

Mozart at the Movies: Cinematic Reimaginings of Opera

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Master of Music, 2015
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Submitted to the Faculty
Graduate Division
College of Fine Arts
Texas Christian University
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF MUSIC

May, 2015

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Acknowledgments

This thesis would not be possible without the support of many people, but I will only mention several here. First, thank you to my advisor, Dr. Gibbons, who granted me fairly open access to his book collection, spent countless hours editing drafts, and was a constant source of encouragement; to my committee, Dr. Atkinson and Dr. Watkins, who got just as excited about this topic as I did and took the time and care to help see my ideas to fruition; to my family for unending support and free food; to Heidi, Loren and Robert (who should really be listed as family at this point) for giving advice, talking out thoughts, and an almost endless supply of Legos; to Ms. Queen for yoga, chocolate, and inspirational memes; to Julian for tacos, coffee, conversation, and *Grey's Anatomy* quotes; and thank you to Nick who watched each movie with me (maybe more than he ever wanted to), endured late-night rants, half-thought out ramblings, and who has waited very patiently for me to finally let him read my thesis.

Abstract

This thesis analyzes the use of Mozart's opera in contemporary film, employing as a framework Lars Franke's three levels of opera scene analysis—literal, cultural, and dramatic. The first chapter analyzes the use of “Voi che sapete” in the 1995 BBC adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice*, revealing the effect of music as narrator. Included in the analysis is the influence of dance forms, lyrics, and Classical and Romantic philosophies on the audience's interpretation of the developing relationship between Elizabeth Bennett and Mr. Darcy. The second chapter uncovers connections between Don Giovanni and Sherlock Holmes in the Guy Ritchie film *Sherlock Holmes: A Game of Shadows*. The film presents a modern “retelling” of the Don Giovanni story as the presence of the opera's Act II in the film establishes Sherlock Holmes as Don Giovanni; however, the association is complicated as Holmes represents the moral side of Giovanni while his nemesis, Professor Moriarty, represents the amoral Giovanni. The final chapter offers a reading of *Wedding Crashers* as an opera buffa, dividing the film into three acts, analyzing the primary couples as seria (John and Claire) and buffa (Jeremy and Gloria), and considering the handling of social issues such as homosexuality, gender roles, and rape-culture. Additionally, the chapter explores a connection between the opera buffa and Romantic Comedy genres.

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Introduction

If, as film scholar Claudia Gorbman suggests in her seminal work *Unheard Melodies*, music sets the mood of a film, yet music with text distracts the audience and detracts from the effectiveness of the action, how can we analyze opera scenes in film?¹ Marcia Citron's 2010 groundbreaking *When Opera Meets Film*, explores the film/opera boundary by focusing on the intertextual connections revealed within operatic moments in mainstream film. The films she deals with span the period from 1971 to 2004; through these films, Citron develops a framework for analyzing the relationship between opera and film that expands our understanding of the boundary, emphasizes their symbiotic relationship, and offers ways in which opera can make a difference in film. Citron's framework (Style, Subjectivity, and Desire) creates the structure for the book—the relationship between opera and film, cultural elements, and how the presence of opera influences the audience's interpretation of a character's social status. In her study Citron also emphasizes the film-opera and how techniques used in this genre transfer to opera scenes in film, concluding that both genres contribute to the audience's (and society's) understanding of opera.

While Citron's approach is noteworthy, her reliance on the film-opera genre as a framework for analysis of opera in mainstream film discounts the effectiveness of these scenes in their own right.² Opera scenes in film do not always take place at an opera house, and neither are

¹ Claudia Gorbman, *Unheard Melodies* (Indiana University Press, 1987).

² Even Citron's article "The Operatics of Detachment: *Tosca* in the James Bond Film *Quantum of Solace*," *19th Century Music* 34/3 (2011): 316–40, focuses primarily on the social class implications of opera in film and the connection between opera scenes in film and the opera-film genre. Citron is certainly not alone in her analysis of film-operas and I do not mean to imply that her analysis is unfounded or incorrect. The bulk of opera/film research is on opera *on* film (filmed operas) and edited books on opera and film often only contain one or two chapters on

they always meant to imply pretentiousness. To that end, when opera scenes *are* at an opera house, it is not necessarily the trip to the opera itself that is noteworthy. In these situations, a different analytical framework is necessary.

In his 2006 chapter “*The Godfather Part III: Film, Opera, and the Generation of Meaning*” in *Changing Tunes: The Use of Pre-Existing Music in Film*, musicologist Lars Franke creates a framework for his opera scene analysis:

Rather than acting as mere background “ritual,” opera manifests itself on three levels within the narrative of film: the first and most foregrounded is the “literal level”—the use of Mascagni’s opera; the second is the “cultural level,” on which we encounter opera as a cultural artefact that permeates everyday life; the third level is the “dramatic,” characterized by the adaptation of operatic techniques and convention to film.³

Franke applies his three levels of reading to opera in *The Godfather Part III*, beginning with the use of Mascagni’s *Cavalleria rusticana* in the last thirty minutes of the film (literal), followed by an analysis of how the opera contributes to the Italian-American construction of the film (cultural), and, lastly, how *Part III* is like an opera and how the presence of an opera scene contributes to this interpretation (dramatic). Franke’s analysis accounts for several levels of understanding of opera in film and allows room for various applications of opera to film.

Whereas Franke uses the three levels for the interpretation of one scene in one film, in my thesis, I apply these three levels to three separate films—*Pride and Prejudice* (1995), *Sherlock Holmes: A Game of Shadows* (2011), and *Wedding Crashers* (2005)—that contain

opera *in* film. In fact, when I am asked the topic of my thesis I am often misunderstood as meaning opera *on*, rather than *in*, film.

³ Lars Franke, “*The Godfather Part III: Film, Opera, and the Generation of Meaning*,” in *Changing Tunes: The Use of Pre-existing Music in Film*, ed. Phil Powrie and Robynn Stilwell (Burlington: Ashgate, 2006), 32.

music drawn from Mozart's operas. Research on Mozart opera in film is typically limited to (the previously discussed) opera on film, operatic function in *Amadeus* (1984) and the opera scene in *The Shawshank Redemption* (1994).⁴ While these studies are crucial to the conceptualization of Mozart opera—and more generally, Mozart's music—in film, they represent a narrow scope of what could and should be a much larger field of study. With over 900 film and television credits claiming the use of Mozart's music, surely there are more than two films worthy of study.

Through my study of Mozart opera in film, I aim to uncover new ways of viewing opera in film and connections between opera and film genres. The first chapter focuses on the 1995 BBC adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice*; specifically, Elizabeth Bennett's performance of "Voi che sapete"—Cherubino's aria from Act II of *The Marriage of Figaro*. On the literal level, the aria's text represents both Cherubino's and Elizabeth's emotions and the dance-like form of the song transforms the performance into a symbol of nineteenth century courting practices. The connection between the plots and characters of the two stories is only indicated in this scene, however, and does not continue throughout the entirety of the *Pride and Prejudice* film. Chapter Two presents the cultural level of Franke's analytical approach in Guy Ritchie's *Sherlock Holmes: A Game of Shadows* (2011). In the film, Holmes and his nemesis, Moriarty, come head-to-head at a performance of Mozart's *Don Giovanni*. The opera is recalled throughout the film, however, with connections between the plots and characters throughout, and I offer Holmes as a modern-day retelling of *Don Giovanni*. The third and final chapter offers a reading of *Wedding Crashers* (2005) as an opera buffa, drawing connections between plot, character type, couplings,

⁴ See Jeongwon Joe's chapter "Reconsidering *Amadeus*: Mozart as Film Music" (2006), Mary Hunter's chapter "Opera in Film Sentiment and Wit, Feeling and Knowing: *The Shawshank Redemption* and *Prizzi's Honor* (2002), and "Listening to the Self: *The Shawshank Redemption* and the Technology of Music" (2011) by Daniel K. L. Chua.

and aria structure and speech patterns. The film uses an arrangement of Mozart's music as an overture, setting the mood and setting the audience's horizon of expectations. This film offers a prime opportunity for the application of Franke's dramatic level, showing what happens when operatic conventions are applied to film.

Although each study assumes a knowledgeable audience—one that recognizes the excerpts, knows their respective plots and characters, and has an understanding of their larger place in the canon and society—such an audience is not necessary to appreciate the films and recognize the significance of the music scenes. In her analysis of the recurring use of *Così fan tutte* in the film *Closer* (2004), musicologist Delphine Vincent suggests different levels of recognition among audiences, proposing that even if they do not recognize the particular work they might still recognize differences in social class, connotations associated with opera, or create their own parallels to a different work.⁵ Elizabeth and Darcy's unspoken connection in *Pride and Prejudice*, for example, is obvious without previous knowledge of the role of "Voi che sapete" in *Le nozze di Figaro*, or the theoretical tools necessary for an analysis of Georgiana's Beethoven performance. Yet a musical understanding of the scene provides the knowing audience an additional level of connection and substantiates the characters' feelings.

In *Sherlock Holmes: A Game of Shadows*, the opera scene can be read simply as Moriarty defeating Holmes, an isolated moment between Don Giovanni and *A Game of Shadows*, or—even more broadly—proof of Moriarty's superior intellect by furthering his connection with classical music and chess (a theme throughout the film). These interpretations are certainly how I read the scene before delving into further research; this research resulted in

⁵ Delphine Vincent, "Closer to *Così fan tutte*? The Film Soundtrack, Intertextuality and Reception," *The Soundtrack* 4, no. 2 (2011): 101–115.

discovering numerous connections between the two plots and their connection to modern popular culture. Perhaps most easily dismissed as what Vincent calls “musicological over-interpretation” is my analysis of *Wedding Crashers*. While it is simplest to say that the Swingle Singers excerpt at the beginning of the film establishes the mood and the overture to *The Marriage of Figaro* sets the “wedding atmosphere”—analysis that is easily recognized by the unknowing audience—the knowledgeable audience is let in on an additional joke of sorts, with the connection to opera buffa and the “bonus level” of understanding.⁶ Even though it may be easy to stop after baseline assertions, it is difficult to overlook the similarities between the film and the opera buffa tradition, especially structure, plot, and character types.

⁶ This understanding is akin to John Sawyer’s third level of musical irony from his discussion of Handel’s opera *Agrippina*: “A duality of comprehension whereby one party understands only the ostensible meaning while a second party is aware of both the ostensible and veiled meanings. The party of limited comprehension includes, or is confined to, the ‘innocent’ victim(s) while the other party includes at least the perpetrator of the irony (when this is other than Fate) and the audience. A third layer of comprehension may reside with astute readers or audience members who understanding, being more distanced from the action and perhaps more informed than that of the participants, may be on a still broader level.” John E. Sawyer, “Irony and Borrowing in Handel’s ‘Agrippina,’” *Music and Letters* 80, vol. 4 (1999): 532.

Chapter I

Tell Me What Love Is: Aria as Narrator in *Pride and Prejudice* (1995)

When the jovial and single Mr. Bingley rents the nearby manor house Netherfield Park, the Bennett household goes into a frenzy. Mrs. Bennett decides that Mr. Bingley will marry one of her five daughters (Jane, Elizabeth, Mary, Kitty, and Lydia), setting in motion the plot of Jane Austen's 1813 novel *Pride and Prejudice*, the remainder of which focuses on the gradually developing romance between Elizabeth and Mr. Bingley's friend, Mr. Darcy. The 1995 BBC adaptation of Austen's novel, starring Jennifer Ehle as Elizabeth Bennett and Colin Firth as Mr. Darcy, attempts to capture on screen the relationship as described in the novel: Darcy's infatuation with Elizabeth and her equal contempt of him, the change in his character, and her growing awareness of her feelings for him. In the novel this progression is aided by the omniscient narrator, who gives the reader insight into Darcy's and Elizabeth's thoughts and feelings. For example, Darcy is infatuated with Elizabeth as early as Chapter Six of the novel; in this chapter the reader is granted a glimpse into Darcy's thoughts as he admires her eyes and playful mannerisms.

These insights pose a challenge for the film adaptation, which has no such narrator; as a solution to this problem, the BBC version uses music to help reveal characters' thoughts and feelings. In a music featurette from the 2014 rerelease, the film's composer, Carl Davis explains his desire to have the score sound like a "less talented student of Haydn or Mozart."¹ Furthermore, Davis created leitmotifs for each character and several locations to amplify the emotions associated with each. Musicologist Annette Davison explains this approach further:

¹ "The Music of *Pride and Prejudice* Featurette" in *Pride and Prejudice*, directed by Simon Langton. 1995 (A&E Home Video, 2014), DVD.

Davis's research and subsequent musical choices represent a largely successful attempt to present this musical world with fidelity, applying only a little poetic license to amplify the subtle distinctions presented through the characters' relations with music.²

In addition to Davis's score, the film uses borrowed music to enhance the audience's understanding of characters' emotions. Specifically, two diegetic performances—Elizabeth's performance of Mozart's "Voi che sapete" and Georgiana's performance of Beethoven's *Andante Favori*—highlight crucial developments in the relationship between Elizabeth and Darcy: Elizabeth's growing awareness that her feelings match Darcy's, her emotional freedom, and both characters' inward confirmation of their feelings. These feelings culminate in a fabricated scene at the music room of Pemberley, Darcy's estate, where Elizabeth plays and sings (in English) Cherubino's aria "Voi che sapete" from Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro*, K. 492 and Darcy's sister, Georgiana, performs Beethoven's *Andante Favori*, WoO 57.³ An analysis of the text and form of "Voi che sapete"—more broadly, the plot and characters of *The Marriage of Figaro*, and ideas associated with Classicism—reveal Elizabeth's struggle to abandon her emotional restraint and allow herself to love Darcy.⁴ Conversely, a harmonic analysis of *Andante Favori*, coupled with Romantic ideals and Georgiana's emotional disinhibition juxtaposes Elizabeth's initial feelings and emphasizes her development. The music reaches its full leitmotivic potential when "Voi che sapete" becomes the underscoring for Darcy's flashback to Elizabeth at the piano. In this scene, the music transitions from representing Elizabeth's

² Annette Davison, "High Fidelity? Music in Screen Adaptations," in *The Cambridge Companion to Literature on Screen*, ed. Deborah Cartmell and Imelda Whelehan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 216.

³ *The Marriage of Figaro*, Act II, Scene 2

⁴ Musicologist Jennifer Ronyak offers similar methodologies and conclusions in her analysis of Schubert's "Ständchen" in the 1998 film *The Governess*.

emotional journey to signifying Elizabeth and Darcy's relationship, cueing the audience into the characters' emotions and fulfilling the role of the omniscient narrator.

Mozart and Elizabeth

The music-room scene occurs in Episode 5 in the BBC adaptation.⁵ Elizabeth is in the middle of performing "Voi che sapete" while Georgiana, stands next to her at the piano (see Figure 1.1); Darcy and other guests are seated in the room listening to the performance. The camera first focuses on smiling Darcy while Elizabeth sings the lines "Say ye who borrow love's fleeting spell"; the camera then cuts to Elizabeth and Georgiana at the piano while Elizabeth sings "What is this sorrow naught can dispel?" On the repeat of the line, the camera rapidly cuts to different areas of the room, moving from character to character before settling on



Figure 1.1 Elizabeth singing "Voi che sapete"

⁵ The BBC adaption is comprised of six, one-hour long episodes.

Darcy; while other characters look to each other and Elizabeth, or straight ahead, Darcy never takes his gaze off Elizabeth who finishes the piece to applause and exclamations of praise from the small audience.

An analysis of “Voi che sapete” in its original context of *The Marriage of Figaro* will aid in understanding its function in *Pride and Prejudice*. The aria is performed by the pageboy Cherubino to the Countess during Act II of *The Marriage of Figaro*. Cherubino is essentially in love with love; he is a source of constant (although arguably unintentional) mischief throughout the opera as he is found in different women’s rooms, makes coy attempts at seducing the Countess, and continually avoids the Count. During one such escapade, Cherubino is hiding in Susanna’s bed when the Count enters and attempts to seduce her. The Count discovers Cherubino and threatens to enlist the pageboy in the militia; Cherubino laments having to leave the Countess by singing “Voi che sapete” to her. Cherubino is a pants-role—a role intended for a female soprano dressed as a boy—but when he sings “Voi che sapete,” Cherubino is dressed as a girl. Cherubino’s indeterminate gender is representative of his personality, as explained by Allanbrook:

Early adolescence is a peculiarly amorphous time of life, when youth is androgynous and undelimited – unsure of what it is or what to expect from the people around it. Cherubino knows himself only that he does not know himself, and he is strikingly indiscriminating in his relationships.⁶

Musicologist Tim Carter offers a similar, yet expanded, explanation of Cherubino:

In [Voi che sapete] Cherubino expresses two contrary emotions: his growing awareness of love and his desire to feel it on the one hand, and his confusion about whom he wants to love on the other.

⁶ Wye Jamison Allanbrook, *Rhythmic Gesture in Mozart: Le nozze di Figaro & Don Giovanni* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 96.

