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Despina, Cupid and the pastoral mode of *Così fan tutte*

EDMUND J. GOEHRING

One of *Così fan tutte*'s more amusing episodes occurs in the first-act finale when Despina marches on stage disguised as a doctor and, in a spoof on Mesmerism, produces a magnet to heal the stricken Albanians.¹ She introduces this little scenario with a ridiculous salutation: 'Salvete, amabiles, bones puellas'. The source of this mangled Latin is interesting: it is present in Mozart's autograph, but not in Da Ponte's libretto, where the Latin appears in its proper form, 'bonae puellae'. Only two words, to be sure, but they have attracted attention because of the rare glimpse they offer of Mozart's direct intervention in a Da Ponte text, of a parting of ways between composer and librettist. Mozart's change has traditionally been interpreted not as an error at all, but as a kind of 'correction' of Despina's character: since the servant Despina lacks the status and education to know proper Latin, Mozart portrays her in a way that is true to her station. As one commentator says, she 'understands only half of what she says; she imitates what she has picked up from frequent doctor's visits to her masters'.²

But does this appeal to social realism give an accurate measure of Despina's character? In a carnivalesque inversion of the social order, the Figaros, Leporellos and other servants of comic opera often outwit or reproach the masters they serve. In this genre, at least, intelligence is not necessarily limited by station – 'Never schooled, and yet learned', as Oliver says of Orlando in *As You Like It* (I.i.157). Another complication with a realist reading is that it obscures the conventions behind Despina's disguise. Cloaked in long robes, improvising her part using the typical *lazzo* (device) of fake poison, and – most of all – mangling her Latin, Despina is simply putting on the mask of the Dottore, the *commedia dell'arte* fool of pedantry.³ Although another reading holds that disguise liberates hidden aspects of

¹ This study is in part the product of work done under the sponsorship of a 1994 National Endowment for the Humanities Summer Seminar entitled 'Music and Literature', offered by Stephen Scher. A version of this paper was read at the Annual Meeting of the American Musicological Society in Minneapolis on 30 October 1994.

² Kurt Kramer, 'Da Ponte's *Così fan tutte*', *Nachrichten der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen I. Philologisch-historische Klasse* (1973), 19. Kramer's reading of this passage is also taken up in the *NMA* edition of the opera (II/5/18, ed. Faye Ferguson and Wolfgang Rehm [Kassel, 1991], I, xvii), where Mozart's emendation is seen as a way of clarifying Despina's lack of education ('daß damit die Unbildung der Zofe Despina verdeutlicht werden sollte'). It is also offered by Daniel Heartz, who says that Mozart's changes serve the dictates of realism; see *Mozart's Operas*, ed. Thomas Bauman (Berkeley, 1990), 236n8.

³ The presence of the *commedia dell'arte* is felt everywhere in this scene. Fake poisoning is so frequent a *lazzo* that Kathleen Lea notes that it is often taken for granted – she even gives it a separate heading ('Supposed Poison') in her discussion of *lazzi* in *Italian Popular Comedy: A Study of the Commedia dell'arte, 1560–1670, with Special Reference to the English Stage* (New York, 1962), I, 182.

personality, except in moments of physical concealment (the other one is as the notary in the second-act finale) Despina never plays the fool.

A representation of Despina absent of any token of social status would be incomprehensible. Yet building one wholly on this foundation obscures the influence that genre and mode exert in the formation of her verbal and musical imagery. Indeed, of all the Da Ponte operas a realist reading is especially problematic for *Così fan tutte*, for it owes a considerable debt to the experimental comedies of Marivaux, where tokens of social status are deliberately suppressed to expose the underlying truths of human nature.⁴ I wish to suggest instead that Despina's positions as an outsider and, most of all, her musical language are more fruitfully understood from the vantage point of the pastoral mode, and that her adoption of pastoral gestures plays a vital role in the opera's exploration of human passion.

1

Così fan tutte is not usually viewed as an opera that invokes the bucolic world, nor is it immediately apparent why Mozart might wish to do so: pastoral works often generated more criticism than praise.⁵ One front of this campaign was waged against eroticism and sexual indulgence. Although the bee-sting episode in Tasso's *Aminta* (1573) and the kissing games of Guarini's *Il pastor fido* (1580–9) furnish the most notorious examples, erotic episodes appear throughout the pastoral world, including eighteenth-century opere buffe in this mode. Of these, Martín y Soler's and Da Ponte's *L'arbore di Diana* (1787), an opera buffa saturated with pastoral characters and themes, received the most blistering criticism. An anonymous Viennese resident left no aspect of the work untouched: the music was trite, the acting often bad, the whole thing too long. Worst of all was the erotic content – the indecency of Cupid's costume, for example, received an entire paragraph.⁶ The entire work was called 'a detestable rhapsody of ambiguity, of filth and horror, which in all nations other than ours would not be tolerated even by the most notorious villains or whistled in the taverns of London'.⁷

Works in the pastoral tradition were also denigrated for their refusal to conform to the rules of either tragedy or comedy. *Il pastor fido*, which Guarini called a tragicomedy, drew fire for this breach of poetics even before its publication.⁸ Although derived from the entirely different genre of romance, Sannazaro's *Arcadia*,

⁴ For the influence of Marivaux on *Così fan tutte*, see Charles Rosen, *The Classical Style: Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven* (New York, 1972), 312–15.

⁵ Only Geoffrey Chew draws such a connection, arguing that the libretto parodies the Italian Platonic love pastoral. He adds, however, that the music is 'scarcely pastoral in any distinctive sense'. See 'Pastoral', in *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera*, ed. Stanley Sadie (London, 1992), III, 912. For the pastoral as a topic in *Le nozze di Figaro*, see Wye J. Allanbrook, *Rhythmic Gesture in Mozart: 'Le nozze di Figaro' and 'Don Giovanni'* (Chicago, 1983).

⁶ The letter appears in Otto Michtner, *Das alte Burgtheater als Opernbühne. Von der Einführung des deutschen Singspiels (1778) bis zum Tod Kaiser Leopolds II. (1792)*, *Theatergeschichte Österreichs* Vol. 3: Vienna, part 1 (Vienna, 1970), 436.

⁷ Michtner, 435.

⁸ Nicolas J. Perella, *The Critical Fortune of Battista Guarini's 'Il Pastor Fido'* (Florence, 1973), 10.

a work with special significance for *Così fan tutte*,⁹ also muddled generic distinctions by interspersing lyrical, pastoral episodes within a prose narrative. And if the idea of pastoral literature as a hybrid has a long pedigree,¹⁰ the difficulties of definition become more complicated for modern scholarship, which must assume the added burden of understanding how later works conform to the tradition. Recent studies have understandably assigned a bewildering, even contradictory array of characteristics to pastoral works: artificial and realistic, naive and ironic, satirical and escapist, their ethos both Christian and pagan.¹¹ If the often low regard for the pastoral raises questions about its presence in *Così fan tutte*, its resistance to definition poses ones of identification and evaluation.

