

his aegis Susanna and the Countess have drawn closer together, Figaro has learned to listen as well as to act, and the Countess has faced out the Count to bring him back to her, for at least a moment reconciled. Cherubino is emblematic of the fragile traits possessed by some humans which enable them to discover a special place, a "room of their own," a tranquil refuge to which they may also draw fellow seekers less well endowed than they. The opera, filled with joy and wit, and yet a certain resignation, is not a revolutionary's manual, nor a facile witness to an aphorism about true friendship knowing no bounds. Mozart had no desire to obliterate class distinctions, because for him the way to the most important truths lay through the surface of things as they are. The attempt to shrug off one's skin is a vain and ultimately circumscribing act of violence; one struggles impotently, caught in the coils of the unwilling self. True freedom begins with carefully articulated orders, true knowledge with the patience of the receptive eye.

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## PART THREE

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### *DON GIOVANNI*

I am strangely at a loss what to think of this man. He is a perfect Proteus. I can but write according to the shape he assumes at the time. Don't think *me* a changeable person, I beseech you, if in one letter I contradict what I wrote in another; nay, if I seem to contradict what I said in the same letter; for he is a perfect camelion; or rather more variable than the camelion; for that, it is said, cannot assume the *red* and the *white*; but this man *can*. And though *black* seems to be his natural color, yet he has taken great pains to make me think him nothing but *white*.

Samuel Richardson, *Clarissa Harlowe*, letter 28, Clarissa Harlowe to Miss Howe.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### *Overture and Introduction*

The world of *Don Giovanni*, although nocturnal and ominous in its atmosphere, is not entirely removed from the luminous space inhabited by Susanna and the Countess. The seeming difference in tone between the two operas is at first so striking that it claims all one's attention. Yet the things which distinguish them are not primary, but superadded, and cause a shift in perspective rather than a change of scene. The first thirty measures of the overture left aside, *Don Giovanni* begins in essentially the same way as does *Figaro*. The *Molto allegro* of the one and the *Presto* of the other are virtually interchangeable, with their *galant* fanfares, marches, hints of noble bourrée, and flourishes of concerto style. Even the *Sturm und Drang* turn to minor in the overture to *Don Giovanni*, just before arrival in the second key area (mm. 67–76), has its analogue in an only slightly less flamboyant gesture in *Figaro's* overture. There are differences between the two passages,<sup>1</sup> but they serve the same formal function.

The change in emotional climate from the one opera to the other, that quickening of the pulse which one inevitably experiences at the outset of *Don Giovanni*, is effected entirely by the overture's first thirty measures. They belong to the genre of the *ombra* scene, in which, according to operatic tradition, striking and solemn music evokes the domain of the shades.<sup>2</sup> The musical elements of the *ombra* style here are purposeful unorthodoxies: a minor key (always in the musical language of the late eighteenth century the signal of unusual and portentous events); an antique chaconne bass and the ponderous dotted rhythms of an earlier style; chains of syncopations, with no resolution provided to the rhythmic imbalance which they provoke; frequent assertion of the Phrygian

half-step; sideslipping chromatic progressions and a major place in the harmonic events conceded to the Neapolitan sixth; a handful of disconnected "filler" figures, the most distinctive of all merely a minor scale ascending through the octave and descending again slowly from a point a chromatic crack higher; sudden *sforzando* shocks in an otherwise *piano* and muted uneasiness. Figures are laid into the larger structure in chunks, open-ended and repetitive rather than symmetrically rounded off in the departure-return sequence of the dance. Yet all the *ombra*'s unorthodoxies are embedded in a harmonic plan which is only deceptively complex, and ensures the maximum local mystery and indirection with the minimum sacrifice of broad cadential muscle.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, a fantasialike slow introduction was hardly a novelty in itself. Mozart had just supplied the *Prague* Symphony, K. 504, with a slow introduction resembling this one on almost all counts except for its beginning in a major key.<sup>4</sup> The construction and locus of the introduction are not mysterious, nor is the piece *sui generis*, as some fervent admirers of *Don Giovanni* would have us believe.<sup>5</sup> The D-minor section is carefully fashioned to pose a diametric opposition to the material of the main body of the overture, or human movements caught by the rhythms of dance: *alla breve* is the logical meter for the supernatural component in this confrontation. The *ombra Andante* is *alla breve* as *alla capella*, the slow and somber meter of church fugues and choruses, slowed past the tempo of even the exalted march, and loaded with heavy figuration and complex rhythms. The substitution of a tempo twice again as fast (the *Molto allegro*'s ♩ roughly equals the *Andante*'s ♪) eases us into the gestures of the sunlit *buffa* world without skipping a beat.

By invoking the superhuman and supernatural at the outset of the opera, Mozart does more than simply prefigure the celestial will and the power of its censure. He also invites the listener to view the familiar *buffa* world at a new remove. The *ombra* music gives the world Mozart created in *Le nozze di Figaro* a further moral dimension; it suggests a new height for aspiration and a new capacity for cruelty and wrongdoing, both of which were unthinkable before when one's vision was bounded by the limits of the terrestrial social hierarchy. It expands our perspective on the world to include the penumbra above and below the human order, suggesting that what is about to be encountered is a kind of human action which is either too noble or too base to be encompassed within the narrower limits of merely human judgment. Whatever one may decide to be the nature of the transgressions of the *dissoluto punito*<sup>6</sup> (a task of considerable difficulty, to judge from the thousands of labored and inconclusive paragraphs concerned with spelling out precisely the error, or the glory, of his ways), the word "transgression" is clearly an apt one in the context: the Don's sins involve a "crossing be-

yond" the proper limits of human experience, and in order to secure his punishment, the purview of the opera must be widened to include the realms of the only authority capable of judging him. In accommodating the divine perspective the opera has somewhat to distort our view of that small part of the world where we were formerly at home: to gain the new dimension the vivid planes of *Figaro*'s *terra firma* must be compressed into a caricature of themselves, a shadow play.

