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A reference to *Figaro* in the novel *Das Leben eines Lüderlichen* (spurious document) (1787)

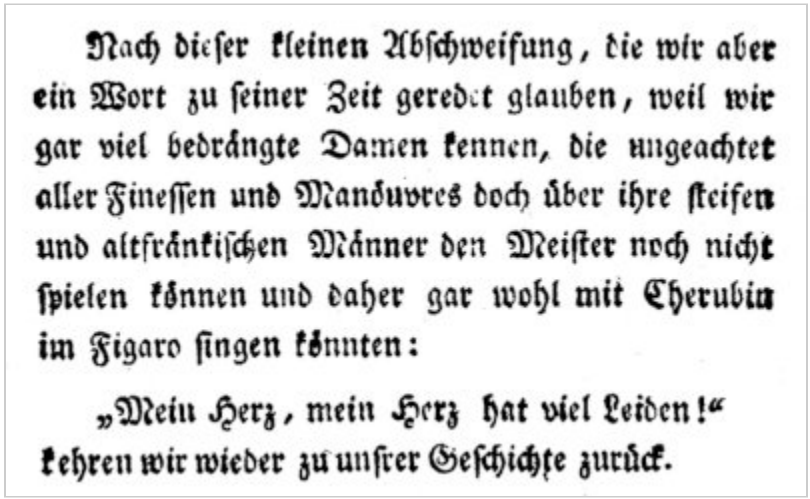
Dexter Edge

[Christoph Friedrich Bretzner], *Das Leben eines Lüderlichen. Ein moralisch=satyrisches Gemälde nach Chodowiecki und Hogarth.* Leipzig: Friedrich Gotthold Jacobäer, 1787

[vol. i, p. 27]

Nach dieser kleinen Abschweifung, die wir aber ein Wort zu seiner Zeit geredet glauben, weil wir gar viel bedrängte Damen kennen, die ungeachtet aller Finessen und Manöuvres doch über ihre steifen und altkränkischen Männer den Meister noch nicht spielen können und daher gar wohl mit Cherubin im Figaro singen könnten:

"Mein Herz, mein Herz hat viel Leiden!"
kehren wir wieder zu unsrer Geschichte zurück.


Nach dieſer kleinen Abſchweifung, die wir aber ein Wort zu ſeiner Zeit geredet glauben, weil wir gar viel bedrängte Damen kennen, die ungeachtet aller Fineſſen und Manöuvres doch über ihre ſteifen und altfränkiſchen Männer den Meiſter noch nicht ſpielen können und daher gar wohl mit Cherubin im Figaro ſingen könnten:

„Mein Herz, mein Herz hat viel Leiden!"
kehren wir wieder zu unſrer Geſchichte zurück.

[translation:]

After this little digression—which we believe, however, to have been a timely observation,

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because we know so many hard-pressed women, who in spite of every finesse and maneuver still cannot play the master over their rigid and cantankerous men, and thus could probably sing with Cherubin in *Figaro*:

> "My heart, my heart has much suffering!"

—we return again to our story.

Commentary

In his commentary on a (possibly spurious) "protest" against Mozart attributed to Christoph Friedrich Bretzner over Mozart's misuse of his play *Belmonte und Constanze* (*Dokumente*, 187), Deutsch writes: "In 1787 Bretzner anonymously published the novel *Das Leben eines Lüderlichen* [The Life of a Rake] in which Mozart's *Figaro* is repeatedly mentioned and one of Cherubino's two arias is quoted" ("Bretzner veröffentlichte 1787 anonym den Roman *Das Leben eines Lüderlichen*, worin Mozart's *Figaro* wiederholt erwähnt und eine der beiden Arien Cherubinos zitiert ist"). As his source for this claim, Deutsch cites Greither (1970, 79). Deutsch's claim has, in turn, been repeated by several subsequent writers, perhaps most prominently by Bauman (1987, 108). However, it seems that no writer has yet quoted any passage from Bretzner's novel corresponding to the claim, and neither Deutsch nor Bauman gives direct citations from the novel.

Bretzner's novel is, as the title suggests, based on Hogarth's *A Rake's Progress* ("lüderlich," standard modern spelling "liederlich," means "dissolute"; "ein Liederlicher" or "ein Lüderlicher" was a common translation of Hogarth's "Rake" at the time.) Google Books includes scans of two different editions of Bretzner's novel, both published in three volumes. The earlier edition was published anonymously in Berlin in 1787 (vols. 1 and 2) and 1788 (vol. 3). A second edition of the novel appeared under Bretzner's name in 1790 (vol. 1), 1791 (vol. 2), and 1792 (vol. 3).

In Google Books, a search on the term "Figaro" in the three volumes of the 1787 edition turns up only one hit, the passage cited here. The reference to *Figaro* and "Cherubin" is omitted from the corresponding passage in the 1790 edition. The notion that *Figaro* is mentioned several times seems to derive from Greither.

A search of Google Books on the phrase "Mein Herz hat viel Leiden" reveals that it comes not from a translation of Mozart and Da Ponte's opera, but rather from a translation of Beaumarchais' play published in 1785: L[udwig] F[erdinand] Huber, Der tolle Tag oder *Figaros Hochzeit, ein Lustspiel in fünf Aufzügen. Aus dem Französichen des Herrn von Beaumarchais nach der ächten Ausgabe übersezt.* Dessau und Leipzig: Göschen, 1785, 36–37. The line "Mein Herz, mein Herz hat viel Leiden!" appears in Huber's translation in every verse of the "Romanze" that Cherubin sings to the Countess, corresponding to "Voi che sapete" in the opera, but here based

on Beaumarchais' original, where the line is "Que mon cœur, que mon cœur a de peine." This phrase was, in fact, quoted quite frequently by other German writers in the ensuing decades.

However, Bretzner's reference is clearly to the play (which was widely translated and performed in Germany), not to the opera, and thus Bretzner was not alluding to Mozart.

Notes (⇧)

The record for the 1787 edition of Bretzner's novel in Google Books appears with the faulty title *"Das" Leben eines Luderlichen*, with superfluous quote marks around the word "Das," and no umlaut on the "u" in "Lüderlichen." The Google Books scan of this edition is based on a copy in the ÖNB. The Google Books record for the 1790 edition has the correct title; the scan is based on a copy in BSB. Bretzner seems also to have published a play based on the novel: *Der Lüderliche: ein tragisches Gemälde in fünf Aufz.; nach der Geschichte: Leben eines Lüderlichen,* 1789.

Bibliography (⇧)

Bauman, Thomas. 1987. *W. A. Mozart:* Die Entführung aus dem Serail. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Greither, Aloys. 1970. *Die sieben großen Opern Mozarts, mit einer Pathographie Mozarts*. Heidelberg: Verlag Lambert Schneider. (First published in 1956)

Credit: DE

Author: Dexter Edge

Link(s): Google Books (1787 edition); ÖNB [search "figaro"]

Search Term: figaro

Source Library: ÖNB, 18205-A.1.Alt Mag

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