The protean nature of the pastoral has led many to refer to it not as a genre but as a mode. If, as Alastair Fowler notes, generic terms tend to be used as nouns, then modal ones take adjectival form, a practice that is especially true of the pastoral: 'When we say "pastoral", we mean pastoral elegy, eclogue, etc.'¹² This modal behaviour is evident throughout the tradition. Along with the works of Sannazaro and Guarini cited above, a particularly famous example from the English stage is *As You Like It*, which portrays a pastoral oasis of Arden – where 'feel we not the penalty of Adam' (II.i.5) – within its comic framework. To be sure, any genre has the capability of behaving as a mode, but the pastoral seems to stand apart in its habit of existing almost exclusively through attachment to other genres.¹³

The pastoral's operation as a mode runs true to much of the practice of eighteenth-century opera buffa. One version of the text for Haydn's *La fedeltà premiata*, a work indebted to episodes from *Il pastor fido*, calls the work a *drama [sic] pastorale giocoso*. Similarly, in the *argomento* to his opera buffa *La cifra*, Salieri, a frequent commentator on his own work, explains that the overture is in the *stile pastorale*. Settings of the pastoral tale of *Endimion* receive various designations, including *musicalische pastoral [sic]*, *serenata*, *tragicomedia* and *pastorale per musica ornata di balli, trasformazioni, e machine*.¹⁴ Nor was the modal behaviour of the pastoral lost on critical commentary of the time. Mattheson, for example, argues for a distinctive character

⁹ For Don Alfonso's quotation of Sannazaro, see page 132, below.

¹⁰ David M. Halperin, *Before Pastoral: Theocritus and the Ancient Tradition of Bucolic Poetry* (New Haven, 1983), 28–9.

¹¹ For a summary of definitions given to pastoral literature, see Paul Alpers, 'What is Pastoral?', *Critical Inquiry*, 8 (1982), 437; and Andrew V. Ettin, *Literature and the Pastoral* (New Haven, 1984), 3.

¹² *Kinds of Literature: An Introduction to the Theory of Genres and Modes* (Cambridge, 1982), 107. Halperin agrees, saying that the 'pastoral has been known to trespass freely on the territory of the major literary genres' (see n. 10), 28; and Helen Cooper sees the pastoral as 'a mode of thought – a way of recasting and projecting experience'. *Pastoral: Mediaeval into Renaissance* (Totowa, NJ, 1977), 2.

¹³ Even the title of William Empson's seminal and highly influential *Some Versions of Pastoral* (New York, 1974) emphasises pastoral's generic indeterminacy.

¹⁴ See Anthony van Hoboken, *Joseph Haydn: Thematisch-bibliographisches Werkverzeichnis* (Mainz, 1971), II, 403; for Salieri see Rudolph Angermüller, *Antonio Salieri. Sein Leben und seine weltlichen Werke unter besonderer Berücksichtigung seiner 'großen' Opern: Teil 3: Dokumente, Schriften zur Musik*, 18, ed. Walter Kolneder (Munich, 1972), 53; the references to *Endimion* are in the *Catalog of Opera Librettos Printed before 1800*, prepared by Oscar Sonneck (1914; rpt. New York, 1967), I, 434.

to the pastoral – that of an innocent, modest love in ‘unfeigned, innate and pleasant simplicity’ – but he also identifies both heroic and comic versions of it. In other words, it is a mode that modifies a genre.¹⁵ Christoph Martin Wieland, among other things an acquaintance of Mozart, makes a similar statement regarding pastoral poetry (‘Hirtengedichte’) in Sulzer’s *Allgemeine Theorie der schönen Künste*: ‘The general character [of pastoral poetry] is to be found in this: that the content and delivery agree with the music and character of a happy shepherd people. The kind of representation, however, can be manifold: epic, dramatic and lyric’.¹⁶ Perhaps the most extreme claim for the pastoral as a mode comes from Schiller’s remarks on the idyll, which concerns itself with ‘the poetic representation of innocent and contented mankind’.¹⁷ In his reading, the actual setting of pastoral poetry – whether in the countryside or in the beginnings of civilisation – matters far less than the depiction of ‘man in a . . . condition of harmony and of peace with himself and with his environment’.¹⁸ Far removed from a genre, the pastoral for Schiller has become a ‘mode of perception’.¹⁹

The episodic nature of the pastoral finds many representations in opera buffa. One example is Righini’s and Da Ponte’s *Il Demogorgone, ovvero Il filosofo confuso* (Vienna, 1786), an opera buffa that belongs to a sub-category of eighteenth-century ‘philosophical’ operas ridiculing pedantry and idealism. Invariably, the leading character is a kind of gnostic who immerses himself unsuccessfully in the world of books and abstract thought as a way of avoiding the perils of the sensory world, chief among them marriage. What draws the eponymous character out of his self-imposed isolation is a pastoral play staged for his benefit. In the following, Albetta sings the part of Licoris, a nymph who mocks the affections of the shepherd Tirsis, and Lesbina sings the role of Aglauros, also a nymph:

Albetta: Non t’invidio, fiorito Arboscello,
De le Fronde, e de’ rami la gloria;
Ma l’onore che Tirsi mio bello
Ti farà di sederti vicin.

Lesbina: Non t’invidio, fioretto mio bello,
Il colore o l’odor de le foglie,
Ma l’onore che il mio Pastorello
Ti farà d’adornarsene il crin.

[*Albetta*: I don’t envy you, o little tree in bloom, the glory of your leaves or branches, but only the honour that my dear Tirsis will bring you by sitting nearby. *Lesbina*: I don’t envy you, my lovely little flower, your colour or the aroma of your petals, but only the honour that my shepherd will bring you in gracing his hair.]

¹⁵ ‘In einer unschuldigen, bescheidenen Liebe, in einer ungeschminckten, angeborenen und angenehmen Einfalt (naïveté).’ Johann Mattheson, *Der vollkommene Capellmeister* (1739; rpt. Kassel, 1987), 218.

¹⁶ Johann Georg Sulzer, *Allgemeine Theorie der schönen Künste*, 2nd edn (Leipzig, 1794), II, 581.

¹⁷ H. B. Nisbet, ed., *German Aesthetic and Literary Criticism: Winckelmann, Lessing, Hamann, Herder, Schiller, Goethe* (New York, 1985), 210.

¹⁸ Nisbet, 210.

¹⁹ ‘Empfindungsweise’. Cited in Chew (see n. 5), 910.

This is a kind of singing contest akin to the amoebaeen verses of Theocritus, and its appearance in the larger context of a spoof of Platonic idealism illustrates how much even the most ingenuous evocation of bucolic flora belongs to the sensuous and empirical.

Schiller's above-cited essay also mentions the sentimental qualities of the pastoral, which gives an important lead into eighteenth-century reception and its influence on *Così fan tutte*. The idyll, he observes, is a fiction – the paradise it describes not actually depicting a true representation of shepherd life – but a useful, elevating one none the less, inasmuch as every people with a history has an experience of a golden age.²⁰ At the same time, he sees in the idyll's nostalgic gaze a basic flaw:

Unhappily, [pastoral idylls] place that purpose *behind* us, *toward* which they should, however, lead us, and hence they imbue us only with a sad feeling of loss, not with joyous feelings of hope. Since they can attain their purpose only by the denial of all art, and only by the simplification of human nature, they possess together with the utmost value for the *heart*, all too little for the *spirit*, and their narrow range is too soon exhausted.²¹

Schiller's criticism bears witness to a growing sentimentalisation of pastoral literature in the eighteenth century, where it began to lose its character as an allegorical genre with ethical purposes (as in the *Shepherd's Calendar* [1579] or the *Lycidas* [1637]) and became more self-indulgent. It seems that this tendency motivated Jonson to launch his oft-cited attack of the pastoral as 'easy, vulgar, and therefore disgusting'.²²

However one reads the fortunes of eighteenth-century pastoral literature, most opere buffe in the pastoral mode move easily within its sentimental territory. Martín's *Una cosa rara* provides a typical and popular example. A peasant woman, betrothed to a man of similar station, encounters obstacles to her marriage: the son of a monarch also desires her, and he has the support of the mayor, who is concerned only with the financial opportunities afforded by this union. Although her innocence and simplicity – pastoral virtues – are what attract the regal suitor to her, they are also the source of her constancy, which never wavers despite rumour

²⁰ Nisbet (see n. 17), 211.