Thus all that seems different in the domains of the two operas becomes a matter merely of a different stance toward the conventions of a single world. In *Figaro* the conventions which support human relations are plastic in Mozart's hands; he expands and redefines them, finding happy places within for unconventional behavior. In *Don Giovanni* the conventions have become rigid and chilling — grim truisms rather than growing-spaces. Masetto is a stock peasant character, and Donna Anna moves in her noblewoman's habit with the taut hysteria of the caged. The characters who do live beyond the boundaries of convention deserve some admiration, but it must be mixed — with pity, for Elvira, and for Giovanni with a measure of horror. The warmth and subtlety which informs the relationship of Susanna and the Countess are impossible in a world whose human inhabitants are necessarily diminished in complexity by the overshadowing presence of the superhuman and daemonic. If there is some note of solace, it must not be embraced over-quickly; only a hard look at the opera can assure that we do not grasp at straws.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### *The Opening Scene*

#### *The Structure of the Drama*

One striking feature of *El Burlador de Sevilla y convidado di piedra*, the first Don Juan play,<sup>1</sup> and of many versions thereafter, is its beginning *in medias res*, with cries of rape, and hot pursuit in the darkness. In the earliest versions of the first scene none of Don Juan's women victims are identifiable precisely as Donna Anna, and in Tirso's version the routed authority turns out to be Don Juan's uncle, who benevolently permits the seducer to escape into the night. Nevertheless all the openings share the same silhouette, and for good dramatic reasons. The story itself has the thinnest of plotlines: Don Juan is a libertine, so Heaven punishes him. For a successful presentation of the plot on stage two scenes alone are indispensable, one to make a compelling display of the depth and depravity of Don Juan's crimes, and another to bring the final vengeance of Heaven down on his head. In between these pivotal scenes the author is meant to improvise, inventing as large and varied a bouquet of seductions and confrontations as may please him; he is free to improve upon the fancies of others or to compose fresh histories himself. Tradition, however, has fixed the outer scenes firmly in place in order to ensure a modicum of dramatic power and coherence in a work which could easily be weakened by diffuse and errant improvisation in its episodes. Final vengeance has to take the shape of the "Stone Guest," whose visitation became the hallmark of the legend. The opening and indicting scene, with Giovanni bursting from a darkened house pursued by an outraged noblewoman, provides evidence of at least one sin com-

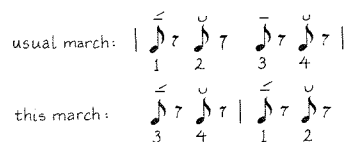
mensurate with the high degree of celestial attention manifested by the statue's visit, gives the play a dark and galvanizing opening, and in some versions, Mozart's included, furnishes an outraged father of the outraged gentlewoman as a handy candidate for murder and petrification.

By the time of Giovanni Bertati's libretto for the composer Giuseppe Gazzaniga, *Don Giovanni o sia Il Convitato di pietra*,<sup>2</sup> the traditional breathless opening had been supplied with a brief upbeat—a monologue by Don Giovanni's comic servant Pasquariello as he keeps watch outside the house of Donna Anna. *Opere buffe* often begin with a soliloquy by a comic servant; a monologue-beginning works well in opera, since a few nicely conceived reflections by the protagonist's *alter ego* can provide the exposition which would occupy several scenes of a straight play's spoken dialogue. It was left to Mozart, however, to bind the two traditions, of low comedy and high tragedy, together into what is perhaps the most stunning opening scene in operatic literature. The comic-servant routine and the passionate chase and duel, while serving as introduction to the business of the opera, in their confluence take on a far deeper meaning. The brilliant characterizations of Leporello, Don Giovanni, and Donna Anna, laden with ambiguity and irony, establish musical metaphors thematic to the entire opera. Furthermore, the daring combination of disparate styles into an apparently seamless and unified whole itself projects the opera's central theme: the rhetoric of *Don Giovanni*, and perhaps its final blackness, is figured by the act of setting the high pathetic style in the unlikely and antic foil of *buffa* comedy.

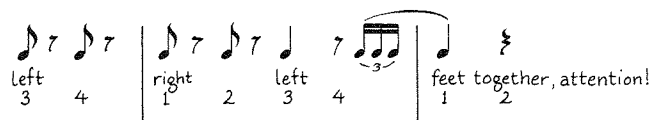
#### *"Notte e giorno faticar"*

Leporello's "soliloquy" masquerades as a simple foursquare march. Yet some subtle rhythmic imbalances and clever inflections of the stock march affect invade its apparent straightforwardness, sketching in with darker strokes the dubious qualities submerged in the role of the stock buffoon-servant. Leporello has no malice, no true diabolism in his nature. He's only good-humoredly vulgar, a touch greedy in his discontent, inattentively cruel, a little slow to draw a moral consequence.

"Notte e giorno" is a study in the art of articulating one simple meter into a series of varying rhythmic gestures. The aria is set in 4/4, a rhythmic modulation to ♩ from ♩, the *alla breve* of the overture. Each different scansion of the 4/4 is part of the mimetic account of the subject matter of Leporello's complaint. At first he is merely himself, the flat-footed sentinel, executing a frankly pedestrian march. Mozart's articulation of the simple 4/4 march seems curiously labored at first glance, since he phrases the four beats across rather than within the barline:



In Leporello's version beat 3 is stressed because it begins the phrase, beat 1 because it begins the measure. The march is distinctly more pedestrian when the two halves of its 4/4 measure receive nearly equal weights; an ordinary stride becomes the stiff-legged gait of a tin soldier, a *soldat malgré lui*. Facing about in comic annoyance Leporello executes a formal infantry maneuver, drawing himself up to reconnoiter at the flourish on the first beat of every other measure:



The unconventional gavottelike barring of the march also positions just before the barline the sixteenth — and thirty-second-note upbeat runs which suggest Leporello's salutes, assuring them a strong accent. If the runs were arranged as upbeats to beat 3 of a conventionally barred march, as they are in measures 1–4 of example 8–2 below, they would be merely pallid decorations, no longer serving to direct the marcher in the execution of his military figure.

Leporello marches in sturdy distraction, preoccupied with his angry resentment against his master. A check on the expected march period structure catches his bemusement. Mozart makes all the two-measure units of the eight-measure phrase antecedents, repetitions, that is, of the eight-beat opening motive. He organizes the repetitions on a rising line from F to B-flat, to portray both Leporello's concentration on his rising anger and the growing distance between the sentinel and his post. By its third instance the eight-beat figure begins to sound clumsy and overdrawn. By its fourth repetition the sentinel's four-step maneuver has transported him too far from his starting place, obliging him to break ranks and scurry back, a "choreography" which is suggested by the bustling sixteenth-note descending scale which ends the phrase (ex. 8–1). A lesser composer, attending to the conventional expectations for meter and period structure, would have fashioned something like the following unexceptional little march period, whose four-measure consequent returns the marcher neatly to his starting place (ex. 8–2). Its trim march symmetries suffice to set the comic stereotype. Mozart's version, with its stilted "gavotte" rhythms and the overstrained stretch of

## Example 8-1



## Example 8-2



the figures toward the dominant seventh, makes the stereotype larger than life and thus renders it particular.