He is in fact just old enough to know what love is, yet too young to experience mature passion as a result of it.⁷

The aria highlights Cherubino's androgynous nature by pointing out his curiosity about love, who he should love, and his overwhelming (and sometimes conflicting) urge to love anyone and everyone. The text of the aria reads as follows:

Voi che sapete
 che cosa è amore,
 donne vadete
 s'io l'ho nel cor.
 Quello ch'io provo
 vi ridirò,
 è per me nuovo,
 capir nol so.
 Sento un affetto
 pien di desir,
 ch'ora è diletto,
 ch'ora è martir.
 Gelo e poi sento
 l'alma avvampar,
 e in un momento
 torno a gelar.
 Ricercò un bene
 fuori di me,
 non so chi 'l tiene,
 non so cos'è.
 Sospiro e gemo
 senza voler,
 palpito e tremo
 senza saper.
 Non trovo pace
 note né dì,
 ma pur mi piace
 languir così.
 Voi che sapete
 che cosa è amor,
 donne, vedete
 s'io l'ho nel cor.

Dear ladies, you know
 The part love can play.
 Is it to love that I owe
 My heart led astray?
 All that I feel inside,
 The tumult and change,
 I long to confide.
 It is thrilling and strange.
 First, I'm all fright,
 Then, walking on air.
 First, sheer delight.
 Then, mere despair.
 One moment, ice,
 One moment, fire.
 In such a paradise
 I am bound to expire.
 I need only to find
 A treasure, I swear,
 Beyond my own mind.
 Oh but how? And where?
 Day in and day out
 I groan and I sigh.
 I mumble and pout
 Without knowing why.
 Night after night
 No rest to be found.
 Why does anguish excite
 And joy so confound?
 Dear ladies, you know
 The part love can play.
 Is it to love that I owe
 My heart led astray?⁸

⁷ Tim Carter, *Le nozze di Figaro* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 28.

⁸ The translation in the film is slightly different from the one provided here (by J.D. McClatchy) with Elizabeth singing the final verse in English as: "Say ye who borrow Love's fleeting

We can apply these interpretations of Cherubino to *Pride and Prejudice*'s Elizabeth Bennett through an analysis of her romantic relationships, especially with regards to her relationship with Mr. Darcy. In the first half of the plot, Elizabeth is captivated by Mr. Wickham, an officer in the militia, who appears the essence of a gentleman. He confirms Elizabeth's belief that Mr. Darcy is "proud" and "disagreeable" with a story from his childhood. According to Wickham he played with Darcy as a child (Mr. Wickham, Sr. was the steward of Mr. Darcy, Sr.) and in Mr. Darcy Sr.'s will, he promised Wickham a priest post at a local parish; however, Darcy refused to relinquish the parish to Wickham, forcing him to enlist in the militia. It is this information that supports Elizabeth's decision to refuse Darcy's first marriage proposal and it is not until after this refusal that Darcy explains the truth: Wickham refused the position, opting for a one-time payment instead, attempted to elope with Georgiana, and was discovered by Darcy, who broke off all ties between the two families. At this point, Elizabeth's opinion of Darcy begins to change; she sees his acts of kindness, rather than only acts of pride, and is confused about her feelings. In other words, the aria reflects Elizabeth's confusion just as it reflects Cherubino's, but the confusion is of a different kind. Whereas before, Elizabeth was uncertain of Darcy's nature, Wickham's truthfulness, and *who* she should love, in the music scene she is now confused about if she should—or does—love Darcy.

Beyond the meaning of the text we can consider the function of "Voi che sapete" in relation to its connection to a contredanse. Allanbrook offers an analysis of the aria:

In 2/4 meter, *Andante*, 'Voi che sapete' opens with a gesture which could in theory be a slow contredanse . . . But the stately harmonic rhythm of the opening, underlined by the plucking of Susanna's

spell/What is this sorrow naught can dispel?/What is this sorrow naught can dispel?/What is this sorrow naught can dispel?"

guitar (*pizzicato* in all the strings), militates against the usual rhythmic excitement and compression of a key-area dance form. Cherubino's music is ingenuous and leisurely, lacking the urgency of dance.⁹

Allanbrook goes on to say that, given operatic conventions, we expect Cherubino to dance—but his dance turns to song.¹⁰ The remainder of Allanbrook's analysis largely abandon's the song's connection with dance in favor of an analysis of key areas, phrasing, and the text. The aria is in the key of B-flat Major and the cadences in the first two stanzas follow the poetic form—a half cadence where the text denotes a question (“Is it to love that I owe my heart led astray?”) and an authentic cadence where the text denotes a period. Throughout the opening stanza, chromatic passing-tones indicate Cherubino's confusion, which becomes fully apparent when the aria modulates to the remote and “cool” (according to Allanbrook) key of A-flat major at the mention of “fire” and “ice.” The aria eventually modulates back to the original key in the final stanza by way of G minor which is “conventionally ‘outside’ the place just abandoned, and the modulation to it is open-ended, ‘searching.’”¹¹ The final stanza in the home key of B-flat Major is the most self-assured of all, with the questions underscored by tonic cadences, rather than dominant; it is this stanza that Elizabeth sings in the adaptation. The knowing audience is aware of the missing portions of the aria, their musical uncertainty, and their representation of Elizabeth's indecision; therefore, the choice of the final stanza as the one actually heard in the scene is even more powerful as it reinforces Elizabeth's previous hesitance about loving Darcy and underscores the burgeoning confirmation of her affection.

⁹ Allanbrook, *Rhythmic Gesture in Mozart*: (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 106.

¹⁰ “A young and blushing girl, dressed as a boy, tremulously singing the clichés of passion with a cool and vibrato-free voice – the creature before us must be very special. We expect him to dance – the established idiom of the opera – and his dance turns to song.” *Ibid.*, 109.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 108

While this analysis is important and useful to a holistic understanding of the aria, its connection to dance and the function of dance in nineteenth century society is equally crucial. At the time of *The Marriage of Figaro*'s premiere—and certainly during Jane Austen's time—dance, and more specifically social dances, facilitated meetings between potential couples, allowing them to talk “alone” without interruption. Dances followed a series of social protocols intended to avoid hurt feelings and facilitating unions:

It was the men who sought partners and the women who could merely accept or refuse. If they refused, it was incumbent on them to avoid looking as if they refused that particular gentleman. Even if a woman found the gentleman who asked her to dance repulsive or clumsy, she had to spare his feelings by refusing to dance with anyone, usually for the rest of the evening.¹²

Although Cherubino's aria is not an actual dance (meaning that he does not physically dance with the Countess) the scene seems to follow courtly dance manners. The Countess is polite in listening to Cherubino and it allows him the opportunity to be near her without the Count interrupting. The implication of the aria—Cherubino has romantic feelings for the Countess—is reflected in the text and in the aria's dance form. Likewise, when Elizabeth sings the aria, it is a reflection of her impending union with Darcy; furthermore, dance is central to the relationship between Elizabeth and Darcy: the first time Darcy sees Elizabeth, Bingley implores him to ask her to dance but Darcy refuses, stating, “She is tolerable, I suppose, but not handsome enough to tempt me.” Even though Elizabeth swears to herself and Jane that she will never dance with Darcy, she does just that at their next meeting, the Netherfield Ball (episode 2/6), and they make stiff and awkward small talk with Elizabeth speaking disproportionately to Darcy (See Figure 1.2).

¹² Kirstin Olsen, *All Things Austen: A Concise Encyclopedia of Austen's World* (Oxford: Greenwood World Publishing, 2005), 103.



Figure 1.2 Darcy and Elizabeth dancing

In the music scene the dance-like nature of the aria (2/4 meter, major key, and clear-cut melody) reflects the conventions of an actual dance and the two are equally engaged—Elizabeth performing and Darcy observing. Dance contributes to an understanding of the stages of their relationship, from dislike to uncertainty to confirmation of their mutual feelings, and “Voi che sapete” is the culmination of these feelings.

The presence of Mozart’s music, in a more general sense, influences the reading of Elizabeth’s emotional restraint. Mozart is the archetype of Classicism—a movement marked by its emotional control and reliance on logic—and Elizabeth equally epitomizes these ideals and, while headstrong, is a well-grounded and logical person. Darcy is similarly rational and, therefore, is distressed when he acknowledges that he loves (and wants to marry) Elizabeth against all reason and logic; the choice of Mozart’s music to underscore their relationship is consequently fitting. Cherubino, on the other hand, is not a grounded, logical character; he overflows with emotions and cannot help but act on them. When Elizabeth uses Cherubino’s words as her own in the performance of “Voi che sapete,” she is conflicted about her feelings for

Darcy, and allows herself to contemplate these confictions, taking a step towards acknowledging and accepting them.

Beethoven and Georgiana

Continuing the trend away from reason and towards passion is Georgiana's performance of Beethoven's *Andante Favori*, WoO 57. Where Mozart and Elizabeth were representative of these Classical ideals, Beethoven and Georgiana embody the Romantic. Beethoven, in contrast to Mozart, is a conspicuously Romantic composer; his music (especially works from his middle and late periods) is marked by its high emotional levels and abandonment of Classical ideals.

Georgiana is similarly influenced by her emotions and has difficulty thinking rationally; when she was sixteen she agreed to elope with Wickham (he planned on stealing her inheritance) and would have done so had Darcy not discovered the ruse. Whereas Elizabeth's performance of "Voi che sapete" represents her conflicted thoughts, Georgiana's performance signifies Elizabeth and Darcy's emotions—indicating both a new step in their relationship and an increase in the music's leitmotivic function.

Georgiana begins her performance while Elizabeth walks about the room; she is stopped by Caroline who inquires about the militia:

Caroline: Pray, Miss Eliza, are the militia still courted at Meryton?

Elizabeth: No, they are encamped at Brighton for the summer.

Caroline: That must be a great loss for your family.

Elizabeth: We are enduring it as best we can Miss Bingley.

Caroline: I should have thought one gentleman's absence might have caused particular pangs.

Elizabeth: I can't imagine who you mean.

Caroline: I understood that certain ladies found the society of Mr. Wickham curiously agreeable

At the mention of Wickham's name Georgiana plays a V^7 in the left hand in measure 12 (See Example 1.1, "A"), the volume of the piano track increases, giving prominence to the major

second in the bass and emphasizing Georgiana's shock. Darcy rises to go to Georgiana but before he can take a step Elizabeth then turns to her, saying, "I'm so sorry; I've been neglecting you. How can you play with no one to turn the pages?" As a way of removing herself from the conversation, Elizabeth returns to the piano while Georgiana continues the piece, which has modulated from F Major to D-flat Major. A pedal D-flat begins in the left hand in measure 17 as Darcy retakes his seat; Elizabeth turns her gaze from the music to Darcy as an Italian augmented sixth chord occurs over the pedal D-flat in measure 21 (see Figure 1.3). The chord resolves to an open C chord in measure 22 as the camera cuts to Darcy and he physically relaxes (See Example 1.1, "B"; See Figure 1.4). The nondiegetic underscoring then joins Georgiana's playing as the camera cuts to Elizabeth and continues with a series of reverse shots between her and Darcy.

In this sequence of shots the characters' tension is reflected in the music; the music's resolution is evocative of Darcy's physical response and, in turn, the audience relaxes as well. Furthermore, the music highlights the developing emotional bond between Elizabeth and Darcy: the tension in the augmented sixth chord highlights the equivalent in the relationship between Elizabeth and Darcy (especially in relation to the failed marriage proposal) but as their eyes meet and the chord resolves, the relaxation and ease signals a new turn in their relationship. Reinforcing this idea, the uncertainty evoked by the text of "Voi che sapete" is replaced by the lighthearted atmosphere as the Beethoven blends into the underscoring and signals the transitional relationship. The connotation of this technique is that the music is now completely a representation of the characters' emotions and has fully taken on the role of narrator.

Example 1.1 Beethoven *Andante Favori*, WoO 57, measures 12–24; A: V^7 played at the mention of Wickham; B: It^{+6} resolving to open C chord when Elizabeth looks at Darcy

The musical score consists of two systems, A and B, in the key of B-flat major and 3/4 time. System A (measures 12-18) begins with a V^7 chord. The right hand plays a melodic line with a crescendo, followed by a decrescendo and a piano (*p*) section, ending with a pianissimo (*pp*) section marked 'Ped.'. System B (measures 19-24) starts with an It^{+6} chord, which resolves to an open C chord. The right hand features a crescendo, a fortissimo (*f*) section, and a piano (*p*) section, ending with another crescendo. The left hand provides harmonic support with chords and octaves.



Figure 1.3 Elizabeth lovingly returning Darcy's gaze



Figure 1.4 Darcy looking at Elizabeth

Following Georgiana’s performance, the scene cuts to Elizabeth and the Gardiners leaving and then to the remaining party in the sitting room where Caroline insults Elizabeth:

Caroline: Hmm. For my part I must confess, I never saw any real beauty in [Elizabeth’s] face. Her features—not at all handsome—her complexion has no brilliancy. Oh, her teeth are tolerable, I suppose, but nothing out of the common way. [laughs] And as for her eyes, which I’ve sometimes heard called “fine,” I could never perceive anything extraordinary in them. . . . And in her air altogether there’s a self-sufficiency without fashion which I find intolerable.

Bingley: I think—

Caroline: I remember when we first knew her in Hertfordshire, how amazed we all were to find her a reputed beauty. I particularly recall you, Mr. Darcy, one night after they’d been dining at Netherfield, saying, “She a beauty? I should as soon call her mother a wit.” [laughs with Mrs. Hurst] Ah, but afterward she seemed to improve on you. I even believe you found her rather pretty at one time.

Darcy: Yes, I did. That was only when I first knew her. It has been many months now since I have considered her one of the handsomest women of my acquaintance.

Darcy's reaction confirms that an emotional transformation has taken place; whereas before Darcy was reserved and primarily concerned with maintaining propriety, here he is outspoken and openly rebukes Caroline. The subsequent scene shows Darcy smiling as he carries a candle down a darkened hallway while flute and strings play the "Voi che sapete" melody in the underscoring. Once in the music room we see, through flashback, Elizabeth looking at Darcy and, in real time, Darcy looking contemplative. Mozart's theme that once represented Elizabeth's uncertainty now represents confirmation because it is coupled with the relaxation associated with the Beethoven. The logical and the emotional go hand-in-hand, assuring Darcy that Elizabeth returns his feelings. Davison explains how the music reinforces this awareness to the audience:

Where we have the opportunity to experience the joy and agony of these performances through Austen's, and her characters' words and emotions when reading the novel, here we are given the opportunity to experience them at first hand, with access to all the excitement and pain generated by the shot/reverse-shot sequences that draw our attention to the characters' responses to these performances.¹³

The music reinforces the confirmation of the relationship in a way that is similar to how the narrator provides the reader with insight into Elizabeth's change of heart.

The idea of original diegetic music sublimating into the underscoring and becoming a leitmotif is not new. For example the 1942 film *Casablanca*, presents the borrowed tune "As Time Goes By" as the love theme for the primary couple. After its initial entrance, the theme transitions into the underscoring where it undergoes changes in key, tempo, and instrumentation

¹³ Davison, "High Fidelity? Music in Screen Adaptations," in *The Cambridge Companion to Literature on Screen*, ed. Cartmell and Whelehan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 217.

to reflect changes in the relationship throughout the film. Although the “Voi che sapete” leitmotif is limited to the two scenes mentioned previously, its presence during the flashback evokes a similar function, representing the changes in Elizabeth’s and Darcy’s growing relationship, albeit in a short time frame.

Even without knowledge of the musical context of Elizabeth’s performance and the brief analysis of Georgiana’s performance, the shared moment between Elizabeth and Darcy is powerful. Film scholar Erica Sheen provides her own interpretation of the scene:

After [Elizabeth] finishes her performance, she turns pages for Georgiana—and here for the first time her eyes meet Darcy’s. This realization of the shared glance—the conventional operatic and filmic image of mutual recognition—as the raising of a page-turner’s eyes from the page across the instrument towards a listener is a brilliant transformation of literary anagnorisis into a climax of the adaptive transaction.¹⁴

Anagnorisis is recognition of a person or what that person stands for; here the term refers to the recognition of, and turning point in, the relationship of Elizabeth and Darcy. Sheen’s use of the word “operatic” is striking, referring to the mutual recognition but also (I would argue, intentionally) connecting the glance back to Elizabeth’s performance of “Voi che sapete.” Sheen goes on to explain in a footnote the importance of the historical accuracy and song choice to the meaning of the scene:

The Marriage of Figaro was written and first produced in 1786, with a first London performance, in Italian, in 1812. According to the British Library Catalogue of Printed Books, the first piano and

¹⁴ Erica Sheen, “‘Where the Garment Gapes’: Faithfulness and Promiscuity in the 1995 BBC *Pride and Prejudice*,” in *The Classic Novel: From Page to Screen*, ed. Robert Giddings and Erica Sheen (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 24.

voice transcription of “Voi che sapete” available in London came out in 1810. Jane Austen started writing her novel in 1797 and finished it in 1813. So it’s a very up-to-date piece of music both for Lizzy to know, and for Darcy to have in the house. For us as *their* audience, it’s the conjunction of the two—Lizzy knowing it, and Darcy owning it—that makes it meaningful.¹⁵

While Sheen’s interpretations and information are helpful to understanding the artistic choices in the scene, there is much more to be uncovered. Recalling the operatic context and musical analysis, the scene provides an extra layer of meaning for the audience: it reinforces developments in the relationship of Elizabeth and Darcy and supplants the omniscient narrator. Carl Davis’s score supports the importance of music as narrator through a series of leitmotifs for the various characters, couples, and locations; these leitmotifs establish music as a representation of characters’ emotions. This normativity, by extension, allows for an interpretation of Elizabeth’s “Voi che sapete” performance as a representation of her initial hesitance (a reflection of Classical principles). Elizabeth takes a step towards Romanticism, however, as she allows emotions to influence her judgment and echoes Cherubino’s sentiments: she is confused about love and her developing feelings for Darcy. Furthermore, the stages of Elizabeth and Darcy’s relationship are reflected in the dance-like nature of the song, representing the courting practice of the time.¹⁶ Georgiana’s performance of Beethoven’s *Andante Favori* implies that Elizabeth’s and Darcy’s mindsets are removed from rationality and are instead completely focused on emotion—an idea that is reinforced by the piece’s leitmotivic nature. The culmination of their budding relationship is when the rational and emotional combine—when “Voi che sapete” becomes a leitmotif, representing their confirmed feelings, cueing the audience in on the shared understanding, and fully taking on the role of the omniscient narrator.