²¹ Nisbet, 211. The emphasis is Schiller's.

²² Cited in Bryan Loughrey, *The Pastoral Mode* (London, 1984), 19. This escapist view of the pastoral has a strong hold on much modern commentary. See, for example, Renato Poggioli, who argues that 'the psychological root of the pastoral is a double longing after innocence and happiness, to be recovered not through conversion or regeneration but merely through a retreat'. *The Oaten Flute: Essays on Pastoral Poetry and the Pastoral Ideal* (Cambridge, Mass., 1975), 98. The escapist dimensions have also been noted by Loughrey, 10, and Laurence Lerner, who sees in pastoral literature an impulse to escape from the complex to the simple. *The Uses of Nostalgia: Studies in Pastoral Poetry* (London, 1972), 83. Paul Fussell opens an essay entitled 'On the Persistence of Pastoral' with the suggestion that literary genres arise out of universal psychological needs: epic, for example, out of 'the need to contemplate heroes', or the love of wit finding expression in the epigram. The pastoral satisfies the 'urge to escape the actual to lodge in something closer to the ideal'. *Thank God for the Atom Bomb and Other Essays* (New York, 1988), 151–2.

and intrigue.²³ The deliberate juxtaposition of nobility of character with a lowly social standing becomes more conspicuous – and artificial – in Salieri's *La cifra*, a variation on the common foundling tale, in which a noble woman has been raised from birth as a peasant. In her alter ego this woman maintains a delicate balance between the polished and the humble, her simple peasant virtues betraying a nobility and beauty that set her apart from her surroundings. This tension between nature and artifice, where sophisticated urban dwellers assume the rustic guises of the shepherd, yet whose masks are true representations of their noble simplicity, fits easily in the pastoral realm. Both works, and others besides, reflect the reforms of Goldoni, who sought to ennoble comedy by introducing characters worthy of emulation. Here, then, is a coincidence of the sentimental, elevated and pastoral.²⁴

The tendency of Josephine pastoral operas to paint the bucolic world with soft brush strokes yielded some of the most performed works of the decade. Martín's *Una cosa rara* had fifty-five performances from 1786 to 1791 alone, *L'arbore di Diana* sixty-six performances to 1791 and 141 overall.²⁵ Other operas at the time with pastoral topics include *La cifra*, Guglielmi's and Zini's *La pastorella nobile* (1790)²⁶ and *Il pastor fido*. It seems that pastoral operas enjoyed a vogue in Vienna during the second half of the 1780s similar to that enjoyed by Turkish opera about a decade earlier. This sentimental treatment in the eighteenth century in general and on the Viennese stage in particular provides an important background for understanding

²³ One finds other pastoral dimensions in this work, especially in the concluding fable of Tirsis and Dorilla. John Platoff also notes the presence of the pastoral elsewhere in the opera, especially in the following passage from Act II scene 8, where the queen paraphrases the opening of Tasso's *Aminta* (see p. 122, below): 'Chi mai diria, che in questi rozzi tetti/E sotto queste pastorali spoglie/Tanta virtù, tanta onestà s'accoglie' (Who would have said that under these rough roofs and among the poverty of these shepherds is harboured so much virtue and honesty?). See 'A New History for Martín's *Una cosa rara*', *Journal of Musicology*, 12 (1994), 93.

²⁴ Goldoni's reform of comedy has its own literature. However one views the debate regarding his rejection of the *commedia dell'arte*, it is clear that at least some of his works embraced more noble characters. Above all there was the extraordinarily popular *La Cecchina*, an adaptation of Richardson's *Pamela*, a sentimental work if ever there was one. Its equation of the pastoral with the sentimental is evident from the very first number: 'Che piacer, che bel diletto/È il veder in sul mattino/Colla Rosa il Gelsomino/In bellezza gareggiar!/E potere all'erbe e ai fiori/Dir son'io coi freschi umori/Che vi vengo ad innaffiar' (What pleasure, what great delight there is to see in this morning the jasmine compete with the rose in a contest of beauty, and to be able to say to the grass and flowers that I, with bright spirits, come to water you).

²⁵ On theatrical activity in eighteenth-century Vienna, see Peter Branscombe, 'Mozart and the Theatre of His Time', *The Mozart Compendium: A Guide to Mozart's Life and Music*, ed. H. C. Robbins Landon (London, 1990), 358–70; Otto Erich Deutsch, 'Das Repertoire der hofischen Oper, der Hof- und der Staatsoper: Chronologischer Teil', *Österreichische Musikzeitschrift*, 24 (1969), 369–422; Franz Hadamowsky, *Die Wiener Hoftheater (Staatstheater) 1776–1966: Verzeichnis der aufgeführten Stücke mit Bestandsnachweis und täglichem Spielplan* (Vienna, 1966–); Michtner (see n. 6); and Otto Rub, *Das Burgtheater: Statistischer Rückblick auf die Tätigkeit und die Personalverhältnisse während der Zeit vom 8. April 1776 bis 1. Januar 1913* (Vienna, 1913).

²⁶ Michtner (304) notes that this opera had a rapid dissemination through Europe, and also that it received praise from Zinzendorf.

Così fan tutte's manipulation of the pastoral and how it informs Despina's behaviour and thought.

2

The reception of the pastoral in the eighteenth century suggests that its significance within a given work is a matter of context. What makes its presence so persuasive in *Così fan tutte* is its adoption by Despina, who wields an authority that transcends her station. In particular, her first-act aria, 'In uomini, in soldati', manipulates operatic conventions for the purpose of portraying a character whose behaviour is authoritative and whose thought is sophisticated. The first five lines of Da Ponte's text alternate between *settenari* and *endecasillabi*, with no regular rhyme scheme:

Via, via passaro i tempi
 Da spacciar queste favole ai bambini.
 In Uomini 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.

[Go on with you! The times are past when you can tell these myths even to children. In soldiers, in men you hope for fidelity? Don't let anyone hear you, for heaven's sake! They are all made of the same stuff: the fickle leaves, the inconstant winds have more stability than men.]

This kind of versification occurs in recitatives, and its presence here indicates that Da Ponte intended the aria to begin with the words 'Di pasta simile', an arrangement Mozart ignored by beginning his setting with 'In uomini'. The resulting introduction retains some of the characteristics of a recitative in the sturdy, declamatory delivery it achieves through the avoidance of symmetry and periodic closure (see Ex. 1). At the same time, this is no conventional accompanied recitative because, in addition to avoiding word repetition, it lacks the chromaticism and jagged rhythmic and vocal contours normally encountered in the recitative. Indeed, such an elaborate setting would not have made any sense for someone of Despina's station and character.²⁷ If this transformation of a secco recitative into a musical exordium suggests that Mozart is pushing Despina into regions where there is no precise terminology, this is only a reflection of the singularity of her character: her introduction is one of a kind, an accompanied recitative 'à la Despina'.

Manipulating operatic convention in this way elevates Despina's character, giving her an authoritative presence in the workings of the opera. Since the music unfolds more slowly than would secco recitative, this introductory passage lends her aria the

²⁷ John Brown sees the accompanied recitative as a vehicle for expressing elevated passions that cannot be contained within the boundaries of the aria. *Letters upon the Poetry and Music of the Italian Opera: Addressed to a Friend* (Edinburgh, 1789), 15.

Allegretto **Despina**

In uo - mi - ni, in sol - da - ti,

spe - ra - re fe - del - tà,

in uo - mi - ni spe - ra - re fe - del - tà, in sol -

- da - ti spe - ra - re fe - del - tà, fe - del - tà, fe - del - tà?

