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## **DOMESTICATING DON JUAN\***

Who are they, and what are they about – these legions of ancient southern and eastern gods and goddesses, angels, devils, heroes and heroines who have refused to bow off the stage of a Christian civilization? They keep returning, sometimes disguised, their number augmented by fresh cohorts from the northern and western, the Celtic and Germanic realms, as well as by visitors from more distant pantheons such as the Hindu. Although Renaissance savants began to approach this complex question in ways that eventually would foster our modern analysis of myths, a further complication swiftly overtook such efforts. Their coworkers, the poets, brooded forth that mysterious constellation of Renaissance figures whom, in retrospect, we recognize to be ancestral spirits of modernity.

The magnificent Baroque tester and quester, Shakespeare's Hamlet and Cervantes' Don Quixote, arrived on the scene shortly after the philosopher Montaigne had begun exploring the perplexing twists and turns of his own consciousness and of the cultural record of humanity in a quirky new genre dubbed essays. Through and with Hamlet and Quixote, European readers were already probing the reliability of human judgment and the nature of the imagination as the Age of Reason spread its peacock fan.

A full century before the ink dried on Bacon's and Descartes's respective treatises on an empirical and a rationalist method to strive for certain knowledge and to reassess the human heritage and purpose, one of the radical doubters of the Renaissance, Cornelius Agrippa of Nettesheim, had recommended such a complete revision. The ears of Renaissance cognoscenti surely tingled when Marlowe's rebel Dr. Faustus cited Agrippa as a model of self-empowerment for aspiring minds. Hamlet and Quixote reached their respective tragic acceptances of natural and divine law in the fifteen-year interval at the start of the seventeenth century between the horrible finishes meted out to impious

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Faust in Marlowe's play, as in the original chapbook, and to Don Juan in Tirso de Molina's play. Confident that a more responsible culture of doubting had dawned, eighteenth-century philosophers appropriately modified the rationalist program for the re-education of the human race. Yet Hamlet, Quixote, Faust, and Don Juan lingered on into Romanticism as embarrassing memories and their paths crossed even more frequently in art.

Have these fictional characters been driving the process, or has, rather, the sheer volume of critical commentary on them been responsible for their persistence? In order to grasp the obvious paradox that, collectively, we participate in an open cultural conspiracy keeping them alive, we may appreciate but do not really need pointers from newer anthropologists like Claude Lévi-Strauss, who has suggested that Freud's theory of an Oedipus complex is simply one of the latest crystallizations continuing the ancient myth<sup>1</sup>. Cervantes long ago confirmed this composite lesson of the Renaissance anticipating Lévi-Strauss. In creating the anti-romance *Don Quixote* in the wake of Ariosto and Rabelais, and thereby founding the self-critical modern novel, Cervantes recapitulated the troubling discovery that when you fight the Middle Ages and romance you perpetuate them in cultural memory. Rabelais' joyful mockery of our stultification during the supposed epochal downhill slide of the Middle Ages, which Renaissance humanists sought to reverse, gave way in Cervantes to that bitter-sweet self-ironization about our medieval addictions that has been the hallmark of critical humanism down to the present. When Quixote dies in Christian humility, abjuring his desire to restore the phantom of romance, we along with the bereft Sancho feel a pang of regret that the dream-spawning noble clown is at last beaten into submission by the laws of life.

Shortly before Catholic Quixote's first sally, Hamlet, a student from the then fashionable new Protestant University of Wittenberg, electrified audiences by being fated to peer into the abyss of human life. A humanist princely questioner who knows what both a king and a clown are, and who unifies diverse roles as the axial protagonist of late Renaissance consciousness, Hamlet reaches the ripeness, the «readiness», at the limits of the knowable, in his encounter with otherness and the uncanny. Perhaps their human fallibility in their respective struggles have made Hamlet and Quixote less irritating companions than Faust and Don Juan to the ensuing centuries. This long train of second thoughts has, of course, considerably colored our views of them. If Hamlet's and Quixote's respective submissions to superior natural and supernatural reason has rendered them less troubling, by the same token, sheer obstreperousness in their earliest ventures in literature may well account for the disproportionate effort required to domesticate the anti-heroes Faust and Don Juan over the past some four hundred years.

And no wonder! The Faust of the late-sixteenth-century chapbook pulsates with humanist self-assertion so extreme that even the acknowledgment of it constituted a threat to readers then and later, including supposedly «enlightened» beneficiaries of the rejection of old orthodoxy. It is plausible to argue that as a libertine Marlowe manipulated the chapbook's fascination for the prideful magician so as to cloak the Renais-

sance challenge to older authority in an acceptable piety; that, by sugar coating *The Tragical History of Dr. Faustus*, Marlowe seduced the broader public into swallowing this potent Renaissance drug. Willynilly, the intensified focus on Faust's agony in Marlow's rewrite of the chapbook smuggled into our Christian world the intoxicating thrill of allegiance to a counter-order. What is more, Faust's tormented farewell to his disciples in a gloomy counterpart to the Last Supper and his truly ghastly immolation lifted his story into a numinous realm. Only Milton's Satan would yet marshal the luster sufficient, on the eve of the Enlightenment, to rival Faustus as the model of the European fatal man and free-thinking rebel. Shakespeare's Hamlet, too, is called from the start to probe something lurking as a threat in life and to recognize an order persisting beyond life; and in madly inspired adventures, Quixote brushes death often before meeting it. But the more striking analogy clearly is between the mysterious sacrifice of Faust in Marlowe's play and the black sacrament on which Tirso's Don Juan stubbornly feasts when death and hell claim him at the end.

