

Søren Kierkegaard's Interpretation of Mozart's Opera *Don Giovanni* :
An Appraisal and Theological Response
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By common confession, Mozart's opera *Don Giovanni* has been reckoned holy ground, and must be approached without sandals. The Salzburg composer and this classic work belongs to that incomparable Arnoldian category of the very best that has been thought, said, and done. What Plato's *Republic* is to political philosophy, what Michaelangelo's Cistine Chapel Ceiling is to painting, and what Shakespeare's tragedies are to drama, so also is Mozart's *Don Giovanni* to the works and world of opera. An attitude of "fear and trembling" seems to befit those who would seek to plumb the depths of its music, and contemplate the mystery of its mythic theme.

Mozart's opera, whose proper Italian title is *Il dissoluto punito ossia il Don Giovanni* (*The Punishment of the Libertine or Don Giovanni*), has been admired by many enthusiastic opera-goers ever since its first performance in Prague on October 29, 1787.¹ The claim is frequently made that *Don Giovanni* is one of the greatest, if not *the* greatest, opera ever written and staged. Goethe expressed a sense of the wonder of

¹ Here is a review from the Prague *Oberpostamtszeitung* of November 3, 1787, of the first performance of *Don Giovanni* which took place in that city on October 29, 1787. "Monday the 29th the Italian Opera Society presented the passionately awaited opera of the composer Mozart *Don Giovanni*, or the Stone Feast. Connoisseurs and musicians say that its equal has never been presented in Prague. Herr Mozart himself conducted, and when he entered the orchestra, he was accorded a triple ovation; this occurred when he left the orchestra pit as well. As for the opera, it is extremely difficult to execute, and everyone admires, regardless, the good performance after such a short rehearsal period. Everything, theater and orchestra, offered its all to reward and thank Mozart with a good performance. Moreover, much expense was entailed by the several choruses and the decoration, all of which was splendidly arranged by Herr Guardasoni. The extraordinary number of spectators is evidence for the general approbation" (Bleiler 59).

Indeed, even Mozart himself was quite pleased with the responses to and reviews of his new opera. He wrote these words to his sister a month after the first performance: "I most humbly beg your pardon for having left you so long without an answer. Of my writing 'Don Giovanni' for Prague and of *the opera's triumphant success* you may have already heard, but that His Majesty the Emperor has now taken me into his service will probably be news to you. . ." (Blom 1956: 229, italics added).

Don Giovanni in a letter to Schiller on December 30, 1797, in which he wrote these words after a performance in Weimar: “Your hopes for opera are richly fulfilled in *Don Giovanni* but the work stands absolutely alone and Mozart’s death prevents any prospect of its example being followed” (quoted in Turner 1938: 349). Indeed, when Goethe also declared that Mozart, who obviously possessed deep insight into human nature, would have been the man to compose his “Faust,” no doubt he was thinking of the brilliance of *Don Giovanni* (Jahn 161). Additionally, E. T. A. Hoffmann’s revolutionary romantic interpretation of Mozart’s *Don Giovanni* was based on the same kind of appreciation for and devotion to this operatic masterpiece (Weinstein 52). Also the nineteenth century French composer Charles Gounod was unrestrained in his encomium for *Don Giovanni* which he spoke of as “that unequalled and immortal masterpiece, that apogee of the lyrical drama.” For him personally, the opera had thrown open the gates of heaven, and served as a superlative example of aesthetic perfection. He wrote: “The score of *Don Giovanni* has exercised the influence of a revelation upon my whole life; it has been and remains for me a kind of incarnation of dramatic and musical infallibility. I regard it as a work without blemish, of uninterrupted perfection . . .” (v-vi). Finally, Eric Blom stated that among Mozart’s own opera’s *Don Giovanni* is surely “the greatest of all” (1962: 288), and for Pierre Jouve, it was a work which ascended with ease “to the highest plane of revealed truth, the threshold of the world beyond” (106).²

² In a chapter entitled “The Importance of Mozart’s Operas,” Brigid Brophy in her book *Mozart the Dramatist: A Psychological and Historical Study of Genius* (1964), states that Mozart’s value as an operatic dramatist lies not only in his musical ability as a classical artist, but also in his psychological understanding and the relevance of that understanding for today. As she puts it, “Mozart’s unique excellence lies in his double supremacy: as classical artist, and as psychological artist.” Consequently, she argues that “The Mozart of the operas is a music dramatist in the sense that Shakespeare is a poetry-dramatist. His characters . . . ‘exist’ and deserve serious scrutiny to the same extent as Shakespeare’s. They have the same importance to us as Shakespeare’s—for their own sakes: that is, for our own sakes. The touchy problem of how to ‘place’ Mozart admits of only one solution. He stands on the very pinnacle of Parnassus” (34).

Of course, this kind of celebration of *Don Giovanni* is really praise for the Salzburg *Wunderkind* himself. Karl Barth, the twentieth century dialectical theologian and disciple of Kierkegaard, makes these enthusiastic comments about Mozart's insight into humanity and his comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted, polyphonic, unified constitution of the cosmos. He writes:

Mozart is universal. One marvels again and again how everything comes to expression in him: heaven and earth, nature and man, comedy and tragedy, passion in all its forms and the most profound inner peace, the Virgin Mary and the demons, the church mass, the curious solemnity of the Freemasons and the dance hall, ignorant and sophisticated people, cowards and heroes (genuine or bogus), the faithful and the faithless, aristocrats and peasants, Papageno and Sarastro. And he seems to concern himself with each of these in turn not only partially, but fully; rain and sunshine fall on all. . . . It is as though in a small segment the whole universe bursts into song because evidently the man Mozart has apprehended the cosmos and now, functioning only as a medium, brings it into song! Truly, we can call this "incomparable" (34-35).³

³ Geoffrey Clive (162) translates this extensive footnote from Karl Barth's magnum opus, *Church Dogmatics* III. 3, in which Barth marvels even further in the tremendous mystery and significance of Mozart's music as it entails all aspects of creation, including its darkness. He writes: "Why and in what sense can this man be called unique? Why has he, for him who can understand him, almost with every measure which passed through his mind and which he wrote down on paper, created music for which 'beautiful' is an inadequate expression; music which for the 'just' is not entertainment, nor pleasure, nor edification, but flesh and blood; music full of consolation and admonition, as they need it, never reduced to mere technique and never sentimental, but music 'moving,' free, and liberating, because wise, virile, and sovereign? Why can one maintain that he has a place in theology (especially in eschatology and cosmology) although he was no church father and not even a particular devout Christian—and beyond that Catholic!—and, when not busy composing, according to our notions leading a somewhat fickle life. . . . He has heard the harmony of creation as providence in coherent form of which darkness is also a part, but in which darkness is no eclipse, also the deficiency which is no flaw, the sadness which cannot lead to despair, also the gloomy which is not transformed into the tragic, the infinite sorrow which nevertheless remains unconstrained to posit itself

Incomparable he was, and as Pierre Jouve suggests, Mozart is “revealed as it was God’s will he should be: as an absolute source of music” (1). This is exactly what he was for the nineteenth century Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard (1813-1855). Few have revered Mozart, and savored his music as much as Kierkegaard, and in regard to *Don Giovanni*, he earnestly believed that it deserved the highest place among all the classic works of art. As he put it, “With his *Don Giovanni*, Mozart joins that little immortal band of men whose names, whose works, time will not forget because eternity recollects them” (48).⁴ Indeed, Kierkegaard offers a deep meditation on the meaning of Mozart’s *Don Giovanni* in a splendid treatise entitled “The Immediate Erotic Stages or the Musical Erotic” found in his book *Either/Or*. Kierkegaard’s treatise sets forth a fascinating interpretation of this opera and its time honored theme which illuminates profound aspects of human nature, especially in its experience of the erotic and encounter with the demonic. The purpose of this present essay is to present these Kierkegaardian insights that shed such light on Mozart’s *Don Giovanni*, and also to

absolutely—precisely therefore also joyousness, but also its limits, the light which is so radiant precisely because it breaks through the shadows, sweetness which is also pungent and therefore does not carry satiety in its wake, life which is not afraid of death but knows it well. . . . In the music of Mozart—I ask whether one also finds this in any of his successors?!—we are dealing with an illuminating, I should like to say with a compelling proof that it is a slander of creation to ascribe participation in chaos to her because she includes a YES and a NO within herself, because one side of her is turned toward NOTHINGNESS and the other toward GOD. Mozart makes audible that the creation praises the Lord also in its negative aspect and thus in its totality.”

⁴ Kierkegaard continues his Mozartian panegyric with even more profound language of veneration and respect. “Immortal Mozart! You to whom I owe everything—to whom I owe that I lost my mind, that my soul was astounded, that I was terrified at the core of my being—you to whom I owe that I did not go through life without encountering something that could shake me, you whom I thank because I did not die without having loved, even though my love was unhappy. No wonder, then, that I am much more zealous for his glorification than for the happiest moment of my own life, much more zealous for his immortality than for my own existence. Indeed, if he were taken away, if his name were blotted out, that would demolish the one pillar that until now has prevented everything from collapsing for me into a boundless chaos, into a dreadful nothing” (1987: 49; see also pages 51, 57-58).

interact with selected aspects of his presentation theologically. Surely this opera's pedigree and the recognition of Kierkegaard's influential treatment of it merit this consideration. But before proceeding to this task, a little background information on the opera will be presented as well as a very brief survey of its overall plot.