Leporello's silent motions on stage are revealing enough; when he turns to sing to the tune of his march, he gives away even a little more. The repetitive figuration is now with equal appropriateness brought to the service of a list, the usual chain of servants' complaints:

Notte e giorno faticar  
Per chi nulla sa gradir;  
Piova e vento sopportar,  
Mangiar male e mal dormir.<sup>3</sup>

It arrives on the dominant again, where the grand flourish of scales on the dominant seventh demands an equally portentous event to follow. Leporello's fancy, piqued by visions of his master's activities in Donna Anna's chamber, conjures up an apt musical metaphor for what his master represents to him — a full-fledged cavalry march (m. 20). It begins vigorously on the dominant with a string flourish, a horn call in parallel thirds, and arpeggiated triplets in the middle strings, this last the conventional evocation of riding at a gallop.<sup>4</sup> Since the 4/4 measure is no longer mechanically articulated, it has a broad and heroic sweep (ex. 8–3). The notion of a cavalry march as a metaphor for the gentleman — the *cavaliere* — takes off from a direct contrast with Leporello's foot march: gentlemen ride to hunt and to war, while servants follow on

## Example 8-3


## Example 8-4

foot. But the prerogatives of a gentleman transcend the trivial matter of better transportation: they also grant him license for seduction. The horseman is also a bedroom soldier, says Leporello with a leer at Donna Anna's house; the evidence is inside. The orchestra puts the sexual *dou-ble entendre* over succinctly, using hunting horns to suggest cuckoldry and the equestrian imitation for an even bawdier dig—it translates the time-honored pun on the word “mounting” (It. *montare*) into music to emphasize the dual nature of the *cavaliere's* pursuits.

The rhythmic sweep of the cavalry march's phrases is striking because while each of the phrases is an irregular three measures long, this irregularity makes no claim on our attention. It might be more noticeable if the figures in the foot march were not also drawn out past normal expectations. A simple recomposition of the cavalry march (to the state of the foot march of ex. 8-2, p. 203), punctures its blown-up phrases (ex. 8-4). The result is another period of a simple march for a *buffa* servant's lament, which works well enough to have been the skeleton Mozart considered at the start, but lacks all his jokes. Once one commences to play with the skeleton, each broad stroke necessitates an-

## Example 8-5

other. The infantry march fails to find its consequent phrase after nineteen measures, and requires an answer equal to its own extravagant extension. The necessity of a strong tonic chord on the first downbeat of the consequent introduces the extra measure into each phrase of the cavalier's march, helping to give it the expansive “die-Jagd” tone which is contrasted so successfully with the stiff-legged gait of Leporello's march. The settled contrast of foot and cavalry marches (mm. 1-25) demands yet a new inflection of gesture for the cadence, so Leporello comes by his low half-note refusals alternating with clipped “no's” in patter for a seven-measure cadential figure (mm. 26-32). Mozart's version is better music as well as better comedy: it evolves from three pale and choppy eight-measure phrases of equal weight<sup>5</sup> into two broader phrases, which, while spun out to thirty-two measures, are still bound together in antecedent-consequent relationship. For the characterization of Leporello, at any rate, broad comic strokes are the more precise ones; by stretching the simple rhythmic conventions of *buffa* rhetoric Mozart substitutes profile and character for the prosaic homogeneity of caricature.

The possible inflections of the supple 4/4 are not exhausted yet. After Leporello's patter cadence the horns enter on a long F (m. 32), making the cuckold joke again in order to direct attention back to the clandestine activities within. Strings and bassoons take advantage of the gavottelike barring of the opening march to inflect a real gavotte in its place (ex. 8-5). Its skeleton of descending parallel sixths touching on the tonic every first beat, and the characteristic  figure which further energizes the downbeat, shape the gavotte's miniature rhythmic arch over the barline. (Leporello's foot march fails to be a gavotte because the same rhythmic event keeps being repeated: the unadorned and mechanical alternation of F and C at the opening of the march forms caesuras at the half-measure and every two measures, making a two-measure grouping the first full member of the phrase:



The triplet flourish over the barline to measure 2 punctuates the two-measure unit, and the first harmonic change occurs immediately after that cut to give it final confirmation.) This little orchestral gavotte-phrase mimes Leporello's *frisson* of delight mixed with envy as he imagines what he is missing by his enforced sentinel duty. The flirtatious rhythms and amorous associations of the dance suggest the love play transpiring inside between "il caro galantuomo" and his "bella."<sup>6</sup> The sarcastic endearment *caro* is a natural concomitant of the gavotte: with a heavy exaggeration of salon preciousity Leporello imitates the gentleman lover at work.

The gavotte and Leporello's response to it are a gloss on his earlier manifesto — "Voglio far il gentiluomo."<sup>7</sup> The horns for cuckoldry and horses for mounting in the accompaniment to his cavalry march have already demonstrated the privileged life of a *gentiluomo*, and the gavotte spells the associations out for anyone dim enough to have missed these musical puns. A gavotte inflected over a march rhythm is used to somewhat the same effect by Figaro in "Non più andrai," to the text "Narcisetto, Adoncino d'Amor." There the joke is gently affectionate, figuring young Cherubino as a blushing soldier in the war of Eros. Leporello's version takes a cruder turn. Seduction in *Don Giovanni* no longer has the expanded meaning it takes on in *Figaro*, that of forging bonds of affection between human beings who rightfully bear the name of lover. Seduction to Leporello is merely a means of garnering pleasure for oneself; capitulation demeans, if it doesn't ruin, the seduced, while enhancing the confidence and repute of the seducer. In Molière's *Don Juan* the servant Sganarelle, offended by his master's deceiving love play, wants to restrain the Don, yet fears him too much to make more than a feeble and easily silenced protest. Leporello is no Sganarelle; far from disapproving of Don Giovanni's actions, he wants to belong to the class which holds them as prerogatives. Like Sganarelle, he is afraid. When the clamor of a chase sounds in the background Mozart shows up his braggadocio by having him substitute to the music of his proud "E non voglio più servir" the muttered "Non mi voglio far sentir"<sup>8</sup> as he hastily hides in the shadows. His fear, however, usually restrains him not from lecturing the Don on his depravity but from getting a bit of the action for himself. Molière makes Sganarelle's weakness a quality endemic to servants: the role of masters is ruthlessly to prevail, of servants ruefully to have their scruples trampled. Leporello, on the other hand, has no scruples about following in his master's footsteps; a servant's nature is to be a cruder model of his master, and finesse and opportunity are the only barriers raised by class.