There are further suggestive formal resemblances between Faust and Don Juan which later artists exploit. One is between Faust's more cerebral craving for experience and control of his world and the sensual Don Juan's unquenchable desire to know carnally the entire universe of women without loving any of them. If Faust as a fatal man emits a dusky Promethean glow, the more naïve Don Juan, a heedless male animal, is not only associated with the masculine element of fire as his emblem but literally rumpages through his society as the dangerous archaic power of Eros unchecked. Tirso, the Spanish playwright who first let him loose, was a sincere Christian and moreover an ordained priest. With the tough-mindedness of the Counter-Reformation, he linked this untrammelled flame and the unharnessed male principle with hellfire, because his anti-hero must be punished for mocking divine and social ordinances. Don Juan's nickname in the title is *el burlador*, the playboy, joker, prankster, or trickster. Both Faust and Don Juan belong unmistakably in the general lineage of their sixteenth-century comic predecessor Panurge, who is the alter ego of the exemplary humanist hero, Prince Pantagruel, in Rabelais' encyclopedic five-volume epic on the Renaissance ethos and quest. Whereas the wily sharper and rogue Panurge ultimately praises the virtue of marriage, that is, symbolically accepts harmony with natural law (which entails recognition of societal forms), the overweening and criminal intellectual Faust is deflected from any genuine integrative participation in normal existence; the devil can satisfy him with the humanist wishdream, the ghost of Helen. In analogy, the unstoppable sexual adventurer Don Juan tenaciously evades human commitment, even though out of his traditional Spanish grounding he cries out at the last moment for absolution. In his story Eros meets and merges with Thanatos.

It is especially appropriate, therefore, to focus on his story as a glaring contrast to the romantic paradigm (romantic with a small r). Although the Western love ethic has enjoyed important reinforcement from Renaissance Neoplatonism, we have inherited its tenets mainly from the high Middle Ages. The mythanalyst Joseph Campbell has proposed that, after early Christianity, this was perhaps the most significant break-

through of the Western principle of the paramountcy of individual identity. The story of Don Juan, then, challenges frontally what we celebrate on Valentine's Day or whenever we see Shakespeare's play *Romeo and Juliet*. For the Western love ethic posits that men and women can aspire to be more than self-interested animals. As Socrates taught in the *Symposium* as a disciple of Diotima and Petrarch in the *Canzoniere*, inspired by Laura, love educates and ennobles its servants. Now, as soon as Don Juan first appears on the European scene – we have no proven earlier version of him than Tirso's play from about 1616 – a perplexing doubleness attaches to his fiery drive to possess women generically, not individually. Although Tirso exhibits nothing comparable to a Marlovian hidden agenda, his play conveys more than the condemnation of human inconstancy, transitoriness, and confusion, more than a dose of obdurate sinfulness. This is proven by the variety of responses to the Don Juan figure, which Leo Weinstein in *The Metamorphoses of Don Juan* and Oscar Mandel in *The Theatre of Don Juan* have helpfully surveyed, right into the second half of our century<sup>2</sup>. If we then trace one revealing thread in the fortunes of this myth – the recurrent struggle to domesticate Don Juan, a struggle perhaps successful in certain cultural areas as our century ends – what does the domestication of the trickster-seducer reveal to us?

To end *El burlador de Sevilla y Convidado de piedra*, Tirso demonstrates that the King of Castile's reaffirmation of marriage is congruent with dispensing justice. Not just the females, but also the males who have been duped by Don Juan, that is, endangered by the sexual principle, are reintegrated into a sanctioned social order. Octavio can marry the disgraced Isabela as a «widow» now that her ravisher is deceased; and the Marquis de la Mota can finally take his cousin Ana who almost qualifies as a «widow», so close did Don Juan come to success under his friend's borrowed cloak. This squaring of the books is prepared when, in place of the king as patriarchal authority figure, the statue of the dead Commander inflicts on Juan as foretaste of hell the burning which we have seen Juan cause in Tisbea in Act I, soon after his violation of Isabela. Instead of Venus arising from the waters, a masculine incarnation of the power of love, Don Juan, comes to the proud fisher maiden out of the sea and engulfs her in flames. Tisbea, who moments before has vaunted to be «sola de amor esenta» (the sole girl not ruled by love, line 378), is anxious lest he be a wily Odysseus, her personal «caballo griego» (Trojan horse, line 613) and she the foolish city that opened its gates<sup>3</sup>. Reciprocally, in the final analysis, Juan's shipwreck in the feminine element proves to be a permanent condition. Using Petrarchistic rhetoric to snare her when he awakens in Tisbea's lovely arms, he speaks the truth unawares: «Vivo en vos, si en el mar muero» (I live in you if I die in the sea, line 584).