There is considerable dispute as to the precise origin of the now classic myth of Don Juan. As Leo Weinstein points out, "the origin of the Don Juan legend remains an unsolved problem about which much has been written and conjectured but little has been satisfactorily proved" (6). In one way or another, the genealogy of the myth inevitably leads back to a play entitled *El Burlador de Sevilla y convidado de piedra* (The Joker/Mocker/Jester of Seville and the Stone Guest) which is commonly attributed to a monk by the name of Gabriel Téllez, but who is best known by the pseudonym Tirso de Molina.⁵ Standard accounts suggest that the play first appeared under Tirso's name in 1630, but it may have been performed as early as 1613. In any case, the content of the play revolved around two basic themes. First, the amorous adventures of a young Spanish nobleman by the name of Don Juan Tenorio, and second, the punishment of Don Juan by the statue of the Commander Gonzalo de Ulloa. As Weinstein points out, "No matter who this man was [who first assimilated the themes of the myth], the glorious career of the Don Juan legend, which was to inspire so many writers all over the world, received its initial impetus from [Tirso's] *El Burlador de Seville*" (11).

A gap of only about thirty-five years separates Tirso's *Burlador* and the next significant installment of the Don Juan theme, Molière's play *Dom Juan ou le Festin de Pierre* (1665). Despite the chronological proximity of the two works, they are consid

⁵ For a collection of scholarly papers and recent discussions on de Molina and his play, see Josep M. Sola-Sole and George E. Gingras, *Tirso's Don Juan: The Metamorphosis of a Theme* (1988). Also, for recent translations and introductions to the play itself, see Gwynne Edwards, *The Trickster of Seville and the Stone Guest* (1986), and Max Oppenheimer, Jr., *Tirso de Molina: Don Juan* (1976). An excellent summary of the main features of the play are found in Weinstein (12-26).

erably different in terms of the portrayal of the protagonist. Tirso's burlador is a man caught between two epochs, the medieval and the modern, with an allegiance to both resulting in a measure of tension and turmoil. On the other hand, Molière's Dom Juan is a thoroughly modern man—refined, sophisticated, and rebellious. In the first act, Sganarelle provides a cameo description of this man whose character and consciousness has been shaped by modern forces.

. . . in my master, Don Juan, you see the biggest scoundrel that ever encumbered the earth, a madman, a cur, a devil, a Turk, a heretic who believes in neither heaven, Hell, or werewolf. . . . Marriage means nothing to him. It is his usual method of ensnaring women: he marries 'em left and right, maids or married women, ladies or peasants, shy ones and t' other sort—all come to him. . . . Let it suffice that the wrath of Heaven is bound to overwhelm him one of these days and that, for my part, I would sooner serve the Devil himself (Molière 200).

Among the contrasts between Molière's Dom Juan and Tirso's burlador, one of the most important would be the former's cold, calculated philosophy of seduction in contrast the latter's rather playful, unconscious approach. Another difference would be Dom Juan's trenchant religious skepticism and rebellion as opposed to the burlador's residual theistic attitudes. In any case, Molière's play certainly made a significant contribution to the development of the Don Juan myth, and gave it a new characterization that was considerably radical for its age.

More than a hundred years passed without any fresh treatment of the Don Juan theme. The subject appears to have suffered from considerable inertia, except for an occasional play or opera of little or no consequence. Then, in 1787, a new production appeared—Mozart's own *Don Giovanni*—which not only resurrected the theme and gave it new life, but also imparted to it a new interpretation which was to mark it per

manently as it has passed through the generations and shaped the consciousness of Western thinking about this distinctive myth and/or archetype.⁶

As is well known, the libretto for *Don Giovanni* was drafted by a former abbé named Lorenzo Da Ponte (1749-1838; his real name was Emmanuel Conegliano) whose accomplishments are generally overshadowed by the greatness of Mozart and the grandeur of his music.⁷ His *Giovanni* libretto is certainly not as highly regarded as its musical score, but it was certainly adequate, and on occasions even displays deep human insight and poetic beauty.

Questions about the opera and its libretto are generally twofold. First, from which prior sources of the Don Juan theme did da Ponte draw in order to compose his libretto, and how did he modified them? Second, what is the genre of the opera itself that he and Mozart composed—*opera seria*, or *opera buffa*, tragedy or comedy?

In regard to the first question, da Ponte drew directly upon a brand new opera on the classical theme entitled *Don Giovanni, o sia Il convitato di pietra: Dramma giocoso*

⁶ In this regard, Bernard Williams notes, “Later writers have not simply gone back to some archetype of Don Juan, or taken Mozart’s opera merely as one previous embodiment of that character, but have in many cases been quite specially influenced by the opera. Indeed, nineteenth- and twentieth- century thoughts about Don Juan have been dominated by Mozart’s embodiment of him. This is not merely because the opera is by far the greatest work given to this theme. It is also because the opera is in various ways problematical, and that it raises in a challenging way the question of what the figure of Giovanni means. Hence, not only is the opera the historical starting point of many modern thoughts on this subject, but some of those thoughts lead directly back to the problem of understanding the opera itself” (81-82). Pierre Jouve also believes that it was Mozart’s *Don Giovanni* that gave final shape to the character of Don Juan. He writes: “When we think to-day of Don Juan, we think, voluntarily or involuntarily, of ‘Mozart’s Don Juan’. Mozart did for Don Juan what Goethe did for Faust—made his representation the prototype of all others” (105).

⁷ Da Ponte also provided the librettos for two other Mozart operas—*The Marriage of Figaro*, and *Così Fan Tutte* for which he wrote an original piece. With *Don Giovanni*, these three constitute the Mozart/DaPonte trilogy. Overviews of Da Ponte’s life and career can be found in Einstein (420ff.), Bleiler (29ff.), Weinstein (60ff.). Also, da Ponte’s memoirs have been published in a German edition by Gustav Gugitz (Dresden, 1924), and as Einstein says of them, “they will not be found boring” (421).

in un atto. The music for this opera was composed by Giuseppe Gazzaniga and the libretto was written by Giovanni Bertati. It was first performed during the Carnival season in Venice in February, 1787. Tradition suggests that da Ponte, who was writing two additional librettos at the time, drew to a great extent on this new work. As Einstein puts it, “To say that he stole from Bertati in the most shameless manner would be both true and untrue. Da Ponte actually used Bertati’s text as a model as far as he could; but eighteenth century notions of property in ideas were different from those of today, and da Ponte actually went far beyond Bertati in his *Don Giovanni* (434)⁸. That he did go far beyond Bertati is certain. Indeed, as Weinstein points out, what is really important is not da Ponte’s originality, but the synthetic inventiveness with which he drew from the best of his predecessors.

What matters is that Da Ponte borrowed so intelligently that he succeeded in creating a splendid synthesis of all the previous Don Juan versions worth borrowing from, and in producing a work that is not pieced together but thoroughly unified. From Tirso he took Doña Ana, but he combined Tirso’s de la Mota and Octavio into one person and dropped Don Juan’s father and the unnecessary

⁸ Edward Dent agrees: “. . . Da Ponte incorporated practically the whole of Bertati’s libretto, although he entirely rewrote the play in more elegant language” (133). Einstein makes a point of the fact that the selection of the Don Juan theme for Mozart’s opera (“a subject that was infinitely pleasing to him” as da Ponte’s recalls in his memoirs, Bleiler 32) was bold and courageous because of the contemporary attitude toward recent portrayals of this topic dramatically and operatically. Carlo Goldone, who had produced a version of it in a play in 1736 (*Don Giovanni Tenorio, o sia Il dissoluto*), had said: “I have always regarded it, in Italy, with horror, and I have never been able to understand how this farce could hold its own for such a long time, could draw crowds, and could be the delight of a cultivated nation” (435). Indeed, with its depiction of “the bold frivolity of the aristocrat, in the reactions of his feminine victims, and in the impertinence of his servant, as well as his shudders at the intervention of superhuman forces of justice, ending with his abduction to hell,” many cultured eighteenth-century citizens considered the work to be “food for the theatrical rabble” (436). Mozart’s boldness, then, is manifested not because he chose to portray the life of a profligate, but rather because the drama itself was regarded as kitsch. This suggests it took not only great courage, but also tremendous insight into the inherent power of the material to make *Don Giovanni* into a great opera.

scenes of the *Burlador*. He wisely replaced Tirso's Isabela by Molière's Elvire, modeled Leporello after Sganarelle and omitted M. Dimanche, Elvire's brothers, Dom Juan's hypocritical conversion, and Sganarelle's claim of his wages from the French author's work. Zerlina and Masetto are skillful combinations of the corresponding characters in Tirso (Tisbea and Aminta; Batricio) and Molière (Charlotte, Pierrot) (61).

Another important innovation concerned the role of Donna Anna. As Daniel Hertz notes, "Most important for the continuity and interest of the drama, they [Mozart and da Ponte] enhanced the role of Donna Anna and extended it over the whole opera. Her thirst for revenge now becomes the driving force that unites the work and propels it to the inevitable catastrophe. The original concept of retribution emerges much more clearly as a result" (202). In any case, with the help of a sixteen year old mistress whose presence and caresses inspired him like a muse (as he tells the story in his memoirs), da Ponte was able to complete the libretto, along with a second, and two-thirds of yet a third, in sixty-three days.⁹

In regard to the second question about the genre of the opera, when combined with the music, the result was neither *opera seria*, nor *opera buffa*, but rather, according to the author and composer, a new operatic genre that combined them both: *dramma giocoso* (gay drama). George Gingras tells the interesting story of the compromise between Mozart and da Ponte which resulted in this unique fusion of operatic genres.