"Notte e giorno" is the equivalent of a vulgarly hearty smack of appreciation for Don Giovanni's mode of conduct, delivered with rolling

eyes and an occasional leer. The consequences of the chase for hunter or victim the aria conveniently ignores. Although Leporello is comic, and can even generate some sympathy in his audience, his unabashedly prurient account of what it means to be a gentleman is a little chilling. Whereas in *Figaro* the word "noble" in "nobleman" expands to include the virtue as well as the rank, in *Don Giovanni* the word is contracted to a mean and narrow range, all the more debased because a servant in wholehearted approval unconsciously delivers the indictment.

### The Nature of Don Giovanni

The high passion of the chase is grafted directly onto Leporello's final cadence: his F becomes the bottom of a tremolo run up through E-flat to B-flat, and thus a dominant instead of a tonic. This effortless modulation compels a new rhythmic gesture and a new emotional climate. From F major — the *buffa* face of its relative minor, the grim D opening the overture, and Leporello's key throughout the opera — we move to B-flat major, D minor's sixth degree. The new rhythm, although not indicated by a change of signature, is unmistakably *alla breve*, and the new gesture is another version of march time — a slightly accelerated exalted march (ex. 8-6).<sup>9</sup> Anna's *opera seria* indignation betrays her immediately upon entrance — "come furia disperata,"<sup>10</sup> she characterizes herself — and so does the ambiguity of her first words to her seducer, "Non sperar, se non m'uccidi, Ch'io ti lasci fuggir mai!"<sup>11</sup> It would be merely insensitive to accuse Donna Anna of real ambivalence toward her enemy in her present fury; yet later, when she persists in directing all her ardor toward the pursuit of her seducer rather than toward marriage with her affianced lover, these words will afford a second meaning. Here she has the bearing of a classical tragic heroine; moving fiercely to what will become her characteristic *alla breve* gesture, she sees her vengeful anger as divinely inspired. Nobility is as full-blown and majestic in this opera as *buffa* is salacious.

Giovanni, on the other hand, wants only to identify himself as No-

### Example 8-6

DONNA ANNA

Non spe-rar, se non\_m'uc-ci-di, Ch'io\_ti la-sci-fug-gir\_mai.

16. Ch.

75

*p* *f*

Man. The stage direction describes him as "cercando sempre di celarsi,"<sup>12</sup> and his response to Donna Anna's challenge is oddly oblique: not "You shall not detain me," but "You shall not find out who I am."<sup>13</sup> He also conceals himself in his music, adopting for his first utterances Donna Anna's vocal line, and never in the remainder of the trio (Leporello supports the duo throughout with patter imprecations about approaching trouble) originating any of its rhythmic or melodic material. It is hardly surprising that a pursued seducer should try to conceal his identity from his intended victim. Yet although Tirso's Don Juan, pursued by Isabella and several Spanish nobles, also at first calls himself No-Name, he finally cannot resist revealing himself, crying out "Fool!" "I'm a gentleman!"<sup>14</sup> (nor could Odysseus bear to leave the Cyclops without at the last informing him proudly that No-Man was Odysseus, son of Laertes<sup>15</sup>). Giovanni is strangely free from this besetting vanity. Chameleonlike, he doesn't even betray himself in speech, but borrows Donna Anna's music and a combination of Leporello's and Donna Anna's words.<sup>16</sup> The most striking thing about him is that he sees nothing demeaning in escaping, pursued and nameless, into the darkness; he feels no need to regain his public dignity. His retort to Anna's wrathful epithet "scellerato" ("villain") is a cool "sconsigliata" ("rash woman") — "you're ill-advised to make a fuss." In fact if the music of the movement were not so elevated, Don Giovanni's first appearance on stage would amount to a simple sight gag. The musical imagery of "Notte e giorno" made the hunt a live metaphor for seduction. Now suddenly the gentleman hunter sprints out, determinedly stalked by his erstwhile prey — "exit, pursued by a bear."

In other eighteenth-century versions of *Don Giovanni* the chase scene might well have been played for laughs. Don Juan Tenorio had fallen into disrepute in the eighteenth century. His story belonged primarily to the popular theater, where it had degenerated into the spectacle of a comic gentleman scrambling out of windows, inventing adroit lies to cover misdemeanors, and taking the occasional pratfall. There are, beside Mozart's, only two eighteenth-century versions of the tale of any reputation, and neither one takes it very seriously. Goldoni's *Don Giovanni Tenorio* is merely, on his own account, an undercover attack on a lover who has spurned him. And the Bertati/Gazzaniga opera views the story from a certain remove, bracketing it neatly in ironic quotation marks. It is presented as the second act of a two-act opera, the first act of which portrays a debate among the members of an Italian opera company traveling in Germany about what work they should produce; they finally decide on *Don Giovanni* despite the fact that all of them agree it to be a vulgar farce.

Indeed, in his choice of libretto da Ponte was perhaps less to be praised for prescience than he was to be censured for pandering to low tastes. For the eighteenth-century audience the subject of hellfire and damnation had lost both its dignity and its shock value. Consider, for example, Henry Fielding's wry remarks in *Tom Jones* on the status of hell as a literary subject matter:

"Had this history been writ in the days of superstition, I should have had too much compassion for the reader to have left him so long in suspense, whether Beelzebub or Satan was about to appear in person, with all his hellish retinue; but as these doctrines are at present very unfortunate, and have but few, if any believers, I have not been much aware of conveying any such terrors. To say truth, the whole furniture of the infernal regions hath long been appropriated by the managers of playhouses, who seem lately to have laid them by as rubbish, capable only of affecting the upper gallery — a place in which few of our readers ever sit."<sup>17</sup>

And to the refined libertines of the Enlightenment, seduction as Grand Guignol must have seemed merely adolescent. To be caught out in attempted seduction was ridiculous and unmanly, behavior beneath a gentleman's dignity; the preferred sport was drawing-room intrigue with the tacit consent of the seduced. Most eighteenth-century works which are notoriously about seducers turn out under closer scrutiny to be about something quite different. The burden of Richardson's *Clarissa Harlowe* is the unflagging virtue of the heroine, and the role of Lovelace her seducer is principally to make it manifest. Tom Jones is a doughty adventurer whose amorous interludes overtake him because of his winsome beauty and sheer niceness. Even the archrogue Rousseau of the *Confessions* is passive in his escapades; he makes a point of describing his frequent amours as the result of his weakness, and not as a matter of premeditated pursuit.