¹⁵ Ibid., 29, footnote 30.

¹⁶ The contredanse was popular until the middle of the nineteenth century.

Chapter II: Sherlock Holmes and Don Giovanni: The Case of the Reinvented Opera

One of the more memorable moments of the 2011 film *Sherlock Holmes: A Game of Shadows* takes place at the Paris Opéra during a performance of Mozart's *Don Giovanni*. Holmes (Robert Downey, Jr.) and Dr. Watson (Jude Law) team up with a Gypsy woman, Sim (Noomi Rapace), to prevent Professor James Moriarty (Jared Harris) from causing a world war.¹ Holmes believes Moriarty has planted a bomb at the opera house in the Commendatore's statue but, as the climactic scene unfolds, Holmes reaches the opera house and realizes he was wrong—the bomb is at a peace meeting in a nearby hotel, not the opera. As Holmes realizes his mistake, the onstage Commendatore damns Don Giovanni to hell. The camera cross-cuts between the Commendatore onstage, Moriarty in the audience, and Holmes at the demolished hotel. Removed from the rest of the film, this scene reinforces Moriarty's upper hand and Holmes's mistake by connecting the characters to the Commendatore and Don Giovanni, respectively. The scene also functions on a much larger scale, however, providing a framework for understanding the film characters and their relationships (Franke's second level of analysis). The Holmes of these films is brilliant, egotistical, persistent, stubborn, and often self-centered. In many ways, he is a modern Don Giovanni. The drastic—and vital—difference is Holmes's ability for empathy and human compassion; his treatment of Watson and Irene Adler is markedly different from Giovanni's treatment of Leporello and Elvira. The antithesis of these feelings, amorality and a lack of human compassion (or really any emotional depth) is embodied in Moriarty. As we will see later in this chapter, Holmes and Moriarty represent the conflicting interpretations of Don

¹ I am using the word “gypsy” because Holmes uses this word in the film.

Giovanni. This paper explores the similarities and differences between Mozart's Don Giovanni and Guy Richie/Downey Jr.'s Sherlock Holmes. By extension, the comparison investigates the parallels between various characters and plots. Furthermore, this analysis seeks to offer a reading of Holmes as a retelling of the Don Giovanni story for a modern audience.

Although the Don Juan legend permeated popular culture long before the renowned opera *Don Giovanni (Il dissoluto punito)* by Mozart and Da Ponte, there is something exceptionally captivating and alluring about Mozart's Giovanni. As Joseph Kerman points out, "[Don Juan] is now little more than an abstract idea left over from the past, awaiting an occasional new embodiment."² Despite the numerous incarnations of the legendary figure, Mozart's remains the definitive version. As the musicologist Mary Hunter reminds us, *Don Giovanni* is purposefully universal, resulting in a work that is easily adaptable to suit its current audience:

The combination of making the work different from its usual versions, but socially and politically familiar in the circumstances and back story it presents has the effect of universalizing both the work, and, more importantly, the idea of Mozart himself. That is, if Mozart's and his librettists' characters are made to live and act in circumstances that the audience deeply recognizes, it makes Mozart (his librettists are never invoked by the directors of such productions) an essentially modern man – someone who understands the vicissitudes of modern life, and whose vision encompasses the corners of the modern soul. The obsessive particularities of these settings, and the exactitude with which particular circumstances are represented, universalize the spirit of the composer.³

Hunter attributes *Don Giovanni*'s collective appeal to Mozart's modernity. The Victorian interpretation of this opera is a morality tale and a warning to those who break social norms. As

² Joseph Kerman, "Reading Don Giovanni," in *Write All These Down* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 308.

³ Mary Hunter, *Mozart's Operas: A Companion* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 223.

philosopher Mladen Dolar explains, “Don Giovanni is not a master whose status would depend on granting mercy.... he abides solely by the law of his desire.... He is his own legislator, obedient only to his own desire, and in the end he rebels against the old order in a much more radical way than any bourgeois subject would ever dare to do.”⁴ Giovanni embodies the punishment awaiting libertines. The Romantic approach is slightly different, however. Philosopher Bernard Williams argues that for Romantics “Giovanni’s lofty refusal to repent when the statue demands that he should is not an ultimate offence to the cosmic order, but rather a splendidly attractive and grand refusal to be intimidated.”⁵ In this view, Giovanni is an anti-hero who refuses to deny his true self by capitulating to social norms. Mozart’s ingenuity accounts for the story’s continued popularity and success in both historical and modern guises.

Before updating *Don Giovanni*, we must first understand the problems posed by the legend. Despite the numerous personality flaws and lack of emotional depth of Mozart’s Giovanni, audiences are drawn to his story; depending on the staging, they may feel a need to defend Giovanni’s actions or mourn his inevitable death. In her book *Understanding the Women of Mozart’s Opera*, Kristi Brown-Montesano discusses past interpretations of Don Giovanni and the insistent desire to defend his actions:

Too often Mozart’s willful, seductive, and violent protagonist has been rarified by idealization and projection, credited with virtues—unflagging bravery, triumphant self-determination, revolutionary resistance to oppressive societal power, and sensual idealism—that are, at best, equivocally represented in the opera, and are sometimes flatly contradicted. The Don has also served as the libidinous and eternally resourceful poster boy for centuries of

⁴ Dolar, Mladen, “Don Giovanni,” in *Opera’s Second Death*, ed. Slavoj Žižek and Mladen Dolar (London: Routledge, 2002), 47.

⁵ Bernard Williams, “Don Juan as an Idea,” in *The Don Giovanni Moment: Essays on the Legacy of an Opera*, ed. Lydia Goehr and Daniel Alan Herwitz (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 88.

restless (male) envy and self-indulgence masquerading as autonomy, transcendent vision, and unyielding personal power.⁶

Brown-Montesano goes on to highlight the misogynist undertones present in the story (not quite as subtle as we might like to think) and to take issue with the treatment of women, particularly Donna Elvira. Don Giovanni, the “poster boy” of male power and rebellion maintains an elevated position in the modern mind. Without any inkling of human sympathy, remorse, or morality, how can modern society perpetuate and *justify* the continued popularity of the Don Giovanni myth? To answer this question, we can return to an equally famous—and almost equally confusing—literary icon: Sherlock Holmes.

What began as short newspaper stories by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle in 1887 became one of the most celebrated sagas of the nineteenth century. The level of attachment readers developed to Holmes is astonishing; such was his popularity that when Doyle killed off the character in 1893, there was such an uproar that the author revived Holmes for subsequent stories. Eventually, the adventures transitioned from page to screen; as of 2009, *The Guinness Book of World Records* listed Holmes as the most frequently portrayed character in film, with over 200 films and 70 actors.⁷ The year 2009 also saw Holmes return to the silver screen.

The connection between Don Giovanni and Sherlock Holmes is set up in Guy Richie’s first film, *Sherlock Holmes* (2009).⁸ There are some loose plot similarities the two stories, the most obvious being the death of a nobleman at the beginning of the drama and his eventual resurrection. Less obvious is the way details and relationships of the first film lay the

⁶ Kristi Brown-Montesano, *Understanding the Women of Mozart’s Operas* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), xxii–xxiii.

⁷ Chloe Fox, “Sherlock Holmes: Pipe Dreams,” *The Telegraph*, last modified December 15, 2009, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/film/6789921/Sherlock-Holmes-pipe-dreams.html>.

⁸ Although my research focuses primarily on *A Game of Shadows* as a basis for Holmes’s characteristics, at times an in-depth analysis warrants a discussion of the first film as well.

groundwork for the second. The relationship between Holmes and Watson began prior to the film and introduces their primary struggle—Watson is engaged and is completing his last adventure with Holmes. This issue continues, and eventually resolves, in the second film. Additionally, the first film introduces us to Irene Adler, whose relationship with Holmes also began before the start of the film. Holmes is surprised at her appearance and she informs him that the hotel at which she is staying gave them *their* old room, implying that they had more than a business relationship. Furthermore, she asks Holmes to leave the city with her several times and asks why he cannot. Holmes tells her that he cannot accompany her, but does not offer a definite reason for his decision. We also learn that Adler is working for a professor whose name is not revealed until the end of the film: James Moriarty. Adler warns Holmes to be careful because Moriarty is his intellectual equal.

The first film is essential in establishing the musical, as well as dramatic, norm. Holmes is almost immediately connected to gypsy music, a trait that carries over into *A Game of Shadows*. In a 2011 interview with *The Playlist*, composer Hans Zimmer explained his film scoring process:

The Roma culture was something that I gave to Sherlock, in the first movie. There have been many Sherlock Holmes interpretations, but the one thing he does is play the violin. He's always been playing classical music, as far as I know. I thought that, in the Victorian Age, they were looking for the exotic and the East was this exotic place, so I wanted to widen the gaze. I thought he would be interested, not in playing classical music, but in playing a great virtuoso Gypsy violin.⁹

⁹ Christina Radish, "Composer Hans Zimmer Talks *Sherlock Holmes: A Game of Shadows* and *The Dark Knight Rises*," *Collider*, last modified December 3, 2012, <http://collider.com/hans-zimmer-sherlock-holmes-2-dark-knight-rises-interview/>. An alternate interpretation of Holmes's violin playing is that the Gypsy violin is representative of his almost supernatural intellect.

Although Holmes's musical style is not situated in the classical canon, his knowledge of music reflects a broad awareness of canonical repertoire and music theory. At one point Holmes tells Watson that *Don Giovanni* is in town and perhaps they can attend a performance if Watson is "feeling cultured." (The two do not attend, but the reference clearly foreshadows the second film). *Sherlock Holmes* has many scenes in which the detective plays the violin to either conduct a scientific experiment or stimulate investigative thought. In one such scene, Holmes demonstrates to Watson that by playing atonal clusters, instead of a chromatic scale, he is able to make flies move in a certain direction, creating order out of chaos. This scene reveals that Holmes is knowledgeable about music, at least to the point of being able to differentiate between certain scales and chords. It also sets up the recurring theme of order and chaos that is central to both films and to *Don Giovanni*. The first film functions as a sort of prologue to the second, giving us the necessary background to the characters and relationships that are essential to the plot.

"To the opera"

Although the first Sherlock Holmes film contains a reference to *Don Giovanni* it is not until the second film that we actually see or hear any of the opera. Holmes, Watson, and the Roma woman Sim are searching for Sim's brother, Rene, who they believe is involved with Moriarty. They go to a restaurant in Paris where Rene used to work and meet with his former boss. The man has information about a bomb that is set to go off that night; he then kills himself as his workers chase Holmes, Watson, and Sim. The trio follows a tunnel leading out of the basement where Holmes sees a sign marked "Imperator" (Commendatore); he commands "To the opera," and the *Don Giovanni* theme (see Example 2.1) enters in the underscoring. The theme continues as they exit the tunnel and the camera pans to the exterior of the opera house.

The scene then cuts to the opera stage (see Figure 2.1) where Donna Elvira, dressed in black, sings (in Italian) to Giovanni and Leporello, mirroring Holmes, Watson, and Sim who are backstage as the filmic underscoring and the diegetic music from the opera intertwine; a man says something to Holmes, but his voice is drowned out by the underscoring. We gain a glimpse into Holmes's mind as he makes the connection between the "Imperator" sign in the basement, the statue of the Commendatore in the opera, and the bomb he believes is hidden in the statue. The scene then cuts back to the opera stage where the Commendatore rises behind Giovanni (clearly the original Act II Finale, or Act V according to nineteenth-century Parisian performance practice), the music becomes purely diegetic as the Commendatore sings "Don Giovanni," however, instead of panning back to the Giovanni onstage, the camera focuses on Holmes's face. Holmes is under the stage and slides back a piece of wood from the "Imperator" sign where he finds a King chess piece in the "O" (Example 2.1 shows the moment in the score of *Don Giovanni*; Figure 2.1 shows the opera stage; Figure 2.2 shows Holmes looking through the "O" of the "Imperator" sign).

Andante. (The ghost of the Commandant appears as a marble statue.) The Commandant.

Don Gio-
Don Gio-

(clap of thunder)

ff Tutti Tromboni Tympani &c

p *Wind*

van - ni a ce-nar te - co min-vi - fa - sti! e son ve - nu - to!
van - ni! bythee in - vit - ed, Here be - hold me As thou'st di - rect - ed.

Strs.

Example 2.1 *Don Giovanni* Act II, Scene 15



Figure 2.1 Donna Elvira, Don Giovanni, and Leporello



Figure 2.2 Holmes looking at the chess piece through the “O” of Imperator

Through the opening he makes eye contact with Moriarty, sitting in the audience (see Figure 2.3). Again we enter Holmes’s mind as he pans through everything he saw in the restaurant and realizes that the bomb is at the Hotel du Triomphe, rather than the opera house. Holmes returns to Watson and Sim saying, “I was mistaken.” Faced with Watson’s disbelief, Holmes repeats, “I made a mistake.” The camera then cuts to the Commendatore, to Moriarty,

and then to the street as the trio attempt to reach the hotel before the bomb goes off. The music is purely cinematic underscoring as Holmes, Watson, and Sim leave the diegetic realm of the opera house. They are too late, however, and the bomb explodes as they reach the hotel. As Holmes watches the explosion, the opera music reenters and the camera returns to the opera stage as the Commendatore declares to Giovanni “Ah, tempo piú non v’è. [Ah, your time is up.]” The scene again shows Moriarty as he delights in, what we can assume is Giovanni’s—and Holmes’s—demise.¹⁰ The chorus of demons enters the stage as the trio enters the demolished hotel.

Giovanni’s line “Da qual tremore insolito sento assalir gli spiriti! Dond’escono quei vortici di foco pien d’orror? [A tremor seizes my body. I feel . . . my life assailed. Fiery whirlwinds flail . . . Where are these horrors from?]” coincides with Holmes’s disbelief of what occurred. The scene continuously moves between the demons devouring Giovanni, Moriarty watching, and Holmes’s look of shock as the music from the opera continues.



Figure 2.3 Moriarty watching the opera

¹⁰ All libretto translations are from Lorenzo Da Ponte, “Don Giovanni,” in *Seven Mozart Librettos*, translated by J.D. McClatchy (New York: W.W. Norton, 2001), 495–678.

The scene ends with Holmes discovering a dead politician and a corresponding bullet hole in the wall behind the man as Giovanni sings his final line “Chi l’anima mi lacera? Chi m’agita le viscere? Che strazio, ohimé, che smania! Che inferno! Che terror! [Who tears at my soul! Who lashes my body! The torment! The pain! This is hell! This is terror!]” The opera music cadences with the end of the scene (see Table 2.1 for a scene analysis).

1:04:10	Trio enters tunnel; Holmes finds “Imperator” sign
1:04:47-1:05:18	“To the opera”; <i>Don Giovanni</i> motive; Trio running through the streets
1:05:19-5:26	Opera scene on stage; Trio backstage
1:05:35	Nondiegetic underscore foregrounded while diegetic opera continues
1:05:52	Nondiegetic only close-up of Holmes
1:05:57	Mixture of nondiegetic and diegetic; Holmes sees “Imperator” sign and envisions bomb inside
1:06:18-1:06:32	Don Giovanni and Commendatore on stage; Holmes under statue
1:06:35	Commendatore pointing; “Don Giovanni”; close-up of Holmes
1:06:44	Chess piece; View of Moriarty through “O” of Imperator; Shot-reverse-shot Moriarty, stage, and Holmes
1:06:57	Holmes flashback to clues about bomb
1:07:07	Holmes admits mistake
1:07:22	Shot-reverse-shot Moriarty and Commendatore
1:07:27-1:07:45	Trio running through the streets; meeting at hotel
1:08:00	Hotel explosion
1:08:09-1:08:50	Rapid cuts between Don Giovanni and Commendatore on stage, Holmes in destroyed hotel, Moriarty in audience; Don Giovanni dragged to hell
1:08:51	Holmes discovers bullet hole

Table 2.1 Scene Analysis of *Sherlock Holmes: A Game of Shadows*

The opera scene is crucial in establishing the connections between the characters of *Don Giovanni* and *A Game of Shadows*. The repeated panning between Moriarty and the Commendatore, Giovanni and Holmes, the position of the characters (the Commendatore and Moriarty are looking down on Giovanni and Holmes, respectively), and the correlation between the stage and film events reinforce these associations. In an interview with *Indie Wire*, Zimmer said that “in the process of interpolating these iconic pieces into the score, he was intent on protecting the structure of their original composition, even if they were going to be woven into pieces he created himself.”¹¹ Film-music scholar Claudia Gorbman points out that music “sets moods and tonalities in a film, it guides the spectator’s vision both literally and figuratively.”¹² The soundtrack in the opera scene guides the audience through Holmes’s emotions and his unspoken struggle with Moriarty. The intertwining of Mozart’s and Zimmer’s music results in further connectivity between the two dramas, their characters, and, by extension, the meaning of the *mise en abyme*, or metanarrative in which the aspects of the embedded story are reflected in the larger narrative. In other words, *A Game of Shadows* mirrors *Don Giovanni* at a number of levels.