In their attempts to steer the course of events more humanely by prudential connivance, once passion has unleashed the ugly incident of Duchess Isabela's mistake, both the King of Naples and Juan's uncle Don Pedro undertake woefully inadequate measures to cope with the eruption of the natural forces we witness. Of course, Don Juan's behavior is the extreme case of this self-serving approach by the aristocratic elite, which the King of Castile, too, collaborates in during Act III. Tirso readily plays

up the charms of attractive women like Tisbea and Arminia and not without sympathy he shows their deceived reliance on formulas of marriage when they succumb to their own longing. But in Act II he lets the rakes remind us of the hard facts of prostitution, the plight of aging women stricken with venereal disease, and the inherent culpability of invitations which pass through grilled windows to wooing males from ladies who possess reputations of honor. Tirso is no sentimental fool about the reality of double standards and deception in human affairs. That knowledge only reinforces, rather than detracts, from the higher moral truth in his play. Although Tirso does not flinch from exposing the social problems, he focuses our attention beyond them by a whiff of hell's exhalations that concentrates the mind. When Juan keeps his word to the dead Commander and goes to the black meal in the church, we encounter something absolute. What will prove so productive for later versions of the antihero's heroic obduracy is that Tirso cannot avoid acknowledging Juan's wayward courage; it admits him into that special numinous realm, while the moralizing servant Catalinón, a lesser human specimen, crawls out of the débacle into the duller light of ordinary human life.

Within half a century, in Moliere's *Dom Juan, ou Le Festin de Pierre* (1665), the *commedia* clown Sganarelle is this tainted moralizing servant who, on the level of all-too-human duplicity and mediocrity, can act intermittently now as admonitory chorus and now as criminal collaborator to his bigamous master. His credentials thus suit him in the decade of Milton's Satan to be a spokesman to the public on the fascinating subject of their and his dark shadow, his master Don Juan. Sganarelle confides to Gusman in the opening scene that Don Juan is «le plus gran scélérat que la terre ait jamais porté, un enragé, un chien, un diable, un Turc, un hérétique, qui ne crois ni Ciel, ni Enfer, ni loup-garou, qui passe cette vie en véritable bête brute, a Turk, a heretic that believes in neither Heaven nor Hell, nor the bugaboo; who lives like a downright brute beast, one of Epicurus' swine, 716)<sup>4</sup>. And in scene 2, without avail he warns his master not to wear the mantle of a freethinker lightly, because «les libertins ne font jamais une bonne fin» (libertines never come to a good end, 721). It is clear that breaking the accord of two tender lovers ranks very high on Don Juan's scale of pleasure and that outrageous manipulation of every register in the sentimental and ethical codes delights him because his acts subvert his society's claims. Wounded by betrayal, Donna Elvira pursues Juan first to compel his compliance to her passion, then for revenge. A double dialectic of contending love and duty, sincerity and deception, passion and jealousy or rage unfolds in Juan's further escapades with Charlotta and Mathurina in Act II while search parties are in hot pursuit, hoping to close the gap in which he daringly defies all norms of social order. Molière expands the implications in Act III by having the disguised fugitives Juan and Sganarelle divide on the line separating a radical materialist view from the standard humanist argument of a meaningful great chain of being.

Then, out of Juan's stubborn bravery in Tirso's version, Molière creates a concomitant intellectual toughness that can pay tribute to equal courage. We see this turning when Juan offers a beggar a piece of gold only on the condition he curse, and still

gives it to him «pour l'amour de l'humanité» (for the love of Mankind, 748) when out of genuine piety the beggar refuses. Juan's natural generosity extends to spontaneously defending an outnumbered swordsman who turns out to be Elvira's duty-bound, pursuing brother, Don Carlos. When the grateful Carlos offers Juan the opportunity to make peaceful reparations through marriage, Juan clearly conforms to the beggar's example by refusing to compromise on his own code as a libertine noble. That firmness is not shaken even by direct evidence of a supernatural power in the encounter with the statue. Juan's defiant answer is to invite his murder victim to supper. The Roman garb of the statue suggests both paternal authority and classical virtue. The worldly parallel is clear when, in Act IV, Juan's father rebukefully declares: «Je ferois plus d'état du fils d'un chrocheteur qui serait honnête homme, que du fils d'un monarque qui vivroit comme vous» (I would have more regard for the son of a porter that was an honest man than the son of a monarch that should live like you, 763) and proposes to check his criminal conduct. In Act IV, we shiver at Juan's ruthless Oedipal aside, «Eh! mourez le plus tôt que vous pourrez» (Die as soon as you can, 763), and at his long speech on the political uses of hypocrisy, the age's most fashionable vice. His mastery practicing it on his own father in Act V gives us the full measure of his subversive potential. In Molière's hand, Juan's detailed analysis of how «sous cet habit respecté, (les vicieux) ont la permission d'être les plus méchants hommes du monde» (a respectful outside licenses the wickedest fellows in the world, 771) becomes a dagger to penetrate the moral hollowness of his times. We hear a genuine libertarian protest through the mocker's exposure of social dissembling.

