerchi d'infamar.</i>	You are faithless, wicked and you have sought to disgrace me
Act II sc. 7	Countess	finale	<i>Adunque la fede d'une anima amante si fiera mercede doveva sperar?</i>	So this is the reward that I can expect for the loyalty of my faithful heart?
Act II sc. 7	Countess	finale	<i>Crudele! Più quella non sono, ma il misero oggetto del vostro abbandono, che avete diletto di far disparar</i>	In response to the Count calling her "Rosina": Cruel man! I am no longer she, but the wretched object of your neglect, whom you delight to make suffer.
Act III sc. 2 no. 17	Susanna	duet	<i>Signor, la donna ognora tempo ha di dir di sì.</i>	Signor, a woman always needs time before she says yes (Note: She in the process of deceiving the Count)
Act III sc. 2 no. 17	Susanna	duet	<i>Scusatemi se mento, voi che indete amor.</i>	Excuse my deception, you who I truly love (aside)
Act III sc. 4 no. 18	Count	aria	<i>. . . Vedro per man d'amore unita a un vil oggetto chi in me destò un affetto, che per me poi non ha? Ah no, lasciarti in pace non vo' questo contento! Tu non nascesti, audace, per dare tormento. . .</i>	Must I see her, who has aroused in me a passion unrequited, united by the hand of love to a base slave? Ah no, I will not give you the satisfaction of this contentment! You were not born, bold fellow, to cause me torment.
Act III sc. 8 no. 20	Countess	recitative and aria	<i>Dove sono</i>	Translation of end of the recitative and aria: To what humiliation I am reduced by a

				<p>cruel husband, who after having first loved me, then neglected me and finally deceived me in a strange mixture of infidelity, jealousy and disdain, now forces me to seek help from my servant! (aria) Where are those happy moments of sweetness and pleasure? Where have they gone, those vows of a deceiving tongue? Then why if everything for me is changed to tears and grief has the memory of that happiness not faded from my breast? Ah, if only my constancy in yearning lovingly for him always could bring the hope of changing his ungrateful heart.</p>
Act III sc. 12	Barbarina	recitative	<p><i>Eccellenza, voi mi dite se spesso, qualtvolta m'abbracciate e mi bacciate: Barbarina, se m'ami ti darò quel che brami.</i></p>	<p>The Count catches Cherubino and Barbarina together and Barbarina pleads with the Count: Your lordship, you have told me so often when you have kissed and caressed me, "Barbarina, if you'll love me I'll give you whatever you want"</p>
Act III sc. 12	Barbarina	recitative	<p><i>Or datemi, padrone in sposo Cherubino e v'amerò</i></p>	<p>Do please give me, sir, Cherubino as my husband and I'll love you</p>

Act IV sc. 7	Basilio	recitative	<i>con'amo il mio gattino</i> ... <i>Susanna piace il Conte. Ella d'accordo gli diè un appuntamento ch'a Figaro non piace</i>	as I love my kitten Susanna pleases the Count. She has agreed to give him a rendezvous, and that doesn't please Figaro.
Act IV sc. 7	Bartalo	recitative	<i>E che? Dunque dovri Soffrirlo in pace</i>	So what? He'll have to grin and bear it (smile in peace)
Act IV sc. 7 no. 26	Basilio	aria	<i>In quegli anni in cui val poco la mal pratica ragion, ebbi anch'io la stesso foco fui quel pazzo ch'or non son ma col tempo eoi perigli Donna Flemma capito; e I capricci ed punigli dalla testa mi cavò</i>	In those years when reason little practiced, carried little weight, I too had that same fire, and was the kind of fool I no longer am, but with time and dangers, Dame Discretion appeared and drove caprices and scruples out of my head.
Act IV sc. 8 no. 27	Figaro	aria	<i>Tutto è disposto.....Aprite un po' quegli occhi</i>	... and now I learn the foolish art of being a husband. Traitor! At the very moment of our wedding! ... he reading with pleasure and I watching him, unwittingly laughing at myself. Oh Susanna, Susanna what anguish you have cost me! With that sweet face and those innocent eyes. ... who would have believed it! Ah, to trust women is sheer folly. Just open your eyes you rash and foolish men, See them as they are,

<p>these goddesses, so called by the intoxicated senses to whom feeble reason offers tribute. They are witches who cast spells for our torment, sirens who sing for our confusion, night owls who fascinate to pluck us, comets who dazzle to deprive us of light. They are thorned roses, alluring vixens, smiling she-bears, malign doves, masters of deceit, friends of distress, who cheat and lie, feel no love and have no pity. The rest I need not say, for everyone knows it already.</p>				
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APPENDIX B