Furthermore, the increased ambiguity between diegetic and nondiegetic music is essential to the scene. Musicologists Robynn Stilwell and Marcia Citron explain similar phenomena in their respective research. Stilwell explains this space of aural ambiguity as “The Fantastical Gap”; music is not strictly diegetic and then strictly nondiegetic but exists in a permeable state,

¹¹ Todd Gilchrist, “Hans Zimmer Says He Riffed on Mozart, Schubert & European Gypsy Music on ‘Sherlock Holmes: A Game of Shadows’ Score,” *The Playlist*, last modified December 15, 2011, <http://blogs.indiewire.com/theplaylist/hans-zimmer-talks-the-influence-kurt-weill-gypsy-culture-on-the-score-for-sherlock-holmes-a-game-of-shadows>.

¹² Claudia Gorbman, *Unheard Melodies: Narrative Film Music* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 11.

often transitioning from one diegesis to the other without the audience's awareness that it has done so.¹³ In *A Game of Shadows*, the soundtrack moves fluidly between diegetic and nondiegetic, even combining both. These transitions are representative of the *mise en abyme*. The characters of *Don Giovanni* and *A Game of Shadows* characters are fluctuating as well. Holmes is singularly Holmes at certain points in the scene and at other points is identifiable as both Holmes and the moral representation of Giovanni. Similarly, Moriarty is simultaneously himself, the Commendatore, and the amoral Giovanni. While these parallels are foregrounded in the opera scene, other moments in the film are more ambiguous.

Citron provides an analysis of how *Don Giovanni* figures into Claude Chabrol's 1995 film *La Cérémonie*. Of particular interest to my study is a scene in which no music is playing, yet music still influences the characters' actions. Citron points out that in the film, "Mozart's subversive music may well infiltrate the [characters's] psyches, as psychodiegetic music, and foment literal violence, for in the opera it portends violence and will return for Giovanni's demise."¹⁴ In other words, the music exists only in the characters' minds, influencing their behavior. Such psychodiegetic music is also present in *A Game of Shadows*. Giovanni's demise at the end of the scene is foregrounded and obviously diegetic when the camera focuses on the stage and Moriarty. When the camera pans to Holmes, however, the source of the music is less obvious. We surmise that Mozart's music and Giovanni's punishment infiltrated Holmes's mind and is affecting his behavior, causing him to become despondent as he realizes Moriarty has the

¹³ Robynn J. Stilwell, "The Fantastical Gap Between Diegetic and Nondiegetic," in *Beyond the Soundtrack: Representing Music in Cinema*, ed. Daniel Goldmark, Lawrence Kramer, and Richard Leppert (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 107–118.

¹⁴ Marcia J. Citron, *When Opera Meets Film* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 144.

upper hand. The construction of this scene and its relation to the characters strengthen the association of Holmes as Giovanni.

“Why are you always so suspicious?”

Donna Elvira is an essential character in *Don Giovanni*; throughout the opera she follows closely behind Giovanni, warning other women of his dangers. In the first Act, Elvira immediately recognizes Giovanni as the man who seduced and then abandoned her. As he dismisses her feelings she explains the situation:

Cosa puoi dire dopo azion sì nera? In casa mia entri furtivamente;
a forza d'arte, di giuramenti e di lusinghe arrive a seurre il cor mio;
m'innamori, o crudele, mi dichiari tua sposa e poi, mancando della
terra e del cielo al santo dritto, con enorme delitto dopo tre dì da
Burgos t'allontani, m'abbandoni, mi fuggi e lasci in preda al
rimorso ed al pianto, per pena forse che t'amai cotanto!

[What could you say after what you've done? You sneaked into my house. With cunning and vows and flattery you seduced my heart and made love to me. You were cruel enough to promise marriage. Then, defying the holy laws of heaven and earth with your crime, you fled Burgos. You deceived me, you ran away, and left me a prey to remorse and weeping, as my punishment for having loved you so much!]

Giovanni claims to have an explanation, but Leporello distracts Elvira so Giovanni can flee. One reading of the relationship between Giovanni and Elvira is that she is simply another one of his conquests—a woman seduced and forgotten. Conversely, Giovanni might have had genuine feelings for Elvira but left her out of fear. As literary scholar Lawrence Lipking explains:

Thus even the libertine may be viewed as in flight not so much from a woman as from an image of himself as a possible loser, the one who might be left. Don Giovanni abandons Donna Elvira before she can abandon him, and denies that any speck of her humanity can cling to his flesh. It is impossible to imagine that he could ever shed a single honest tear; he leaves all feeling behind.

This might be considered his triumph. Yet it also might be seen as his punishment.¹⁵

In this view, Giovanni is either unwilling to or incapable of exhibiting genuine feeling and Elvira is aware of Giovanni's deficits before the opera even begins. In the famous catalogue aria, "Madamina, il catalogo è questo," Leporello describes to Elvira the many woman that Giovanni seduced. Elvira's almost constant presence suggests that she is integral to the plot and, moreover, to Giovanni; she does not belong on Leporello's long list of dismissed women.

In the first Act Elvira seeks to undermine Giovanni's efforts and prevent him from seducing more women, pleading with the other characters of the opera to take her seriously when she speaks of Giovanni's danger. In the second Act she turns her attention to Giovanni, ardent in her appeal to his emotions, begging him to repent. To once again quote Lipking, Elvira "assumes the form of Giovanni's nemesis, his missing conscience, his alter ego. That is to say, she supplies what he lacks, the pity and fear that mark a human being."¹⁶ Giovanni constantly pursues women, unable to commit to just one—and Elvira constantly reminds the audience of this fact. We gain a better understanding of Giovanni through his treatment of Elvira: he is dismissive, and at times demeaning towards her. Although the other characters in the opera recognize Elvira's sanity, Giovanni insists otherwise. Despite Giovanni's persistence, Elvira perseveres in her endeavor and pleads with Giovanni to repent. "In the end," Brown-Montesano reminds us, "Donna Elvira is more the lead character in a cautionary tale than a model for emulation In fact, throughout the opera Elvira pleads with us—as she does with most of the characters—to

¹⁵ Lawrence Lipking, "Donna Abbandonata," in *Don Giovanni: Myths of Seduction and Betrayal*, ed. Jonathan Miller (New York: Schocken, 1990), 46–47.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 45.

listen carefully to her warning, to take her *seriously*.¹⁷ Because Giovanni does not take Elvira seriously, neither does the audience. Despite our every empathetic inclination, we side with the libertine and paint him as a(n) (anti)hero, not wanting to accept his evils. It is in this respect that the opposing functions of Elvira and Adler become clear (see Table 2.2). While Elvira emphasizes Giovanni's lack of human empathy, Adler reinforces that Holmes *is* a person despite his detached demeanor. Both women give the audience insight into a different side of their respective partner. *A Game of Shadows*'s introduction is similar to the *in medias res* opening of *Don Giovanni*. And in both instances these introductory scenes are significant to the film in the way that they (re)establish relationships, characters, and structure the plot.

Donna Elvira	Irene Adler
Physical Presence	Spiritual Presence
Relationship with Giovanni prior to opera	Relationship with Holmes prior to first film
Begs Giovanni to repent	Begs Holmes to stop chasing Moriarty

Table 2.2 Comparison of Donna Elvira and Irene Adler

The film opens with Irene Adler walking through the streets of London while a disguised Holmes follows her. The two are flirty upon greeting and make dinner plans (see Figure 2.4). Holmes attempts to warn Adler that three men are following her, but she informs him that it is actually four men—her escorts. She leaves the men to take care of Holmes while she continues on her way. The leader of the thugs begins whistling Mozart's *Eine kleine nachtmusik* as the four

¹⁷ Brown-Montesano, *Understanding the Women of Mozart's Operas*, 35.

attack Holmes, who eventually defeats them.¹⁸ Holmes finds Adler at an art auction; she disregards Holmes's warnings and proceeds to a lunch meeting with Moriarty, who poisons her. The subsequent scene shows Holmes alone at the restaurant where he had arranged to meet Adler and the opening title of the film begins.



Figure 2.4 Sherlock Holmes and Irene Adler in the streets of London

As mentioned earlier, Adler appears in the first film and plays a large role in its plot. She is working for Moriarty and warns Holmes of the grave danger her master poses. She is an obvious emotional and psychological threat to Holmes, and possibly a physical one as well, given that he is obviously on edge at their first meeting and flinches when she reaches for her pocket. In her first scene Holmes is in a boxing match; she is barely physically present but she leaves her handkerchief on the edge of the ring for Holmes to see. Upon seeing the handkerchief he is immediately distracted and scans the crowd for her. This scene sets up Adler as an idea. She does not need to be seen in order for Holmes to become enamored; just the idea of her is enough.

¹⁸ The small reference to Mozart here is interesting (albeit not significant to the plot as a whole) because Mozart was working on *Eine kleine nachtmusik* and *Don Giovanni* simultaneously. Additionally, *Eine kleine nachtmusik* is a divertimento and the leader is a diversion for Holmes, keeping him away from Adler.

Throughout the film Adler's motives are questionable: she works both with Holmes and against him. At first she hires Holmes as a detective and pays him in advance, but as the film progresses she attempts to seduce him and by the end warns him to be careful because Moriarty is dangerous. Moriarty provides clarity: "Your job was to manipulate Holmes's feeling for you, not succumb to them." In the same way that Elvira confronts Giovanni, Adler has difficulty remaining silent about Holmes's impending demise. She allows her feelings for him to override the job she was given by Moriarty, resulting in her death in the second film. This event motivates Holmes to stop Moriarty. Previously, Moriarty's role in an impending war was just another case but now Holmes is emotionally attached, despite appearances.

Even without knowledge of the first *Sherlock Holmes* film, the relationship between Holmes and Adler is clear in *A Game of Shadows*. They exchange kisses on the cheek several times and are casual when setting their dinner date. Their relationship is comfortable, yet distant. Adler is dismissive of Holmes and appears unwilling to take his warnings seriously. In return, Holmes is seemingly indifferent to Adler's absence from dinner. After Holmes discovers Adler's death, however, it is apparent that his feelings for her were more than he was willing to admit. Holmes takes Adler's handkerchief from Moriarty and carries it with him for the majority of the film. While on a ship with Watson, Holmes takes out the handkerchief and smells it before letting the wind carry it into the ocean. Adler's "spiritual presence" at a point in the film far removed from her physical presence, serves to reinforce the relationship between Holmes and Adler and suggests that Holmes has (or perhaps, had) genuine feelings for her but does not let those feelings show.¹⁹ When Holmes lets go of Adler's handkerchief he leaves all feeling behind

¹⁹ Scholars and fans of Sherlock Holmes vary in their opinion of the significance of Holmes and Adler's relationship. She only physically appears in the short story "A Scandal in Bohemia." Holmes scholar Christopher Redmond explains the relationship between the characters in his

before his final pursuit of Moriarty; as a result he receives Giovanni's triumph and punishment as outlined by Lipking.

“Always good to see you”

Watson and Leporello are as integrally connected to the stories of Sherlock Holmes and Don Giovanni as the title characters themselves (see Table 2.3). They are seldom separated from the main characters and are united by their role as chroniclers, adding commentary to the action and providing clarity for the audience. Furthermore, they function (quite successfully) as stand-ins for their respective partners. Watson and Leporello enable the audience to experience a level of intimacy with Holmes and Giovanni respectively that is not experienced with the other characters. Watson and Leporello shed light on the ethical qualities of the main characters and allow the audience a glimpse into who these men truly are.²⁰ Through the eyes of Watson and Leporello the audience deciphers the motives of the main characters.

Leporello	Watson
Keeps record of Giovanni's "conquests"	Chronicles Holmes's adventures
Impersonates Giovanni	Solves a case for Holmes
Introduces audience to the action	Informs audience of events between films

Sherlock Holmes Handbook. Holmes “calls Irene Adler ‘*the woman*,’ giving a lasting impression of infatuation even though Watson assures the reader that there was nothing emotional in Holmes’s admiration of her.” While Watson could be correct in his assertion that Holmes showed no emotion to Adler, it is also possible that Holmes was so guarded with his emotions that Watson simply was not aware of Holmes’s feelings. What is clear is that while the film is based on the characters from the books, the Holmes portrayed in the film is not the same as the original. Therefore, the actions of the filmic Holmes, Watson, and Adler, among others, are open to fresh analysis and interpretation.

²⁰ Moriarty also has a partner in *A Game of Shadows*, Colonel Sebastian Moran (Paul Anderson), who carries out Moriarty’s orders, brings him the opera ticket, and attempts to thwart Holmes’s plans.

Table 2.3 Comparison of Leporello and Watson

As the camera pans over London, *A Game of Shadows* begins with an opening narration from Watson in which he reveals both the date and the events that occurred between the first and second films: “The year was 1881; storm clouds were brewing over Europe. France and Germany were at each other’s throats, the result of a series of bombings. Some said it was Nationalists, other, the Anarchists. But as usual, my friend Sherlock Holmes had a different theory entirely.” Watson sets the stage, and then allows the eponymous hero to be foregrounded, providing plot clarity by giving the audience insight into Holmes and Watson as individuals and as partners. Watson is the perfect foil for Holmes, balancing the title character’s eccentricities with rationality and common sense; conversely, Holmes balances Watson’s timidity with a brash disregard for convention. He is a willing participant in Holmes’s adventures, if sometimes begrudgingly. He questions Holmes’s behavior several times and at one point asks to return home—yet even when Holmes interrupts his honeymoon, Watson is willing to follow him on an adventure. Given the level of intimacy between the characters, the moments when Watson does *not* question Holmes become vital. For example, when Watson discovers Adler’s handkerchief he looks inquisitively at Holmes, but the two do not speak and Watson never asks questions about Adler. It seems that when Watson does not understand Holmes, neither does the audience. Because Watson is Holmes’s storyteller, it is through his lens that the audience views the action.

In the same way that Watson is Holmes’s storyteller, Leporello is “our own representative, who, while waiting before the house in which his master attempts his seduction, introduces the opera, thereby setting our perspective.”²¹ The introduction marks Leporello as the observer and his catalogue aria expands this role to that of the chronicler. Even though Leporello

²¹ Mladen Dolar “Don Giovanni,” in *Opera’s Second Death*, 47.

calls Giovanni “a scoundrel” for his behavior in Act I, Scene 5, he willingly (or so it seems) does Giovanni’s bidding and records the story:

DG: Now listen up. Why do you think I’m here?

L: I have no idea, but since it’s so late...could it be some new conquest? I’d need to know—to put her on my list.
(Act I, Scene 4)

Just as with Watson and Holmes, however, Leporello cannot know the full details of every conquest and when presented with an unknown (and possibly confusing) situation, does not pry. When Donna Elvira confronts Giovanni in the first Act and asks him why he abandoned her, Giovanni leaves the explanation for his absence up to Leporello, who asks what he should tell Elvira, seemingly confused as to Giovanni’s true motivation.

DE: Cosa puoi dire dopo azion sì nera? [. . .] m’abbandoni, mi fuggi e lasci in preda al rimorso ed al pianto, per pena forse che t’amai cotanto!

[What could you say after what you’ve done? [. . .] You deceived me, you ran away, and left me a prey to remorse and weeping, as my punishment for having loved you so much!]

L: (Pare un libro stampato.)

[(She could write a book.)]

DG: Oh, in quanto a questo ebbi le mie ragioni . . . È vero?

[As for that, I had my reasons. (to Leporello) Didn’t I?]

L: (*ironicamente*) È vero. E che ragioni forti!

[(*ironically*) Indeed, yes. Valid reasons.]

DE: E quali sono, se non la tua perfidia, la leggerezza tua? Ma il giusto cielo volle ch’io ti trovassi per far le sue, le mie vendetta.

[What are they, other than lies and infidelity? But a just God wanted me to find you, to carry out His vengeance, and mine.]

DG: Eh via, siate più ragionevole . . . (Mi pone a cimento costei.) Se non credete al labbro mio, credete a questo galantuomo.

[Come, be reasonable . . . (My, this woman is a nuisance.)
If you won't believe me, believe this honest gentleman.]

L: (Salvo il vero.)

[(Anything but the truth.)]

DG: (*forte*) Via, dille un poco . . .

[(*loudly*) Go on, tell her . . .]

L: (*piano*) E cosa devo dirle?

[(*softly*) What should I say?]

DG: (*forte*) Sì sì, dille pur tutto.

[(*loudly*) Yes, yes, the whole truth.]

DE: (*a Leporello*) Evven, fa' presto . . . (*In questo frattempo Don Giovanni fugge.*)

[(*to Leporello*) Well then . . . be quick about it . . .
(*Meanwhile Don Giovanni escapes.*)] (Act I, Scene 5)

While it is possible that Leporello is simply looking for a plausible excuse for Giovanni, it may also be that he truly does not understand Giovanni—and consequently, neither does the audience.