These underground currents are all the more interesting in the light of a transformation that appears in counterpoint to Juan's macho generosity. In Act IV, Elvira visits to announce that out of earthly love there has emerged in her «une tendresse toute sainte, un amour détaché du tout» (a tenderness entirely holy, a love quite detached, 764); she wants to save him, with the intention of withdrawing again into a religious retreat; and she begs him, «ne me refusez point votre salut» (don't refuse me your salvation, 765). Juan feels a tiny flicker of his old flame at this but continues on his own course. Elvira's grasping for the sublimation of desires – perfectly in accord with the major Western tradition of the educational ladder of love – will provide one of the major weapons that lesser playwrights eagerly take up in the struggle to domesticate Don Juan. The paramount example is, of course, the sentimentalized drama *Don Juan Tenorio* (1844) by the late Romantic José Zorilla y Moral, who allows one of the seducer's victims, Doña Ines, to save him by the power of her love founded on total self-sacrifice. The main action on a terrestrial level climaxes in Act IV of Part I when Don Juan acknowledges his love for the wronged Ines, convinced she could redeem him through her goodness. But her outraged father Don Gonzalo scorns his contrition as a cowardly dodge; forced to kill Don Gonzalo and Don Luis and feeling heaven's gate is closed on him, Juan leaves Ines behind in the hell of worldly life much as Faust abandons Margarete in the dungeon at the end of Goethe's *Faust*, Part I. In Part II of Zorilla's work, we enter not a complex symbolic affirmation of human striving as with Goethe, but a Baroque

postmortem morality play in romantic dress. The tenacious spirit of drowned Ines visits her conscience-stricken and desperate beloved in Act I, and even her father, as a rather loquacious statue, comes on a special mission of mercy to help prevent Juan's pride from pushing him into madness in Act II. The title of Act III explicitly joins the «Misericordia de Dios, y apoteosis de Amor» (the mercy of God and the apotheosis of Love). Juan's final reaching for heaven through faith reciprocally saves Ines, who informs him and us: «Yo mi alma he dado por ti, / y Dios te ortoga por mí / tu dudosa salvación» (I gave my soul for you, and because of me God has granted your salvation which hung in the balance, lines 3787-9)<sup>5</sup>.

Here we must begin to wonder just what new thing it is that Don Juan may be discovering in the nineteenth century through his obsessive attraction to women. The Don-Juanesque aspects of the seduction of Margarete in Goethe's sublime two-part masterwork completed in 1832, *Faust: Eine Tragodie* (Faust: A Tragedy), are unmistakable; Goethe's symbolic quester, Faust, goes forward to the moment when his soul, at death, because he follows the mysterious eternal feminine, will slip through the clutches of the devil. In the second half of the nineteenth century, in the four-part opera cycle *Der Ring des Nibelungen* (The Ring of the Nibelung, 1844 ff.), the late Romantic Wagner again affirms the Antigone principle, and the feminine side of human identity. Being built on fraud and coercion, the empire of the patriarchal ruler figure Wotan ultimately collapses, while his daughter Brünnhilde proclaims the salvational power of love on her funeral pyre. In brief, there are too many serious examples to allow us to dismiss Zorilla's mawkish popular work as an oddity – rather it represents a new mainstream tendency. Nonetheless, masked underneath this Romantic taming of the masculine offender, a second and disturbing change in Don Juan's literary function gradually emerges.

Surely one of the weirdest moment in Don Juan's travels through Western cultural history is also the key moment of his modern transformation. It is in Romantic literature (romantic with a capital R) that his myth begins to be understood as a version of the «eternal» story of the life-force. For example, we reencounter Don Juan in the theatricality of the new nocturnal space of the mind in chapter four of that quite bizarre German novel of 1804, *Die Nachtwachen des Bonaventura* (The Night Watches of Bonaventura), when at midnight in a favorite haunt, the gloomy Gothic cathedral, the attention of the pseudo-biographical narrator, a disenchanting poet, former actor of Hamlet, certified clown, and ex-puppeteer named Kreuzgang, is drawn to a majestic figure «mit einem südlichen blaßgrauen Kolorit» (with a southern pale grey complexion, 66) who kneels on a gravestone<sup>6</sup>. The stranger's «holzerne mechanische Bewegungen, und (...) steinernen antiken Stil» (wooden mechanical movements and... petrified ancient style, 68), as he lifts his dagger to kill himself, excites in Kreuzgang hope for a genuine tragic catastrophe. But at the stroke of midnight, the momentarily benumbed figure cannot strike and slips back into time. As he explains to the fascinated watchman, he cannot die; though wild and angry, a second Prometheus, he can only curse his author: «hätte mich nur der Dichter nicht selbst mit ins Stück verflochten als handelnde

Person» (would the poet never had woven me, too, into the play as *dramatis persona*, 72). We are listening – need I say it? – to Don Juan himself who reveals that for many ages of man already he has been striving to escape from the director's control, painfully aware that «ich hier unten schon viele Jahrhunderte als Akteur gedient habe und eine von den stehenden italienischen Masken bin, die gar nicht vom Theater herunterkommen» (I have served many centuries here below as actor and am one of the standard Italian masks which never step down from the stage, 83). Despite seeking refuge in insanity, Don Juan is condemned suddenly «wie in einen unermeßlichen Abgrund, in dem die Zeit wie ein unterirdischer nie versiegender Strom dumpf dahinrauscht» (to peer deeply into myself as into an unfathomable abyss in which time is rumbling on as a never exhaustible subterranean stream, 84); he can never escape his role. Don Juan next tells his story to Kreuzgang in the form of a savage *commedia dell'arte* farce, to a Mozartian accompaniment, the music from *Don Giovanni* badly executed by village musicians. The protagonists, Juan, his brother Ponce, and the beautiful Columbine, are mariottes, while a malicious clown, Jackpudding, acts as fate and chorus.