REFERENCES TO FIDELITY IN *DON GIOVANNI*

Scene	Character	Aria or Recitative	Text	Text summary or Translation
Act I sc.5 no.3	Donna Elvira	trio	<i>Ah, chi mi dice mai? Quel barbaro dov'è, che per mio scorno amai, chi mi mancò di fe? Ah, se ritrovo l'empio e a me non torna ancor, vo' farne orrendo scempio, gli vo' cavare il cor</i>	Ah, who is there? Who will tell me where the rascal is? He, whom to my shame, I have loved and who has betrayed me? Ah, if I can find the villain and he will not come back to me, I will make an example of him. I will tear out his heart
Act I sc.5 no. 4	Leporello	recitative and aria	<i>Madamina! Il catalogo è questo</i>	(recit) Calm yourself! You are not, were not, and will not be either the first or the last. Look: this fat little book is entirely full of names of each of his sweethearts. Each town each district, each region testifies to his affairs with women (aria) The aria lists all of his various women across Europe, counting the number of every rank, age, and physical type.
Act I sc.7 no.5	Zerlina	duet and chorus	<i>Giovinette che fate all'amore, non lasciate che passi l'età</i>	You girls who trifle with love, do not let time pass you by.
	Masetto	duet and chorus	<i>Giovanetti leggeri di testa, non andate girando di là e qua, poco dura de' matti la festa</i>	You lighthearted young men, don't go wandering here and there; a fool's holiday is very short.
Act I sc.7	Don Giovanni	recitative	<i>Tal parola non vale un zero</i>	In response to Zerlina: "but I promised to marry him" Giovanni

Act I sc. 10	Donna Elvira	recitative	<i>Il ciel mi fece udir le tue perfidie. Il sono a tempo di salva questa misera innocente dal tuo barbaro artiglio.</i>	replies: That kind of a promise means nothing Heaven willed that I should overhear your lies. I am in time to save this unfortunate innocent from your dreadful scheming.
Act I sc. 10	Donna Elvira	recitative	<i>Ho perduto la prudente tua colpa ed il mio stato voglio a tutti palesar.</i>	I have lost my sense of modesty. Your guilt and my situation shall be known to all.
Act I sc. 13 no. 10	Donna Anna	aria	<i>... or sai chi l'onore rapire a me volse</i>	Now you know who tries to steal my honor from me
Act I sc. 15 no 11	Don Giovanni	aria	<i>Doman mattina d'una decina devi aumentar</i>	After boasting of the manner in which he will seduce women and enjoy himself at the party, Giovanni exclaims: Tomorrow morning you will have to add at least ten names!
Act I sc. 16	Masetto	recitative	<i>Perchè me chiedi? Perfida! Il tocco sopportar dovrei una man infedele</i>	You ask me why? Cheat! Why should I put up with anything from a hussy like you?
Act I sc. 16	Masetto	recitative	<i>Porre in fronte a un villano d'onor questa marca d'infamia! Ah, se non fosse lo scandalo, vorrei--</i>	To put on my head this dishonor-- this mark of shame! Ah, if it were not for the scandal I would like to--
Act I sc. 16 no. 12	Zerlina	aria	<i>Ma se colpa io non ho, ma se da lui ingannata rimasi; e poi, che temi?</i>	But if I am not to blame, if I have been tricked by him, then what do you fear?
Act I sc. 16 no. 12	Zerlina	aria	<i>Batti, batti, o bel Masetto, la tua povera Zerlina; strato' qui</i>	Beat me, beat me my Masetto. Beat your poor little Zerlina. I'll stay

Act I sc. 20	Masetto	recitative	<i>come agnellina le tue botte ad aspettar. Lascierò straziarmi il crine, lascierò cararmi gli occhi, e le care tuemamine lieta poi saprò baciar.</i> <i>Tocca pur, che ti cada la testa</i>	here like a little lamb and await your every blow. I'll let you pull my hair out, I'll let you gouge my eyes out and then happily will I kiss your wonderfully sweet hands. Go on and touch her so I can lop off your head.
Act I sc. 20	Donna Anna, Donna Elvira, Don Ottavio		<i>Soccorriamo l'innocente!</i>	Let us rescue the innocent girl!
Act I sc. 20	Zerlina		<i>Soccorrete mi! O son morta!</i>	Rescue me or I'm dead!
Act II sc. 1	Don Giovanni	recitative	<i>È tutto amore! Chi a una sola è fedele, verso l'altre è crudele; io che in me sento sì esteso sentimento, vo' bene a tutte quante; le donne poichè calcolar non sanno, il mio buon natural chiamano inganno.</i> <i>Meglio ancora!</i>	Love is all the same! He who remains faithful to one is being cruel to the others; I, who have an overabundance of sentiment, love them all. Since women cannot think clearly, they call my natural kindly feelings betrayal.
Act II sc. 11	Don Giovanni	recitative		Giovanni has just related a tale to Leporello detailing the seduction of one of Leporello's former conquests. Leporello asks, "What if she had been my wife?" Giovanni replies: better still!
Act II sc. 14	Donna	recitative	<i>L'ultima prova dell'amor mio</i>	As a final testament of love. I no