This strong connection between Giovanni and his servant also allows for smooth character substitutions in each Act. Leporello is the Don's storyteller, knows him better than the other characters, and, as a result, Leporello impersonates Giovanni with ease. In the first Act Leporello tells Giovanni that he was able to convince people to follow him by acting like Giovanni. "A forza di chiacchiere, di vezzi e di bugi, ch'ho imparato sì bene a star con voi, cerco d'intrattenerli . . . [By chattering, flattering, and nattering—I've learned it all from you—I tried to keep them amused . . .]" With each pause in the story Giovanni encourages Leporello with "Bravo!" and the line blurs between the characters. In the second Act, Leporello takes this

behavior a step forward by actually assuming Giovanni's identity in an attempt to distract (and seduce) Elvira.

DG: (*allegriissimo*) Amico, che ti par?

[*exuberantly*] Well, what do you think, my friend?]

L: Mi par che abbiate un'anima di bronzo.

[It seems to me you have a heart of stone.]

DG: Va' là, che sei il gran gonzo! Acolta bene: quando constei qui viene, tu corri ad abbracciarla, falle Quattro carezze, fingi la voce mia; poi con bell'arte cerca teco condurla in altra parte.

[Go on, you're a simpleton! Listen to me. When she comes down here, run and embrace her, caress her a little, imitate my voice. Then, use a little cunning and lead her off somewhere.]

L: Ma signore . . .

[But suppose . . .]

DG: (*mette press oil naso una pistol a Leporello.*) Non più repliche!

[*(pointing a pistol at Leporello's nose)*] Not another word!]

L: Ma se poi mi conosce?

[But what if she recognizes me?]

DG: Non ti conoscerà, se tu non vuoi Zitto, ell'apre: ehi giudizio! (*Va in disparate.*)

[She won't recognize you, if you don't allow her to. Hush! She is opening the door. Pay attention. (*He goes to one side.*)] (Act II, Scene 2)

Leporello is certainly coerced into playing Giovanni, but is successful in his charade. After recording Giovanni's exploits for a significant length of time (or at least long enough to travel to several countries and record over 2,000 women) it is not surprising that Leporello would have observed Giovanni enough to successfully impersonate his master's seductive behavior with ease.

Although Watson does not assume Holmes's identity in quite the same way that Leporello does, he does successfully replicate Holmes's methodology. Watson's and Leporello's reactions to being forced into impersonation are strikingly similar. Both admit to learning the methods from their "master" and are hesitant about their new role, but the tone of delivery is different. While Leporello is anxious about the potential repercussions of his actions, Watson's anxiety stems from what will happen to Holmes:

SH: You and Sim shall find her brother. Of this I have no doubt.

W: Holmes.

SH: You know my methods.

W: And I know where you'll be.

SH: No possible solution could be more congenial to me than this.
By the way, who taught you how to dance?

W: You did.

SH: Well, I've done a fine job.

W: Be careful.

Watson's apprehension looms over the audience as Holmes steps out onto the balcony to meet Moriarty. Despite his unease, Watson solves the case and prevents the assassination of an ambassador. His success is not enough to save Holmes, however, just as Leporello's warnings to Giovanni are not enough to save him from the Commendatore. Whereas Leporello sets off to find a new master after Giovanni's death, *A Game of Shadows* ends with Watson completing his final entry for Holmes, and closing the original voiceover frame. These final actions illuminate the bond, or lack thereof, between the chroniclers and their subject. Leporello functions as a storyteller for Giovanni, but Watson and Holmes are friends, confidantes, and partners. It is this difference that gives Holmes more humanity than Giovanni, removes the moral ambiguity associated with the myth, and refocuses the *idea* of Giovanni as a hero rather than a scoundrel.

“Did you just call me a ‘selfish bastard’?”

At this point it becomes unclear whether Holmes or Moriarty is more analogous to Giovanni and it may be helpful to outline the main events of *Don Giovanni* and the features of its main character. The aforementioned opera scene establishes a connection between Holmes and Giovanni; however, this association extends to the film as whole and is not isolated to one particular scene. Although the plot points in each respective story do not always align, the similarities between the main characters result in parallel events (see Table 2.4).

Table 2.4 Comparison of Don Giovanni and Sherlock Holmes

Don Giovanni	Sherlock Holmes
Assault and Murder	Holmes attacks Adler’s escorts Adler is murdered by Moriarty
Women	Series of mysteries
Followed by one woman (Elvira)	Haunted by memory of one woman (Adler)
Servant (Leporello)	Assistant (Watson)
Stone Guest’s Arrival	Act II Finale during the opera scene
Refusal to Repent	Refusal to give up
Sent to hell	Falls into abyss
Relentlessly chases women	Relentlessly follows new cases
Restlessly looks for new women	Restlessly searches for clues and knowledge
Changes mannerisms and singing style	Changes clothes and mannerisms (non-diegetic music changes)

Most obvious is the self-absorbed nature of both characters. Furthermore, each constantly pursues his next conquest: Don Giovanni is always looking for the next woman, while Sherlock Holmes is following his newest case. Regardless of their individual motivations, both play a game in which they are confident to the point of self-destruction. Lipking explains Don Giovanni’s struggle between pursuing the next female conquest and peace:

Desire renews itself with each climax: no sooner has he overcome the tyranny of one pursuit than he is overwhelmed by the tumescence aroused by the next. Far from going to hell at the conclusion of the opera he is in it from the start . . . a growing realization that death is perhaps the only sanctuary in which such a morbidly insatiable self can find its peace.²²

This description is equally applicable to Holmes, constantly pursues the next case, clue, and challenge. Holmes's "hell" is twofold: simultaneously emotional and intellectual. He is in emotional anguish after the death of Adler and allows himself to be distracted by her memory more than once during the film. Furthermore, Moriarty is Holmes's intellectual equal and, as such, makes it impossible for Holmes to win. As a result, Holmes resigns himself to the fact that in order to defeat Moriarty, he must die as well.

Hunter summarizes the different versions of the Don Giovanni myth by examining consistent themes:

Common (but not universally present) elements in these versions include the assault of a noble lady and the murder of her father, the presence of one or more other seducees with varying degrees of attraction to the Don, the servant (sometimes in the guise of Harlequin or another commedia dell'arte character) who acts as foil and mirror to the Don himself, and the stone guest's arrival at dinner and subsequent consignment of Don Juan to Hell.²³

There are, of course, elements unique to Mozart's Giovanni as opposed to earlier versions of the story. The character is relentless, restless, and exceptionally adaptable. Giovanni expends a great amount of energy seducing a woman and will not stop until he has her. But as soon as he is in her presence, he is already looking for another. For example in Act I, Scene 5, Giovanni tells Leporello, "Sappi chi'io sono innamorato d'una bella dama, e son certo che m'ama. La vidi . . . le

²² Jonathan Miller, Introduction to *Don Giovanni: Myths of Seduction and Betrayal*, xi.

²³ Hunter, *Mozart's Operas*, 149.

parlay . . . meco al casino questo note verrà . . . Zitto: mi pare sentire odor di femmina . . . [You should know that I am in love with a beautiful woman, and I am certain she loves me. I have seen her . . . spoken with her . . . and tonight she is coming to my house. Hush! I'm sure that's the scent of a woman.]” Literally in the midst of confessing his feelings for one woman, Giovanni is distracted by another. Later in the same scene he exclaims, “Hear that? A lovely lady seduced and abandoned. Poor thing! Let's try to console her distress” to which Leporello responds, “Like the thousands before this little princess.” Giovanni's declaration does not seem at all new to Leporello—if anything, he is expecting Giovanni's distracted nature. To gain the opportunity to seduce a woman, however, Giovanni must mold himself into what she is looking for. For example, when we first see him with Donna Anna he is dressed as a nobleman when we, he is supposedly betrothed to Donna Elvira, and he borrows Leporello's clothes to seduce a handmaid. He is capable of becoming what each woman seeks. Giovanni's singing style emphasizes this mutability. Scholars such as Bernard Williams and Mary Hunter have noted that Giovanni has no actual aria, he does not reflect on his circumstances, and he mimics the musical style of other characters. His musical flexibility “functions as a musical analogue to the protagonist's refusal to be contained within social norms” and allows him to move easily between the different social and character classes, never settling on one guise beyond his carnal desires.²⁴

The Act II Finale is perhaps the most memorable scene in *Don Giovanni*. The Commendatore's return from the grave, Giovanni's refusal to repent, and resultant descent to hell are powerful images; however, these scenes are more than a succession of events leading to

²⁴ Laurel Elizabeth Zeiss, “Permeable boundaries in Mozart's *Don Giovanni*,” *Cambridge Opera Journal* 13, no. 2 (2001): 132.

Giovanni's punishment. They reveal aspects of Giovanni's character that were previously exclusive to his relationships with women. As Williams emphasizes, Don Giovanni "is always in action; even when he is resting from one adventure, he is in flight for the next."²⁵ Giovanni's relentlessness shifts from pursuing women to his refusal to repent. Even if he *wanted* to repent (which is not something I am arguing here), he does not give himself time. Giovanni is very quick to resolve that he will not repent and equally swift in responding so to the Commendatore. It is in these moments of determination and persistence that Giovanni drops his permeability and becomes steadfast in his character. Holmes shares a number of Giovanni's character traits, and *A Game of Shadows* parallels the action of *Don Giovanni* in several ways. Holmes is, for example, similar to Giovanni in his ability to move seamlessly from one social group to another. Hans Zimmer's music for Holmes is exotic and rustic, in line with the gypsies portrayed in the second film. When Holmes and Watson visit a Gypsy camp, Holmes is apparently at ease, talking Watson through the social customs (see Figure 2.5). Holmes exhibits the same demeanor when he talks to Professor Moriarty and correctly identifies Schubert's Lied *Die Forelle*, and is at ease when he attends the peace summit, surrounded by diplomats and high society. In fact, the opera scene is the only time that Holmes appears out of his comfort zone—yet even then, the discomfort is psychological. Holmes has already demonstrated his knowledge of classical music and expressed an interest in attending *Don Giovanni*, so his physical presence at the opera is not abnormal. Holmes's uneasiness stems from Moriarty and what he has come to represent—an intellectual equal. Upon this realization Holmes shows frustration (and possibly fear) for the first time and admits that he made a mistake. As soon as Holmes voices his distress, however, he regains his composure and continues to work on the case. Giovanni does not show fear even

²⁵ Williams, "Don Juan as an Idea," in *The Don Giovanni Moment*, ed. Goehr and Ierwitz, 89.

when it might be expected, such as the Act I fight with the Commendatore or the Act II Finale. This difference puts Holmes in stark contrast to Giovanni and paints Holmes as more human than Giovanni. These inhuman qualities are present in Moriarty and, at this point, analysis becomes more complicated.



Figure 2.5 Sherlock Holmes and Watson at the Gypsy camp

Not only does the opera scene in *A Game of Shadows* serve as a distorted *mise-en-abyme*, reflecting altered characters and events, but it also foreshadows the final altercation between Holmes and Moriarty. During the peace summit, Holmes and Moriarty meet on the terrace and play a chess game. Tensions are high as the connection between their game on the terrace and the action in the ballroom strengthens. Moriarty offers to guide Holmes's next move, suggests that Holmes cannot win, and declares the game over. Each time, Holmes continues the game either by moving a chess piece or offering information that further provokes Moriarty. It becomes increasingly clear that the two men are equally matched mentally, their fight, then tests each

other physically. Holmes plays out the fight in his mind (a customary trope in the *Richie Holmes* films), but before he can finish his mental contest Moriarty does the same, once again emphasizing their equal wit. Moriarty's imaginary fight ends with the declaration "Come now, let us not waste any more of each other's time. We both know how this ends." He then pushes Holmes over the edge of the terrace into the seemingly bottomless waterfall. Holmes is apparently aware of the decided outcome and does the unexpected: he pulls Moriarty over the edge with him. Both men (seemingly) fall to their deaths as Watson steps out onto the terrace just in time to witness the event. As the men fall, Holmes embraces his fate and falls peacefully with his eyes closed whereas Moriarty screams, the sound of which is engulfed by the film score (see Figure 2.6).



Figure 2.6 Sherlock Holmes and Professor Moriarty in the waterfall

The plunge into the water is a meeting of the two sides of “Giovanni” and a rebirth for the “Holmesian” Giovanni. Holmes represents the tranquility of water while Moriarty is destructive fire. In effect, they are each other’s antithesis, and in the end, water wins out. Water can represent mirrors (in this case reinforcing the characteristics mirrored in Holmes, Moriarty,

and Giovanni) and it is also a powerful motif in Joseph Losey's cinematic version of Mozart's *Don Giovanni* (1979). Water sounds open the film and characters often travel by boat throughout. In Citron's interpretation of the motif, water "implies the womb and a return to primal innocence . . . Water can cleanse and purify, as in baptism . . . Water is also significant for its relationship with fire. In traditional cosmology, water serves as the antithesis to fire."²⁶ The Losey staging is also worth noting because of its portrayal of Giovanni. Devoid of all feeling and embodying only predatory traits, Giovanni objectifies women even more than the libretto implies. This is a Giovanni closer to Moriarty than to Holmes; he uses other people for his own gain and disposes with them when he is done (as Moriarty uses Adler and then kills her).

When compared to the events and characters of *Don Giovanni*, the waterfall scene becomes increasingly intriguing and pertinent to my study. *Don Giovanni* is a struggle between chaos and order, one that is certainly present in *A Game of Shadows* as well. However, in this scene it is more difficult to associate Holmes with Giovanni than earlier points in the film. It is Moriarty, not Holmes, who makes the case for chaos: "You see, hidden within the unconscious is an insatiable desire for conflict. So you're not fighting me so much as you are the human condition." Moriarty certainly embodies many of Giovanni's characteristics as well. He is motivated by personal gain and will stop short of nothing to get what he wants. Moriarty is the moral equivalent to the traditional Giovanni, deprived of any human empathy or emotion. He exists purely for his own gain and is the opposite of Holmes, the updated Giovanni. Thus, Moriarty is the amoral equivalent of Giovanni but the functional equivalent of the Commendatore, plotting Holmes's (Giovanni's) downfall. The character relations are dependent on the situation. The lines are muddled in this scene but the final Act of the opera scene reaffirms

²⁶ Marcia J. Citron, *Opera on Screen* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 172-173.

the character boundaries. Furthermore, Moriarty is linked to the Commendatore via the opera scene and its strong imagery of banishing Giovanni/Holmes to hell. Moriarty is prepared to carry out the act. Holmes is prepared to die, however, and like Giovanni, shows no fear at the prospect of death.²⁷

While Mozart's Giovanni hardly changes with up-to-date stagings, modern thinking requires a more moral hero that is easier to defend and uphold. "*Don Giovanni* is more than an artifact that exists in our time; it is an accumulation, a *continuing* history."²⁸ Giovanni's interactions with Leporello and Elvira portray a man who abuses his servant and dismisses strong women as crazy. This character cannot maintain a moral standing by modern standards of morality, ethics, and feminism; the righteous Commendatore stands in stark contrast to the degenerate Giovanni. Despite society's fixation on Giovanni, his behavior is increasingly difficult to justify. To make his tendencies more palatable, we must modernize him; however, the general personality need not change. Giovanni is persistent, confident, and adaptable. Sherlock Holmes shares these characteristics, but in his interactions with Adler, Watson, and Moriarty he represents the moral side of Giovanni that we long for. Holmes mourns the death of Adler, is confident in his own abilities *and* in Watson's, and, above all, Holmes is moral. His motivations are distinctly different from Moriarty's. Holmes seeks to prevent chaos, whereas Moriarty seeks to incite it—representing the amoral Giovanni. Although Holmes could easily disregard Moriarty, or even aid him, Holmes chooses to utilize his adaptability and adeptness to bring Moriarty to justice. In essence, Holmes is the Romantic hero that Giovanni is incapable of being.

²⁷ Of course, Holmes does not *actually* die. He uses a personal supply of oxygen, taken from his brother previously in the film, to survive the tumultuous waterfall.

²⁸ Brown-Montesano, *Understanding the Women of Mozart's Operas*, xvii.

Chapter III

Rule #109—Never Reveal Your True Identity: *Wedding Crashers* as Opera Buffa*

Mistaken identities, love triangles, and disguised paramours abound in a weekend at a country estate. While this description may sound like an advertisement for an opera buffa, the story in question is a few centuries later. The 2005 film *Wedding Crashers* fits comfortably in the “Buddy Film” sub-genre of the Romantic Comedy, but is also highly reminiscent of an opera buffa—qualities apparent in the plot’s outrageousness and short time-frame, and large cast of memorable characters. Like opera buffa, *Wedding Crashers* uses comic moments to highlight and address social issues (in similar ways to the three Mozart/Da Ponte operas—*The Marriage of Figaro*, *Don Giovanni*, and *Così fan tutte*), such as (non)traditional gender roles, rape culture, and homosexuality. Furthermore, the film is easily divided into three acts—pre-lake house, lake house, and post-lake house—and the characters align with couple pairings typical of an opera buffa: the seria couple and the buffa couple. In this chapter, I argue that by analyzing *Wedding Crashers* through the lens of opera buffa, we gain new insight into the plot and characters; furthermore, the film borrows operatic techniques and its soundtrack reinforces the connection with opera buffa, encouraging this reading.

