

# Music and Analytic Discourse<sup>1</sup>

*The questions this work seeks to pursue were spurred by the Finale of Mozart's Don Giovanni performed in Amsterdam by the Englisch Baroque Solist in 1995, under the direction of John Eliot Gardiner.*

What has this Finale of Don Giovanni's made us see and hear?<sup>2</sup>

That there is something unheard of and unseen that nonetheless makes itself heard in Mozart's music, which is able to transport us "Elsewhere."

Beyond the sound vibrations as such, each of us perceived, at a particular moment that for opaque reasons is his and his alone, the sudden presence of an inner impulse whose appearance corresponded with the vibration issued and conveyed by the instruments of the orchestra and the human voice.

This moment, which Opera, like all Art, is able to create, is something new in the sense that it disappears as soon as it appears, and when it reveals itself once more, it will be Other than what it was. The argument I shall pursue here is that this moment was not unknown at the origins of the new discourse that Lacan dubbed "psychoanalytic."

The basis for this is the experience we have had of Don Juan's cry, and the distance it takes us across the analytic field of transference.

First note that subjective engagement in an experience does not go without saying.

This is why in the Finale, word and music join forces in support of the everyday point-of-view, the point-of-view of guilt. There is no subjectivity in it because the auditor participates in the scene as a spectator watching the Commander, who is the one who intervenes.

The listener is immediately drawn to the long, repetitive and octave-straddling notes ("*Giovan-ni*," "*invita-sti*"); the funereal quarter-eighth-quarter rhythm; the lapidary conclusion "*Ah, tempo piu non v'é*," ("Oh, time is up") carried by a descending chromatic melody of whole-notes whose rhythm seems to swallow up time, and finally the reciting tones that silence all debate.

These aspects are interesting because they describe a Commander who is a "non-dupe,"<sup>3</sup> someone who can't be fooled, perhaps even because he resides within each of us already. But does our fascination with the Commander not run the risk of garnering too much of our attention?

The experience of Don Juan's cry might instead teach us of the existence of an Other thing.<sup>4</sup> Perhaps we as psychoanalysts might learn more from this opera<sup>5</sup> about the art of

---

<sup>1</sup> This essay, written one year after an improvised talk given at the OPUS-GATTIERES *Festival d'Art Lyrique* on Mozart's *Così fan tutte* (Saint Paul, July 31-August 1, 2004), is an attempt to respond to the questions that followed and my own development of this topic over the course of my 2004-2005 Seminar in Paris. Le premier Numéro de la revue *Insistance* éditée chez Erès en octobre 2005 offre un développement sous le titre "*Mozart et le cri de Don Juan*".

<sup>2</sup> I shall italicize "Don Juan" when referring to the Opera, but will write it without italics when speaking of the character himself.

<sup>3</sup> Characterized as such in homage to Lacan's Seminar *Les non-dupes errant (Non-Dupes Err/Names of the Father)*, especially the meeting on April 9, 1974.

<sup>4</sup> Related to the Alterity referred to above but also to an Other *jouissance* that we shall meet with again at the end of this text.

<sup>5</sup> The aim here is not to effect a psychoanalytic explanation of Art in general, or Opera in particular.

what Lacan as analyst-analyzand clearly sought to put to the test through his experiment (*experience*) of the pass.

But the passage in question deserves closer scrutiny. What is happening when Don Juan's cry makes us hear this Other something, every time we listen to it, but without knowing what it is?

The cry must first and foremost be interpreted as an expression of the horror Don Juan feels when confronted with the abyss in which he had been imprisoned until then.

Having heard this "je ne sais quoi," which the *Précieuses* identified as the presence of wit (*l'esprit*), allows us to then hear Lacan saying, in his paper on "Logical Time,"<sup>6</sup> that the fixity of meaning (*signification*) is forever imprisoning the speaking being.

But when he realized what he did not know he knew, the doors swung open and nothing was as it was before.

Don Juan was no longer the *dissoluto punito* we had come to expect because he was visited by angst, and appealed to the power of words: "*Che vuoi?*" ("What do you want?").