Toward the end of his life, when he was living in New York, Mozart's librettist, Lorenzo da Ponte, confided to an American friend, Dr. John Francis, how he and the composer happened to give to their variation on the Don Juan theme its particular dramatic and tonal configuration. Mozart, it would seem, understood

⁹ Bleiler presents an extensive excerpt from da Ponte's memoirs which contains the fascinating (and scintillating) story of the composition of the libretto for *Don Giovanni* and the other two librettos he was working on simultaneously (32-33).

the Don Juan action as essentially tragic and wished to make of his *Don Giovanni* a profoundly serious work, one that would capture all the sacro-myth solemnity of the theme in the form of an *opera seria*. Da Ponte, on the other hand, in the interest of assuring the opera's success with a public accustomed to seeing a more generically-variegated Don Juan, sought to persuade the composer to give it a more comic turn. Out of the dialectic of composer and librettist emerged neither the *opera seria* envisaged by the former nor the *opera buffa* that the latter might have secretly desired but a fusion of the two, a true *dramma giocoso*, that is to say, a formal dramatic work on a serious subject with pervasive comic force running through it (106).¹⁰

Though the opera is perhaps best understood as a alloy of the *seria* and *buffa* roles, nonetheless the ultimate nature of the work remains mysterious and impervious to any kind of definitive understanding and analysis. As Einstein believes, "The work is *sui generis*, incomparable and enigmatic from the evening of its first performance to the

¹⁰ John Francis' own recollection of this alleged exchange between Mozart and da Ponte is found in Francis' own work *Old New York, or, Reminiscences of the Past Sixty Years* (1865; quoted in D. Heartz 174). "The opportunities which presented themselves to me [Francis] of obtaining circumstantial facts concerning Mozart from the personal knowledge of Da Ponte, were not so frequent as desirable, but the incidents which Da Ponte gave were all of a most agreeable character. His accounts strengthened the reports of the ardent, nay, almost impetuous energy and industry of Mozart; his promptness in decision, and his adventurous intellect. The story of Don Juan had indeed become familiar in a thousand ways; Mozart determined to cast the opera exclusively as serious, and had well advanced the work. Da Ponte assured me, that he had remonstrated and urged the expediency on the great composer of the introduction of the *vis comica*, in order to accomplish a greater success. . . ." Be that as it may, W. J. Turner seems to agree with the standard understanding of the genre of the opera. In regard to both *Don Giovanni* and *Così fan Tutte*, he writes: "In these two great works the two forms: (1) Opera Seria and (2) Opera Buffa—that is, of Tragedy and Comedy—are for the first time in the history of opera perfectly united into one, and we may take it as a sign that Mozart was aware of this new unity the fact that he described each of them as a *dramma giocoso* instead of *opera buffa*" (388).

present day” (442). The plot of this magnificent opera, which bears the Köchel listing “K. 527,”¹¹ should now be summarized.¹²

ACT ONE. Don Giovanni’s attempted seduction of Donna Anna results in a duel in which he kills the Commendatore, who happens to be Donna Anna’s father. Don Giovanni escapes the scene of the crime undetected with his servant Leporello, as Donna Anna and her fiancé, Don Ottavio, vow vengeance upon her father’s murderer.

Don Giovanni next encounters Donna Elvira whom he had seduced by a promise of marriage. After he departs, Leporello, in the famous “catalog aria,” enumerates to the angry and betrayed Elvira the varied and extensive sexual exploits of his master, including 1,003 in Spain alone!

On the way to her wedding, Zerlina, a country girl, is approached by Don Giovanni for less than noble purposes. After Leporello leads Masetto, Zerlina’s bridegroom, away, the Don waves a hand in the direction of his castle, and suggests that she accompany him there so they can be married at once. His flirtation with the minx is interrupted by Donna Elvira who warns the girl and urges her to flee. Elvira also attempts, with limited success, to arouse the suspicions of Donna Anna and Don Ottavio

¹¹ Of course, Mozart’s 626 total works were classified and catalogued in chronological sequence by Ludwig Köchel (1800-1877) who, through painstaking examination of contemporary documentary evidence, Mozart’s letters, and other sources, was able in 1862 to publish his massive 551 page *Chronological Catalog of the Works of W. A. Mozart*. Consequently, the author’s surname Köchel, frequently abbreviated “K.,” appears with the title of every one of Mozart’s compositions (see Bleiler 79-80 for a brief discussion).

¹² Summaries of the plot of *Don Giovanni* may be found in Rushton (8-26); Pack and Lelash (218-19); and Bleiler (52-64). The *dramatis personae* of the opera are: Don Giovanni, baritone—a young and extremely licentious nobleman; Donna Anna, soprano—a lady of Seville, betrothed to Don Ottavio, tenor; The Commendatore, bass—father of Donna Anna; Donna Elvira, soprano—a lady from Burgos, abandoned by Don Giovanni; Leporello, bass-baritone, or bass—Don Giovanni’s personal servant; Masetto, bass or baritone—a peasant in love with and engaged to Zerlina; Zerlina, soprano—a country girl; chorus of peasants and girls; stage instrumentalists; the action takes place in Seville, during the course of one day in the middle of the seventeenth century.

about Don Giovanni. But it is not until the Don takes leave of Donna Anna that she recognizes his voice as that of the man who killed her father.

A great ball is in progress in Don Giovanni's castle at which time Zerlina reassures her bridegroom, Masetto, of her love and devotion to him. Nonetheless, he attempts to seduce Zerlina a second time, but his efforts end in failure. Elvira, Donna Anna and Don Ottavio, who have joined together, appear at the ball as masqueraders, seeking vengeance on Don Giovanni, hoping to expose his wickedness before the entire assembly. They successfully prevent him from seducing Zerlina, but with his sword in his hand, he escapes from his pursuers.

ACT TWO. Exchanging his clothes for Leporello's in order to serenade and deceive Donna Elvira's maidservant, Don Giovanni, disguised as Leporello, persuades Donna Elvira to come down from her balcony, and succeeds in sending her off with Leporello whom she believes to be her Don. At this time, Masetto enters and encounters the Don whom he thinks is Leporello. When he tells him of his plans to murder the profligate Don who has been accosting his bride-to-be, Masetto receives an unexpected pistol whipping from the Don who then flees from the scene. Zerlina enters and comforts the mangled Masetto, suggesting to him that if he will go home with her, she can give him a remedy much better than that of any pharmacist!

Meanwhile, Leporello cannot elude Elvira who thinks him to be Don Giovanni. Anna, Ottavio, Zerlina, and Masetto enter in pursuit of revenge on Don Giovanni, but Elvira pleads with them to spare her lover's life. Leporello finally discloses his true identity, and in the confusion which ensues, he is able to make a successful escape.

Leporello rejoins Don Giovanni in a cemetery presided over by a statue of Donna Anna's father, the Commendatore. Their laughter at the evening's events is interrupted by the ominous "sepulchral" voice of the Statue which announces that the Don's mirth will soon end, and he bids them to leave the dead in peace. After Leporello reluctantly reads the statue's inscription at the Don's bidding ("Here I await vengeance on the

wicked man who brought me to my death”), Don Giovanni, in the spirit of Prometheus, invites the Statue to dine with him the next evening. The invitation is promptly accepted.

The next evening finds Don Giovanni and Leporello carousing at a festive dinner. Donna Elvira bursts in and earnestly entreats the Don to mend his evil ways, but when he makes fun of her impassioned request, she departs. The statue of the Commendatore then enters the room as the Don’s especially invited guest. The Stone Statue ironically extends an invitation to the Don to dine also with him, an invitation which he accepts. The statue of the Commendatore offers Don Giovanni one last chance to repent, but he adamantly refuses any such exhortation. As the statue of the Commendatore departs, flames appear from every direction, and Don Giovanni, engulfed by fire and smoke, is swept away into hell. Leporello informs the remaining parties of Don Giovanni’s fate whereupon each of them announce their future plans: Donna Anna and Ottavio will postpone their wedding to allow for an entire year for mourning; Donna Elvira will enter a convent; Zerlina and Masetto will go home to dinner, and finally, Leporello announces that he will seek a new and better master. And they all rejoice at the end of evil doers! And thus ends *Don Giovanni* (Pack and Lelash 218-19; Bleiler 52-64).

The profound, and yet unsettling nature of the theme of this opera, and the beauty and yet demonic nature of the music which expresses this deeply provocative theme incited Kierkegaard’s writing of his aforementioned seminal essay “The Immediate Stages of the Erotic, or the Musical Erotic.” Kierkegaard’s efforts have not gone unnoticed, and here Collins is representative of typical responses to the treatise: “The pages which he [Kierkegaard] devotes to the music and libretto of this opera are among the finest passages in musical criticism. What Nietzsche was to do for Wagner in the

sunny days of their friendship, was done by Kierkegaard for Mozart with sustained brilliance and in a generous spirit of gratitude which he never repudiated” (51).¹³

Kierkegaard’s exposition was one of a set of essays contained in a 1843 book entitled *Either/Or*, which, curiously enough, was not published under Kierkegaard’s name. Rather, *Either/Or* was published pseudonymously under the name of “Victor Eremita” who is said, in the first of its two volumes, only be the editor of the work. In the Preface, Eremita claims to have found the papers accidentally in a used desk, and decided he would publish the essays in book form. The set of papers contained in the first volume is said to be the work of a young man called “the Seducer,” also anonymously designated simply as “A”. The set of essays which make up the second volume is said to be the work of an older man known as “the Judge,” or simply as “B”. The papers of “A” describe the aesthetic stage or view of life, while the essays of “B” reflect the ethical outlook.¹⁴ The exposition of *Don Giovanni* is the second entry in the first

¹³ Likewise, George Pattison speaks of Kierkegaard’s “brilliant essay on *Don Giovanni*” as one of the philosopher’s “best known and most accessible” of his works” (96). Writing in 1938, W. J. Turner stated that “there are famous living Continental musicians who think Kierkegaard’s long essay to be the finest thing ever written about Mozart. . .” (403). Armand Singer has presented a recent bibliography of works in English and Danish on Kierkegaard’s treatment of *Don Giovanni* in his essay “The Present State of Don Juan Studies” (21-22). At the same time, there have been stringent criticisms leveled against Kierkegaard’s piece, especially by W. J. Turner (402-20). At the outset of his survey of Kierkegaard’s essay, Turner writes that for him the author as a philosopher was platitudinous, long-winded, repetitious, sentimental, repressed, indirect, ingratiating, etc. He presents a number of more serious criticisms in which he faults Kierkegaard’s understanding of the function of art, his view of music as abstract and concrete, his notion of the abstraction of the idea of the sensuous, his idea that only music can convey the sensuous, his position regarding the genesis of the Don Juan myth, and his understanding of what makes a work a classic.