In fact, although there is much talk about the "Don Juan type," it is difficult to name another representative of the class beside Don Juan, in his various manifestations. When dealing with such a character, writers seem to have been drawn exclusively to the Don as *sui generis*, the full and sufficient expression of a creature who, although encountered frequently enough in ordinary life, does not cut a very attractive figure as the center of a play or novel. For the straightforward seducer is a difficult literary hero in any era; depending on the sophistication of the audience his exploits will be either too horrible or too banal to be witnessed with approval. The reason for the extraordinary popularity of the Don Juan figure prior to the eighteenth century may have been that

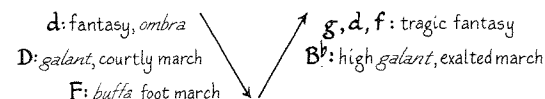


he was inextricably paired with as galvanizing a figure invented for his despatch — Tirso's Don Gonzalo, the famous Stone Guest. When sin was punished by damnation, the audience need not be uneasy about enjoying either.

But to an audience for whom hellfire had been emasculated, and rapine reduced to a vulgar and demeaning pursuit, a morality play could provide little interest. In eighteenth-century works where the theme of sin and damnation was retained, it was usually so thickly veiled as to be unrecognizable: the seductions in Choderlos de Laclos's *Les liaisons dangereuses*<sup>18</sup> are cerebral campaigns of the utmost refinement, and the seducers are punished by natural rather than supernatural causes — a duel for the Vicomte de Valmont, and for the Marquise de Merteuil a disfiguring disease. In the face of these fashions it is surprising that da Ponte retained the traditional armature of the Don Juan story, even discarding the disclaimer that Gazzaniga's ironic introduction would have provided, and that Mozart played the chase scene seriously. Of course the one elevated gesture belongs to Donna Anna, while Giovanni remains almost a cipher in the scene. But the potential joke of the hunted turning tables on the hunter must have been intended to comprise a more significant image. Given Mozart's vignette of the hero locked in ungraceful flight from a bristling fury, we must somehow assimilate this rather ridiculous behavior into the account of a man who, variously damned or worshiped for the past two centuries, was termed in Kierkegaard's famous essay on the opera the "expression of the daemonic."<sup>19</sup> The extraordinary reputation of Giovanni the *Übermensch* must be squared with the thin melodrama of his story, the insignificance of his introduction, and the banality of his pursuits.

The conclusion of this first scene reveals more of the Don. The Commendatore enters<sup>20</sup> to challenge Don Giovanni to a duel. Giovanni refuses, having no desire to cross swords with an old man, but the Commendatore persists, and Giovanni finally accedes in exasperated decision ("Misero! Attendi,/Se vuoi morir"<sup>21</sup>). He battles with and kills the Commendatore. Then, with Leporello gaping from a nearby hiding place, he stands over the old man as he dies.

Musically the five throughcomposed sections comprising the overture and first scene are arranged in a symmetrical hierarchy of gesture. From the supernatural heights of the D-minor *ombra* fantasy introduction the affect declines to the bright clarity of the D-major *galant*, touching bottom with Leporello's ribald *buffa* grousing. The high *galant* with Donna Anna's stirring exalted march begins the reascent and now, at the entrance of the Commendatore, the scene returns to the somber pathos of the fantasy style:<sup>22</sup>



In this fantasy section time is taken in very special ways. The fantasy gesture is suited to the depiction of high tragedy because, unlike the *galant* and *buffa* styles, it is free of the normal gestural and temporal restraints of the dance and of the period.<sup>23</sup> Here the fantasy communicates both the immediacy and the enormity of the event, first by a pantomimic choreography of the actual challenge and battle — a literal representation of time's passing — and then by a surreal distention of time to mark the Commendatore's death throes. Time is taken first below and then above the threshold of periodic dance structure, the normal time element of the opera. The fantasy and its temporal distortions cause a sense of the portentousness of these events to pervade the scene, fulfilling the less specific portent of the overture; its tone is not matched again in the opera until the Stone Guest appears in the next-to-last scene (notice that whereas at the opening of the opera the *buffa* and *galant* styles are set in the frame of high fantasy, at the close of the opera the reverse is true — but more about that later).

Giovanni's behavior throughout the challenge and battle is marked by an insouciant and natural nobility; it is honorable and properly formal. The Commendatore's first challenge is portrayed musically by one formal antecedent-consequent (command-refusal) phrase (mm. 139–46), which is not set in a continuum of ordinary periodic rhetoric, but is meant to be directly mimetic of the ritual formality of the meeting. Giovanni's refusal is tossed off with a i<sup>6</sup>-iv-V-i cadence in G minor. The Commendatore delivers a second, more peremptory challenge ending on the dominant of G minor (m. 149), and when again refused repeats approximately the same phrase in D minor, his increased urgency expressed by the inflection of a G-sharp to form a penultimate augmented sixth.<sup>24</sup> After a decisive measure of silence, Giovanni accepts the old man's challenge. Refusal to do so would be an insult, a violation of the code of honor. That Giovanni is acting from the sense of a nobleman's necessity and not from viciousness is made clear by the detachment of his death knell for the Commendatore after the fatal blow is struck; his words — "Ah! già cade il sciagurato,"<sup>25</sup> are reportorial, coolly free from either triumph or regret. He couches his acceptance in an eight-measure cadence (mm. 159–66, including the measure of rest), using the antique formula i-VI-iv-V-i, a harmonic version of the descending-tetrachord or "chaconne" bass (ex. 8–7). A critical theme also in the overture and second-act finale, here this portentous formula puts the

## Example 8-7

DON GIOVANNI

Mi - se - ro! At - ten - di, Se vuoi mo - rir.

*f*

*Ob. Str.*

*f*

*p*

*f*

brakes on the semiregular rhythm of overlapping fours which was set up at the outset:

m.139

(V/g) (3, V/d) (d minor cadence)

COMMENDATORE: 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1

DON GIOVANNI: 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 1 1 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8.

LEPORELLO: 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4

It lends Giovanni's assent the stern and ceremonial flourish appropriate to the occasion of a formal calling-out, and brings the first section of the fantasy to a close on a strong D minor cadence.