In the next chapter, Kreuzgang translates this nocturnal farce for us into a more prosaic daylight genre preferred in the mendacious bourgeois age, that is, into a sentimental tragedy. In this version, at first unknowingly, two brothers struggle murderously over their own sister. But it remains at bottom the same terrifying account of Oedipal desire and violence. The watchman hears Mozartian music repeatedly as he explores the hidden face beneath the mask of his times in this initially mawkish, then increasingly gothic and horrific tale. It sounds again in a later chapter when he finds that the town's last noble soul, therefore starving, has committed suicide. This poet dangles in his garret by the cord that bound the manuscript of his rejected play *Man: A Tragedy*. Through the watchman we are able to read its Prologue, spoken by the clown, which comes in the middle of the action, thus effectively at the end of our human story, because here the drama falters. The reason is explicitly stated: in the Romantic age, under the reign of reflexion, we pass finally out of the delusion of a tragic stature inhering in the human story and beyond belief in immortality into the truth of farce, into insane laughter, hurtling toward nothingness. The clown analyzes the triumphalist moment when European idealism proclaims humanity and world history to be God. He exposes this pretentious claim (it will later provide the core of Hegel's philosophy) as the gigantic, the axial lie and confirms that «der Ödipus, der Mensch, nur bis zur Blindheit, nicht aber in einer zweiten Handlung zur Verklärung fortschreite» (that man, that Oedipus, will progress only as far as blindness, but not in a second plot to transfiguration, 142). Kreuzgang identifies in anguish with Hamlet, because Hamlet has appeared in cultural history on the boundary between kings and clowns, tragedy and farce. As the novel teaches us, Oedipus, Don Juan, and Hamlet are stages in the consciousness of a creature who is sliding down a Viconian ladder of values from the divine into the absurd.

Of course, many other Romantics helped the Spanish macho Don Juan metamorphose into a representative of rebel consciousness that dared to pierce the veils over the mystery of life. One of the most fascinating was the multitalented artist Hoffmann who

advertised his Mozart idolatry by adopting Amadeus as one of his own names. In the story «Don Juan: Eine fabelhafte Begebenheit, die sich mit einem reisenden Enthusiasten zugetragen» (Don Juan: A Fabulous Adventure that Befell a Music Enthusiast on His Travels), Hoffmann's narrator in 1814 recounts the dream-like experience of being visited by Donna Anna while he is attending a production of Mozart's opera *Il dissoluto punito ossia Don Giovanni* (première 1787 in Prague). This music critic learns directly from her the secret that she pursues Don Juan in order to bring peace to her soul, a soul consumed with raging love because «Nur Er, nur Don Juan, konnte den wollüstigen Wahnsinn in ihr entzünden, mit dem sie ihn umfing, der mit der übermächtigen, zerstörender Wut höllischer Geister im Innern sündigte» (he alone, Don Juan alone could awaken in her the erotic madness with which she embraced him – him who sinned with the omnipotent destructive rage of hellish spirit in him, 95)<sup>7</sup>. Yes, Hoffmann has let the cat out of the bag; somewhere between the lines, somewhere offstage in interstices of the libretto, Donna Anna gave in passionately to Don Juan. This communication with the character from Mozart's work, accessible only through the music, opens the narrator's mind to interpret the mystery of the antihero's transformation. In an arrogant striving for godlike perfection, Don Juan has rushed from one more beautiful woman to another into bitter satiety, has passed beyond the hope of ever stilling his own longing through love, in fact revolts against the very thought of such a relationship, resisting such a delusion at every opportunity as a way to outrage Nature and the Creator. By cruelly dashing the happiness of lovers, he achieves «ein herrlicher Triumph über jene feindliche Macht, die über ihn immer mehr heraushebt aus dem beengenden Leben – über die Natur – über den Schöpfer! – Er will auch wirklich immer mehr aus dem Leben, aber nur um hinab zu stürzen in den Orkus» (an exalted triumph over that hostile monster, and raises the seducer forever above our narrow life, above Nature, above the Creator' He really desires more and more to transcend life, only to sink all the deeper into Hell, 94). It is simply too bad that Donna Anna is the feminine counterpart to the bitter seducer, because now, as the deeply wounded creature who can never really embrace an ordinary husband, she «spricht in geheimen Anklängen, in den wunderbarsten Beziehungen, jene innere, alles Irdische verzehrende Stimmung der Seele aus» (expresses in secret harmonies, in the most marvellous relations, that inner state of the soul that consumes all earthly happiness, 96).