¹⁴ The contents of the first volume of *Either/Or* contain the following: Preface (which describes the discovery of “A’s” papers in a used desk); Diapsalmata (witty but cynical aphorisms intended as wisdom); The Immediate Erotic Stages, or the Musical Erotic (the piece on *Don Giovanni*); The Tragic in Ancient Drama Reflected in the Tragic in Modern Drama; Silhouettes; The Unhappiest One; The First Love; Rotation of Crops; The Seducer’s Diary (which advances the Don Juan theme even further). The second volume contains these installments: The Aesthetic Validity of Marriage; Equilibrium

volume of *Either/Or* which itself, as Duncan believes, “is nothing more than an extended character essay depicting the life of the aesthetic man” (32). There could seemingly be no finer instantiation of this first aesthetic aspect of Kierkegaard’s three-staged philosophy, which also includes the ethical and the religious, than the brigand Don Juan who is the very incarnation of sensuous passion and desire.¹⁵ As Price puts it, “The Don, in the ideality of Mozart’s concept, is the essence of the aesthetic man in his pre-reflectiveness, gaiety and complete amorality” (162).¹⁶

Between the Aesthetical and the Ethical in the Composition of Personality; and finally, Ultimum.

¹⁵ George Price offers this fine description of the “aesthetic” stage of life as he thinks Kierkegaard sought to depict it. “By its very nature it is the most fragile and least stable of all forms of existence. . . . [The aesthetic man] is merged into the crowd, and does what they do; he reflects their tastes, their ideas, prejudices, clothing and manner of speech. The entire liturgy of his life is dictated by them. His only special quality is greater or less discrimination of what he himself shall ‘enjoy’, for his outlook is an uncomplicated, unsophisticated Hedonism: he does what pleases him, he avoids what does not. His life’s theme is a simple one, ‘one must enjoy life’. . . . He is also, characteristically, a man with a minimum of reflection. . . . Thus on this level there is no serious choice, no decision over an absolute difference. Everything (including duty) is subservient to pleasure. For its mood is to reject what is unpleasant and to choose the pleasant. . . . *carpe diem* (161). Price also includes excellent discussions of Kierkegaard’s understanding of the ethical and religious forms of existence as well (see 171-201).

¹⁶ Kierkegaard also uses Faust as Goethe interpreted him, and Ahasuerus, the Wandering Jew, as exemplars and variations of the aesthetic stage of existence. “First, Don Juan, the simple, exuberant, uncomplicated, unreflective man; then Faust, the bored, puzzled, mixed-up, wistful man; and the third, the inevitable climax, the man in despair—*Ahasuerus, the Wandering Jew*.” Kierkegaard’s discussion of this aesthetic aspect of life “is mainly a sustained exposition of a universal level of human experience, and as such it is a story as old as man. Here is life at its simplest, most general level . . . the life of easy sanctions and unimaginative indulgences. It is also a totally uncommitted and ‘choiceless’ life [Don Juan]. But, for reasons inexplicable to itself, it cannot remain there. The inner need for integration brings its contentment to an end. Boredom intervenes; and boredom followed by an abortive attempt to overcome it by more discrimination about pleasures and diversions, about friends, habits and surroundings [Faust]. But the dialectical structure of the self gives rise to a profounder disturbance than boredom; and finally the man is aware of a frustration which nothing can annul [Ahasuerus, the Wandering Jew]. Were he constituted differently, says

One thing that is very important to remember, however, is that Kierkegaard's treatment is not about the meaning of the myth of Don Juan *per se*, but rather is directly concerned with Mozart's opera *Don Giovanni* in particular.¹⁷ Perhaps it is even better to say that the myth and the music coalesce in a perfect form/content unity such that, as Denis de Rougemont believes, the goal of Kierkegaard's account is "to demonstrate that Mozart's opera is the myth itself, integrally manifested in each detail as in the style and structure of the whole" (118). The salient themes of Kierkegaard's massive essay will now be surveyed.

The "melancholy Dane" begins by reflecting on that happy Greek view of the world which understands it to be a well organized and elegant *κοσμος* [cosmos], a world which entails a "ruling wisdom especially wonderful at uniting what belongs together, Axel with Valborg, Homer with the Trojan war, Raphael with Catholicism, Mozart with Don Juan" (47). Indeed, in contemplating grand artistic creations, there is great and sacred joy in seeing united that which belongs together, not by accident, but rather by good fortune which entails the "divine interplay of historic forces . . ." (48). In Kierkegaard's estimation, it was not by accident that the most remarkable subject matter of the Trojan War came into the hands of Homer, and the same was true of Mozart and Don Juan: "So also with Mozart: it is fortunate that the perhaps sole musical theme (in the more profound sense) was given to—Mozart" (48).

Kierkegaard, he would not suffer in this fashion. But being what he is, suffer he must—in diminishing hope and in growing staleness of existence" (Price 168-69). See also Pattison for his commentary on these three expressions of the aesthetic stage of existence in Kierkegaard's philosophy (48-49).

¹⁷ As Turner says, Kierkegaard's essay "has ostensibly as its subject Mozart's opera *Don Giovanni*" (402). For one of the best analyses of the *myth* of Don Juan *per se* (as well as Tristan and Isolde), see Denis de Rougemont's outstanding work *Love Declared: Essays on the Myths of Love* (1963), in which he undertakes a "mythanalysis" of what he believes are in myths the manifestations of the very nature and structure of the human soul (17).

After casting garlands at the feet of Mozart, and even declaring that if need be he would “form a sect that not only places Mozart first but has no one but Mozart” (48), Kierkegaard addresses a number of important questions that are designed not only to prove his point about the happy conjunction of Mozart and Don Juan, but which also provide interesting aesthetic perspectives on the arts themselves.¹⁸

The first issue he discusses concerns the nature of a classical work. His thesis is relatively simple: a work is a classic if it possesses “the absolute correlation of the two forces” form and content (49). Some aesthetic schools of thought have emphasized the importance of form, and others, like Hegel in particular, have focused on content as the key to a classic work. But Kierkegaard makes the case that it is not either the one or the other, but the unity of both that creates the classic work of art. Furthermore, any attempt to call a work a classic that depends on the author/composer alone is doomed to fail because then everything produced by that person would have to be considered a classic as well. Also, any attempt to rank the classics in some kind of order on the basis of either form or content exclusively will fail. As Kierkegaard himself puts it, “But this thorough-going mutual permeation— . . . that the subject matter permeates the form

¹⁸ The following quotations provide insight into Kierkegaard’s obsession with Mozart, and especially with his *Don Giovanni*. In his opening statements on love in “In Vino Veritas,” Kierkegaard writes about a group of guests who meet on a summer’s evening in northern Zealand in front of a hunting lodge, and who feel the power of the opera’s music when it is played. He writes: “The folding doors were thrown open; the sparkling illumination, the gusts of cool air, the seductive fragrance of perfume, the impeccable taste of the dinner service momentarily overwhelmed the guests who were on the point of entering the room, and when at the same instant the orchestra began playing the ballet music from *Don Giovanni*, they felt transfigured, and as though in stunned reverence before an invisible spirit, stopped for a moment in their tracks, like a man whom enthusiasm has stirred and who comes to himself in the midst of his enthusiasm.” In Kierkegaard’s 1839 journal, this rather disturbing entry is found which speaks of the influence the play Don Juan had on his own life. “In a sense I can say of Don Juan what Donna Elvira says to him: ‘Thou murderer of my happiness.’ For in truth: this play has so diabolically enraptured me that I can never forget it. It is this play that has driven me, like Elvira, out of the calm night of the cloister” (both quotes from de Rougemont 113; emphasis added in the first quotation).

and also that the form permeates the subject matter—this mutual permeation, this like-for-like in the immortal friendship of the classic, may serve to illuminate the classic from a new side and to limit it in such a way that it does not become too copious” (52-53). Kierkegaard summarizes his position in these words.

Only where the idea is brought to rest and transparency in a definite form can there be any question of a classic work, but then it will also be able of withstanding the times. This unity, this mutual intimacy in each other, every classic work has, and thus it is readily perceived that every attempt at a classification of the various classic works that has as its point of departure a separation of subject matter and form or of idea is *eo ipso* a failure (54).