	Elvira		<i>ancor vogl'io fare con te. Più non rammento gl'inganni tuoi, pietade io sento.</i>	longer remember your lies; I feel pity.
Act II sc. 14	Donna Elvira	recitative	<i>Restati, barbaro nel lezzo immonso esempio orribile d'iniquità!</i>	Stay then, ingrate! Wallow in your crimes, a horrible example of iniquity!
Final chorus	all	chorus	<i>Questo è il fin di chi fa mal; e de' perfondi la morte alla vita è sempre ugal</i>	This is the end which befalls evil doers and in this life scoundrels always receive their just deserts.

APPENDIX C

REFERENCES TO FIDELITY IN *COSÌ FAN TUTTE*

Scene	Character	Aria or Recitative	Text	Text summary or Translation
Act I sc. 1	Ferrando	trio	<i>La mia Dorabella capace non è; fedel quanto bella il cielo la fe</i>	My Dorabella is incapable of such a thing; heaven created her as faithful as she is beautiful.
Act I sc. 1	Guglielmo	trio	<i>La mia Fiordiligi tradirmi non sa, ugale in lei credo costanza e beltà</i>	My Fiordiligi could not be false to me, I believe her constancy is as great as her beauty.
Act I sc. 1	Alfonso	trio	<i>E in donne pretendete di trovar fedeltà? Quanto mi piaci mai semplicità! E la fede della femmine come l'arba fenice: che vi sia, ciascun lo dice; dove sia nessun lo sa</i>	And you claim to find fidelity in women? How truly delightful you are, simpletons! Fidelity in women is like the Arabian phoenix; everyone says that it exists, but no one knows where.
Act I sc. 7 ¹	Alfonso	ariette	<i>... Nel mare solca e nell'arena semina e il vago vento spera in rete accogliere, chi fonda sue spereza in core di femmina</i>	... Whoever bases his hopes on a woman's heart ploughs the sea, sows the sand, and hopes to catch the wanton wind in a net.
Act I sc.9	Despina	recitative	<i>La pura verità; due ne perdetete, vi restan tuttigli altri</i>	The simple truth; if you lose the two of them you still have all the others.
Act I sc. 9	Despina	recitative	<i>Han gli antri ancora tutto quello che han essi. Un uom</i>	The others have everything that they've got. Now you love one

¹ Dorabella and Fiordiligi profess their love for Ferrando and Guglielmo throughout much of the opening scenes claiming that they would rather die than lose their lovers.

Act I sc. 9	Despina	recitative	<p><i>adesso amante, un altro n'amerete; uno val l'altro perchè nessun val nulla; ma non parliam di ciò; sono anco vivi, e vivi toreran; ma son lontani, e piuttosto ch'in vani piani perdere il tempo pensate a divertirvi.</i></p> <p>Continuing: Sicuro! E quel ch'è meglio, far all'amar come assaine, e come faremo al campo i vostri cari amanti.</p>	<p>man, you'll love another, one's worth the other because they all are worthless. But let us not talk of that; they are still alive; but far away, and instead of wasting your time in useless tears, think of how you are going to amuse yourselves while they are away.</p> <p>Continuing: Certainly! And what's even better, make love like the devil as your dear ones will be doing at the battlefield.</p>
Act I sc. 9	Dorabella	recitative	<p><i>Non offender così quelle alma belle, di fedeltà d'intratto amore esempi</i></p> <p>In uomini, in soldati</p>	<p>Do not insult those splendid souls, those paragons of purest love and faithfulness</p>
Act I Sc.9 no.12	Despina	aria		<p>You think men, soldiers, will be faithful? Don't let anyone hear you for goodness sake! They are all the same dough; the fickle leaves, the inconstant winds have more stability than men. Lying tears, false glances, deceitful voices, treacherous caresses, these are their outstanding qualities. They love us only for their own pleasure. Then they despise us and deny us love. Is it not worthwhile asking mercy of these barbarians.</p>

