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Don Juan. The Donjuanism
Theatricality and Mannerism

ABSTRACT

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THESIS SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

The coordinating plan of the present analysis is the concept of donjuanism in drama, opera and performance. It is one of the three main concepts which composes the contents of this study, along with theatricality and mannerism. The main accent stresses the role of the *maniera* during the process of transfer from dramatic genre to opera score. The donjuanism is a synonymus term of flexibility, metamorphosis, adaptability in any theatrical formula and any variations in literature.

The concept of theatricality is assessed from two perspectives. Firstly, according to the system created by the theatre critic Iustin Ceuca in *The evolution of dramatic forms* which indicates two types of theatricality : dramatic and scenic. Another link in evaluating the concept comes from the italian movement of theatre criticism *Nuova Teatrologia*, whose initiator is prof. Marco de Marinis DAMS, Bologna, who promotes the combination of terms “scenic writting” and “performance text” after Roger Planchon, french stage director.

The third concept, mannerism, is applied mainly in relation with opera and the stage directing of this genre. The analysis points out the relation between Don Juan and the XVIII-th century Italian opera, after an investigation of the term mannerism in music and musical theatre. Don Giovanni is extracted by musical composers from *commedia dell'arte* and destined for the musical stage which will finaly confirm the concept and theatrical character. The study continues with specific elements of mannerism in acting and scenography and culminates in the third chapter with the comparative vision of opera performances of Don Giovanni.

CHAPTER I

The first chapter of this study begins with the theatrical origins of Don Juan in the XVII-th century in Spanish theatre, as a result of the pattern of theatrical practices which combined the religious performance with light topics in drama, such as eroticism and erotic jokes. The starting point in Spanish drama is *El Burlador de Sevilla* by Tirso de Molina who combines ideas from a theological conflict (between *tomism* and *molinism*, two religious orders) with the idea of theatricality promoted by the common stage.

Don Juan is absorbed in the *commedia dell'arte* style and developed in terms of this type of acting and staging *maniera*. The plays under analysis are *L'Ateista fulminato* (sec XVII), Giacinto Andrea Cicognini (*Il Convitato di Pietra* - 1650), *Il Convitato di Pietra* (sec XVII), Domenico Biancolelli (*Il Convitato di Pietra* - 1658), Andrea Perrucci «Preudarca» (*Il Convitato di Pietra* - 1690) Carlo Goldoni (*Don Giovanni Tenorio*). From a philosophical point of view, the character is surrounded by a favorable climate for libertinage in shades of humanism, as promoted by the Renaissance libertine thinkers : Lorenzo Valla with *De Voluptate* and Pietro Aretino and *Sonnetti lussuriosi*.

From Italy the subject goes to France where the hero becomes a rationalist with flavour of cartesianism. Modern philosophy in a theatrical context, based on flamboyance and a visual theatre of stage machineries, creates almost an esthetic of theatrical donjuanism. From now on, the character Don Juan is confirmed as the symbol of revolt and liberty. The study mentions the version of Molière mainly for the path created for the libretto of Don Giovanni, the opera of Mozart. The authors and plays are as follows : Nicolas Drouin Dorimon *Le Festin de pierre ou le Fils criminel* (1659), Jean Deschamps Villiers *Le Festin de Pierre ou le Fils criminel* (1660), Molière *Dom Juan* (1665). Claude La Roche Rosimond *Le Nouveau Festin de Pierre ou l'Athée foudroyé* (1670), Thomas Corneille, *Le festin de pierre* (1677).

The Restoration Theatre in England is shortly interested in the topic, for its “extravagance of the subject”. It is an interesting theatrical stage for the character of Don Juan, due to these specific spectacular qualities influenced by the standard imposed by Dorset Garden theatre, which remains a leitmotif in the substance of the English libertine as created by the whole cultural context of the period and especially *The Libertine* of Thomas Shadwell. The idea of Shadwell must be approached in the middle of the cultural context

dominated by materialism and deism, Thomas Hobbes and his *Leviathan*. The topics of drama promote the culture of libertinage : Sir Aston Cokayne in *Tragedy of Ovidiu* (1669), George Etherege *A man of mode or Sir Fopling Flutter* (1676), Thomas Durfay (D'Orfay) *A fond husband* (1677), Thomas Otway *Friendship in fashion*, William Wycherley (1640 – 1715) *The Plain-Dealer* (1676) sau *The Country Wife* (1675), Aphra Behn, John Wilmot - 2nd Earl of Rochester, William Congreve (1670 – 1729), *The Double Dealer* (1694), which could be considered as thematic fragments of english donjuanism. From the theatrical point of view the version of Shadwell stimulates the connexion between the “classical” donjuanism and the formulas of excessive theatre. The formula is maintained until the first decades of the nineteenth century under the name of *opera extravaganza*, mixture of shocking theatrical appearances, music and burlesque.