The remainder of the swordfight is choreographed with graphic literalness. The brief back-and-forth of sword strokes is hung on a descending chromatic line, itself organized into three two-measure lengths by a counterpoint of tritone and resolution. The combat culminates in Don Giovanni's final lunge, which are directed by a complementary chromatic ascent (see ex. 8-8 below). The sword reaches its mark on a thrusting diminished seventh (of V in F minor). The Commendatore, mortally wounded as the harmony touches a dominant of a dominant (an overreaching of the dominant which had previously been prepared by the augmented sixth and  $i_4^6$  accompanying Giovanni's preliminary lunges), falls back to his death agony as the harmony slips back to the dominant (ex. 8-8).

At the moment of the death blow, time and pantomime are arrested by a fermata. The new signature, *alla breve*,<sup>26</sup> and the instruction *Andante*

## Example 8-8

Battle

Death blow

Andante

Mi - se - ro! At - ten - di, Se vuoi mo - rir.

*f*

*Ob. Str.*

*f*

*p*

*f*

## Example 8-9

Andante DON GIOVANNI

già cad - de il scia - gu - ra - to

*f*

*Ob. Str.*

*f*

*p*

*f*

slow the tempo by half, making the previous  $\text{♩}$  roughly equal  $\text{♩}$ . The strings mark time with gravely ticking triplets over a dominant pedal; they measure out the precious seconds of life remaining to the Commendatore. The very deliberateness of their ticking puts the scene out of time, for time passes normally only when attention is not called to it, leaving the shapes of events themselves to measure its passing for us. The monotony of the measured triplets is temporarily open-ended, fixing on the bare phenomenon of time's passage to make the present moment seem capable of enduring forever. Over the ticking of the triplets the low murmurs of Don Giovanni and Leporello seem automatic, elicited from them involuntarily. They are not singing to us or to another character, but are transfixed and private in awe of the moment at which "the vital spirit leaves the throbbing breast."<sup>27</sup> Giovanni's first music is again not of his own invention, but is Donna Anna's "Come furia disperata" of the chase music, cast in F minor and slowed to twice its original tempo (ex. 8-9). Hearing the familiar figure in slow motion and in the minor heightens the dreamlike effect of the scene. Giovanni's voice emerges occasionally from the sepulchral mix of bass tones to sculpt a phrase with a plangent dissonance<sup>28</sup> or a reach for a high note. His torpor underlines the preternatural quality of the moment: "real" time has been suspended so that the audience may be made to recognize the grave import of the Commendatore's death.

Harmonic procedures are simple in the fantasy. The harmonic rhythm is slow-moving, consisting of three oscillations of V to  $i_4^6$  (all but the last  $i_4^6$  over a pedal, and each filling one measure) and two i-iv-V-i cadential phrases. An air of suspended animation is maintained in the measure-to-measure relation by the avoidance of a strong tonic, and of most of the secondary articulations implied by the harmony.<sup>29</sup> The first i-iv-V-i phrase (mm. 181-86) includes the austere pathos of a VI-ii<sup>6</sup>-V<sup>7</sup> "deceptive cadence" after the dominant is first attained.<sup>30</sup> The omission of this VI-ii<sup>6</sup> parenthesis shortens the second i-iv-V-i phrase by one measure: circumventing the possible monotony of repetition, Mozart at the same time catches poignantly the Commendatore's dying breath. Giovanni

## Example 8-10

COMMENDATORE

Ex. 8-10

184 Sen - to... l'a - ni - ma... par - tir.

188 Sen - to l'a - ni - ma par - tir

## Example 8-11

battle:

deathblow

death scene: long "dominant parenthesis" (mm. 176-189)

flight of the soul

\* expected tonic close

167

190

begins the repetition by leaping up to his pathetic E-flat on "già" (m. 186). The Commendatore, growing rapidly weaker, can only manage one note to three of Giovanni's, so the two men engage in a momentary "hocket." The Commendatore moves, in an open space in the texture, to the flatted second degree G-flat, forming a Neapolitan sixth which, followed by  $i_4^6$ -V-i, is another poignant cliché for cadences in minor. The Commendatore's halting line, its barely audible Phrygian inflection fainting toward the tonic, hauntingly evokes the utter weakness prior to death. Example 8-10 compares his last two phrases (contiguous in the score).

A chromatic line in the oboes descending from the dominant marks the flight of the soul from the body (ex. 8-11) and returns us to familiar measured time. By supplying the implied resolution of the chromatic line which ordered the swordplay, and by turning directly mimetic again (although now of a "supernatural" event—the hushed gravity of the death scene makes such a fancy possible), this second chromatic descent puts time back on the track, heightening the fantasy's quality of parenthesis, of a moment frozen in time. But returned to ordinary time Giovanni is impatient of last rites, and forestalls the anticipated tonic by hissing out for Leporello. The drop from high fantasy to the lowest *buffa* dialogue in *recitativo secco* ("Leporello, ove sei?"/"Son qui, per disgrazia.../Chi è morto? voi o il vecchio?"/"Che domanda da bestia! i vecchio." <sup>31</sup>) is immediate and stunning. It only underlines Giovanni's polymorphic nature: a gentleman when answering the Commendatore's

challenge, at his opponent's death he slips back into the seamy behavior of an arrant blackguard. He wears no mask in either episode; he is never "playing a role."

It is precisely this perplexing contradiction in his nature which brings many delineators of the character of Don Giovanni to elevate him: George Bernard Shaw's counter to Ruskin's outraged attack on the libretto of the opera <sup>32</sup> cheerfully embraces the prodigy of the Don:

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, and come out at the other side singing *Finch'han dal vino* and *Là ci darem la mano*, 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. <sup>33</sup>

Attacking Ruskin for prudishness, Shaw displays his own habitual reverse prudishness as far as the question of the existence of the Divinity is concerned. A visit from a stone *deus ex machina* (or *machina dei*) may be a bad way to solve the "social problem" posed by Don Giovanni, but Shaw clearly does not consider the Don to be one. In the "Don Juan in Hell" sequence of *Man and Superman* he ultimately installs the Don in heaven, there to ponder through his high intellect a mysterious quantum called "Life: the force that ever strives to attain greater power of contemplating itself"; his task in heaven is to be "the work of helping Life in its struggle upward." <sup>34</sup> For Shaw, Giovanni's intent pursuit of earthly pleasures is merely a passing phase in the evolution of a superhuman intelligence.