Act 1 Sc.11 no. 14	Fiordiligi	recitative and aria	<i>Come scoglio</i>	Oh women, let us pay back in their own coin the pernicious, impertinent race of men. Let us love to suit ourselves, for our own gratification.
Act 1 sc.13	Despina	recitative	<i>È legge di naturale, a non so prudenza sola: amore cos'è? Piacer comodo, gusto, gioia, divertimento, passatempo, allegria, non è più amore, se</i>	... do not let the ill-omened air of scandalous utterances profane our hearts, our ears, and our affections! It is useless for you, or for any other to try and seduce our souls. The steadfast faith, which we gave to our dear lovers, we shall preserve till death, despite the world and destiny! (aria) As a rock stands firm against winds and storms, so this soul will always be strong in its fidelity and its love. In us is kindled the fire that brings delight and comfort and only death can make us change our affections. Heartless men, honor this example of fidelity and may no more uncouth hopes make you bold.
It's not just sensible, it's a law of nature. What's love? Pleasure, convenience, taste, delight, amusement, pastime, enjoyment: it is no longer love when it becomes				

				<i>incomodo diventa, se invece di piacer, nuoce e tormenta</i>	inconvenient, when instead of being pleasant it is annoying and painful.
Act 1 sc. 16	Dorabella and Fiordiligi	recitative	<i>Sarà ver; ma tante smorfie fanno torto al nostro onor</i>		That may be so; but such goings-on imperil our honor.
Act II sc. 1	Despina	recitative	<i>Trattar l'amar en bagatelle, le occasioni belle non negligiar giammai; cangiar tempo, a tempo esser constanti, coquetizzar con grazia, prevenir la disgrazia si communea chi si fidain uomo, mangiar il fico e non gittare il pomo</i> ... per esempio: i vostri Ganymedi son andati alla guerra; infin che tornano, fate militare: reclutate.		Treat love as a thing of little consequence, never miss a good opportunity, change your mind when necessary, be constant when necessary, flirt with grace, foresee the disgrace which is so common among those who trust men. Have your cake and eat it too.
Act II sc. 1	Despina	recitative	<i>... che pon star senza amor, non senza amanti.</i>		... for example: your Ganymedes have gone off to war; until they return, do as the soldiers do: go recruiting.
Act II sc. 1	Despina	recitative	<i>... che pon star senza amor, non senza amanti.</i>		(in reference to ladies such as the two of them) that might survive without love, but not without lovers
Act II sc. 1	Fiordiligi	recitative	<i>... Credi tu che vogliamo favola diventar degli oziosi? Ai nostri cari sposi credi tu che vogliam dar tal tormento?</i>		... Do you think that we want to become a target for idle gossip? Do you think we'd wish to cause our dear lovers such pain?
Act II sc. 1	Dorabella	recitative	<i>Non ti pare che sia torto</i>		Don't you think it would do them

Act II sc. 1	Despina	recitative	<i>bastante, se noto si facesse che trattiamo costor?</i> <i>Anche per questo c'è un mezzo sicurissimo: io voglio sparger fama che vengono da me</i>	enough harm if it got about that we were receiving these men There's a perfectly safe way of dealing with that too: I'll let it be known that they came to see me
Act II sc. 1	Despina	recitative	<i>... Non ha forse merto una cameriera d'aver due cicisbei?</i> ...	Isn't a ladies' maid good enough to have two lovers?
Act II sc. 1 no. 19	Despina	aria	<i>Una donna quindici anni</i>	A woman of fifteen must know all the ways of the world, must have her wits about her, must know what's good and what's bad. She must know all the artful tricks to fascinate lovers. (Despina then goes on to expound on all the various tricks to use on men)
Act II sc. 2 ²	Dorabella	recitative	<i>Restano quel sono; per divertirsi un poco e non morire dalla malinonia, non si mancadi fè, sorella mia.</i>	(in response to Fiordiligi's question of what is to become of their relationships) They will stay just as they are. If we amuse ourselves a bit, so that we don't die of melancholy, we are not being unfaithful, my dear sister. (F. responds: That's true)

² Dorabella and Fiordiligi debate Despina's ideas. Fiordiligi does not want to be a target for gossip, but Dorabella reminds her of Despina's solution. When Fiordiligi asks her about the commitment of their hearts Dorabella responds glitbly.