In retrospect, after Bonaventura and Hoffmann, Don Juan's older life under Tirso as a criminal rake seems an understandable and a relatively simple job. But if the later chapters of his adventures reveal that the eternal feminine is in a state of perturbation and desire worse than his own, the prospects for job satisfaction are rather grim. The late Romantic playwright Christian Grabbe actually brings the two archetypal offenders together as rivals representing a split modern consciousness in his tragedy *Don Juan und Faust* (1826). He condemns both Faust, the more cerebral champion of the ideal, and Don Juan, irrational exponent of the life-force, because he concludes that God and nature, the ideal and the real, constitute a mutually irreconcilable antinomy and are equally inefficacious as meaningful pathways. George Bernard Shaw has no-

thing reassuring to add as the next century starts. The banner allusion to Nietzsche in Shaw's *Man and Superman* (1903) tells us much about the context in which we should place his particular modernist domestication of Don Juan, and the witty dream-play set in hell within Act III confirms the new twist. Through dream, the rebel entrepreneur and socialist reformer John Tanner reexamines the logic of the career of his namesake Juan Tenorio and admits that he is now an aspirant for heaven, but a newer kind of heaven, where boring human beings have no place because «you live and work instead of playing and pretending»; it is the «home of the masters of reality», a refuge from an «earth which is the home of the slaves of reality»<sup>8</sup>. In Hoffmann, Donna Anna is eternally a vibrant young woman; in Shaw, she discovers herself in old age as a tedious crone in whom lingers the mind of a vapid vamp.

Late nineteenth-century art and literature witnessed a rebirth of the femme fatale and a concomitant rise of the theme that the glory and cruelty of life were interlocked. Artists like Huysmans and Wagner popularized the views of the Romantic philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer who, in 1818 in his treatise *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* (The World as Will and Idea), taught that human existence is a tragic captivity to the «will» or «life-force»; and that, even though certain individuals gain deeper insights into human suffering and joy, we are driven by the imperatives of the survival of our species and directed from the ultimately ungraspable unconscious. To improve on Schopenhauer, Nietzsche proposed a creative affirmation of nature's inexorable laws, a vitally heroic and aristocratic reshaping of values in an era whose false, sickly values he thought were hollowed out to the point of collapse. The combined vogue of Schopenhauer, Wagner, and Nietzsche fed so-called «decadent» writing of the *fin-de-siècle*, for example, the works of Gabriele D'Annunzio, which embraced cruelty and death as necessary elements for heightening existence above the herd mentality.

In contrast to Nietzsche's inherent misogynism, his Austrian contemporary, Leopold von Sacher-Masoch, celebrated the superior power of the feminine or natural principle and of male subservience to it in such influential novels as *Venus im Pelz* (Venus in Furs), which swept Europe in 1870. Pitted against this new feminine truth as well as the secret purposes of the unconscious, many male protagonists of important early twentieth-century works discovered their subordination to life's larger design. Joyce's *Ulysses* is perhaps the best-known playful revaluation of the age-old heroic tradition of Western literature. The main male protagonists – Leopold Bloom (the suffering cuckold named after Masoch), Stephen Dedalus (the artist-elect who broods over his failure to be a Nietzschean superman), and Blazes Boylan (the relentless seducer whose name recalls the heat and fire of the Don Juan tradition) – can never fully grasp or displace the inexhaustible reality of the All-Mother whom we meet in Molly. While Joyce couches his daring revaluation in a benevolent Rabelaisian humor, Kafka practices a grimmer surrealist masochism in stories such as *Die Verwandlung* (The Metamorphosis) in 1914. There Venus in Furs puts in her appearance on page one, in the guise of a magazine pin-up, as the goddess to whom the wretched traveling salesman Gregor Samsa is being sacrificed. The elusive but triumphant feminine principle is often openly associated

with Masoch's Venus – appearing, for example, in the constant transformations of Odette in Marcel Proust's *Du côté de chez Swann* (Swann's Way) in 1913; likewise, in the role-shifting of boa-wearing Clawdia Chauchat in Thomas Mann's *Der Zauberberg* (The Magic Mountain) in 1924. With women of their mettle on the scene, the literature of modernity is hardly a congenial place for Don Juans, let alone self-sacrificial, parodic Fausts.

Just a few years after Proust's and Mann's masterworks, Hermann Hesse's novel *Steppenwolf* (1927) takes note of the puzzling decline of meaningful masculinity in the early twentieth century. Its inner narrator and title figure gradually recognizes that as a modern German intellectual he represents the preponderance of worn-down Faustian types over real human vitality. In dream-like processes, a resentful Steppenwolf discovers that, far from being the monumentalized culture hero of his nation and thus effectively dead, the poet Goethe had and has a mysterious hermetic and dionysian connection with life and creativity. Hesse revisits and intertwines two traditions descended from Romanticism, as he reconsiders the last moment when a Faust or Don Juan still had force. One tradition is the recognition of the link between laughter and the devil, or the unconscious, a theme that passed from Jean Paul, over Baudelaire, to Bergson and Freud. The other is the reverence for Mozart as the demiurgic instrument through which the entire range of the life-force, from the angelic to the diabolic, expressed itself in the age of Goethe. Don Juan's hellish laughter in *Don Giovanni* is transmuted in Hesse's novel into Mozart's celestial laughter over the divine joke of life. Hesse leaves us with Steppenwolf's confession of his humiliating failure to acknowledge the symbol of the androgyne, at the climax of his psychedelical experience in the Magic Theater. The ringing laughter of Mozart cascades over Steppenwolf's folly as a redemptive reminder, an inspiring reproof, and unsettling balm. Why is it that, with Steppenwolf, we can hear Mozart laughing – and what does it mean to laugh like Mozart? Why should the reader of the twentieth century feel a yearning to commune with that remote mind, like part of the mind of God, that subsumes Don Juan's laughter?