Ex. 1. 'In uomini, in soldati'. Translation: In men, in soldiers, you hope to find fidelity?

dramatic weight equal to that of an accompanied recitative. At the same time, its unconventional style signals a tone and function different from the typical accompanied recitative/aria scheme that the lovers in this 'scuola degli amanti'

employ. Despina studiously avoids self-reflective statements. Her aim is not to move, but to instruct.

In fact, 'In uomini, in soldati' is best seen not merely as a presentation of Despina's *Weltanschauung*, but as a formal refutation of 'Smanie implacabili', Dorabella's immediately preceding aria. In at least one respect, Despina draws on a topic present in Dorabella's aria – its versification – and reinterprets it. 'Smanie implacabili' alternates *quinari sdruciolli* with *quinari piani* – five-syllable lines with antepenultimate and penultimate stresses, respectively. *Versi sdruciolli* occur less frequently than *versi piani*, but when they appear, they often invoke the infernal and funereal. Among the most famous instances in the eighteenth century is the underworld scene of Gluck's *Orfeo* – 'Chi mai dell'Erebo/Fralle caligini' (who from Erebus through the mists), and it is clear that Dorabella is trying to create a similar tone of high earnestness with her reference to the Furies and the miserable example of fatal love she intends to set ('Esempio misero/D'amor funesto,/Darò all'Eumenidi'). Despina, however, also uses the same patterns in her aria:

<i>Dorabella:</i>	<i>Despina:</i>
Smanie implacabili	Di pasta simile
Che m'agitare	Son tutti quanti,
Dentro quest'anima	Le fronde mobili
Più non cessate.	L'aure incostanti.

Seen in relationship to Dorabella's example, Despina's use of the *quinario sdruciollo* is both ironic and instructive, and shows Dorabella (and the audience) that this metre can be used in other contexts and with other meanings.²⁸

That a character of lower social status or musical style is not necessarily an object of ridicule is also clear in Despina's second-act aria, 'Una donna a quindici anni'. This belongs to the sub-category of the catalogue aria, listing all the things a woman of fifteen ought to know to get along in the world. Typically, the catalogue is neither a subtle nor effective means of persuasion: its loose arrangement of ideas suggests the haphazard or capricious, making it an ideal repository of chaotic thought and a ready vehicle for buffo patter. The quintessential example occurs in Osmin's 'Solche hergelauf'ne Laffen', where his rage becomes so incoherent that he expresses the desire to hang Pedrillo *after* decapitating him ('Erst geköpft, dann gehangen').²⁹ Despina's aria stands apart from these types by bringing order to the catalogue in both text and music. The opening melody closely follows the symmetrical *ottonario piano* pattern through division into two equal segments, the first arriving on a half cadence, the second

²⁸ For *versi sdruciolli* as representative of both the infernal and the pastoral, see Tim Carter, 'Versification', in *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera*, IV, 965.

²⁹ One also encounters examples of the topic in Bartolo's 'La vendetta' and in several scenes in *Don Giovanni*. Allanbrook (see n. 5), 221, calls the list as a form of ordering 'an analogue of anarchy' in connection with Don Giovanni's 'Fin ch'han dal vino'. (See also 244–6 and, for *Le nozze di Figaro*, 169–70.) In Gazzaniga's and Da Ponte's *Il finto cieco* (1786), Don Fastidio, whose name speaks for itself, sings a catalogue aria about all the scholarly works he has studied in his life.

Andante **Despina**

U - na don - na a quin - di - ci an - ni dee sa -

- per o - gni gran mo - da: do - ve il dia - vo - lo ha la

co - da, co - sa è be - ne, e mal co - s'è.

Ex. 2. 'Una donna a quindici anni'. Translation: A woman of fifteen years must know all the ways of the world: where the devil has his tail, what is good and what is bad.

Do - ve il dia - vo - lo ha la co - da

Ex. 3. Hypothetical setting of bars 5–7 of 'Una donna a quindici anni'.

on a full, though decorated, close (see Ex. 2). Although it would have been easy enough to maintain this symmetrical pattern in the following verses (see Ex. 3), Mozart instead breaks up the next two lines with a rest: 'Dove il diavolo – ha la coda/Cosa è bene – e mal cos'è'. This fragmentation accelerates the pacing of the phrase – the segments now occupying one bar instead of two – and also produces a more declamatory pattern of accents as the types of poetic close progress, moving from an antepenultimate stress on 'diavolo', a penultimate one on 'bene' and a final one on 'cos'è'. This last line is not only the syntactic culmination of the phrase but also its semantic and musical point of arrival. Rhetorically, 'Cosa è bene – e mal cos'è' is an epanalepsis, a device in which the

opening word or words of a line are repeated at the end; musically, this phrase stands out in its setting as a hemiola, which provides rhythmic impetus for an energetic close. Text and music have modified the haphazard arrangement of the catalogue: knowing what is good from what is bad is important, and Despina's grasp of this is evident in the musico-rhetorical figuration that closes off this section.³⁰

But shaping the catalogue is only one means of distinguishing Despina from the conventionally buffoonish servant. What is also unusual about this aria is its aside: 'Par ch'abbian gusto/Di tal dottrina,/Viva Despina/Che sa servir' (It seems that they are taking to this doctrine; long live Despina, who knows how to serve).³¹ In a letter of 8 November 1780 regarding *Idomeneo*, Mozart had explained his objections to asides:

But now comes what has always seemed to me unnatural in an aria: that is, *a spoken aside*. In dialogue these things are quite natural, for a few words can be spoken on the side hurriedly; but in an aria, where the words have to be repeated, it makes a bad effect, and even if this were not the case, I should prefer an aria whose movement is entirely natural.³²

Introducing a spoken aside within an aria creates an abrupt transition from the pacing of song to that of speech, shattering the static posture of the aria. What is more, the spoken aside is an active passage representing a unique event; its incorporation into an aria, where repetition is the rule, 'makes a bad effect' by repeating a singular moment. To be sure, the aside in 'Una donna a quindici anni' is sung, not spoken, but the issues of posture and repetition remain. Mozart's solution is to place it in the retransition to the tonic and the third quatrain of the text (see Ex. 4), thus making the aside a singular event that the recapitulation could dispense with altogether. Ironically, this is not the last time this passage appears. The formal close of the aria occurs at bar 74, and a coda follows on the words 'E qual Regina/Dall'alto soglio/Col posso, e voglio/Farsi ubbidir' (And like a queen from the high throne she makes herself obeyed with an 'I can' and an 'I want').³³ This is the most unusual stanza in the aria to this point: 'E qual Regina' does not rhyme with the preceding or following lines of the quatrain (though it does rhyme with 'Despina' in the aside) and instead breaks up the symmetry of the preceding couplets 'Saper nascondersi/Senza confondersi,/Senza arrossire/Saper mentire'. This passage is conspicuous even for its choice of vowels, the frequency of *os* (alto,

³⁰ There are also other modifications to the list: at bar 21, there is a shift to an *allegretto* tempo inspired by the change of poetic metre from *ottonari* to *quinari* at 'Dee in un momento'. The opening of 'Una donna a quindici anni', like that of her first-act aria, also has the character of an introduction, which presents a central didactic point for subsequent elaboration. The structure of the aria confirms the introductory character of these bars: when the tonic returns, it does so with the third quatrain of the text – neither the opening stanzas nor the melody associated with them reappear.

³¹ The aside is indicated in the 1790 libretto through the placement of parentheses around the last stanza.

³² Wilhelm Bauer and Otto Erich Deutsch, eds., *Mozart: Briefe und Aufzeichnungen* (Kassel, 1962), III, 13. The emphasis is Mozart's.

³³ The italics appear in the 1790 libretto.

45 Despina
(Par ch'ab- bian gu - sto

47 di tal dot - tri - na, vi - va De - spi - na che sa ser -

50 vir, che sa ser - vir.)