Unlike the other two films in this study, in *Wedding Crashers* the foregrounded example of Mozart’s music is both nonoperatic and unconventional. The film opens with John (Owen Wilson) and Jeremy (Vince Vaughan) in the middle of mediating divorce proceedings at their law firm. The men tag team a divorce arrangement, and the film’s title sequence begins as the

* The “rules” in the chapter title and section headings come from the rulebook quoted by John and Jeremy throughout the film. A full list of rules can be found at <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0396269/trivia> and on the DVD bonus features.

happily divorced clients finalize their agreement. The audience is immediately shown the nature of the film by an arrangement of the Mozart Horn Concerto Number 4 in E-flat Minor, K. 495, performed by the Swingle Singers.¹ Even though this selection is nonoperatic in origin, here its function is akin to an opera overture as the film's opening frame sets the atmosphere and mood before the primary action begins. The arrangement is lighthearted, almost humorous, and very different from Mozart's original. This mood sets our horizon of expectations for the film: comedy, bordering on the ridiculous. The use of Mozart's music in *Wedding Crashers* is like a sort of double overture, with the Horn Concerto providing the atmosphere while the overture to *The Marriage of Figaro* introduces the audience to the main action. Furthermore, a brief excerpt of the overture to *The Marriage of Figaro* is heard at the opening scene to the Cleary wedding. Whereas the Swingle Singers arrangement sets the tone for the film as a whole, the second instance of Mozart's music marks the beginning of the main plot and sets up what we can expect for the remainder of the film. The overture is a traditional recording performed by the Hungarian State Opera Orchestra, is diegetic, heard once, and only briefly, and establishes a customary wedding atmosphere. This musical style contrasts with the music that plays during John and Jeremy's wedding crashing montage—"Shout" by the Isley Brothers—and implies that the proceedings will be more dignified than what we just witnessed. Keeping in mind which opera this music is an overture to, however, we know that the film will not remain as dignified as the music suggests. The Cleary wedding introduces the audience to John and Jeremy's love interests and sets up the main action; these introduction are reinforced by a literal overture. *Wedding Crashers* and *The Marriage of Figaro* share several elements: a diverse group of people are

¹ The Swingle Singers are an *a cappella* vocal group formed in Paris in the 1960s. The group often rearranges and covers classical pieces by Bach and Mozart in addition to popular songs by The Beatles and Björk.

sharing one house, a love triangle, mistaken identities, and cross-class relationships. Such common elements suggest the application of opera convention to *Wedding Crashers* (Franke's third level of analysis) and encourage a reading of the film through an opera buffa lens.

The film follows John and Jeremy through a series of weddings that they gate-crash to seduce women (See Figure 3.1). A pivotal moment in the plot occurs when John believes he has fallen in love with one of the women, Claire (Rachel McAdams). John, with Jeremy in tow, is then invited to Claire's father's lake house for the weekend.



Figure 3.2 John and Jeremy crashing a wedding

As might be expected from a typical Hollywood comedy, the film incorporates a number of interesting characters, from a senile, bigoted grandmother (Ellen Albertini Dow) to a gay brother (Keir O'Donnell) to Claire's over masculine boyfriend (and eventual fiancée), Zach, hereafter referred to by his nickname "Sack" (Bradley Cooper). Claire's father, William (Christopher Walken), is Secretary of the U.S. Treasury and invites John for the weekend vacation, thus facilitating John and Claire's union. Events almost immediately spiral out of control: John is seductively trapped by Claire's mother, Kathleen (Jane Seymour), the butler

accuses Jeremy of sleeping with the grandmother, and Jeremy actually has late-night encounters with both Gloria (Isla Fisher) *and* her brother, Todd, who misinterpreted a look from Jeremy.

Film scholars such as Leger Grindon, Nick Davis, Susanne Kord, and Elisabeth Krimmer situate *Wedding Crashers* within the frame of the romantic comedy.² Yet there are certainly numerous overlaps in the generic conventions of romantic comedy and opera buffa, including courtship conflicts, class issues, and overarching structure. As Grindon explains:

The plot of most romantic comedies could be presented with the earnestness of melodrama, but the humorous tone transforms the experience. The movie assumes a self-deprecating stance which signals the audience to relax and have fun, for nothing serious will disturb their pleasure. However, this sly pose allows comic artists to influence their audience while the viewers take little notice of the work's persuasive power.³

Grindon goes on to elaborate on the three major conflicts of romantic comedies: between parents and children, between courting men and women, and between the lovers themselves.⁴ *Wedding Crashers* exemplifies these conflicts, the Secretary (as patriarch) attempts to maintain control over his children by micromanaging their choices and interfering in their relationships (Grindon's parents and children). For example, he interrogates Jeremy on his intentions with Gloria and tries to force Todd into traditionally masculine activities. John endeavors to intervene in Claire and Sack's relationship (the courting couple) while his own relationship with Claire is equally complicated ("the lovers"). The characters become less than admirable; they are selfish,

² For more information see Leger Grindon, *The Hollywood Romantic Comedy* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011); Nick Davis, "I Love You, *Hombre: Y tu mamá también* as Border-Crossing Bromance," in *Reading the Bromance: Homosocial Relationships in Film and Television*, ed. Michael DeAngelis (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2014), 109-138; Susanne Kord and Elisabeth Krimmer, *Contemporary Hollywood Masculinities* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011), 187-191.

³ Leger Grindon, *The Hollywood Romantic Comedy* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 2.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 3

(questionably) bigoted, and classist.⁵ Analyzing the plot using this character analysis results in a film lacking in redeeming qualities and earning the title of a “gross-out” comedy.⁶ Analyzing the characters within the couple pairings and tropes associated with opera buffa, however, leads to a very different conclusion.

Musicologist John Rice explains the central plot of Mozart’s opera buffas: “A young man and a young woman love one another, but their path to married happiness is blocked by a second man, older and/or more powerful. . . .”⁷ Mary Hunter expands Rice’s point:

The triumph of young love over rigidity, lust, or greed in the form of a father, uncle, or guardian who tries to prevent his daughter, niece, or ward from marrying the young man of her choice, is one of the most common basic plots in this repertory. The lovers, often aided and abetted by servants or other household members, devise a plot or series of plots that either force the older man to sign a real wedding contract in a fictitious situation, or that humiliate him into agreeing to the wedding. Two trajectories intersect in this plot; the “ascent” of the couple, and the “descent” of the dupe, who inevitably fails to achieve his own desires and falls from a position of some authority to a risible subordination to or dependence on his juniors.⁸

Here we find a plot *Wedding Crashers*: John and Claire are in love but their union is blocked by her engagement to Sack. The Cleary’s butler, Randolph (Ron Canada), helps John sneak into Claire and Sack’s engagement party in an effort to break up the union. Although the plan fails,

⁵ As classist as is possible in a film with no actual poor people.

⁶ Grindon includes *Wedding Crashers* with other films such as *There’s Something About Mary* (1998), *The Forty-Year Old Virgin* (2005), and *Knocked Up* (2007) for their gross-out humor of “masturbation, castration, voyeurism, and perverse fetishes.... As a whole, these films mock romance and seldom retain a conviction that love can bind the couple in a fruitful partnership in which self-sacrifice and tenderness elevate their union. Rather the power of sex to disturb, humiliate, distort, and infantilize becomes the subject of these films.” Ibid., 62-63.

⁷ John A. Rice, *Mozart on the Stage* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 34.

⁸ Mary Hunter, *The Culture of Opera Buffa in Mozart’s Vienna: A Poetics of Entertainment* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 40.

John attends Jeremy and Gloria's wedding, where he is successful in convincing Claire to break off the engagement. Even the Secretary sides with Claire, Jeremy punches Sack in the face after Sack tries to attack John, and all ends well. Sack is obviously the dupe who falls from the Secretary's graces and is left alone as Claire rides off with John. These characters and situations create a number of ludicrous scenarios reminiscent of opera buffa. The film's *in medias res* opening is reminiscent of the opening to Mozart/Da Ponte's *Così fan tutte*, in which the two male leads (Guglielmo and Ferrando) argue the merits of marriage with Don Alfonso. The men don disguises and attempt to seduce each other's fiancées with the hopes that they will be unsuccessful and prove to Alfonso that women can be faithful. While John and Jeremy are not aiming to prove women's fidelity (in fact, they are attempting the opposite), one cannot help but draw parallels between the disguises, skepticism, and seduction. To fully understand these parallels and appreciate how opera techniques are applied to *Wedding Crashers*, we must analyze both the seria and buffa couples, in turn, and tropes associated with opera buffa.

Rule #11—Sensitive is Good: The Seria Couple

Seria characters are motivated by a sense of nobility and show emotional restraint, but at the beginning of the film, John expresses comic elements: John gives Jeremy the information about the weddings they are planning to crash, bets with Jeremy during the ceremonies, and is the life of the party during the receptions; however, his question to Jeremy of how they are treating women ("You don't think we're being—I don't want to say sleazy because that's not the right word, but a little irresponsible?") reveals at least some level of depth and seriousness in the character. Even when John agrees to crash the Cleary wedding, he does so in order to meet Secretary Cleary, *not* to seduce women. These actions reveal the serious side of his character and make him a presumably equal match for Claire. Given what we know of Claire from her first scene (her father is rich and politically well-connected) we assume that she too will be a serious

character, and we are not entirely wrong. As is frequently the case with a seria heroine—such as *The Marriage of Figaro*'s Countess—Claire is driven by a sense of duty and is painted as a martyr for agreeing to marry a man out of obligation.

As Table 3.1 shows, John and Claire first meet at Claire's eldest sister's wedding. John is drawn to Claire during the ceremony and, although John is obviously physically attracted to Claire, he is equally interested in talking to Secretary Cleary who is obviously a member of the upper class, given his position, the extravagant wedding, and his mannerisms. Despite John's middle-class status, he converses easily with the Secretary, who opens up to him about the family dynamics, suggesting that they are of the same class—intellectually at least. The Secretary invites John to his lake house for the weekend and John quickly accepts. Once at the lake house, John situates himself within the family dynamics and becomes more clearly interested in forming a relationship with Claire. In true opera buffa fashion, the thing preventing John from seducing Claire is her fiancée Sack, who is the opposite of every other male character in the film: hyper masculine, bigoted, patriarchal, arrogant, and controlling.

Table 3.5 John and Claire's Relationship

Act I	John and Claire meet at the Cleary wedding; Secretary Cleary invites John and Jeremy to the lake house for the weekend
Act II	John attempts to build a relationship with Claire; John puts eye drops in Sack's water to make him sick; Claire defends Todd; Mrs. Cleary forces John to feel her breasts; Sack announces his and Claire's engagement; Sack reveals the truth about John and Jeremy; John and Jeremy are kicked out of the house
Act III	John enlists the butler's help to crash Claire's engagement party (he is unsuccessful); John attends Jeremy and Gloria's wedding where he pronounces his feelings for Claire; Claire chooses John over Sack

Although Claire is a member of the upper class because of her father's status and her engagement to Sack, she appears more comfortable and at ease with John. Claire's sense of ease with John reinforces the equality of their seria status and coupling. When Sack announces their

engagement, Claire is taken aback and attempts to emphasize that the nuptials will not be anytime soon, but the only person who seems to hear her is John. Despite the numerous opportunities Claire's father is able to provide her, she is still forced into a situation that will leave her with only one option: marry Sack and stay at home. Her relationship with John offers a way out, however, and as they spend more time together she becomes increasingly aware of her impending mistake and the equality between herself and John. Claire and Sack's union is mismatched from the beginning, but her display of "spunk" and ultimate union with John (the "right" man) contribute to her designation as a buffa heroine. Hunter explains:

Although the figure of the sentimental heroine appears in a number of different operatic stories, two plot subtypes are paradigmatic for this character type. In the first she is besieged by the unwelcome and inappropriate attentions of a man of much higher social rank, but she ultimately marries her socially appropriate suitor. The nobleman is typically portrayed as evil, the young woman is always attached to someone else, and the sympathies of the audience are engaged by this alone. It is always clear very early in the piece that the heroine will not be forced into a socially inappropriate match, and her mixture of sentimentalism, naïveté, and a certain pertness verify the correctness of her placement among the lower social orders.⁹

Sack, while not outright evil (despite being an oversized, overly masculine bully), is a dislikable character who mistreats Claire and attempts to prevent her happiness with an equal partner.

Claire, like *Figaro's* Countess, is a stagnant character for approximately the first half of the plot, and even though she may have doubts about her engagement, does not voice them. Rather, Claire's uncertainty is displayed during a montage in which she tests Sack with games that she played (and enjoyed) with John and while wedding shopping with her father. During these scenes we gain a small glimpse into Claire's mind as she realizes that her union with Sack is

⁹ Mary Hunter, *The Culture of Opera Buffa in Mozart's Vienna: A Poetics of Entertainment* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 41.

incompatible. Likewise, the Countess does not voice to other characters her misgivings about her marriage, instead her introspection occurs during her arias. Hunter defines the Countess as:

A quintessential “sentimental heroine”; a type of character quite familiar in opera buffa . . . they have presented themselves to the audiences as both ‘unpretentious’ and possessed of an unusual capacity for feeling. . . . The character does not explain or act before she sings; rather, musical introspection seems to be her “default” mode. . . . [The Countess] exercises a largely reactive role in the second act and it is not until she decides to rely on her knowledge of her own unimpeachable fidelity that she can act on her own behalf. . . . Within the world of the plot she exercises very little power; she has little temporal authority over the other members of the household, and to the extent that the other characters act with her in mind, they act out of sympathy rather than fear. But in the auditorium, to the audience, the Countess’s power is unparalleled; she is the one who literally stops the show with “Porgi amor,” and who provides the literal coup de grace at the end by agreeing to pardon the Count for his transgressions.¹⁰

Claire is similarly reactionary; she appears surprised when Sack announces their engagement, is unaware of John’s true identity and is again surprised when told the truth, and responds to John’s statements rather than being the initiator. Despite all of these instances, Claire rises to Todd’s defense at dinner, refuses to marry Sack, and at the end of the film decides on the story for the next wedding crash. Like the Countess, Claire decides to act on her own authority, essentially finding her voice and speaking out for herself.

The way in which the film raises social issues with both couples (as we will see again later in this chapter) is reminiscent of a Mozart opera buffa; these moments of social tension provide insight into the characters and the couplings. Claire’s efforts to maintain her individuality in the wake of her engagement and overly controlling fiancé reinforce the feminist issues in the film. Film and Media scholar Maria San Filippo goes into further detail:

¹⁰ Mary Hunter, *Mozart’s Operas: A Companion* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 142; *Ibid.*, 141.

Wedding Crashers stems from a similarly (third-wave) feminist movement when struggles for gender equality have waned in the wake of women's stronger presence in the workforce and greater access (for now anyway) to reproductive freedoms, even as persistent glass ceilings and inequitable salaries send women scrambling for marriage as a way out of professional disappointment. The result is the reinforcement of gender binaries as a generation of American women, assured that they could have it all, find themselves stymied by occupational discrimination and an inadequate child care system yet goaded into marriage and motherhood by domestic benefits and alarmist admonitions that the biological clock is ticking.¹¹

Additionally, the film raises the issue of homophobia: Todd is Claire's gay younger brother who is constantly ridiculed by various family members. "Despite relying on stereotypes—Todd is maladjusted and hypersensitive, paints instead of playing football, and makes a predatory pass at Jeremy—*Wedding Crashers* exhibits a measure of queer sensitivity unusual for a mainstream American comedy."¹² During family dinner at the lake house, Jeremy attempts to engage Todd in conversation but the discussion quickly turns against Todd as the Grandmother announces his sexual preferences.

Jeremy: Todd, I noticed that you haven't even touched your food yet.

Todd: I don't eat meat or fish.

Grandmother: He's a homo.

Secretary: Mommy, let's not go there again.

Claire: Actually, um, Todd is an amazing painter. He's going to the Rhode Island School of Design.

John: That's a great school, Todd. That's really impressive. "RISD."

Todd: Dad used to think I'd be a political liability. You know, in case he ever ran for President.

Secretary: Now, Todd. Actually, truth be told, polling shows that a majority of the American people would ultimately empathize with our situation.

Todd: What is our situation, *Dad*?!

¹¹ Maria San Filippo, *The B Word: Bisexuality in Contemporary Film and Television* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013), 191.

¹² Filippo, *The B Word* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013), 187.

Grandmother: You're a homo.

Even though the grandmother and conversation are fixated on Todd's homosexuality, Claire shifts the focus to Todd's education and the other factors that define him. This scene is a defining moment for Claire and the film as a whole; Claire reveals a sense of awareness and sensitivity not present in the other characters and attempts to diffuse the tense situation, calling attention to Todd in a way that the other characters do not. There are only a few moments in the film where we see what we can assume are Claire's true feelings. Kord and Krimmer suggest that she is "all sweetness and lacks spunk. Although she enchants with her captivating smile and her willingness to speak the truth, Claire remains an underdeveloped character who is not situated in any professional setting or shown to have any aspirations beyond the family context."¹³ Claire's scenes are the opposite of Kord and Krimmer's Romantic Comedy interpretation, however. During the aforementioned wedding scene, Claire proves herself capable of defying Sack. When she does so, her father follows suit, confirms her decision, and, by extension, her independence. Claire's "spunk" might not be as obvious as Kord and Krimmer would like, yet her personality is more comparable to a Mozartian heroine than a RomCom woman.

Rule #2—Never Use Your Real Name: The Buffa Couple

Jeremy and Gloria's relationship is based on lies, deceit, and manipulation (See Table 3.2). Moreover, their relationship exemplifies humor as a tool for dismissing serious issues and diffusing tension—the purpose of buffa characters.