Wanting to reinforce this outlook, Kierkegaard attempts to support his position by inquiring about what is the most abstract artistic form or medium, and by asking what is the most abstract artistic idea or content. In regard to the first concern, for Kierkegaard, an idea becomes concrete by being permeated by the historical. A medium is concrete if it is identified with or approximates language, and abstract if it is distanced from the linguistic domain. The medium that is the most abstract is the one most removed from language. He presents two clarifying examples in sculpture and the work of Homer. “. . . the idea that is disclosed in sculpture is totally abstract and has no relation to the historical; the medium through which it becomes manifest is likewise abstract. Consequently, it is very probable that the section of classic works that comprise sculpture will include only a few” (55). On the other hand there is Homer whose epic idea of the Trojan War is obviously historical, and whose medium of language was very concrete. “Homer certainly is a classic poet, but precisely because the idea that becomes manifest in the epic is a concrete idea and because the medium is language, it is conceivable that the section of classic works that includes the epic has many works. . .” (55). In any case, for Kierkegaard, the most abstract medium, the one farthest removed from language, was neither sculpture, or painting, but rather music.

With regard to the second concern, Kierkegaard believed that “the most abstract idea conceivable is the sensuous in its elemental originality [*Genialitet*]” (56). He passionately believed that this most abstract of all ideas—the sensuous—could best be expressed only through the most abstract of all mediums which, of course, was music. It cannot be expressed in sculpture “because it has a qualification of a kind of inwardness.” It cannot be expressed in painting “because it cannot be caught in definite contours” (56). It cannot be expressed in poetry because the theme itself has not reached the point of words and because it continually moves within the sphere of immediacy (57). Hence,

The only medium that can present it is music. Music has an element of time in itself but nevertheless does not take place in time except metaphorically. It cannot express the historical within time. In Mozart’s *Don Giovanni*, we have the perfect unity of this idea and its corresponding form. But precisely because the idea is so very abstract and because the medium also is abstract, there is no probability that Mozart will ever have a competitor. . . . *Don Giovanni* is and remains the only one of its kind. . . . To be sure, many more classical works in music are conceivable, but there still is only one work of which it can be said that its idea is altogether musical in such a way that the music does not help along as accompaniment but discloses its own innermost nature as it discloses the idea. Therefore Mozart with his *Don Giovanni* stands highest among those immortals (57).

Having established, or at least posited this point, Kierkegaard seeks to prove that Mozart’s *Don Giovanni* is the most perfect expression possible of the most abstract theme possible (viz., the sensuous-erotic in all its immediacy) by means of the most abstract medium available (viz., music). To accomplish this, the immediate task he says, is to show the significance of the musical-erotic in Mozart’s operas. But the musi

cal-erotic depends on the principle of the sensual-erotic itself. Where did this phenomenon come from?

Kierkegaard's answer: Christianity brought the sensual-erotic into the world, for by positing spirit and spirituality, its opposite, namely the sensual-erotic, was indirectly posited as its counterpoint. Kierkegaard explains what he means in these words.

This is quite natural, for Christianity is spirit, and spirit is the positive principle it has brought into the world. But when sensuality is viewed under the qualification of spirit, its significance is seen to be that it is to be excluded, but precisely because it is to be excluded it is defined as a principle, as a power, for that which spirit, which itself is a principle, is supposed to exclude must be something which manifests itself as a principle, even though it does not manifest itself as a principle until the moment when it is excluded (61).

Hence, only in the West has the sensual-erotic been dialectically established as the anti-thesis over against the Christian thesis of spirituality and moral rigor, especially sexual moral rigor. To be sure, Kierkegaard affirms the fact that the sensual existed in the world prior to Christianity, but it was not qualified or defined spiritually, but rather psychically as exemplified among the pagan Greeks. As he says, "In Greek culture, the sensuous was controlled in the beautiful individuality, or, to put it more accurately, it was not controlled, for it was not an enemy to be subdued, not a dangerous insurgent to be held in check; it was liberated to life and joy in the beautiful individuality. Thus the sensuous was not posited as a principle" (62). But it was by Christianity, and by the principle of representation, which was also introduced into the world by Christianity, that this principle can be posited and concentrated in an exemplar, in a single individual which expresses the sensuous-erotic in its elemental immediacy. And when the elemental originality of the sensuous-erotic in all its immediacy embodied in an individual (like Don Juan) insists on expression, the question naturally arises: which medium is the most suitable for this? The answer, as Kierkegaard has already said, is

music. "In its [the sensual-erotic's] mediacy and in being reflected in another medium, it falls within language and comes under ethical categories. In its immediacy, it can be expressed only in music" (64). In this context, Kierkegaard's understanding of the nature of music comes into focus.¹⁹

The significance of music thereby appears in its full validity, and in a stricter sense it appears as a Christian art or, more correctly, as the art Christianity posits in excluding it from itself, as the medium for that which Christianity excludes from itself and thereby posits. In other words, music is the demonic. In elemental sensuous-erotic originality, music has its absolute theme (65).

In the discussion which follows, Kierkegaard points out that language itself is the medium of the spirit as he makes clear in several passages from his text. "Language, regarded as medium, is the medium absolutely qualified by spirit, and it is therefore the authentic medium of the idea" (67). "Language is the perfect medium precisely when everything sensuous in it is negated" (68). "The more rigorous the religiousness, the more music is given up and words are emphasized" (72). "But that which religious fervor wants to have expressed is spirit; therefore it requires language, which is the spirit's proper medium, and rejects music, which for it is a sensuous medium and thus always an imperfect medium with which to express spirit" (73).

On the other hand, where language leaves off in its expression of the transcendent or the spirit, music begins in its expression of the empirically immediate or the sensuous. "Music always expresses the immediate in its immediacy" and the kind of immediacy expressed by music as its absolute theme, of course, is that realm excluded

¹⁹ Price (164-65) offers a brief synopsis of Kierkegaard's view of music which he saw, after the manner of Aristotle, as a means of catharsis. But he also believed it to be dangerous because of the authority and transcendence it imparts to the mood it engenders. For this reason, Kierkegaard, according to Price, viewed music as sub-Christian because it could easily leave a man transfixed aesthetically, but untransformed religiously.

by spirit, namely sensuous immediacy. For this very reason, music itself has been the object of suspicion and even scorn on the part of the religious. To illustrate this point, Kierkegaard cites the quotation of a group of Presbyterians who regarded “the organ as the devil’s bagpipe, with which he lulls to sleep the earnestness of contemplation, just as dance deadens good intentions” (72-73). According to Kierkegaard, music itself is not to be regarded as the devil’s work *per se*, and therefore it was not to be entirely excluded by the religious, but he did argue that music was certainly an imperfect medium for the spirit. On the other hand, because of the many horrible proofs of the demonic power with which music grips an individual, and because that individual in turn can grip a crowd (especially women), and because music is able to torment its devotees in such a terrible way, he concludes once again that “the musical is the demonic” (73).²⁰ Hence, it becomes the perfect means of expressing the immediate stages of the sensual-erotic, and no one has formulated this any better than Mozart has, for as Kierkegaard put it, “the intrinsic power of music is fully expended in Mozart’s music” (74).

Kierkegaard finds three stages of the erotic manifested musically in Mozart’s operas. The first stage of the erotic is suggested by the Page—Cherubino—in *The Marriage of Figaro*. Kierkegaard says he is not to be seen as a single individual, but

²⁰ On the fact of the power of music, see Dmitri Shostakovich’s work *The Power of Music* which he introduces with these simple, but profound words about the nature of music. “No description—however brilliant—can give a true idea of the power of music. Words cannot rival it in appeal and impact. This is only natural: If music expressed just as much as speech, it would be unnecessary. Music is a means capable of expressing dark dramatism and pure rapture, suffering and ecstasy, fiery and cold fury, melancholy and wild merriment—and the subtlest nuances and interplay of these feelings which words are powerless to express and which are unattainable in painting and sculpture. Leo Tolstoi, who on several occasions tried to give a definition of music, finally decided to call it ‘the stenography of the emotions.’ Indeed, music reigns over the emotions, whose interplay it is capable of conveying with far greater force and vividness than all other arts” (10). For a discussion about the power of music and its demonic influence on today’s students, see Bloom (68-81).

rather as a representative mythical person. His particular exhibition of the first stage of the erotic is one “in which the sensuous awakens, yet not to motion but to a still quiescence, not to delight and joy but to deep melancholy” (75). Kierkegaard believes that this initial form of eroticism is interpreted by a kind of music which is intoxicated with erotic love, leading in Cherubino’s case, not to a heightened transparent joy in life, but rather to an obscure depression. Cherubino is desire dreaming, the erotic of substantial longing.

The second stage of the erotic is epitomized by Papageno in *The Magic Flute*, who again is to be perceived as a mythical rather than as an actual personage. Papageno is erotic desire seeking, aiming at discoveries. For him, the dream is over, desire awakens, and receives multiple objects to discover, yet none are obtained. As Kierkegaard describes it, “desire awakens, the object flees, multiple in manifestation; longing tears itself loose from the soil and takes to wandering” (80). Mozart’s musical interpretation of this phase of the erotic, Kierkegaard feels, “is exuberant, merrily twittering, bubbling over with love” (81). Papageno expresses his cheerful liveliness by accompanying himself on the reed flute, and Kierkegaard describes his existential experience in delightful, carefree terms: “. . . it is the absolutely adequate expression of Papageno’s whole life, whose whole life is such an uninterrupted twittering, without a care twittering away uninterruptedly in complete idleness, and who is happy and contented because this is the substance of his life, happy in his work and happy in his singing” (82).