Ex. 4. 'Una donna a quindici anni'.

soglio, posso, voglio) providing the verses with more declamatory flexibility through their suggestion of internal rhyme.³⁴ Clearly, this passage is the chief point of Despina's exhortation.

Although this self-aggrandising text first appears in the exposition of the aria, it is set there as an unremarkable closing figure. In contrast, the coda captures its regal and declamatory character in a heroic musical style, complete with octave leaps, semiquaver anacrusis and a dramatic pause (see Ex. 5). The passage following this fermata is equally grand, with a Mannheim-style cadence and a wide-ranging vocal

³⁴ Mozart's sensitivity even to the character and number of vowels is documented in a letter to his father of 27 December 1780, in which he complains of concluding lines in an aria text having too many *is*. *Mozart: Briefe*, III, 78.

Despina 77

col pos - so e vo - - - glio, col pos - - - so e vo - glio,

80

col pos - so e vo - glio far - si ub - bi - dir, sì,

84

far - si ub - bi - dir, _____ sì _____ far - si ub - bi - dir:

88

(Par ch'ab-bian gu - sto di tal dot - tri - na,

Ex. 5. 'Una donna a quindici anni'.

line that reaches all the way to b'' . This kind of cadential material is adequate to close off any aria sung by a heroic character; all that might be lacking is a ritornello to escort Despina offstage. What follows at bar 87, however, is an instrumental fragment of the opening melody, followed by its return not to the original text, but,

remarkably, to the envoy.³⁵ Previously set as a modest, inconspicuous transitional figure, it now becomes transformed, receiving the main melody of the aria. Having just stated that one can be like a queen, Despina praises herself for knowing how to serve ('Viva Despina/Che sa servir'), and goes dancing offstage to leave the sisters to consider her words.³⁶

The switch to elevated style by a low character does not occur often, and is usually an invitation for ridicule, as in Dr Bartolo's 'La vendetta', or, from a different genre, Osmin's rage aria. In such situations a comic character's sanctimonious pose seems clumsy and inappropriate, the expressions of rage and revenge hollow. What prevents Despina from appearing this way is in part the vocal style – impressive in its range, yet not overwrought with ornamentation – but most of all her ability to return to a more natural idiom. She does not lose herself in a role that does not suit her. Yet the elevated passage makes it impossible for her to be seen only as a naive character: Despina displays the capacity to speak the language of her 'superiors' and consequently is able to persuade them. Recasting the aside from a transitional figure to the main melody and peroration of the aria only augments Despina's flexibility, demonstrating her awareness of the inversion of the social order in which she participates. Of all the characters in the opera, only Don Alfonso has a greater sense of self-awareness and authority.

3

In her aside, Despina refers to her aria text as a doctrine ('dottrina'). Given the manipulation of operatic conventions in both her arias, it is clear that her words and music – her doctrine – carry authority. What she says, and how she says it, belongs squarely within pastoral traditions. The pastoral is unquestionably the dominant topic in her first-act aria, which marks her first musical appearance.³⁷ Its tempo is moderate (*Allegretto*), the metre compound and the melody slurred and graceful, punctuated with snaps in the winds and drones in the bass part – all in unambiguous imitation of the rustic bagpipe (see Ex. 6).³⁸ Equally conspicuous tokens of the bucolic appear at the end of the aria, the self-conscious song created by the singing

³⁵ Despina's aside exhibits many of the characteristics of the older envoy: though to herself, it contains a form of address ('Viva Despina') that recalls the envoy's original dedicatory function; its setting to the melody of the opening verse (as well as the rhyme between 'Regina' and 'Despina') gives it a refrain character common to the type; also typical is its compact summary and reinterpretation of the content of the previous stanzas.

³⁶ The exit is something denied the two sisters in the first act. 'Smanie implacabili' lacks one, and the recitative following 'Come scoglio' – an exit aria if ever there was one – positively subverts this convention, for Fiordiligi seeks to leave but is held back. In contrast, Despina's ability to exit unchallenged is yet another manifestation of her authority.

³⁷ Although this is Despina's first aria, these are not her first words, which are 'Che vita maledetta/È il far la cameriera' (What a damned life it is to play the chambermaid). Such *tirate* make their way into innumerable arias from servants, and Mozart's setting of this as a recitative and his giving 'In uomini, in soldati' the weightier, more memorable setting indicates how much *Così fan tutte* deflects the emphasis away from Despina the servant and towards Despina the pastoral representative.

³⁸ See Allanbrook (n. 5), 43–4, and also Sulzer (n. 16), III, 660, who singles out the 6/8 metre as one of the pastoral's defining musical elements.

Allegretto Despina 25

Di pa - sta si - mi - le son tut - ti quan - ti,

Ex. 6. 'In uomini, in soldati'. Translation: They are all made of the same stuff.

Despina 68

a-miam per co-mo-do, per va-ni-tà, la rala, la rala, la rala la,

Ex. 7. 'In uomini, in soldati'. Translation: Let's love them out of convenience, out of vanity.

syllables and the gestures towards dance in the orchestral interludes furnishing two of the strongest emblems of the pastoral: the lyric and the choreographic (see Ex. 7).³⁹ Despina's turn to these devices typifies the balance of the naive and sophisticated she strikes through much of the opera: she is naive because the topics by themselves paint a playful character lacking the gloomy reflection that so often oppresses the *amanti*; sophisticated because she is – just as in the second-act aria – aware both of the role she is playing and the means she uses to express herself. For Despina, the pastoral is not superficial; unlike the masks of the Doctor and Notary she puts on and removes at will, her pastoral mask is inextricably bound up with her personality.

Despina's musical gestures may seem at first glance to run at odds with her words. As the following conflation shows, there is a realistic, empirical character to her wisdom absent from most sentimental images of bucolic life that often dominate the pastoral mode:

I.9: Via, via passaro i tempi
Da spacciar queste favole ai bambini.

[Go on with you! The times are past for spinning such tales even to babies.]

No. 12: Amiam per comodo,
Per vanità.

[Let's love them to suit our convenience and our vanity.]

³⁹ See especially Sulzer, III, 660, who defines the pastoral as 'ein kleines zum Tanzen gemachtes Tonsstück'.

I.13: È legge di natura
 E non prudenza sola.
 Amor cos'è?
 Piacer, comodo, gusto,
 Gioia, divertimento,
 Passatempo, allegria; non è più amore
 Se incomodo diventa,
 Se invece di piacer nuoce e tormenta.

[It's a law of nature, and not merely sense. What's love? Pleasure, convenience, taste, enjoyment, amusement, pastime, fun; it's no longer love if it becomes a burden and instead of pleasure brings pain and torment.]

II.1: Trattare l'amore 'en bagatelle'.

[Treat love 'en bagatelle'.]

II.1: Eh, che noi siamo in terra e non in cielo!

[Oh, we're on earth and not in heaven!]

There is, however, also room for the down-to-earth in at least one part of the pastoral tradition, and Despina, in her position as outsider, uses it to challenge the idealised, sentimental views of love shared by the *amanti*. Her vision of the world is Epicurean: immediate experience has primacy, and all her rules derive from it. That vision is also hedonistic, and here the pastoral world comes into play. Despina's spontaneous and instinctual pursuit of pleasure makes her a prelapsarian character unhampered by the guilt that follows the expulsion from Eden.

Among the most illustrious representatives of the pleasure principle in pastoral literature is Tasso's *Aminta*.⁴⁰ The chorus concluding its first act invokes a Golden Age where all moral behaviour can be reduced to one rule:

Nè fu sua dura legge
 Nota a quell'alme in libertate avvezze,
 Ma legge aurea e felice
 Che Natura scolpì: *S'ei piace, ei lice*.