¹³ Susanne Kord and Elisabeth Krimmer, *Contemporary Hollywood Masculinities* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011), 188.

Table 3.6 Jeremy and Gloria's Relationship

Act I	Jeremy seduces Gloria who exclaims she always knew she would lose her virginity on the beach; Jeremy tells John he needs to get away from Gloria but is dragged to the lake house
Act II	Jeremy is injured in a game of “touch” football and sexually assaulted by Gloria while she is bandaging him; Gloria sexually stimulates Jeremy under the table during dinner; Gloria ties Jeremy to his bed and rapes him; Todd attempts to rape Jeremy while he is still tied to the bed; Secretary Cleary enters the bedroom and Jeremy tells Todd to hide in the closet; Jeremy tells John they need to leave but John convinces him to stay; Gloria confesses that she was not a virgin the first time they slept together; Jeremy realizes he has feelings for Gloria and confesses them to the priest; Sack reveals the truth about Jeremy and John; Jeremy and John are kicked out of the lake house
Act III	Jeremy and Gloria continue dating but keep it a secret from John; Jeremy proposes to Gloria; Jeremy and Gloria get married

At the Cleary wedding Jeremy seduces Gloria almost immediately after the ceremony; while on the beach together, Gloria admits to Jeremy that she was a virgin and begins talking about their “relationship” (See Figure 3.2).



Figure 3.3 Gloria and Jeremy on the beach

Jeremy believes Gloria’s confession, is obviously turned off at the thought of a relationship, and implores John to decline the invitation to the beach house because Gloria is a “stage-five clinger.” After quoting several times from the “rule-book,” Jeremy begrudgingly agrees to go with John and feign interest in Gloria. Even though Jeremy technically has the same middle-class upbringing as John, he is not capable of interacting with the upper class in the same way. Jeremy is a purely buffo character, evident by his difficulty blending into the Cleary family;

he struggles with talking to Secretary Cleary and is not capable of schmoozing him the way John is. Jeremy expresses his concern to John who dismisses the issue:

Jeremy: Look at the way he's looking at me, John. I can tell he doesn't like me. He's the Secretary of Treasury and to be honest with you, my taxes aren't exactly in line.

John: Oh come on, you're being paranoid.

Jeremy does not buy John's reassurance, however, remains paranoid around the Secretary. At the lake house, Secretary Cleary makes his disapproval of Jeremy clear and addresses Jeremy about Gloria directly, reinforcing their respective class statuses.

Secretary: You know, she's not just another notch in the old belt.

Jeremy: I don't even wear a belt—beltless.

Secretary: I'm a very powerful man.

Jeremy: Yes, you are.

Secretary: See you for dinner.

Gloria is obsessed with Jeremy and does not leave his side for the majority of the weekend trip, which is filled with uncomfortable moments disguised as comedy. When Jeremy is roughly tackled by Sack during a game of “touch” football, Gloria takes Jeremy into the house to clean a cut. She attempts to seduce him, but he is clearly uncomfortable and attempts to make their relationship more verbal rather than physical. Meanwhile, the butler walks in on them and tells Gloria to be a little more discreet. The butler's interruption cues the audience in on the humor of the scene and they forget (or forgive) Gloria's borderline sexual assault of Jeremy. This scene is the first of several that utilizes humor to diffuse uncomfortable situations, a technique common in opera buffa. After dinner John is in his room preparing to visit Claire when Mrs.

Cleary enters, forces him to feel her breasts, and then calls him a pervert.¹⁴ John recounts the story to Jeremy who dismisses it as not a “real” problem.

Jeremy: John, I need to talk to you right now. What’s wrong with you? Why you got the weird look all over your face?

John: Claire’s mom just made me grab her hooters.

Jeremy: Well, snap out of it! What? A hot, older woman made you feel her cans? Stop crying like a little girl.

John: I wasn’t crying like a little girl.

Jeremy: Why don’t you try getting jacked off under the table in front of the whole damn family and have some real problems. Jackass. What were they like anyway? They look pretty good. Are they real? Are they built for speed or for comfort? What’d ya do with ‘em, motorboat? You play the motorboat? [makes motorboat sound with mouth] You motorboatin’ son of a bitch. You old sailor, you. Where is she? She still in the house?

John: What is wrong with you?

Jeremy: What do you mean what’s wrong with me? What’s wrong with you?

Again, the audience is distracted from the discomfort of sexual assault with humor. Jeremy’s dismissal of the situation and comic “motorboating” forces the audience to forget the seriousness of the previous scene; he does not take the issue seriously, so neither does the audience. Later that night Jeremy awakens tied to his bed with Gloria on top of him. She forces his sock into his mouth while he yells. The scene cuts to him alone, ungagged, and asleep in bed. Todd enters the room and wakes up Jeremy; Todd reveals a portrait he painted of Jeremy and exclaims that he noticed the looks Jeremy gave him at dinner. Jeremy denies any such looks, and tells Todd that if he lets him sleep then they can talk in the morning. Someone else knocks at the door, leading Jeremy to tell Todd to hide in the closet—obvious symbolism for Todd’s homosexuality. Secretary Cleary enters the room and talks to Jeremy about bad dreams and Todd (See Figure

¹⁴ Mrs. Cleary is very similar to Marcellina in this instance, however, she does not play a major role after this scene.

3.3), notices the ropes still binding Jeremy to the bed, gives them a tug to test their tightness, and leaves the room. Todd exits the closet and Jeremy tells him that he needs to sleep and they can talk in the morning. Todd says, “You sleep,” kisses his own finger, presses it to Jeremy’s lips, and leaves the room.



Figure 4.3 Secretary Cleary and Jeremy (tied to the bed)

The next morning, Jeremy finds John in the kitchen and declares that they have to leave because he was raped. John ignores Jeremy’s claims and explains that they have to stay because he is making progress with Claire.

John: There he is! It’s the big guy! Get in here. Wait till you see this spread. Anything you want.

Jeremy: Yeah, well get what you want to go. The ferry leaves in 25 minutes. We gotta get out of here.

John: Whoa, what’s your problem? Have some of this stuff.

Jeremy: I didn’t get a lot of sleep last night, John. I’m fried.

John: Soft mattress?

Jeremy: Yeah, that could’ve been it. It could have been the soft mattress. Or it could have been the midnight rape or the nude gay art show that took place in my room. One of those probably added to the lack of sleep.

John: Try one of these scones. You’re gonna love ‘em.

Jeremy: I’m too traumatized to have a scone. Let’s move.

John: Will you slow down for a second. The whole eye drop thing backfired. Okay? It didn't work. She had to leave me and go attend to him. Why are you looking at me like that?

Jeremy: You're fallin' for this broad.

John: No! I just met her.

Jeremy: Exactly. I'm gonna go.

John: You can't go.

Jeremy: Watch me. [spanks himself] Watch me take this on down the road.

John: Look, if you leave Gloria is going to freak out and throw a shit fit and it's going to go into crisis lockdown mode here at the house.

Jeremy: I don't give a baker's fuck. I just had my own sock duct-taped into my mouth last night.

John: Whoa, what?

Jeremy: Yeah. The sock that I wore around all day, playing football in, pouring sweat in, was shoved into my mouth and there was duct tape over it.

John: Well, let's talk about it. I'm a good listener.

Jeremy: I'm not in a place to discuss what happened, okay? I felt like Jodie Foster in *The Accused* last night. I'm gonna go home and see Dr. Fenkelstein and I'm gonna tell him we got a whole new bag of issues, we can forget about mom for a while. I'm gonna go.

John: Suit yourself. Rule #1...Rule #1: never leave a fellow crasher behind.

Jeremy: I can't believe how selfish you are.

John: I need you.

Jeremy: A friend in need is a pest.

The role reversal in these scenes is striking for several reasons. It is now Jeremy who is claiming sexual assault while John is too wrapped up in his own problems. As Filippo explains:

Recounting to an oblivious John how he was forcibly bound and gagged by Gloria in preparation for "making all his fantasies come true," Jeremy refers to this episode as rape, striking terminology for a male character describing a heterosexual encounter (no matter how violent or nonconsensual). Forced to experience rape as a victim—complete with intimations of having asked for it and of finding it enjoyable.¹⁵

¹⁵ Filippo, *The B Word* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013), 189.

While Filippo makes the assertion that Jeremy's use of the word "rape" is shocking, the scene reflects a different attitude. John remains indifferent to Jeremy's situation even after his rape confession, it is not until Jeremy says that he was gagged with his own sock that John pays attention. This scene aligns with others of its kind—the scene's humor distracts the audience from the seriousness nature of the social issues.

Despite Gloria's forceful nature and Jeremy's initial desire to escape her, they fall in love. Unlike John, Jeremy is originally resistant to the idea of both love and marriage (he is simply in it for the opportunity to sleep with Gloria and her proclamation of virginity is enough to scare him away). He is only with her because he is supporting John. At the beginning of the film Jeremy declares, "Guys, the real enemy here is the institution of marriage. It's unrealistic, it's crazy!" and constantly ridicules John for loving Claire. Jeremy's declaration, relationships, and scenarios set up the comparison to Mozart's *Così fan tutte*. Jeremy is the protégé of Chazz (Will Ferrel), the original wedding crasher and a character similar to *Così*'s Don Alfonso. Chazz claims that he is living the dream, crashing weddings (and funerals) and sleeping with as many women as he wants. Jeremy is akin to Guglielmo who is the first to denounce his fiancé and chastise Ferrando. It is surprising, therefore, when Jeremy confesses his love for Gloria and proposes. The seriousness of these moments does not negate his buffo nature, however, if anything, they support him as the comic character.¹⁶ Even potentially serious moments are

¹⁶ In this instance he and Gloria are more like *The Magic Flute*'s Papageno and Papagena, who find their counterparts without undergoing any change. Even though Papageno participates in the trials intended to make him "more" of a man, his only transformation is sitting quiet long enough to be granted Papagena. Likewise, the only "transformation" Papagena undergoes is revealing that she is young, not old.

interpreted as comic due to the nature of both characters. Furthermore, Gloria proves Jeremy's equal when she reveals that everything she told him was a lie.

Jeremy: Ok, listen, Gloria. You know, that I think you're an amazing person, a really amazing person, but I feel like I have to be upfront with you. I-I-I really don't see this relationship going further than this weekend.

Gloria: But I love you.

Jeremy: Yeah, I think you'll learn as time goes on that there's a difference between infatuation and love. You know, um, obviously you're gonna have strong feelings for me because, you lost your virginity to me. But that doesn't mean—

Gloria: Oh, I wasn't a virgin.

Jeremy: What?

Gloria: I wasn't a virgin. Far from it. I just thought that's what guys wanted to hear. Come on. Jeremy! [leaves room]

Jeremy: Wow!

Characters' revelations that they have been lying about or faking their true identity, feelings, etc. for the majority of the plot is an element common in opera buffa. The ending of *The Marriage of Figaro* centers on the Countess and Susanna disguising themselves to trick their husbands before revealing their true identity and a moral lesson. Similarly, the plot of *Così fan tutte* is entirely based on the idea of men disguising themselves to test the faithfulness of their girlfriends. *Wedding Crashers* begins with John and Jeremy hiding their true identities but the fact that Gloria is also duping Jeremy adds an extra level of character depth. Gloria is similar to Susanna, who, in Hunter's words:

Provides the short-term wit and energy to grease the hinges of the action. She disguises Cherubino, she steps out of the closet to confound the Count and exonerate the Countess, she agrees to meet the Count in the garden, and in the end she tests and proves Figaro's love by seeming to serenade the Count. Everything she does in the plot works; she is the heir of generations of sly serving girls who trick and flatter their way to success. It is entirely normal in opera buffa for serving girls to act while their "betters" reflect; what is different (though not unique) about Susanna is that she is not interested in outwitting her antagonists to marry a rich man or gain social status. She simply wants to marry her beloved, but

needs to use the resources of her kind to do so. It is, however, entirely typical of the genre that her actions can only take place within the frameworks set up by her social superiors.¹⁷

Gloria's circumstances are set up by other characters and members of her family just as Susanna's are put in place by her superiors. It is Jeremy who first attempts to gain Gloria's attention, Gloria's father who invites John to the lake house and Jeremy is invited by extension, and Jeremy is the one who proposes. At the same time, however, Gloria's experience is also very similar to *Così*'s Despina, and she is more in control than she appears. Hunter provides insight into Despina:

in her continued amazed reaction to the naiveté of her mistresses, who were at first prostrate with grief at the departure of their lovers, and are now in agonies about the possibility of being attracted to other men, Despina says that in the real world, fifteen-year-old girls know how to deal with men, by flirting, lying, and being entirely manipulative.¹⁸

Just as Despina is amazed at Dorabella and Fiordiligi's innocence, Gloria is amazed that Jeremy actually believed she was a virgin. We now know that Gloria was lying to seduce Jeremy but he was also lying in to seduce her. So, who are we to believe? Gloria's behavior solidifies, or perhaps sparks, Jeremy's true feelings for her. The turn of events is admittedly shocking and Jeremy talks out his feelings with the priest who officiated the Cleary wedding.

Jeremy (to the priest): She's good. I mean, I believed that she was a virgin. It hurts to be lied to like that. It's a horrible feeling to feel that way. But I, you know, was looking to take advantage of something too. So can I really feel that bad? It's not like I was who I was. You know what I'm saying? So, fair play. And let's be honest with each other here, okay, let's put all the cards on the table. She's fit for a straightjacket. This broad's fucked three ways towards the weekend. And you wanna know what? I dig it! It turns

¹⁷ Hunter, *Mozart's Operas*, 143.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 14.

me on! Yeah! It turns me on! Because you wanna know what the kicker is, Father? Maybe I'm a little fucking crazy. That's right! Maybe *Jeremy's* a little fucking nuts. Maybe there's something about me that I'm a little cuckoo. I know it's a surprise. I know it's not on the surface. I had an imaginary friend when I was a kid. His name was Shilo. We used to play checkers with each other every day and bless his heart, Shilo'd always let me win! And that ain't normal! There's something odd in that, but maybe that's what it takes to me you feel like you're connected with somebody. I don't know! But I know when that redhead starts getting kooky that something about me feels alive inside. I'm digging talking with ya. You're a really enlightened guy and I like that about ya. I think you're a special, special man.

Jeremy delivers monologues like the one above throughout the film and, in fact, he is the only character with extended monologues. In these moments, Jeremy quickly loses focus, jumps from one topic to another, and blurts out whatever comes to mind, behavior reminiscent of a buffo aria:

The most common purely comic aria type is the buffo aria. . . . Such arias often start with a mock-heroic tune to a text expressing knowledge or pride, but move quickly to a more speech-like declamation, and often later in the aria include passages of patter (very fast delivery of the words, with a lot of repeated notes). . . . Such arias often include many contrasting short phrases as the character moves through various positions, unable to maintain the kind of rhetorical focus characteristic of noble figures. Buffo arias almost always end with the character seeming to lose control, repeating a short phrase ad nauseam, or juxtaposing more or less unrelated text fragments in a case study of incoherence. . . . Serving class men in Mozart's operas tend to bumble about the stage, blurt out their feelings or suspicions with remarkable directness, and either ape or criticize their superiors more straightforwardly than their female counterparts. Thus . . . buffo often begin with . . . expressing a maxim or other generalized sentiment, but typically devolve into confusion or spluttering.¹⁹

¹⁹ Ibid., 13; Ibid., 202.

Jeremy begins his monologue by confessing to the priest how it feels to be duped, essentially receiving what the behavior he is so accustomed to giving. His honest confession turns into him simply talking through his feelings as if the priest were not there, telling a story about his childhood imaginary friend, and complimenting the priest on how nice it is to talk to him, despite the fact that the priest did not speak at all the entire scene. One of the only moments when Jeremy is certain of what he is trying to say is when he proposes to Gloria; however, his intentions remain incoherent and she has difficulty understanding that he is proposing.

Jeremy: Gloria, I've been doing a lot of soul-searching lately and I-I think that I'm ready to take, um, this relationship, our relationship to the next level. To what the next level of the-of the-relationship would be.

Gloria: Jeremy!

Jeremy: Is that good?

Gloria: I am so ready to take it to the next level too. Do you want to watch me with a girl? What about those Brazilian twins we met at the ballgame?

Jeremy: I was thinking more along the lines of an engagement. But that sounds terrific. That sounds unbelievable. The Brazilian girls were really nice.

Gloria: Oh, Jeremy! I do.

Jeremy: I love you.

Gloria: I love you.

In what would otherwise be a serious moment, Gloria's initial confusion and sexual suggestion are both comic and suggestive of her character type. In addition, their wedding is complicated when it is interrupted by John's confession of love for Claire and fight with Sack. Jeremy and Gloria never experience a truly serious moment, suggesting that, despite the couples' outwardly mismatched social class, they are equally matched in behavior.

The film sheds light on rape culture by putting men in the victim position and easing the tension with humor. By doing so, the audience is aware of the severity of the scenes without feeling forced into directly confronting the complexities of the ways in which society views rape.