The third stage of the erotic is incarnated in *Don Giovanni* himself as the fulfillment of demonic desire.²¹ Here Kierkegaard reminds his readers that this effulgence of

²¹ No one has captured more forcefully the power of the demonic in its fulfillment of desire in the person of Don Giovanni than Denis de Rougemont in his description of him in his book *Love Declared* (101-02). He writes: “When he strides on stage, glittering in silk and gold, he heroic seducer at his proudest, we are tempted to see in him only the natural fire of desire, a kind of vehement and somehow innocent animality.

desire is not to be tied to a particular person, but is rather a principle qualified by the spirit as that which spirit excludes. This desire is the idea of the elemental originality of the sensuous expressed in Don Juan, and it can be communicated solely and simply by music. Furthermore, Kierkegaard shows that *Don Giovanni* is the synthesis and unity of the previous two stages of the erotic.

The contradiction in the first stage consisted in the inability of desire to find an object. . . . In the second stage, the object appears in its multiplicity, but since desire seeks its object in this multiplicity, in the more profound sense it still has not object; . . . In *Don Giovanni*, however, desire is absolutely qualified as desire. . . . In this stage, therefore, desire is absolutely genuine, victorious, triumphant, irresistible, and demonic (84-85).

All Kierkegaard can say about the music of this opera which expresses this third and final phase of the erotic is this: "Listen" (85). His humble goal is merely to illuminate the form and content of the opera from as many points of view as possible in hopes of provoking the music to declare itself and have its full sway. Thus Kierkegaard turns his attention to an explication of the idea of desire in Don Juan and to the interpretation of Don Juan through the music of the opera so that the classical significance of *Don Giovanni* may thereby be truly demonstrated. As he proceeds to his

But Nature has never produced anything like this. We sense there is something demonic about him, almost a polemic of defiant wickedness. . . . In the intoxication of anarchy he thrives on, this *grand seigneur* never forgets his rank. His natural mood is scorn; nothing is further from his nature. Consider how he treats women: incapable of possessing them, he first violates them morally in order to subjugate the animal part of their being; and no sooner has he taken than he rejects them, as if he sought the fact of the crime rather than the gratifications of pleasure. A perpetual polemicist, he happens to be completely determined by the good and the just—against them. If the laws of morality did not exist, he would invent them in order to violate them. Which is what suggests to us the spiritual nature of his secret, so carefully masked by the pretext of his instinct. On the summits of the mind in revolt, we shall see Nietzsche renew this mortal challenge a hundred years later." Given this interpretation, it is no wonder that de Rougemont believes that Don Giovanni embodies "an absolute moral nihilism" (115).

sacred task, Kierkegaard requests the vigilant protection of his readers: “. . . guard me lest I, in confused enthusiasm and blind zeal to make *Don Giovanni* all in all, do it an injustice, disparage it, make it something other than what it really is, which is the highest!” (87).

Several of Kierkegaard’s most important observations about *Don Giovanni* and its music will be presented here. First he discusses the genesis of the Don Juan motif. Though much is uncertain, this much, he believes, is clear: “that it is linked to Christianity and through Christianity to the Middle Ages” (87). The Middle Ages made much of the discord between the spirit and the flesh which was a dialectic introduced into the world by Christianity. Each of these polar opposite forces in this theologically induced conflict was personified in a representative, and the medieval ambassador of the flesh was Don Juan (the saints and martyrs, presumably, personified spirit). As Kierkegaard puts it, “Don Juan, then, if I dare say so, is the incarnation of the flesh, or the inspiration of the flesh by the spirit of the flesh itself” (88). Assuming that Don Juan belongs to the latter period of the Middle Ages, then it is likely that the *persona* of Don Juan, as well as that of Faust, emerged as forces opposed to the spirit which had gladly abandoned this world to which it had set itself in absolute metaphysical contrast throughout the ages. In other words, both Don Juan and Faust arose in the worldly space provided for them by the retreat of the spirit from its intended earthly domain. Its excessively transcendent orientation gave place for the sensuous to flourish. Kierkegaard explains the birth of the sensuous in this lengthy, but significant quotation.

As spirit, qualified solely as spirit, renounces this world, feels that the world not only is not its home but is not even its stage, and withdraws into the higher realms, it leaves the worldly behind as the playground for the power with which it has always been in conflict and to which it now yields ground. Then, as spirit disengages itself from the earth, the sensuous shows itself in all its power. It has no objection to the change; indeed, it perceives the advantage in being

separated and is happy that the Church does not induce them to remain together but cuts in two the band that binds them.

Stronger than ever before, the sensuous now awakens in all its profusion, in all its rapture and exultation, and—just as that hermit in nature, taciturn echo, who never speaks first to anyone, or speaks without being asked, derived such great pleasure from the knight's hunting horn and from his melodies of erotic love [*Elskov*], from the baying of the hounds, from the snorting of the horses, that it never wearied of repeating it again and again and finally, as it were, repeated it very softly to itself in order not to forget it—so it was that the whole world on all sides became a reverberating abode for the worldly spirit of sensuousness, whereas the spirit had forsaken the world (89).

Don Juan is the first born of this sensuous kingdom of passion, intoxication and desire, born in the Middle Ages. He, together with Faust, are the titans and giants of this medieval epoch, the former as the demonic qualified as the sensuous, and the latter as the demonic qualified as the spiritual. These two, as Kierkegaard points out, have an essential relation to each other, and both are preserved in a legend.

The second theme has to do with Don Juan who seemingly subsists primarily as an idea, that is, as power and life, but also as an unfinished, incomplete individual. He hovers in between these two realms of existence. He thus becomes simultaneously “a picture that is continually coming into view but does not attain form and consistency, and individual who is continually being formed but is never finished. . .” (92). If he is imagined as a particular individual walking and talking and all the rest, then his seduction of 1,003 women becomes comic: how did he do it and with whom? On the other hand, when he is conceived musically, as Kierkegaard says, “then I do not have the particular individual, then I have a force of nature, the demonic, which no more wearies of seducing or is through with seducing than the wind with blowing a gale, the sea with rocking, or a waterfall with plunging down from the heights. For that matter,

the number of the seduced can just as well be any number whatever, a much larger number” (92-93). Indeed, as Kierkegaard mentions a bit later, the use of the number 1,003 is aesthetically serious in that it implies that the list of the seduced is not yet complete, and Don Juan is still on the prowl.

Third, the sensuous as it is conceived in Don Juan as a principle is conceived as the erotic, and the erotic is conceived as seduction. This is a concept that was totally lacking in Greek culture where the psychical was the dominant mode of love. The notion of Don Juan the seducer is clearly demonic and Kierkegaard explains what he means by this concept.

Don Juan . . . is a downright seducer. His love is sensuous, not psychical, and, according to its concept, sensuous love is not faithful but totally faithless; it loves not one but all—that is, seduces all. It is indeed only in the moment, but . . . that moment is the sum of moments, and so we have the seducer. . . . But its faithlessness manifests itself in another way also: it continually becomes only a repetition (94).

Seductive love is not concerned about whether or not it will be fulfilled or happy. Seductive love is brisk about its business and must always be completely victorious. Seductive love has no time, for everything is an affair of the moment in which a woman is seen and seduced, for they are one and the same thing. And the same thing repeats itself indefinitely. Seductive love demands that femininity lose any trace of individuality, and become solely abstract femininity the encounters with which disappear in time. For these reasons, music, argues Kierkegaard, is superbly suited to achieve the expression of this kind of seduction, for music articulates not the particular, but the universal, and it articulates this universal not in the abstraction of reflection or thought, but rather in the “concretion of immediacy” (95). Through music, “one does not hear Don Giovanni as a particular individual; one does not hear what he says but hears his voice, the voice of the sensuous, and hears it through the longings for femininity” (96). Indeed, Zerlina,

whom the Don seeks to seduce, is an ordinary, insignificant, peasant girl, and this is sufficient. “For Don Giovanni, every girl is an ordinary girl, every love affair a story of every day life” (97), and this kind of universal activity of seduction, in which the object of his desire is the sensuous alone, can be expressed only by music: Don Giovanni is absolutely demonic and therefore absolutely musical.

But Kierkegaard goes on to point out that Don Juan is not a cautious, reflective seducer, and so it might be better to refer to him as a *deceiver* since this is a more ambiguous term. Insofar as seduction requires craftiness and machination, Don Juan does not seduce. Rather, “he desires, and this desire acts seductively. To this extent he does seduce. He enjoys the satisfaction of desire; as soon as he has enjoyed it, he seeks a new object, and so it goes on indefinitely. Thus he does indeed deceive, but still not in such a way that he plans his deception in advance; it is the power of the sensuous itself that deceives the seduced, and it is rather a kind of nemesis” (99). Also, if one should ask: what kind of power is it by which Don Giovanni seduces? The answer is clear: it is by “the energy of desire, the energy of the sensuous. He desires total femininity in every woman, and therein lies the sensuous, idealizing force with which he simultaneously enhances and overcomes his prey” (100). This power in Don Giovanni, of course, is something that only music can express, and as Kierkegaard puts it, “I know no other predicate to describe it than it is exuberant gaiety” (101).

This leads, once again, to Kierkegaard’s primary point: *Don Giovanni* is absolutely musical. “He desires sensuously; he seduces with demonic power of the sensuous; he seduces all. Words, lines, are not suitable for him, for then he immediately becomes a reflective individual. He does not have that kind of continuance at all but hurries on in an eternal vanishing, just like the music, which is over as soon as the sound has stopped and comes into existence again only when it sounds once again” (102).²²

²² See also pages 101, 107 for more powerful comments that express this same conclusion.