[Nor was (honour's) harsh law known to those souls accustomed to freedom, but rather the happy and golden rule that nature engraved: *If it pleases, it's legal*].⁴¹

Nor is the chorus the only character to invoke this world. The prologue is delivered by Cupid, who stakes out a special claim to the pastoral in the very first lines with a rhetorical question: 'Chi crederia che sotto umane forme/E sotto queste pastorali spoglie/Fosse nascosto un Dio?' (Who would believe that in human form and beneath these pastoral trappings there would be concealed a God?) The association is perfectly logical, Cupid being quite at home in a world where pleasure is the only rule. And this is where the 'pleasure principle' of pastoral literature and Despina's role in *Così fan tutte* begin to merge: as she assumes the part of Cupid's representative.

⁴⁰ The use of the term 'pleasure principle' to describe one facet of pastoral literature comes from Poggioli (see n. 22), 14. See also Loughrey (n. 22), 13; and T. G. Rosenmeyer, *The Green Cabinet: Theocritus and the European Pastoral Lyric* (Berkeley, 1969), 22.

⁴¹ Act I scene 2, lines 678–91.

In fact, Cupid himself emerges as an important, if silent, character in *Così fan tutte*, for Despina's adoption of the pastoral style belongs to a larger debate, enjoined from the start of the opera, about the proper nature of love. The two soldiers, Ferrando and Guglielmo, mention Cupid first, after the bet at the end of the first scene, when their certainty about the outcome leads them to raise toasts to Cupid: 'E che brindis replicati/Far vogliamo al Dio d'amor!' (And what repeated toasts we will make to the god of love). The setting has an unusual sonority: a trill in the orchestra with trumpets instead of horns, complete with a timpani roll. These martial echoes and rhythms arm Cupid as a heroic defender of constancy.⁴² If the soldiers' reading of Cupid is heroic, the sisters' is decidedly – even absurdly – sentimental. Their invocation of Cupid occurs in the next number, 'Ah guarda sorella'. The second part of this duet, an Allegro (bar 72–end), is a hymn to Cupid, set to 'Se questo mio core/Mai cangia desio,/ Amore – mi faccia/Vivendo penar' (If this heart of mine ever changes in its desire, Love – make me live in suffering). Although one occasionally finds an eighteenth-century setting of Cupid armed as a defender of constancy (as in Gluck's *Orfeo* and Grétry's *Cephalus*), this is an ill-fitting uniform. A tradition going back to Apuleius portrays Cupid without any uniform at all, as a mischievous lad numbered among the most powerful of gods. This interpretation is also found in many eighteenth-century sources, including a Da Ponte edition of Lempriere's *Bibliotheca classica*, which characterises Cupid as a lad marked by 'debauchery and [a] riotous disposition', whose influence 'extended over all the heavens'.⁴³ Wieland depicts him in no less flattering terms, though he is equally respectful of the god's power:

Cupid, for whom in every other respect I have all the veneration I owe him, will pardon me, if I affirm that he naturally is a loose bird, whom it is impossible absolutely to prevent committing a little knavery now and then. I cannot make him into anything else, and I defy all you law-givers and moralists to change him.⁴⁴

Thus, offering toasts and hymns to Cupid in defence of virtue is not a very good idea, for it runs headlong into a tradition that holds him up as a rascal.

One need not, however, look beyond the opera to see the flaws within the *amanti*'s reading of Cupid. The sisters' opening duet invokes him in a conspicuously elaborate melisma in parallel thirds (see Ex. 8). If restrained in presentation, ornamentation can properly serve the expression of more noble passions; it also has the legitimate formal purpose of initiating closure through an acceleration of rhythmic motion, as earlier in the duet. (For example, the embellished figures in

⁴² The musical bravado of this passage works against the soldiers, however, for it is not difficult to recall this sound and the accompanying boasts at the end of the opera, when the toasts are not to Cupid the God of love but, ironically, to the other one's beloved: 'E nel tuo, nel mio bicchiero/Si sommerga ogni pensiero/E non resti più memoria/Del passato ai nostri cor' (In your and my glasses may every thought be submerged, and may no memory of the past remain in our hearts). *Guglielmo*: 'Ah bevessero del tossico/Queste volpi senza onor!' (Ah! They should be drinking poison, these foxes without honour!)

⁴³ J. Lempriere, *Bibliotheca Classica*, 15th American edn, rev. Lorenzo Da Ponte and John D. Ogilby (New York, 1851), 700.

⁴⁴ *Nachlass des Diogenes von Sinope*, in *Werke* (Munich, 1965), II, 111.

The image shows a musical score for a duet. The top system is for Fiordiligi (mezzo-soprano) and Dorabella (soprano). Both parts begin with a long, sustained note on 'A' (A4) followed by a melodic line. The lyrics 'A - mo - - - - - re, A -' are written below the vocal staves. The bottom system is for the piano accompaniment, featuring a flowing sixteenth-note pattern in the right hand and a more static bass line in the left hand. The tempo marking 'Adagio' appears above the piano staff in the second system. The score is in G major (one sharp) and 2/4 time.

Ex. 8. 'Ah guarda, sorella'.

bars 9–12 and 28–31 of this duet bring closure to the period.) But in this situation the structural cohesion of ornamentation collapses under the weight of sentiment, particularly with the unexpected turn to cadential writing. Typically, the cadenza acts as an extended dominant that generates harmonic tension through its withholding of the tonic; like a melisma, it can be a way of articulating closure. This duet, in contrast, places a cadenza near the beginning of a section, bringing any momentum towards closure to an abrupt halt. Since it begins and ends on the tonic, this passage is also harmonically and structurally superfluous, an embellishment untethered from its structural moorings.

The distance between the sisters' perception of Cupid in this duet and the view held by the larger tradition is evident in one other passage in this conclusion (see Ex. 9). In many ways, it suggests the pastoral topic: the horns and lower strings supply conspicuous drones, the melody is initiated in the woodwinds, the syncopation of the line gives it an agreeable lilt, and there is a subversion of harmonic motion through the emphasis on the subdominant. All that is missing to make this section a convincing pastoral representation is the proper metre: it is in 2/4, and it ought to be in 6/8. The text would actually be

74 **Fiordiligi**

Dorabella

Se que-sto mio co-re mai can-gia de-si-o,

Se que-sto mio co-re mai can-gia de-si-o,

Ex. 9. 'Ah guarda, sorella'.

76

Se que-sto mio co-re mai can-gia de-si-o,

Ex. 10. 6/8 setting of Ex. 9.

better rendered in the compound metre, which would give a more agreeable union of musical and poetic stress (see Ex. 10). The conspicuous digression on 'Amore' says much about the sisters' sentimentalism. In this duet, the audience's first chance to observe them, they appear intoxicated not by their lovers, but by the idea of being in love. Their idealised reading of Cupid distorts his true nature, their inability to control the pastoral topic revealing the limits of their understanding. By the end of the opera, however, at least one sister gains a better understanding of Cupid, and it is the surest sign of the triumph of Despina's vision that the maidservant is able to convert her mistress to this way of thinking.

4

Dorabella is commonly regarded as one of the weaker characters of the opera. If the monochromatic orchestration and absence of virtuosity blemish her reputation, the swift – indeed enthusiastic – capitulation to Guglielmo places it beyond all hope of redemption. Yet 'Smanie implacabili' is the first aria in the opera, and this number, not Fiordiligi's more illustrious 'Come scoglio', sets the elevated, even tragic, tone of their personalities as the soldiers depart for the battlefield. Its debt to opera seria is evident in many ways, even in its incipit, for the *aria di smanie* is typical of the genre.⁴⁵ In orchestral tone, too, it has a uniformity well suited to the impassive, unyielding posture of an elevated type. But what makes this aria especially persuasive as an elevated gesture is the expansion of its dimensions arising out of the juxtaposition of two notes, G and G^b, and the modes they represent. The first instance occurs at bar 23, where the appearance of G^b postpones a cadence in

⁴⁵ John Brown (see n. 27), 78.