Social issues are both blatant (in that the audience views rape) and subtle (the humor in the scene allows the audience to disregard in-depth contemplation) in the film. In other words, the humorous moments override the serious ones, allowing the audience to recognize the issue and contemplate them in a light-hearted setting. The three Mozart/Da Ponte operas are similar in their treatment of social issues. *Don Giovanni*, for example, opens (at least in some stagings) with a post-coital rape scene, and Leporello's famous catalogue aria "Madamina, il catalogo è questo" concerns the number of women Giovanni has seduced. Again, depending on the staging, this aria may be humorous, especially when Leporello pulls out his list of Giovanni's "conquests" which is often a comically long scroll, massive book, or something of the like. Yet the aria takes place only moments after Giovanni's supposed rape of Donna Anna and after Donna Elvira accuses Giovanni of abandoning her. We should sympathize with both women but instead we laugh at Leporello's buffo aria and only passively acknowledge any discomfort.

Likewise, when Donna Elvira pleads for sympathy and validation from the opera's other characters—and, indirectly, from the audience—they instead side with Giovanni. Just as Jeremy dismissed John's sexual assault as not a "real" problem, Giovanni dismisses Elvira as insane—and in both situations the audience readily dismisses the issue(s). In *Così fan tutte* the majority of the issues, such as the women sleeping with the "wrong" man and the men lying to their respective partners, are covered up by outlandish and humorous moments. In *The Marriage of Figaro*, although the Count's interest in Susanna is uncomfortable to say the least, the audience cannot help but laugh in the first Act when the Count knocks on Susanna's door while she is talking to Cherubino. She must hide the pageboy lest he be discovered by the Count in yet *another* girl's room. The fact that the Count is visiting Susanna with the intent of seducing her before her wedding to Figaro is a serious situation, however, the hasty concealing of Cherubino,

and the numerous times the Count almost finds him (before actually doing so) are enough to distract the audience from the issues at hand. Similarly in *Wedding Crashers*, the audience should be more than a little concerned that Jeremy is about to be sexually assaulted for the second time in one night and that the father of the assailants is not at all alarmed by the ropes tying Jeremy to the bed. Instead, however, we are more distracted and entertained by the humorous potential of Todd being discovered in the closet and the awkward dialogue between the Secretary and Jeremy.

Rule #19—Toast in the Native Language: Space and Setting

Having analyzed the relationships between the characters in *Wedding Crashers* and their relation to opera buffa couplings we can turn to an equally crucial element: setting. As Hunter acknowledges, “The localized and specific settings of the bedroom or the cafe (the openings of *Le nozze di Figaro* and *Così fan tutte*, respectively) are much more apt to plunge us into the action than the harmonious ‘wide-angle’ landscape.”²⁰ Similarly, *Wedding Crashers* “plunges” the audience into the film’s action with a small frame centered on a table and divorce proceedings. The film continues with similarly enclosed settings with various weddings, all of which portray John and Jeremy in the same space, implying that they are equals: they are often on the same side of a table, laugh at each other’s jokes, etc. It is not until the Cleary wedding that the film has a “wide-angle” landscape; the wedding is outdoors, allowing for multiple classes of characters to interact in a neutral space. Excluding Jeremy and Gloria’s wedding, all scenes in

²⁰ Mary Hunter, “Landscapes, Gardens, and Gothic Settings in the *Opere Buffe* of Mozart and His Italian Contemporaries,” *Current Musicology* 51 (1993): 96.

which the entire cast is present take place outside. This space is what Allanbrook refers to as the “green world,” where:

Things can happen in this unnatural world that could never take place in the so-called natural one. . . . Nature in which human beings could form their most important bonds innocent of the “unnatural” distinctions of rank and class. In Mozart’s opera the “green world” offers a withdrawing place to Susanna and the Countess where their friendship may flourish despite their social inequality. . . .”²¹

In the same way, the outdoors allow for John and Claire’s relationship. The first time John sees Claire they are both outside waiting to go into the chapel for the Cleary wedding and their first few conversations take place at the outdoors reception. These scenes are crucial in establishing John’s and Claire’s relationship as part of the outdoors. As Hunter acknowledges, “In *Figaro* the garden suggests the larger dimension of the ‘pastoral,’ as not only a place where nature is trained into conformity with human desires, but also a ‘green world’ in whose shadows real human relationships can be established and made fast.”²² John and Claire establish and build their relationship outside; they ride bikes together on a picturesque country road (See Figure 3.4), talk about Claire and Sack’s relationship on the beach, and flirt on a boating trip (See Figure 3.5). The emphasis on the sea evokes the opera buffa tradition, in which the sea represents a moving or developing relationship, such as the departure and return by sea of Guglielmo and Ferrando in *Così*.²³ In the scope of John and Claire’s relationship the outdoors becomes less of a communal space and more of *their* space; however, when John and Claire meet outside so John can tell her

²¹ Wye J. Allanbrook, “Human Nature in the Unnatural Garden: *Figaro* as Pastoral,” *Current Musicology* 51 (1993): 83-84.

²² Hunter, “*Opere Buffe* of Mozart and His Italian Contemporaries,” *Current Musicology* 51 (1993): 98-99.

²³ For more information on the significance of water see Marcia J. Citron, *Opera on Screen* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 172-173.

who he really is, Sack reveals John and Jeremy's identities instead, resulting in a return to the communal outdoors.



Figure 3.5 John and Claire outside



Figure 3.6 John and Claire during the boating trip

While the outdoors allows for the characters to be in the same space, it is also a place of transition, especially for the comic characters, i.e. Jeremy and Gloria. Their relationship begins outside at the Cleary wedding where Jeremy successfully seduces Gloria (or perhaps the other way around, knowing what we do about her character) on the beach; however, their relationship

quickly becomes restricted to the indoors. The game of touch football conceivably puts all the characters on an equal level but Jeremy is injured and quickly thrown out of the space by Sack, demonstrating Jeremy's inability to remain with the nobility class of characters. All of Jeremy's interactions with Gloria at the lake house take place inside, either in the bathroom (an unconventional place for serious conversations) or with him tied to the bed. Furthermore, apart from the beginning of the football game, all of Gloria's scenes are inside. Jeremy and Gloria's inability to share the communal space or "green world" of the other characters is indicative of their lower status.

Rule #7—Blend in by Standing Out: The *Liete Fine*

The *liete fine*, or light ending, is a prominent tradition in both opera buffa and Romantic Comedies. Happy endings, which typically end with a wedding and/or diffused problems are a common trope in Romantic Comedies, but has changed many times throughout the history of the genre—the customary "marriage as happily-ever-after" is not so standard anymore; happy endings can now translate to the couple parting ways, entering a non-romantic relationship, or assuming non-traditional gender roles.²⁴ *Wedding Crashers*, however, follows a more traditional route. *Wedding Crashers* ends with John, Claire, Jeremy, and Gloria driving off into the sunset. Although we might question the long-lasting relationships of many opera buffa characters (will Donna Anna actually marry Don Ottavio? Will the Count going to remain faithful to the Countess? The answer to both questions is likely no.), the chief concern is the *liete fine*. In keeping with the dismissal of more serious issues, opera buffa glosses over any lingering issues and gives the audience what they want—happily ever after. While as an audience we are assuredly happy with this turn of events—specifically John and Claire's pairing—upon reflection

²⁴ Grindon, *The Hollywood Romantic Comedy* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 78-80.

we cannot help but question the success of these couples. After so many years of crashing weddings, we question whether John and Jeremy actually quit the habit and remain faithful to their partners. This question is answered for us, however, when Claire and Gloria excitedly agree to crash a wedding with John and Jeremy. In this way the opera buffa tradition of the *liete fine* applies to *Wedding Crashers* and the film remains in keeping with the Romantic Comedy tradition of eschewing audience's expectations of traditional gender roles and expectations.

Mozart's music serves as the opening frame to *Wedding Crasher's* main plot and as an overture to its primary relationships. The Swingle Singer's arrangement of the Horn Concerto Number 4 in E-flat Minor, K. 495 sets up the film's humorous atmosphere; furthering this mood, the Overture to *The Marriage of Figaro* preceding the Cleary wedding establishes a connection between the film's plot and the opera buffa tradition—particularly the events of the overture's opera. Despite being a twenty-first century film, *Wedding Crashers* borrows techniques from the opera buffa tradition of the eighteenth century; analogous to this tradition, the film can be segmented into three acts: pre-lake house, lake house, and post-lake house. Furthermore, the main couples are divided by character type, each with their own set of characteristics and interactions: nobility (Secretary and Mrs. Cleary), seria characters (John and Claire), and buffa characters (Jeremy and Gloria). The main and cursory characters are reminiscent of Mozart's opera buffa characters (such as Susanna, Despina, and Cherubino among others) and align with tropes present in *The Marriage of Figaro*, *Don Giovanni*, and *Così fan tutte*, specifically the buffo aria and sentimental heroine. Within the context of these characters and relationships the film uses humor to emphasize social issues such as homosexuality, rape, and (non)traditional gender roles. While I am not arguing that *Wedding Crashers* is an opera buffa (by definition, it

cannot be), the use of Mozart's music at two points in the film encourages a reading through the Mozart opera buffa lens; coupled with support from the combination of character types, social issues, and parallels with notable Mozart opera buffas, this reading offers a new perspective to view the film. Moreover, the combination of these elements and their parallels within the film's Romantic Comedy genre, reveals opera buffa's influence on Romantic Comedies and a successful example of applying opera techniques to film.

Conclusion: Future Directions

Although Lars Franke uses his model of opera integration in film (literal, cultural, and opera techniques applied to film) to analyze one particular scene in one film, its potential is much broader. Through the application of Franke's model to three separate films, I show that each level allows for an in-depth analysis of the opera scenes, characters, and connections across genres and time periods. Furthermore, my aim was to expose a rich sub-field of pre-existing music in media and provide examples that prove the subject is worthy of further study. These purposes are applicable to more than just opera, however; we can expand Franke's ideas to incorporate the use of all pre-existing music in media (including television), connections between music and politics, and the impact of media on society.

The first of these possible directions is exemplified in *The King's Speech* (2010) which uses the first movement of Mozart's Clarinet Concerto in A Major, K. 622. Interestingly, the solo clarinet part is never heard, perhaps representing the King's lack of a voice. The piece is only present in the first portion of the film, as the King works through speech therapy and confronts his own personal demons; the Mozart is not used after the King successfully delivers his war-time speech.

In Season 2 finale of the Netflix Original Series *House of Cards* (2013), tensions are high as President Walker (Michael Gill) faces impeachment for accepting Chinese contribution to Super PACs—contributions that were enabled by billionaire and close friend Raymond Tusk (Gerald McRaney). Walker offers Tusk a Presidential pardon if he indicts himself, thus saving Walker from impeachment. Vice-president Frank Underwood (Kevin Spacey) meets Tusk in the basement of an opera house during a performance of Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*; Underwood

has his eye on the Presidency, and warns Tusk that Walker's pardon is only good as long as he is President. Underwood attempts to win Tusk over to his side by subtly suggesting that he should implicate the President, rather than himself. Although Tusk appears to remain on Walker's side, the implications and connections to opera in this scene are striking. The most obvious is that Underwood is planning the impeachment of the President in a theater—recalling President Abraham Lincoln's assassination and foreshadowing Underwood's success. Moreover, it is important to keep in mind that the opera audio continues in the background throughout Underwood and Tusk's exchange. The aria in the scene is "Un bel dì, vedremo," the text and translation of which is below:

Un bel dì, vedremo
 levarsi un fil di fumo
 sull'estremo confin del mare.
 E poi la nave appare.
 Poi la nave Bianca
 entra nel porto,
 romba il suo saluto.

One good day, we will see
 Arising a strand of smoke
 Over the far horizon on the sea
 And then the ship appears
 And then the ship is white
 It enters into port
 It rumbles its solute

Vedi? È venuto!
 Io non gli scendo incontro. Io no.
 Mi metto là sul ciglio del colle e aspetto,
 e aspetto gran tempo
 e non mi pesa,
 la lunga attesa.

Do you see it? He is coming!
 I don't go down to meet him, not I.
 I stay upon the edge of the hill
 And I wait a long time
 But I do not grow weary
 Of the long wait.

E uscito dalla folla cittadina,
 un uomo, un picciol punto
 s'avvia per la collina.
 Chi sarà? chi sarà?

And leaving from the crowded city,
 A man, a little speck
 Climbing the hill.
 Who is it? Who is it?

E come sarà giunto
 che dirà? che dirà?
 Chiamerà Butterfly dalla lontana.
 Io senza dar risposta
 me ne starò nascosta
 un po' per celia
 e un po' per non morire
 al primo incontro;

And as he arrives
 What will he say? What will he say?
 He will call Butterfly from the distance
 I without answering
 Stay hidden
 A little to tease him,
 A little as to not die.
 At the first meeting,

ed egli alquanto in pena
 chiamerà, chiamerà:
 "Piccina mogliettina,
 olezzo di verbena"
 i nomi che mi dava al suo venire.
 (a Suzuki)
 Tutto questo avverrà,
 te lo prometto.
 Tienti la tua paura,
 io con sicura fede l'aspetto.

And then a little troubled
 He will call, he will call:
 "Little one, dear wife
 Blossom of orange"
 The names he called me at his last coming.

All this will happen,
 I promise you this
 Hold back your fears –
 I with secure faith wait for him.¹

From this text, two metaphors stand out—the sea and the hill; the sea is a running metaphor throughout *House of Cards*, representing Underwood’s tumultuous political career and determination to reach the White House, while the aria’s reference to the hill, in the context of the show, implies Capitol Hill and Underwood’s continual climb to the Presidency. Moreover, the aria’s repeated assurances that “he is coming” foreshadows and reinforces Underwood’s eventual success in forcing Walker to step down and replacing him as President. Further analysis of this scene could reveal more connections between the opera and the scene in question, stylistic similarities between the aria’s music and the show’s typical underscoring, and parallels between characters.

More abstractly, connections between film and society can result in real world reactions; the *Hunger Games*—particularly, the most recent film’s (*Mockingjay: Part I*)—contains several political implications. Panem, the setting the series, is reminiscent of a modern, post–Civil War country that eerily resembles a dystopian America (complete with a dictatorship and extreme classicism). Panem is controlled by the Capitol with the remaining territory divided into twelve districts that live in constant fear of the “reaping” in which a boy and girl (both under the age of 18) are chosen to fight to the death in the “Hunger Games”; the winner of the games receives a

¹ Aaron Green, “Un bel di, vedremo’ Text and Translation from Puccini’s *Madama Butterfly*,” <http://classicalmusic.about.com/od/opera/qt/unbeldilyrics.htm>.

mansion and a life of “peace” in his/her home district. Connections between the series and the real world have led to political protests in Thailand where protesters used the three-finger salute—a sign of protest and district solidarity in the series—to display their displeasure with the government; in Ferguson, MO, protestors displayed signs with the phrase “The Odds Are Never In Our Favor,” (a spin on “May The Odds Be Ever In Your Favor” from the first film/novel), and Jennifer Lawrence’s rendition of “The Hanging Tree” from the third film of the franchise is reminiscent of a Civil Rights Era songs, a reverse implication of the film/music connection.² The song (and the scenes associated with it) recall strong imagery from the Civil Right Movement and that parallel current riots in America. In these scenarios, audiences find a deeper level of meaning that, while not always readily apparent on the surface, contains strong associations with real-world events—especially social and political unrest.

Musicologist Kate McQuiston notes in her analysis of the music in Stanley Kubrick’s films:

Existing musical works can bring in shared cultural ideas, and subjective memories and associations, which can potentially distract the audience (by design or accidentally) from the illusory world on the screen. The more the audience knows about a piece of music, whether a song, classical work, or any other music, the more they will have at their disposal by which to understand its role in film. Yet even when the words or history are unknown to

² Stephen Carter, interview by Scott Simon, “Finding Ferguson and Other News Headlines in ‘Mockingjay,’” *NPR*, November 29, 2014. <http://www.npr.org/2014/11/29/367362450/finding-ferguson-and-other-news-headlines-in-mockingjay>; Ben Child, “Bangkok Cinema Chain Cancels Hunger Games Screenings Over Salute Protest,” *The Guardian*, November 20, 2014, <http://www.theguardian.com/film/2014/nov/20/bangkok-cinema-cancels-hunger-games-screenings-salute-protest-mockingjay>.; Amelia Mason, “The Hidden Roots of ‘Hunger Games’ Hit Song? Murder, Ballads, Civil Rights Hymns,” *The Artery 90.9 WBUR*, December 10, 2014, <http://artery.wbur.org/2014/12/10/hunger-games-mockingjay>.; [Sonia Saraiya, “Mockingjay’s Eerie Echoes of Ferguson: Our Real Dystopian Nightmare,” *Salon*, November 26, 2014, \[http://www.salon.com/2014/11/26/mockingjays_eerie_echoes_of_ferguson_our_real_dystopian_nightmare/\]\(http://www.salon.com/2014/11/26/mockingjays_eerie_echoes_of_ferguson_our_real_dystopian_nightmare/\).](http://www.salon.com/2014/11/26/mockingjays_eerie_echoes_of_ferguson_our_real_dystopian_nightmare/)

the listener, the style or idiom of the music can still make a great impact.³

Of course, we can read into these scenarios what we want, but it is apparent that we can analyze opera in media on several different levels and that each of these levels provides a new way of conceptualizing the film (media)/opera connection. Moreover, taking these connections into account we may find a linear connection from opera to film, the influences inherent in this lineage, and a rich sub-field of pre-existing music in media.

³ Kate McQuiston, *We'll Meet Again: Musical Design in the Films of Stanley Kubrick* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 22.

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