Kierkegaard moves next to a consideration of other versions of Don Juan in relation to the musical interpretation. His purpose here, as one would expect, is to illuminate the significance and superiority of the musical interpretation of the theme of Don Juan over the alternatives (see 105-06). Be that as it may, he makes an interesting statement at the end of this section about whether or not *Don Giovanni* is a moral or immoral play. His conclusion to this brief discussion is illuminating.

Therefore, to say that the opera is immoral is fatuous and comes only from people who do not understand how to interpret a totality but are trapped by details. The definitive aim of the opera is highly moral, and the impression it leaves is altogether beneficent, because everything is large scale, everything has genuine, unadorned pathos, the passion of desire no less than the passion of earnestness, the passion of enjoyment no less than the passion of anger (115).²³

It is interesting to note that Kierkegaard does not say that the opera is religious, for that assertion would be much more difficult to sustain. Indeed, there is considerable debate about the ultimate moral, religious or even immoral “thrust” of *Don Giovanni*, and the conversation on this point has continued up to the present time.

The final section of Kierkegaard’s splendid essay concerns the inner musical structure of Mozart’s masterpiece. One dominant point he makes has to do with the unity of the mood of *Don Giovanni*, a factor more important to opera than to drama. As Kierkegaard claims, “The unity in an opera is preserved by the dominant tone that sustains the whole” (117). If this is indeed the case, then *Don Giovanni* is well crafted

²³ Opposite this position is George B. Shaw who attacks what he believes are the prudish interpretations of the “moral” of the opera. In a response to J. Rushkin, he writes: “As to Don Giovanni, otherwise The Dissolute One Punished, the only immoral feature of it is its supernatural retributive morality. Gentlemen who break through the ordinary categories of good and evil . . . do not, as a matter of fact, get called on by statues, and taken straight down through the floor to eternal torments; and to pretend that they do is to shirk the social problem they present. Nor is it yet by any means an established fact that the world owes more to its Don Ottavios than to its Don Juans” (quoted in Allenbrook 215).

because the unity of its mood is sustained by the powerful presence and personality of Don Giovanni himself. As Kierkegaard phrases it, “Don Giovanni is the hero in the opera; . . . [and] the very secret of this opera is that its hero is also the force in the other characters. Don Giovanni’s life is the life principle in them” (119). Kierkegaard amplifies this notion with these words.

His [Don Giovanni’s] passion sets in motion the passion of the others. His passion resonates everywhere; it resonates in and supports the Commendatore’s earnestness, Elvira’s wrath, Anna’s hate, Ottavio’s pomposity, Zerlina’s anxiety, Mazetto’s indignation, Leporello’s confusion. As the hero in the opera, Don Giovanni is the denominator of the piece . . . (119).

Kierkegaard provides two specific examples of just how it is that the Don’s *persona* permeates and even overpowers the central characters in the work. The first example is Elvira’s first aria which she sings while Don Giovanni and Leporello stand in the background (121-22). The second demonstrates how Don Giovanni’s presence pervades the mood even when he is not on stage, as in Leporello’s famous catalog aria (132-33). Kierkegaard also points out that “with the exception of the Commendatore, all the characters stand in a kind of erotic relation to Don Giovanni. He cannot exercise any power over the Commendatore, who is consciousness; the others are in his power. Elvira loves him, and thereby she is in his power; Anna hates him, and thereby she is in his power; Zerlina fears him, and thereby she is in his power. Ottavio and Mazetto go along for the sake of kinship, for the ties of blood are tender” (125). Thus Kierkegaard believes that the spirit of Don Giovanni resonates everywhere, and it is he who provides the opera with both its seria/buffa tone, and its unifying mood which penetrates and sustains the whole work.

One final feature of Kierkegaard’s treatment of the structure of the opera itself must be considered, namely the overture which, in Kierkegaard’s opinion, “gives the

dominant tone of the opera in a compact concentration” (125).²⁴ For Kierkegaard, the overture’s purpose is to provoke a mood, and since it is typically composed at the very last, it provides a glance into the composer himself, and into his spiritual connection with the music of the opera as a whole. An overture should offer a penetrating elucidation of the content of the music, and if successful, should convey the full content of the opera in a unique way. It should grip the listener powerfully. As far as Kierkegaard is concerned, Mozart’s overture to *Don Giovanni* does not disappoint, and for him it always remained “a perfect masterpiece” (126). Kierkegaard describes the *Giovanni* overture with some of the most evocative words and lyrical expressions in the entire essay. They are worth quoting *in extenso*.

It is concise, defined, strongly structured, and above all, impregnated with the essence of the whole opera. It is powerful like a god’s idea, turbulent like a world’s life, harrowing in its earnestness, palpitating in its desire, crushing in its terrible wrath, animating in its full-blooded joy; it is hollow-toned in its judgment, shrill in its lust; it is ponderous, ceremonious in its awe-inspiring dignity; it is stirring, flaring, dancing in its delight. And this it has not attained by sucking the blood of the opera; on the contrary, it is rather a prophecy in its relation to the opera. In the overture, the music unfurls its total range; with a few powerful wing beats it soars above itself, as it were, floats above the place where it will descend. It is a struggle, but a struggle in the higher atmosphere. To anyone hearing the overture after he has become more familiar with the opera, it may seem as if he had penetrated the hidden workshop where the forces he has

²⁴ Popular legend has it that Mozart composed the overture just the night before the first performance (Oct. 29, 1787), and that the musicians rehearsed it for the very first time when the ink was still wet on the page! Even if that were the case, it must be remembered, as Blom points out, “That the whole piece was fully composed in Mozart’s mind, according to his astonishing habit, and only needed writing down. . . .” (Blom 1962: 142). For helpful discussions about the substance and aesthetics about the *Giovanni* overture, see Allenbrook (197-99) and Jouve (11-13).

learned to identify in the opera move with primitive power, where they wrestle with one another with all their might. The contest, however, is too uneven; before the battle, one force is already victor. It flees and escapes, but this flight is precisely its passion, its burning restlessness in its brief joy of life, the pounding pulse in its passionate ardor. It thereby sets the other force in motion and carries it along with itself. This, which at first seemed so unshakably firm that it was practically immovable, must now be off, and soon the movement is so swift that it seems like an actual conflict (127).

In the application of the overture to Don Giovanni himself, Kierkegaard seems to suggest that it roughly portrays the entire life of the antagonistic protagonist. In the overture there is no despair, and neither is Don Giovanni's life in despair. Rather it is an expression of the full force of the sensuous which is born in anxiety. Don Giovanni himself, according to Kierkegaard, is this anxiety which is, in actuality, the demonic zest for life itself. The overture, in other words, conveys the emergence, presence, and power of the dynamic and demonic one. But the overture also inclines toward the demise of the protagonist as well. His life develops to the dancing strains of the violin by which he skips over the abyss, at least for a while. However, just as a pebble which skips on the water for a while finally plummets to the bottom, so too the Don dances over the abyss, but his own life, like the proverbial pebble, will also descend into the depths (see 129-30).

Such are the most salient themes and ideas in Søren Kierkegaard's interpretation of Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, and if he is sufficiently correct in his interpretation of this great opera, then truly it ought, as Kierkegaard wished, "to rank highest among all the classical works" (135).

In the concluding pages of this paper, a theological response to a selected aspect of Kierkegaard's essay on *Don Giovanni* will be set forth for consideration, beginning with a related, but serendipitous thought, which now comes to mind.²⁵

The Old Testament itself presents its own analogue to Don Juan in the amorous exploits of no minor figure, namely, in the third king of Israel who was King Solomon.²⁶ As it is recorded in 1 Kings 11: 1, "Now King Solomon loved many foreign women along with the daughter of Pharaoh: Moabite, Ammonite, Edomite, Sidonian, and Hittite women." Indeed, in an extended period of his life which could be seen as the equivalent to Kierkegaard's "aesthetic stage," Solomon himself testifies to his relentless pursuit of pleasure which, according to his own word, included the enjoyment of "many concubines" (Ecclesiastes 2: 1-11; esp. v. 8). And many there were, for the Scriptures, just like Leporello, number them at an even 1,000: "And he had seven hundred wives and princess, and three-hundred concubines, and his wives turned his heart away" (1 Kings 11: 3). Furthermore, in Don Juanesque fashion, Solomon the seducer composed many songs, presumably love songs, and it is interesting that they number 1,005—one, perhaps, for each of his paramours. The very best of these songs—"The Song of Songs which is Solomon's"—has been preserved in the poetic-wisdom literature in the Old Testament. As indicated above, the prophetic response to Solomon's "lifestyle" was

²⁵ Geoffrey Clive believes that the drama is suffused with religious and moral content, an observation which lends credence to the value of a theological response to Kierkegaard's interpretation of the opera. Clive writes: "Underlying the surface themes of the opera—intrigue, murder, and seduction—is Mozart's intense preoccupation with the dialectic between hubris and nemesis, grace and damnation, redemption and punitive suffering. It is hard to find a major ethical or religious issue which is not touched on in the course of the drama . . ." (172).