We are only doing what the religious existentialist and existential psychologist Kierkegaard did when in 1843, in his meditative essay *Enten-Eller* (Either/Or), he probed the mystery of love and reviewed the whole Don Juan tradition, from Tirso over Moliere and Mozart to Grabbe. This seemed essential to him if he were ever to examine the ambivalent facts about marriage and to understand the condition of the modern human being, in a secular era, caught between the polarities of aesthetic and ethical consciousness. Kierkegaard unashamedly follows Hoffmann in revering Mozart as a virtual god and *Don Giovanni* as perhaps the closest thing to genuine revelation we have in our paltry times after Homer, the Bible, and Shakespeare. In the process, the Danish sage anticipates much that Rilke will have to say about women as less damaged by the curse of reflection, more capable of love, the leap of faith. In an introductory fragment Kierkegaard is granted any gift but one sole gift by the gods and he addresses them as follows: «'Høistaerede Samtidige, jeg vælger een Ting, at jeg altid maa have Latteren paa min Side'. Der var ikke en Gud, der svarede et Ord, derimod gave sig alle

til at lee» («Esteemed contemporaries, I choose one thing: always to have laughter on my side». Not a single word did one god offer in answer; on the contrary they all began to laugh)<sup>9</sup>. Thus our challenging consciousness of our own human condition is paradoxically connected with a divine realm.

The variant expressions of the anti-Romantic strain in the nineteenth century fascination for Don Juan include the young Galdós' novella *La Sombra* (The Shadow) of 1870. Imaginative but brashly confident in positivistic values, the Spanish author has his unnamed narrator, a psychologist and gentleman detective, relate the strange case of Anselmo (implicitly named after Cervantes' «Curioso Impertinente» from *Don Quixote*), an elderly eccentric recluse with fustian Romantic traits. By inducing Anselmo to recount his story in what amounts to a therapeutic investigation, the outer narrator discovers that, as a young husband, Anselmo became so threatened by the age-old reality of Eros that he slipped into madness, allowed his compromised wife to perish in a house fire (that exhibits the flame motif of the legend), and repressed these traumatic memories. A key event of incipient madness dredged from Anselmo's past is his experience of seeing Paris, the ancient seducer, step down from a picture on the wall and begin to undermine his marriage. In therapeutically induced new conversations with Paris, it grows clear that Anselmo could not face the fact that a present-day conqueror, Alejandro, his best friend, was the actual intruder. In painful exchanges with his alter ego Paris, Anselmo has to hear or reveal his own deeper knowledge of sexual realities, of the double and triple moral standard in society that enables regulation of the tensions between nature and the communal order, and the elaborate network of relationships mediated through marriage. His parents-in-law represent the normative attitudes forcefully. At the end, on drawing Anselmo out of his Romantic sickness, Galdós' liberal and humane narrator is quite proud of having exercised the new sort of scientific tools which promise a progressive liberation of the human mind from its superstitious past. But Galdós underscores, at the same time, the lasting power that is exhibited in the ancient myths and must be respected.

Margarida Losa has detected in the main trends of the twentieth-century treatment of the Don Juan myth since Shaw – what I call his «domestication» – an ongoing critique of patriarchal culture and a mainly implicit or subterranean feminist plea<sup>10</sup>. She sees already in Tirso's play the seeds of a questioning of the institutions by which Eros is contained and managed by the male power-brokers who have to put down serious threats to their compact. Although not detailing the tension of these forces in Tirso's play, Losa regards Freud's treatment of Don Juan in *Totem and Taboo* and *Civilization and Discontent* as actually recapitulating the contest between Eros as an anti-social disruptive principle and Thanatos, but with a new twist, since while Don Juan can be constantly destroyed in the individual, he is never defeated in the race. Besides pointing out interesting substitutions of modern for older motifs in the legend (e.g. use of a «polycultural Center» in Jacinto Grau's *El burlador que no se burla* for the traditional cemetery, or the displacement of sexual by abstract passion in Max Frisch's *Don Juan, oder die Liebe zur Geometrie*), and shifts in the relative weighting of emphases (e.g.,

an abundance of scenes of persecution of Don Juan, the repercussions of attacking society, instead of seductions by him in Brecht's version), Losa argues that the now largely «social» focus of twentieth-century Don Juan literature has issued in a kind of implicit feminism evident in works such as Almeida Faria's *O Conquistador* (1990).