(a) Dorabella 22

d'a - mor fu - ne - sto, d'a - mor fu -

- ne - sto, da - rò al-l'Eu - me - ni-di se vi - va

re - sto col suo - no or - ri - - - - bi -

- le de' miei so - spir, de' miei so -

Ex. 11a. 'Smanie implacabili'.

B flat, the new tonic, for more than a dozen bars (see Ex. 11a). Resolution comes only after a sequential passage reaches its peak on g'' and then descends chromatically to f'' . That this chromatic figure occurs on the word 'orribile' shows

(b)
70 Dorabella

col suo no or ri - - - - - bi -

p *cresc.*

73
- le de' miei so - -

Ex. 11b. 'Smanie implacabili'.

a nice conjunction between local detail and long-range shape: on the one hand, the chromaticism makes for a poignant setting of the phrase 'col suono orribile'; on the other, it impels a weighty expansion of this section of the aria. Much the same occurs in the recapitulation, though the melody is recast to keep it in a manageable vocal range and to uphold the prominence of the $g''-g^{b''}-f''$ melodic progression (see Ex. 11b).

This chromaticism, along with the rapid, unyielding accompaniment, generates a great deal of tension in the aria, which is why the coda is so long, occupying fully one-third of the piece. Although rooted primarily in the tonic and subdominant regions, the coda also makes one last presentation of the $g^{b''}$, and this is the most dramatic of all, if only because its arrival – on a weak syllable and weak beat – is almost entirely unanticipated (see Ex. 12). It also brings the rhythmic activity of the accompaniment to a complete halt for the only time in the aria. But the boldest stroke of all is the aria's resolution: after a modulation to a tonic 6/4 chord (bar 94), the same phrase that closed off the second key area returns to conclude the entire aria (cf. bars 35–8 and 96–9), a resolution that is further anchored by the persistent repetition of g'' on the downbeat and as the first and highest pitch of the melody. The reappearance of this pattern changes the way we perceive the close of the aria, which turns out to be less a coda than an expansive parenthesis.

One expression of a tragic demeanour is the capacity for stretching ideas beyond their customary boundaries. This process is evident even at the most

88 Dorabella

col suo - no or - ri - - bi - le col suo - no or -

92

- ri - bi - le, de' miei so - - -

96

- spir, de' miei so - - -

Ex. 12. 'Smanie implacabili'.

basic level of the phrase, just as in poetry one finds heroic types of scansion.⁴⁶ In his article 'Rhythmus' for Sulzer's *Allgemeine Theorie der schönen Künste*, for

⁴⁶ Christian Gottfried Krause, for example, says that trochaic verses express 'something serious and pathetic'; *Von der musikalischen Poesie* (1753; rpt. Kassel, 1973), 211. An amusing example of the relationship of poetic metre to topic comes from the opening of Ovid's *Amores* (lines 1–4), where the 'stolen foot' refers to the turn from hexameter to pentameter:

Arma gravi numero violentaque bella parabam
Edere, materia conveniente modis.
Par erat inferior versus – risisse Cupido
Dicitur atque unum surripuisse pedem.

[Arms and the violent deeds of war I was preparing to extol in weighty numbers, with subject suited to the measure. The second verse was equal to the first – but Cupid, it is said, with a laugh stole away one foot.]

example, Kirnberger observes that five-bar phrases can be created from four-bar ones by expanding one of the internal bars. For vocal works, which still provide the model for periodicity, it is a procedure justified by the importance of the words.⁴⁷ Of course, if taken too far, expansion or stretching becomes exaggeration and a source of derision. And, indeed, one of *Così fan tutte*'s purposes is to test the boundaries between sympathy and ridicule. Yet there is little evidence to suggest that 'Smanie implacabili' is anything but a candid expression of distress, and the expansion of the aria is a sign of Dorabella's elevated bearing.⁴⁸ Historical evidence also points to a more favourable reading of the aria: although *Così fan tutte* was often considered an overall artistic failure, 'Smanie implacabili' was singled out as one of its few successes.⁴⁹

Seeing the Dorabella of the first act as a legitimately elevated figure is essential for understanding her transformation and the role Despina's pastoral vision plays in it. In the second act she abandons virtually every trace of her tragic demeanour. The first sign of a change in temperament comes, significantly, just after 'Una donna a quindici anni'. Here, Dorabella's words could have been uttered by her servant, with whom she shares the same commonsensical approach to life, even to the point of couching her newly gained philosophy in the form of a crude aphorism:

II.10: Odimi: sei tu certa,
 Che non muoiano in guerra
 I nostri vecchi amanti? E allora? Entrambe
 Resterem colle man piene di mosche:
 Tra un ben certo e un incerto
 C'è sempre un gran divario.

[Listen to me: are you sure that our old lovers won't die in the war? And then what? We shall both be left empty-handed: there's always a wide gap between a good certainty and an uncertainty.]

Dorabella's immersion in Despina's pastoral world is still more noticeable in her musical style. 'È amore un ladroncello' provides nothing less than a new reading of Cupid: in tempo, key, melodic shape and inflection it contains the definitive gestures of the pastoral style. Most of all, Dorabella's pastoral expression – now that she properly understands Cupid – falls into the appropriate metre. The 2/4 of her (and Fiordiligi's) incomplete pastoral hymn to Cupid in the first act now fits comfortably

⁴⁷ Sulzer (see n. 16), IV, 103.

⁴⁸ Fiordiligi's arias draw on other means of expansion to create their elevated tone. In particular, both take the three-bar segment, not the two-bar, as the basic phrase unit. This expansion slows down the pace, making it more earnest and allowing for subsequent accelerations without undoing the stately tone. Although 'Come scoglio' is sometimes considered comical in these exaggerations (Charles Rosen [see n. 4], 315), 'Per pietà' seems not to have been. Moreover, this type of phrasing (along with the march patterns) is used in arias that might have served as models for 'Come scoglio' and are unambiguously serious: 'Seguir degg'io chi fugge' from *Una cosa rara* and 'Se il nome mio non basta', a substitute aria by Tarchi from *L'arbore di Diana*. I am grateful to Mary Hunter for bringing this second aria to my attention, as well as the facts surrounding its creation and performance.

⁴⁹ See Georg Nikolaus von Nissen, *Biographie W. A. Mozarts* (1828; rpt. New York, 1984), 93.

Dorabella

(a)

A - mo - re mi fac - cia vi - ven - do pe - nar,

(b)

È a - mo - re un la - dron - cel - lo, un ser - pen - tel - lo è a - mor, —

Ex. 13. (a) 'Ah guarda, sorella' (b) 'È amore un ladroncello'. Translation: Love is a little thief, a little serpent is Love.

into the compound metre in the second (see Ex. 13). Together with its text, this aria sets forth a classic picture of Cupid as a figure at once mischievous, delightful and irresistible; it also affirms the triumph of the pleasure principle, where love becomes a little thief who must be obeyed.

Although the roguish image of Cupid is firmly embedded in a long tradition of literature containing pastoral subjects, Mozart could easily have found such depictions in musical works well known in his own day. Martín's *L'arbore di Diana*, mentioned above, provides the most immediate and convincing operatic example of the equation of love, Cupid and the pastoral mode. In the seventh scene of Act I, Cupid himself acknowledges his reputation:

Si dice qua e là
Amor è un briconcello,
Che intorbida il cervello
Che sospirar ci fa.