²⁶ The multiple marital and sexual relationships of King David may also be considered as grist for this myth (see 2 Samuel 3: 2-5; 5: 13-16), but in the history of the biblical tradition and interpretation, the honor (or dishonor) of this kind of reputation generally falls to Solomon. It is also worthy of note that both the Old and New Testaments present the rough equivalent of *La Traviata*—the fallen woman—in a number of passages which are worth investigation in this regard (see Proverbs 5, 6 and 7; John 4 and 8).

ensorious in that his many associations severely diminished his spiritual devotion, and turned his heart away. The judgment rendered was clear: "And Solomon did what was evil in the sight of the Lord. . ." (1 Kings 11: 6). Nonetheless, it may be feasible to argue that the Don Juan myth finds an architectonic prototype in the ancient biblical figure of King Solomon (10th century B. C.) whose forays into the realm of the sensual established an archetypal attitude and pattern of behavior that has haunted the conscious of Western man ever since. Perhaps this biblical persona and his exploits were present in the presumably biblically literate consciousness of the Spanish priest and playwright Tirso de Molina who may have incarnated the very spirit of Solomon in the expression of this motif in his own *Burlador de Seville*.

Be that as it may, the most important theological response strikes at a central theme in Kierkegaard's exposition of *Don Giovanni*, in particular at his understanding of the origin of the Don Juan myth itself and the factors which prompted it. According to Kierkegaard, who drew his somewhat distorted understanding of medieval Catholicism from Joseph von Görres' work on Christian mysticism, from the romantic philosopher Franz van Baader, and from Romantic novels (Collins 51-52), a Don Juan could arise only in the kind of situation which obtained in the late Middle Ages when the life of the spirit, and the forces of Christian morality and religion abandoned this world, and took flight to God. The consequences of the abandonment of the secular world by the spirit left the field wide open for the free play of the forces of the world and the flesh. Furthermore, Kierkegaard argues that just as the sinful passions are aroused to expression through the strictures of the Law, so also the appearance of the embodiment of demonic sensuality, as in Don Juan, is engendered by a Christianity which posited the spirit, and thereby implicitly negated the flesh and condemned it as profane. Such an action incites rebellion, and in this case the rebellion took the form of the life and times of Don Juan. Hence, the spiritual factors which gave rise to and permitted the appearance of the figure of Don Juan are twofold: the indirect positing of the flesh by

virtue of the positing of the spirit, and by the abandonment of this world by spirit in its flight to the world beyond. It seems that throughout the history of Western Europe (and only in Western Europe), “religious morality and eroticism have reached this state of permanent conflict, of reciprocal contempt, of rigorous mutual exclusion” (de Rougemont 4). Grace is opposed to nature, and spirit is contrary to the flesh. If one lives after the flesh, one will die after the flesh, and flesh is here understood as the sensual-erotic. Sex, in other words, is the enemy of the spiritual life; it can only be tolerated in marriage, and even there it is the source of social and personal problems and thus regarded with contempt and suspicion. To enter religion and engage in the life of the spirit means to relinquish the world and its activities; to relinquish the world and its activities, including the erotic, means to enter religion. Christianity, as Kierkegaard seems to suggest, is responsible, indirectly at least, for the rise of “sexuality” and the demonic expressions of the sensuous-erotic.

This entire situation began to evoke deep and profound questions: Is there anyway possible to integrate human love with a religious conception of reality? Can spirituality and sensuality in any way be reconciled? Can freedom be achieved only by a flight from this world, and by a rigorous detachment from the passions of the flesh, the world, and the self?²⁷

Over against this repressed dimension of human existence, namely the sensuous-erotic, an explosion took place, an erotic revolution, and it began to manifest itself in multiple ways. One way was in the birth and development of the Don Juan, Faust, and Tristan myths, each of which in their own way, signaled a rebellion against the received traditions regarding love and faith. It was the romantic thinkers themselves—men like Kierkegaard, Baudelaire, and Wagner—who “reveal like seismographs the subterranean movements of the repressed soul.” As de Rougemont believes,

²⁷ These questions are glosses on questions raised by de Rougemont (12, 37).

Kierkegaard, Baudelaire, and Wagner were the first to confront the consequences of this revolution with their whole being. By philosophical analysis, poetry, and music, *Either/Or*, *Les Fleurs du Mal*, and *Tristan* bear witness to a profoundly renewed awareness of the relationship between human love, the life of the soul, and the spiritual quest (12).

If it is true that Medieval Christendom directly or indirectly gave rise to the romantic revolution, and was responsible in some sense of the term for the genesis of the Don Juan myth as a statement of protest, then there is a real and redemptive purpose for the advent of a figure such as Don Juan and it is this: "A Don Juan is there to remind us that no conception of human existence is adequate which cannot find a distinctive place for sensuous experience and the full play of the passions" (Collins 52).

The theological question that must be posed at this point is this: *Does the Christian conception of human existence allow for, and even affirm, a distinctive place for sensuous experience and the full play of the passions?* If Kierkegaard's interpretation is correct, the answer of Medieval Catholic Christendom seems to have been a clear and distinct NO! The two realms are adamantly and irrevocably opposed. Like East and West, never shall the 'twain meet! But here is the counterpoint: Biblical Christianity wholeheartedly affirms the divinely created sensual/passional aspects of human existence. What is the basis for a bald, non-traditional statement such as this? Two words, that is, two doctrines, come quickly to mind: creation and incarnation. Regarding the first of these, the Genesis narrative itself proclaims at the completion of the divine work of creation that "God saw all that he had made, and behold, it was *very good!*" Among the many divinely created very good things were the human body with all of its attendant senses of sight, hearing, taste, touch, smell; plus also there was sexuality, marriage, food, work, not to mention every imaginable specie of flora and fauna. The Judeo-Christian doctrine stands firm in its complete affirmation of the goodness of the created, sensate order, and presents it to human beings as their home for their joyful

habitation. And though, in the biblical drama, the creation has been perverted by sin and consequently abused, nonetheless, it remains structurally or ontologically good, and as such it is the object of divine grace in the merciful and comprehensive work of cosmic as well as personal redemption.

The concept of the incarnation also affirms the divinely valued realm of physical, tangible, empirical, sensual existence. The doctrine of the incarnation is simple: God became incarnate in the *flesh and blood* of man. This doctrine suggests one basic, but profound point: that of all the world's great religions, the Judeo-Christian religion is by far and away the most materialistic of them all, for its central tenet of redemption is this: God became *flesh* and dwelt among us. Second perhaps only to the doctrine of creation itself, the doctrine of incarnation attests liberally to the value and significance of the created order in which humanity lives, moves, and has its being. The use and enjoyment of creation is not to be refused ascetically, and yet at the same time it is not to be abused aesthetically (as Kierkegaard's exemplar of the aesthetic stage of existence, Don Giovanni, did). A robust doctrine of both creation and incarnation, then, establishes the foundation for a strange and unusual mandate, namely, to recover biblical sensuousness in all its power and profundity.²⁸ As John Donne once proclaimed,

Our nature is meteoric, we respect (because we partake so) both earth and heaven; for as our bodies glorified shall be capable of spiritual joy, so our souls demerged into those bodies are allowed to take earthly pleasure. Our soul is not sent hither, only to go back again: we have some errand to do here (quoted in Perry 1).

A part of that earthly pleasure in which humans are encouraged to partake includes the experience of the sensual-erotic, albeit in a proper moral context. If this be

²⁸ See William E. Phipps book *Recovering Biblical Sensuousness* for a complete discussion of the Christian affirmation of and participation in the created order, sexuality, dance, food, and the rest.

the case, then it is deemed an experience that is far from demonic. The biblical love poem, the Song of Solomon, stands as a steadfast affirmation of the fully blessed experience of the sensual-erotic. When observers complain that in the Christian West there is no equivalent of the Kama Sutra of the Tantras, or any other literary treatment of the erotic as in the Vedas and in the Upanishads that relate the sexual to the divine, when this complaint is registered, they overlook this one important text: the Song of Solomon. Yes, it has been the subject of endless interpretative debate; yes, it has been interpreted allegorically to avoid its natural erotic meaning; yes, it has been viewed as a statement of divine love for Israel and the Church. But these factors do not offset the fact that this piece of ancient near eastern love poetry, included in the biblical canon for a reason, stands as an everlasting testament to the Judeo-Christian affirmation of physical, erotic, sensate love between the sexes united under the blessing of God. The erotic imagery of the Song is clear. Consider this one passage in which the act of love is metaphorically rehearsed, and then endorsed by God himself:

I have come into my garden, my sister, my bride;
 I have gathered my myrrh along with my balsam.
 I have eaten my honeycomb and my honey;
 I have drunk my wine and my milk.
 Eat friends;
 Drink and imbibe deeply
 [literally: become drunk]
 O lovers!²⁹

Because of texts like this one, one recent commentator on this biblical love poem wrote, “The capacity to delight in physical beauty, to be attracted by members of the opposite sex, the desire to form secure and intimate relationships, and to express love and affection in demonstrably physical ways—these are all a very fundamental part of our common humanity. The Song of Songs is an unabashed celebration of these deeply rooted urges” (Gledhill 13).

²⁹ Song of Solomon 5: 1.

What if the architects of Medieval Catholic Christendom had heard words such as these and taken them to heart? What if they would have recognized and accepted the whole meaning and significance of the Song of Solomon instead of repressively reducing its meaning to only one ethereal part? What if they would have recognized the profound and powerful implications of the doctrines of creation and incarnation? But, for various and sundry reasons, they did not. And because they did not, Medieval Christendom posited by its blunder the demonic sensual-erotic as it has been personified in Don Juan and *Don Giovanni*. Thanks be to Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and to Søren Kierkegaard who have expressed so powerfully in their music and philosophy the wonder and mystery of these themes. What helpful guides they are for those seeking “adventure in the forests of the Western soul” (de Rougemont 112).

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