At this point the Commander could forge on with his strategy of using the weight of his words to silence all appeal, of changing the rhythm of his versification, of accelerating the tempo, and of exerting pressure through reciting tones and 7<sup>th</sup> diminished chords – his approach could be all the more a funeral march for its plodding quarter-eighth-quarter rhythm, and so on.

For his part, Don Juan was Elsewhere. He was no longer hiding, he offered him "his" hand and this is something *never seen before*:

The tension that filled his being first issued in a stifling "Oï-mé," (Oh! Heavens) conveyed through a diminished seventh chord, which then sounded and resounded beyond the horizon, the cry as a signifier meaning anything and everything...

Mozart's genius was to give us a Don Juan who was no longer invited to dine on commandments, because he had been invoked to partake in hearing the unheard and seeing the unseen, both of which are freely revealed.

Accepting the possibility of this Don Juan as the Unexpected generates a certain anxiety making it possible to imagine that Don Juan himself might also have heard in his cry this "je ne sais quoi" that arrests his listener. In other words, the listener hears it as if it were coming from within himself.

This became clear to me when Jean-Michel Vives<sup>7</sup> made me aware of a strange wager Mozart makes, first identified by Darius Milhaud, in the Commander's "*Chi si pasce di cibo celeste*"<sup>8</sup> that occurs in the early moments of his encounter with Don Juan.

---

<sup>6</sup> "Le Temps logique et l'assertion de certitude anticipée" ("Logical Time and the Assertion of Anticipated Certainty"), in J. Lacan *Les Ecrits* Seuil pp 197-213

<sup>7</sup> For which I offer him my thanks.

At issue is a twelve-note series that Milhaud used in his 1952 opera *David* as the basis for the music accompanying the appearance of the Prophet Jonathan, who reproaches David for allowing himself to be corrupted by the flesh.

The most we can do is bow our heads before the presence of this Stranger to the sovereign law of tonality, and the fact that Darius Milhaud was the only one to have heard it confers upon him the name of “Knowledge Supposed as Subject,”<sup>9</sup> which was for Lacan the locus of the function of writing.<sup>10</sup>

Silently, under cover of darkness, the Commander’s voice has seemingly surpassed the dimension of the mind (*l’esprit*) and its trace, writing.

What was needed was a Don Juan to hear this discovery, the only one that counts as such, in the human voice of one who “errs.”

In gratitude it leaves behind a writing, an unheard of trace of its own passage, a silent composition weaving together orchestra and human voice: *something never before heard...*

The twelve notes are numbered.

Mozart did not falter: he had unearthed a music that knotted, in the same time and the same space, both the laws of tonality and a law that frees itself from them through dissonance.<sup>11</sup>

The psychoanalyst can only laugh when he hears this, insofar as Mozart reminds him of the subject of the unconscious he encounters from time to time, the artist at work in generating the witticism, a creation that simultaneously condenses a word that is already known and something unexpected, yielding something *never heard before*.

Anyway this Don Juan, as we all know, could never disappear. The spirit of this new Don is more about the unlimited, instead of transgressing the limits of the law. Under the guise of his conquests over women, he draws nearer and nearer to the ever-elusive feminine itself.

This is why I invoked him first, so that I may now touch on the moment of vacillation in Fiordiligi’s voice in the middle of *Così fan tutte*’s aria in Act II, “*Per pietà*,” which resonates with some-thing that does not accord with what it is saying.

Of course the thinker in us racks itself trying to discern whether the love that enchants the voice is addressed to Guglielmo or Ferrando. But thinking cannot know this for certain, except perhaps to conclude that it loves them both at one and the same time. If it is true that “they are all the same” (*Così fan tutte*), what in fact causes this voice to falter?

---

<sup>8</sup> Tr: “Non si pasce di cibo mortale. Chi si pasce di cibo celeste.” (Those who partake of heavenly food do not need the mortal stuff.)