An interesting chapter for theatricality is the subject of Don Juan in the theatre of marionettes. The most common versions are *Don Juan oder Das steinerne Gastmahl* which became famous as result of the implication of the well-known actor of the time, Gottfried Prehauser, the type of Salzburger Hanswurst and Wienerischer Hanswurst.

The romantic drama, the last episode of the first chapter, aims to retrace the “fate” of post-mozartian donjuanism in literary drama, a genre without spectacular qualities, dominated by the poetic thought. The spanish perimeter offers paradoxically one of the most important version of Don Juan of the romantic theatre, *Don Juan Tenorio* by José Zorilla. On the other hand the very concept of romantic Don Juan is related to Prosper Mérimée and *Les Ames de Purgatoires* (1834), Alexandre Dumas with *Don Juan de Mañara, ou la chute d'un ange* (1836), Gustave Flaubert with *Une nuit de Don Juan* and *Peste à Florence*, Alfred de Musset in *Namouna*, etc.

The romantic “works” are mentioned only to indicate the dramatic background for the musical genres which use literature or poetic dramas for musical programatism. The phenomenon is equivalent with theatricality in music, a nonverbal system in which Don Juan maintains its dramatic and spectacular function.

CHAPTER II : Mannerism. Opera. Ballet.

The main achievement of Don Juan of the XVIII century is its contact with the Italian opera, french ballet, the viennese classicism, more precisely the opera of Mozart.

The most important target of the study is to establish the relation between musical form, *maniera* and “scenic text”. The musical theatricality is based on musical technologies, the theoretical support, harmonic elements, counterpoint, rhythm, meter, dynamics, tempo, etc.

The musical Romanticism proposes new forms as symphonic poem or romantic russian opera. These pure musical genres are introduced in the present study for the purpose of underlining the programmatic quality of music equivalent of drama with or without words, and virtual theatrical text. We mention Richard Strauss with *Don Juan* and the opera *The Stone guest* by Alexandr Dargomijski.

Regarded as an extension of Restoration spectacular we mention the english performance from the first decades which include the subject Don Juan. The most important names are Thomas J Dibdin, *Don Giovanni or A Spectre on Horseback ! A Comic, Heroic, Operatic, tragic, Pantomimic, Burletta-Spectacular Extravaganza* and William Thomas Moncrieff, a mixture of *buffo style* and *vaudeville*, from 1820 *Don Giovanni in the Country, The New Comic Operatic Melo-Dramatic Pantomimic Moral Satirical Gallymanfrical Parodiocal Salmagandical Olla Podriacal Extravaganza Bizarro Entertainment*. The theatres of East London are dominated by subjects as *Giovanni in Paris* și *Giovanni the Vampire*.

The light and consummation genres have a large contribution in the field of musical theatricality. They come with numbers of spoken dialogue, comicals, pantomime, dance and of course music, with accent on accessibility and beautiful melodic qualities.

CHAPTER III

The third chapter is orientated not only to dramatic donjuanism but also to the practical aspects. It starts with the plays which treat the subject Don Juan based on a commercial type of late romantic donjuanism, especially in Spain and France.

One special case is represented by Michel de Ghelderode and his drama of „direction”, *Don Juan ou les amants chimeriques* (1926) which promotes a dramatic text from the perspective of scenic *praxis* and for the new standards of histrionism indicated by Charley Chaplin. The theatricality is approached from multiple „traditional” perspectives : traditionalism, the scenic grotesque, carnival and mask. It is implied that one of the characteristic of theatrical vision of the play is not centered on dramatic text . It is based on structure, organisation, orchestration of means, etc. It appears the first suggestion of a black

Don Juan, even if is not a real character, only a mask. In the theatrical structure of the play we can indicate a polirhythmic – conflictual composition which sustain the dramatic progression, without static moments. The main purpose is the chain of coherent nonverbal situations. The idea of Don Juan not being a white man continues firstly in the anthropological theatre (Derek Walcott) and in the directing masterpiece of Peter Sellars, opera *Don Giovanni* by Mozart, put on stage in 1990.