Act II sc. 5	Dorabella	recitative	<i>Crudele, di sedur non tentate un cor fedele</i>	Cruel man, do not try to seduce a faithful heart (she then soon consents)
Act II sc. 7	Fiordiligi	recitative	<i>Io ardo e l'ardor mio non è più effetto d'un amor virtuoso: è mania, affano, rimorso, pentimento, leggerezza, perdicia e tradimento!</i> Per pietà	I burn with passion and my passion is no longer a virtuous love; it is frenzy, suffering, remorse, regret, frivolity, deceit and treachery!
Act II sc. 7 no. 25	Fiordiligi	aria		Have pity my love and forgive the fault of this loving soul; it shall remain hidden forever, oh heaven, among these trees and shady groves. My passion, my constancy will empty my veins of this impious desire, will drive away the memory that causes me such horror and shame. And whom did this empty worthless heart betray! You deserve a greater reward my love for your sincerity.
Act II sc. 8	Ferrando	recitative	<i>A tralle il cor dal scellerato, e vendicar il mio tradito affetto.</i>	(when asked where he is going after he finds out that Dorabella has been unfaithful) to tear the heart out of her wicked breast and to avenge my betrayed love.
Act II sc. 8	Guglielmo	recitative	<i>Vuoi tu precipitarti per una donna che non val due soldi</i>	Are you going to ruin yourself on a woman who isn't worth two soldi (worth two cents)

Act II sc. 8 no. 26	Guglielmo	aria	<i>Domme mia, le fate tante</i>	Guglielmo sings out to the women of the world: (paraphrase) you deceive so many that I begin to sympathize with your lovers when they complain of you. So many times I have defended your honor and you know I love your sex, but when your lovers complain of you, they certainly have good reason.
Act II sc. 9 no. 27	Ferrando	aria	Tradito, Schernito	Betrayed, scorned by that treacherous heart, I feel that my soul still adores her: I feel the voice of love speaking for her.
Act II sc. 10	Dorabella	recitative	<i>Invan, Despina, dirisister tenta: quel demonietto ha u artificio, un'eloquenza, un tratto che ti fa cader giù se sei di sasso</i>	In vain, Despina, I tried to resist—but it was useless; that little devil has such a way with him, such eloquence, such a manner, that you would give way even if you were made of stone.
Act II sc. 10	Dorabella	recitative	<i>Odimi: sei tu certa, che non muoiano in guerra i nostri vecchi amanti? E allora? Entrambe reterem colle man piene di mosche: tra un ben certo e un incerto c'è sempre un gran divariol!</i>	Listen to me: Are you certain that our original lovers won't die on the battlefield? What then? We would both be left empty-handed: there is always a wide diversity between a good certainty and an uncertainty!
Act II sc. 10	Dorabella	recitative	<i>Credi, sorella, è meglio che tu creda</i>	Believe me sister, it would be better if you gave in.

Act II sc. 13 no. 30	Alfonso	ariette	<i>Tutte accusan le donne, ed io scuso</i>	All men accuse women, but I excuse them if they change their affections a thousand times a day. Some call it vice, others a habit, but to me it seems to be a necessity of the heart. The lover who finds himself deceived in the end should not condemn the other's folly, but his own. For all women, whether young or old, beautiful or ugly, - repeat with me: -- Così fan tutte (all women are like that)
Act II sc. 18	Ferrando and Guglielmo	ensemble finale	<i>Guisto ciell! Voi qui scriveste, contraddirci omai non vale! Tradimento, tradimento, Ah, si facciali scorpimento e a torreni, a fiumi, a mari indi il sangue scorrerà!</i>	Great heavens you have signed this, there is no point in denying it! Treachery, treachery! Ah, just let us find out all about it, and then blood will flow in torrents in rivers, in seas!
Act II sc. 18	Fiordiligi and Dorabella	ensemble finale	<i>Ah signor, son rea morte, a la morte io sol vi chiedo; il mio fallo tardi vedo; con quel ferro un sen ferite, che non merita pietà!</i>	Ah sir, I am mortally guilty, and death alone is all I ask; I see my fault to late; with this sword pierce my breast which is not worth mercy.
Act II sc. 18	Alfonso	ensemble finale	<i>V'ingannai, ma fu inganno distinganno ai vostri amanti</i>	(in response to Dorabella and Fiordiligi blaming him) I deceived you, but it was a deception that undeceived your lovers.

Final chorus	all	ensemble finale	<p><i>Fortunato l'uom che prende ogni cosa pel buon verso a tra i casi e le vicende da ragion guidar si fà. Quel che suole altrui far piangere fa per lui cagion di riso e del mondo in mezzo I turbini bella calma troverà.</i></p>	<p>How happy is the man who looks on the bright side of everything, and in all circumstances and trials lets himself be guided by reason. Something that makes others weep gives him cause to laugh, and amid the storms of this world he will find perfect peace</p>
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