After mid-century, Emile Capouya astutely noted that the original «Don Juan without the added dimensions of full-blown iconoclasm would be no fit instrument for the Counter Reformation morality play, even though it is his restless lust that supplies the chief impetus for (Tirso's) drama»<sup>11</sup>. As mere priapic womanizer he and his women conquests would and did tend to slip into comedy – to go over the boundary line which Mozart thrillingly skirted. Trying to domesticate Don Juan, Capouya argues, «has the effect of denigrating and neutralizing the qualities that Shaw (still) perceived in the character, and that led him to incarnate them in the revolutionist, John Tanner, in *Man and Superman*. (...) The Counter Reformation dressed Don Juan in the gaudy robes of its most pressing fears. Our own age, so much more timid and tacit, undercuts the entire question of the necessity for revolution by declaring that the revolutionary is a defective. Lenin, Stalin, Hitler, Mussolini – our era has suffered so much from the actions of outsize personalities that it is ready to condemn out of hand any unorthodoxy, any originality, any exuberance, any protest. A homosexual and impotent age accuses its creative spirits of perversity and barrenness, even as it lays its frustrations at the door of woman (the *castrating female* – save the mark, we even have a technical term for the chimera that represents our excuse for not trying to change our castrating society). We like to be told that men are being moulded to an innocuous, uncombative, asexual pattern, as Organization Men and members of the Lonely Crowd. It is easy to see why the notion that Don Juan is merely sick, sick is congenial to a society that is made up of gelded men and altered women». Thus far, the protests of Capouya against the «shallow profundities which are the intellectual coin of our day» in an article published in *The Nation* in 1959, with its slant of that day.

If Capouya is halfway correct, in an administered society such as our own of the 1990s (the kind Kafka dreamt of) there is scant room in the public realm of the «advanced» nations for the original Don Juan or even his Mozartian, let alone Shavian, reincarnation. Therefore I conclude that the disrespectful, defiant Spaniard must go and probably has gone underground into deeper, more recondite channels of the male and female psyche; he must wear more subtle masks and perform ever more devious stunts, such as the ultimate trick of disappearing into the interstices of textuality as a fading hypothetical speech act, instead of the old Freudian dodge of being both Oedipal and homoerotic. – It may give some offense to suggest that our contemporary world exhibits its own duplicity *vis-à-vis* Don Juan: for example, by, on the one hand, trying to rationalize the proliferating barbarism of lethal young gangsters whom we nightly hear being interviewed on TV as minor celebrity figures; and by, on the other hand, attaining new peaks of expressed aversion for any masculinity that is not certifiably tamed, devalued, and humiliated.

The low ebb of Don Juan in the 1990s may, however, be like the stage which a vile worm reaches because, in order to be reborn in a higher form, it must allow itself to be

wrapped textually in protective layers and then to wait in somnolent exile for a propitious season. I am convinced I shall never see Don Juan's reemergence from the cocoon of his domestication as an interesting butterfly. My remaining time on earth will not suffice. But some day, – and if Valentine's Day works its spell and some of the young at heart continue to do what is so utterly politically incorrect, to get married and have children, – it will surely only be their children or children's children who may experience it: who may some day behold Don Juan unfold his flaming wings again to fascinate and perplex further generations; or who, at least, once again, may hear Mozart's celestial laughter.

- <sup>1</sup> Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology*, trans. by Claire Jacobson and Brooke Grundfest Schoepf (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1967), p. 213: «On the contrary, we define the myth as consisting of all its versions; or to put it otherwise, a myth remains the same for as long as it is felt as such. A striking example is offered by the fact that our interpretation may take into account the Freudian use of the Oedipus myth and is certainly applicable to it».
- <sup>2</sup> Leo Weinstein, *The Metamorphoses of Don Juan* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1959); Oscar Mandel, *The Theatre of Don Juan* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1963).
- <sup>3</sup> Citations by line number from Tirso de Molina, *The Trickster of Seville and the Stone Guest*, ed. by Gwynne Edwards (Warminster: Aris & Phillips, 1986).
- <sup>4</sup> Citations by page number from vol. 1 of Molière, *Théâtre complet*, 2 vols., ed. by Robert Jouanny (Paris: Garnier, n.d.).
- <sup>5</sup> Citations by line number from José Zorilla, *Don Juan Tenorio, traidor, inconfeso y mártir*, ed. by José Luis Gómez (Barcelona: Planeta, 1984).
- <sup>6</sup> Citations by page number from *Die Nachtwachen des Bonaventura*, ed. by Gerald Gillespie (Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh Press, 1972).
- <sup>7</sup> Citations by page number from vol. 1 (*Fantasiestücke in Callot's Manier; Werke 1814*) of E. T. A. Hoffmann, *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. by Hartmut Steinecke, Gerhard Allroggen, and Wulf Segebrecht (Frankfurt a.M.: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1993).
- <sup>8</sup> Shaw's «Don Juan in hell» passage is conveniently carried in Mandel, pp. 551-58.
- <sup>9</sup> Søren Kierkegaard, *Sämlede Vaerker*, 20 vols., ed. by A. B. Drachmann, J. L. Heiberg, and H. O. Lange (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1962), I, p. 7.
- <sup>10</sup> Margarida Losa considers Shaw's *Man and Superman* (1903), Lenormand's *L'Homme et ses fantômes* (1921), Grau's *El burlador que no se burla* (1930), Brecht's *Don Juan* (1953), and Frisch's *Don Juan, oder die Liebe zur Geometrie* (1953) in her article «Don Juan, ameaça do patriarcado», in *Colóquio/Letras*, no. 64 (November 1981), 10-20, and examines Almeida Faria's novel *O Conquistador* (1990) at some length in her article «The New Metamorphosis of Don Juan,» in *Parodie, pastiche, mimétisme*, ed. by Paola Mildonian (forthcoming).
- <sup>11</sup> Emile Capouya, «A propos de Don Juan», in *The Nation*, 189: 5 (Aug. 29, 1959), pp. 93-5.