[It is said here and there that love is a little rascal who blurs the mind and makes us sigh.]

Both *Così fan tutte* and *L'arbore di Diana* have in common not only the textual reference but also specific musical motifs that appear in other pastoral settings (see Ex. 14). Particularly intriguing is a passage from Handel's *Orlando*, an opera seria in which Dorinda plays a *pastorella*, that helps to confirm the equation of Cupid with the pastoral.⁵⁰ Sadly, Dorabella's aria is often cut; the tone of its words and music apparently seems too frivolous. Yet the topic on which it draws is an essential one in the opera, and the transformation it brings to Dorabella extraordinary, perhaps even unprecedented. Removing this aria deprives *Così fan tutte* of one of the most important devices by which it explores the human heart.

These are not the only pastoral resonances in *Così fan tutte*.⁵¹ Dorabella's and Guglielmo's seduction scene takes place in a garden, for example, and if the story

⁵⁰ In many respects, the pastoral is ideally suited to the representation of the lower social classes. As Martin Scofield remarks, 'Pastoral traditionally takes the lives of the lowest social classes – originally shepherds and country labourers – and finds in them fundamental forms of human nature and behaviour'. 'Negative Pastoral: The Art of Raymond Carver's Stories', *The Cambridge Quarterly*, 23 (1994), 243.

⁵¹ The exchanges between Fiordiligi and Dorabella in their opening duet might also find inspiration from the amoebae verses of the Theocritan tradition.

(a) **Dorabella**

Se nel tuo pet - to ei sie - de, s'e - gli ti bec - ca qui

(b) **Amore**

Si di - - - ce qua e la A -

- mo - re è un bri - con - cel - lo, che in - tor - bi - da il cer - vel - lo

(c) **Dorinda**

A - mor è qual ven - to, che gi - ra il cer - vel - lo:

Ex. 14. Cupid and pastoral settings. (a) 'È amore un ladroncello'. Translation: If he settles in your heart, if he nips you there. (b) 'Si dice qua', from *L'arbore di Diana*. (c) Handel, *Orlando*.

begins in a café, it is only because the opera is creating a contrast between the urban and the rustic, the familiar and the Other, which is a main impulse behind pastoral literature. The trio 'Soave sia il vento' also has especially strong pastoral qualities. The poem is lyric in its suppression of active verbs (only 'risponda' is in the active voice, and even it maintains the idea of a wish for something that is past), elegiac in its gestures of farewell, the ship voyage in particular furnishing an ancient emblem of departure:⁵²

Soave sia il vento,
Tranquilla sia l'onda,
Ed ogni elemento
Benigno risponda
Ai nostri desir.

[May the wind be gentle, may the water be tranquil, and every element respond kindly to our desire.]

The poem also nods towards the bucolic realm in its use of the pathetic fallacy, where elements of nature are imbued with feeling. Perhaps some facet of this device is captured in the musical setting, which in part aims at a literalist depiction of

⁵² See Ernst Robert Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, trans. Willard R. Trask (Princeton, 1973), 128–31.

physical elements – wind and water – through the opening *circulatio* figure in the strings. But the trio is also much more than that: a sympathetic exploration of imagination and desire.⁵³ Together, words and music exhibit all of the nostalgia and longing of the pastoral as a mode of perception, as Schiller calls it⁵⁴ – one that looks to the past as an ideal but irretrievable world.

Seeing ‘Soave sia il vento’ as pastoral nostalgia makes Don Alfonso’s accompanied recitative, which is the true conclusion of this scene, more meaningful. Its text, ‘Nel mare solca, e nell’arena semina,/E il vago vento spera in rete accogliere/Chi fonda sue speranze in cor di femmina’ (He ploughs the sea and sows on sand and hopes to snare the elusive wind in a net who builds his hopes on a woman’s heart), is a literal quotation from Sannazaro’s *Arcadia* of 1504. Although the source of Don Alfonso’s aphorism has been known for some time, its significance has not been sufficiently acknowledged: *Arcadia* is generally considered to be the first pastoral romance. Thus, Don Alfonso anticipates Despina’s activity when she appears in the very next scene: together, they both show the *amanti* not that they are wholly wrong or ridiculous, but rather that their knowledge is incomplete. For every metaphor they use to describe their view of human nature – nautical, heroic, sentimental, pastoral – Don Alfonso, as he does here, draws on a counterexample from that same tradition to demonstrate the inadequacy of their knowledge and, by extension, their understanding of the human heart.⁵⁵

For all of its use of pastoral topics, however, *Così fan tutte* is not a pastoral opera. Its absorption of other styles and genres is too significant, its reworking of the pastoral too subtle and sophisticated.⁵⁶ *Così* is an opera buffa, and it uses the pastoral as a mode or even a gesture – albeit an important one – in a larger programme of undermining the *amanti*’s idealism. One can trace the boundaries and limitations of the pastoral in the later fortunes of Despina. To be sure, her vision triumphs over Dorabella’s, but Despina is absolutely confounded by Fiordiligi, whose character conspicuously lacks pastoral accoutrements, both verbal and musical. Not only does her seduction take place in a chamber instead of a garden, she is also dressed in Guglielmo’s uniform and ready to die with him in battle. Also, Despina is, like

⁵³ There is only one noticeably unstable region in the trio, on the word ‘desir’, the last word of the text and its point of arrival. The diminished-seventh chords appear as deceptive cadences that disrupt the tranquility of the scene. Although stability is eventually restored, these chords remind one of the inherent instability of desire and suggest that it might disrupt later events.

⁵⁴ See page 110 above.

⁵⁵ I believe this is the significance of Don Alfonso’s borrowing of Lilla’s cavatina ‘Ah pietade’ from *Una cosa rara*. By taking an aria from an unambiguously sympathetic treatment of a sentimental heroine and placing it in *Così fan tutte*’s more ironic setting, Don Alfonso serves notice that the entire tradition of sentimental opera, of which *Una cosa rara* is a quintessential example, is being inspected.

⁵⁶ Indeed, few opere buffe in the pastoral mode show such a complex approach to the topic. Dittersdorf’s and Brunati’s *Democrito corretto* (Vienna, 1787) sets up a debate between two characters regarding the relative virtues and shortcomings of city versus country life (see Act I scene 3), but most others give unambiguously sympathetic portrayals of the bucolic life or ethos.

Cupid, blind.⁵⁷ She does not see through the Albanians' disguise, nor has she any idea of the bet: her pursuit of pleasure is too single-minded for that. When all is finally revealed to her at the end, she is nonplussed, and her epicureanism degenerates into outright cynicism: 'Io non so se questo è sogno,/Mi confondo, mi vergogno:/Manco male se a me l'han fatta/Che a molt'altri anch'io la fo' (I don't know if this is a dream, I'm confused and ashamed. So much the better if they've done this to me, for I've done the same to many others). Accustomed to being the instructor, Despina winds up as a graduate assistant in Don Alfonso's school for lovers.

Così fan tutte thus explores both poles of the pastoral, the satirical and the sentimental, and offers a critique of both. As long as Despina's hedonism parallels Don Alfonso's anti-Utopian programme, he gives her free reign. But ultimately, Despina's absorption in pleasure is as much a retreat as the lovers' *Schwärmerei*, and its limited view of human nature is also in need of correction. The lesson that the old philosopher and his students ultimately arrive at demands reflection as part of a tenable psychology, and in the concluding ensemble the *dramatis personae* insist that one must hold passion and reason in a relationship of balance as a condition for charting a course through the storms of the world.

⁵⁷ Stefan Kunze, *Mozart's Opern* (Stuttgart, 1984), 457.