Indeed, many versions of the Don Juan story make the protagonist into a heroic freethinker—a contemner of social hypocrisies, like Molière's Don Juan or, like the Don of Shaw, E. T. A. Hoffmann, and other nineteenth-century writers, a man prey to a metaphysical vision of the ideal which leads inevitably to a *taedium vitae*. It is obligatory for this Don to be articulate and to give a reasoned account of himself; he must always have a creed. Shaw takes this loquaciousness to extremes in "Don Juan in Hell," but even the bloodthirsty Don Juan of Thomas Shadwell (*The Libertine*, London, 1676)—a proponent of a hedonism which permits under its name every sadistic excess—gives a defense of himself in ringing Lucretianlike tones after the arrival of the statue:

There's nothing happens but by Natural Causes,  
Which in unusual things Fools cannot find  
And then they style 'em Miracles. But no Accident

Can alter me from what I am by Nature.  
 Were there  
 Legions of Ghosts and Devils in my way,  
 One moment in my course of pleasure I'd not stay.<sup>35</sup>

As Shaw's sequel makes plain, hell is an inappropriate dwelling for a man of such philosophic powers.

Among the subsequent admirers of Mozart's Don Juan, the aesthete-essayist of Kierkegaard's *Either/Or* is one of the few to heed the peculiar inarticulateness of the character, understanding it as central to his being. He sees the Don as a life force, a power of nature — "primitively controlled life, powerfully and irresistibly daemonic."<sup>36</sup> Yet this word "daemonic" still imputes a surpassing worth to Giovanni's nature, and the word has since become the adjective most commonly associated with encomiums of the Don. Its orthography is intended to recall its derivation from the Greek *δαίμων* — divinity, genius, or tutelary deity — and to extend its implications beyond the limits of the field of Christian demonology;<sup>37</sup> "daemonic" signifies the supernatural not as above the natural, but as quintessentially natural — "the power of nature, the daemonic, which as little tires of seducing . . . as the wind is tired of blowing, the sea of billowing, or a waterfall of tumbling downward from the heights."<sup>38</sup> And since the life force cannot sin, Giovanni's cruelties and vulgarities are to be excused, or veritably embraced: "His passion sets the passion of all the others in motion. . . . The existence of all the others is, compared with his, only a derived existence."<sup>39</sup> The daemonic man's sins are sins only in the eyes of the *petite bourgeoisie*, whose restricted vision is mean and crippling. The daemonic man is above the morality of the vulgar, and properly the only moral being: as Shaw has the Devil observe after Don Juan departs for heaven, "To the Superman, men and women are a mere species . . . outside the moral world."<sup>40</sup>

The music of Mozart's opera will not, however, suffer a similar apotheosis of the character of the Don. Let us for the moment characterize as "natural" the mode of behavior appropriate to the *galant* and *buffa* worlds which form the full and resonant cosmos of *Figaro*, and which reappear in *Don Giovanni* more narrowly circumscribed. Giovanni then is a man whose behavior is both super- and subnatural. The opera's mélange of musical styles, and more particularly the brilliant mobile inverted pyramid of social gestures which constitutes its overture and first scene, carries the theme of the opera with it. The hero is a buffoon; the buffoon is a hero. By being both he is fully neither. Were he only an obsessive seducer he would be of no interest, but he can behave like a Don as easily as not. He redeems himself from mere vulgarity in the battle with the Commendatore, acting with a clean and spirited *divin-voltura*: he accedes with all proper formality to the challenge but with-

out undue alacrity, waiting until the Commendatore has made it a matter of honor, and he displays neither dismay nor pleasure at his opponent's fall. He is secure in the propriety of having granted Anna's father an opportunity to avenge the insult to his daughter: "L'ha voluto: suo danno,"<sup>41</sup> he says indifferently to Leporello afterward, his elevated disinterest degenerating into a careless flippancy. He is a galvanizing and disturbing figure — daemonic, if you must — because his sphere of action encompasses the highest and the lowest possibilities of human behavior. Rarely does one encounter a man at once of such silliness and such intensity, such spirit and such utter lack of humanity.

Nor can it be said — although it might save the notion of the dark hero — that Giovanni runs the moral gamut in a conscious or willful manner. There are some striking similarities of attitude between Don Giovanni and the notorious seducer of *Les liaisons dangereuses*, but one crucial difference separates Giovanni from the Vicomte de Valmont: Laclos's protagonist is all self-consciousness and calculation,<sup>42</sup> while Giovanni's conduct cannot be explained by recourse to any principle or deliberate intent; he is not purposefully anarchic, or involved in a willed rebellion against ordinary moral standards. Early in act II, in response to Leporello's importunities, Giovanni makes an insouciant defense of his way of life:

*Gio:* Lasciar le donne! Pazzo!  
 Lasciar le donne? Sai ch'elle per me  
 Son necessarie più del pan che mangio,  
 Più dell'aria che spiro!

*Lep:* E avete core  
 D'ingannarle poi tutte?

*Gio:* È tutto amore:  
 Chi a una sola è fedele  
 Verso l'altre è crudele.  
 Io, che in me sento  
 Sì esteso sentimento,  
 Vo' bene a tutte quante.  
 Le donne, poi che calcolar non sanno,  
 Il mio buon natural chiamano inganno.<sup>43</sup>

He delivers his sophisticated argument with an easy indifference to its truth or falsehood, taking the lazy pleasure in casuistry that a child might display. And Leporello, easily giving up the protest, answers him in the same spirit: "Non ho veduto mai/Naturale più vasto e più benigno."<sup>44</sup> But Giovanni's first lines state the truth of his case: to him women are like food<sup>45</sup> and the air he breathes; he pursues them at the command of a stimulus-response mechanism as natural to him, and as

automatic, as the instinct to maintain one's life by taking nourishment. He is merely inexplicable — a *monstrum*, a prodigy, spontaneously at the service of an obsession. Questions of morality can have no relevance to his actions.