Igor Stravinski brings on the stage in 1951 a new opera dedicated partially to donjuanism, faustism and obviously to the english libertinage of the XVIII-th century. Inspired by the series of engravings of Hogarth, Stravinski offers a new dimension to the notion of theatrical musical in terms of form, *balad opera*, revival in terms of contemporary musical perception, the classical form.

After a period without much theatrical creativity (the Romanticism) Don Juan represents a special interest for the stage directors of the XX-th century. There are two main options, *Dom Juan* by Molière and *Don Giovanni* by Mozart. Opera stage directing is the very expression of mannerism. That is why the third chapter of this study proposes a comparative approach between directing styles, from traditional views to experimental and radical interpretation. The versions proposed by this study starts with the traditional operistic vision of Joseph Losey (*Don Giovanni* 1979), created in the key of “marxist mannerism” with a deep socio-political interpretation, and the opera from Metropolitan Theatre New York, a project result of cooperation Zeffirelli / Lawless in order to point out the very essence of operistic mannerism (scenography, rendition, scenic situation, etc). The research continues with René Jacobs, Peter Brook, Peter Sellars in the direction of experimental stage directing of the opera, with different levels of theatricality and “scenic writing”.

The first approach of donjuanism in the Carribean territory is indicated in the novel *Juan Criollo* written by Carlo Loveira, a character which establishes the main characteristics of a Seducer of mixed race and wild, archaic impulses. The typical environment could be only the peripheric area and marginal brutality.

Another play analyzed in this study is *L'Autre Don Juan* written by the cuban writer Eduardo Manet, author which combines his native background with the french scenic experience obtained with Roger Blin. The structure of the play includes film techniques, pantomime, histrionism, etc. orchestrated in the direction of dramas of Spanish Golden Century, Calderon, Molina, Lope de Vega. The target is the rehabilitation of the mexican and spanish witter Ruiz de Alarcón, whose literary merits have not been correctly

recognized. The keywords of the director vision and concept of theatricality is meta-text, meta - drama, meta - character, meta – histrionism, play in play, role in role, *mise en abyme*, etc.

The experimental and courageous anthropological theatre brings one version which offers a special Don Juan, *The Joker of Seville*, written by the Nobel laureate Derek Walcott. The notion of theatricality evolves around the Carnival from Trinidad Tobago, and the characteristics of this culture, music, instruments, etc. The main character is *choteo*, the local type of Don Juan. The target of this episode is the relation between performance, the archaic and ritualic dimension of drama, the influences of ritual theatre with African roots. The drama of the author from Santa Lucia must be considered according to the theatrical experiments made by the reformers of stage direction, reformers like Grotowski, Barba, Brook. The characteristic of the theatricality signed by Derek Walkott is the spirit of Carnival, the music, the specific corporeality coordinated by *kalinda*, *bongo*, *stickfight*, *parang*, etc. Even Don Juan (*the Joker*) is a *stickman*, as Walcott names him. Even if the drama written by Derek Walcott leaves the impression that it is centered on textocentrism, the basis and the structure is determined by ritual and *praxis*. The main intention and coordinating motive in Walcott creation is universality (characters, theatre, drama, performance, identity). *The Joker of Seville* gathers theatrical experiences from asian theatre (*kabuki*), from american Broadway show (musical) from the african roots of the caribbean inhabitants (ritual and performance). The final “product” is the genetic artistic mixture, a *black kabuki*, an arhaico-elitistic *music hall*, etc.

The last episode of this chapter regards the versions of Don Juan in romanian drama. The main purpose is an interpretation in “mannerist” terms of two important plays , *Dona Juana* by Radu Stanca and *Amantul anonim* de Ion Minulescu

CONCLUSION

The donjuanism in the textocentric drama seems to be in a state of crisis. The consequences of the new approaches of theatricality are reflected on the modality of conceiving drama, of organizing the structure and the events. The dramatic text is the first to be eliminated. The target of theatrical donjuanism seems to aim the post dramatic theatre.

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