<sup>9</sup> Tr: “*Savoir Supposé Sujet*,” in opposition of course to “sujet supposé savoir,” or “subject supposed to know.”

<sup>10</sup> Cf. *op. cit.* *Les non-dupes errent (Non-Dupes Err/Names of the Father)* April 9, 1974.

<sup>11</sup> Before then, dissonance had been forced to return to the limits of consonance as it sought to make heard something escaping the law of tonality. In his Second String Quartet (1907-08), Schoenberg challenged the authority of this sovereign law reigning in Western music. Through this unprecedented act he made heard, it must be surmised, the unlimited field of Alterity in music.

It stumbles over something hidden that surpasses it, a secret; the dimension of the feminine that I have argued is what drove Don Juan towards women. His love is not destined for this or that person because it is a Love of Alterity.

Fiordiligi's voice is appealing because it invokes this Stranger, the sound of which, he realizes in the moment it invokes him, is not as strange as all that. It is pleased, it pleases it, to give him words of welcome, and invites us to an Other *jouissance*, "the *jouissance* we need, (which) has to translate the *jouissance* we don't."<sup>12</sup>

This experience of the Other *jouissance* concerns psychoanalysis because it is freely revealed in the music of the human voice in the transference, where it serves to unlock the prisons of symptom and repetition compulsion alike.

Thus it was I who once thanked an analysand of mine for having one day heard something she had *never heard before* when I bid her "hello."

The result for her was the lifting of a particularly debilitating symptom, and for me the invocation of Don Juan's cry, which guided me then and which is leading me once *again*, here with you now, in the direction of this Elsewhere, in the presence of which R.M. Rilke opened his *Duino Elegies*:<sup>13</sup>

*"Qui, si je criais, qui donc entendrait mon cri parmi les hiérarchies des Anges?  
Et cela serait-il, même, et que l'un d'eux soudain me prenne sur son cœur : trop forte serait sa  
présence et j'y succomberais.  
Car le Beau n'est rien autre que le commencement de terrible, qu'à peine à ce degré nous pouvons  
supporter encore; et si nous l'admirons, et tant, c'est qu'il dédaigne et laisse de nous anéantir.  
Tout ange est terrible. Il me faut donc ainsi me retenir et ravalier en moi l'obscur sanglot, ce cri  
d'appel. Mais hélas! Vers qui se tourner?  
A qui donc, mais à qui donc peut-on s'adresser? A l'ange, non! A l'homme, non!  
Et les animaux pressentent et savent, dans leur sagesse, qu'on ne peut pas s'y fier : que nous  
n'habitons pas vraiment chez nous dans le monde interprété"*

#### *The First Elegy*

*Who, if I cried out, would hear me among the Angelic  
Orders? And even if one were to suddenly  
take me to its heart, I would vanish into its  
stronger existence. For beauty is nothing but  
the beginning of terror, that we are still able to bear,  
and we revere it so, because it calmly disdains  
to destroy us. Every Angel is terror.  
And so I hold myself back and swallow the cry  
of a darkened sobbing. Ah, who then can  
we make use of? Not Angels: not men,  
and the resourceful creatures see clearly  
that we are not really at home  
in the interpreted world.<sup>14</sup>*

Paris, August 24, 2005

Jean Charmoille

---

<sup>12</sup> "La jouissance qu'il faut (qui) est à traduire la jouissance qu'il ne faut pas." J Lacan. *Encore*. Seminar of February 13, 1973. Seuil p 55.

<sup>13</sup> R.M.Rilke *Les Elégies de Duino. Les sonnets à Orphée*. (The Duino Elegies and the Sonnets to Orpheus). Bilingual edition, Points p.9.

<sup>14</sup> Tr: From, [http://www.tonykline.co.uk/PITBR/German/Rilke.htm#\\_Toc509812215](http://www.tonykline.co.uk/PITBR/German/Rilke.htm#_Toc509812215).

Voix

3 4 5 6 7 9 10 11 12

Orchestra

# 1 2 # 8

Chi si pa-sce di ci-bo ce-les-te