Although one function of the role of Leporello in the opera is to project, as a pale double of Don Giovanni, the trivial vulgarity of incessant womanizing, it also serves to provide a realistic moral standard for the measure of base behavior. It helps us to remember that most ordinary men cleave to one woman, with occasional lapses, and fear God, although an occasional touch of pride may make them forget their proper place; their sins are committed, judged, and shriven in a familiar moral sphere. There are certain depths beneath which even Leporello refuses to sink. He probably regards his own flirtations as bachelor's license, the customary preface to settling down with some Giannotta or Sandrina. When Giovanni flaunts his seduction of one of Leporello's girls, Leporello asks in an aggrieved tone:

E mi dite la cosa  
Con tale indifferenza?  
... Ma se fosse  
Costei stata mia moglie?<sup>46</sup>

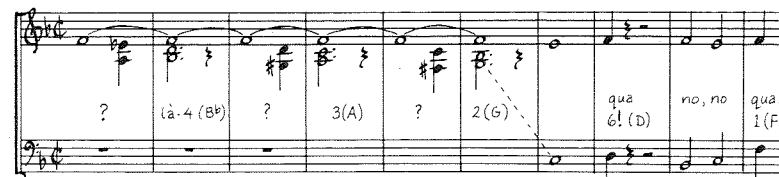
And although he comes to take a certain delight in playing the stand-in for Giovanni with Elvira in act II, he is moved to pity for her in the finale of the opera, when Giovanni pitilessly mocks her efforts to make him repent.<sup>47</sup> That his attempts to reform Giovanni or to leave the Don's service<sup>48</sup> come to nothing, does not change his function as moral measure. We are not concerned to find in Leporello a model of perfection, but merely to discover in him some vague consciousness of a moral imperative no matter how feeble or fleeting. In self-indulgent self-defense he pleads subornation: Giovanni has robbed him of his innocence.<sup>49</sup> His besetting sins are all too human, his very moral weakness an acknowledgment of a nodding acquaintance with the way things ought to be.

Don Giovanni's actions, on the other hand, are characterized by a moral neutrality: he is not evil but banal, not noble but punctilious, and without fear where true courage would discern what properly is to be feared. His "baseness" amounts to a trivial obsession with seduction, his "nobility" to mere freedom from the passions of hate and fear. The obsession and the freedom are opposite sides of the same coin — a habitual disposition which forfeits the right to be judged as excess and thus traps him outside, not above, the limits of human virtue and vice.

The moral world of the opera is delineated by the familiar *galant* and *buffa* — courtly and peasant — dance gestures. To be fully human in the opera is to move in such-and-such a way, to be defined by a particular

## Example 8-12

Andante con moto



gesture or stance. In the anonymity of his moral void, Giovanni is strangely denatured. Moving across the hierarchy of classes quickly established by the opening music he gives allegiance to none, although he partakes of them all by imitation; he is truly No-Man.<sup>50</sup> Mozart marks his nonparticipation ingeniously; almost every solo song of Giovanni's is a conscious performance or disguise. He woos Zerlina in the guise of a nobleman in "Là ci darem la mano" (I, 7), serenades Elvira's maid with a *canzonetta*, providing only his voice for Leporello dressed as Giovanni (II, 3), and sings to Masetto and his band disguised as Leporello (II, 4). This last piece, "Metà di voi qua vadano," one of the cleverest *buffa* numbers in the opera, is actually premised on the theme of disguise and concealment. Giovanni is dressed in Leporello's *buffa* key of F major. His aim is to disperse the troupe of peasants Masetto has gathered for the purpose of punishing him so that he can take on Masetto alone. Adroitly he sends them off in all directions on a fictitious trail, which the opening of the aria mimes. A syncopated F pedal marks the actual position of the quarry (Giovanni beneath his disguise as Leporello), while under the pedal tritones pick out first the fourth degree, then the third, and then the second, closing in on the F which, after one feint with a deceptive cadence (m. 8), finally becomes a proper tonic on the "quà" of "Lontan non sia di quà" (ex. 8-12).<sup>51</sup> Some measures later Giovanni dressed as Leporello describes the noble quarry (himself):

In testa egli ha un cappello  
Con candidi pennacchi;  
Addosso un gran mantello,  
E spada al fianco egli ha.<sup>52</sup>

As he makes the picture more vivid ("Addosso un gran mantello . . ."), he slips into a courtly march with fanfares (mm. 24 ff.) — Giovanni playing Leporello playing Giovanni, a moment with parodistic echoes of Leporello's parody of a gentleman's habit in "Notte e giorno." Layer piles on *buffa* layer in this convoluted situation, where the only thing certain is that the "true" Giovanni is not to be discovered in any of them.



Giovanni does, however, have a "theme song," sung in a private moment, when he is giving Leporello orders for the peasants' ball — the famous "Champagne" aria,<sup>53</sup> "Fin ch'han dal vino." Mozart makes a telling choice of gesture for Giovanni's sole unguarded moment — a rapid and feverish contredanse. The contredanse had no place in the hierarchical vocabulary of eighteenth-century social dance; it was a new dance, a "danceless dance," and hence the true dance of No-Man. The text and the macrorhythm of "Fin ch'han dal vino" expand the social connotations of the contredanse into a thoroughgoing metaphor for Giovanni's nature. In the text Giovanni commands from Leporello the very anarchy which the contredanse had introduced into the orderly cosmos of the social dances:

Senza alcun ordine  
La danza sia:  
Chi'l minuetto,  
Chi la follia,  
Chi l'alemannna  
Farai ballar.<sup>54</sup>

Leporello is an obedient servant: this is precisely what transpires in the famous ballroom scene of the first-act finale, where three stage orchestras play at once each a different dance while under the cover of this rhythmic and social anarchy Giovanni proceeds on his second attempt to seduce Zerlina.

Not only does Mozart perceive the contredanse as generally appropriate to the nature of the Don, he also makes the formal organization of "Fin ch'han dal vino" reflect on Giovanni's character. Another antithesis of hierarchy is the famous list which Leporello keeps for his master; Giovanni mentions it in the aria also:

Ah! la mia lista  
Doman mattina  
D'una decina  
Devi aumentar.<sup>55</sup>

The insatiable cry of "just one more" grants the preceding units no particularity, and hence no dignity or worth; the counter is interested in the counted only insofar as they resemble each other, and thus deserve a place in the list. The contredanse is a listlike dance — an additive dance in which phrase piles on phrase as the dancers intemperately improvise yet another figure. Mozart manages to make this manifest in "Fin ch'han dal vino" by superimposing on the essentially dramatic plan of the Classic key-area movement with its clearly delineated beginning, middle, and end an impression of additive or chain construction. To

## Example 8-13



bring this about he builds with clear-cut and even-measured units, repeated without alteration. The staple of the aria is a "tonic phrase," consisting of a two-measure unit repeated three times, once each on the three notes of the tonic triad, and then punctuated by a V-I two-measure unit (ex. 8-13). This phrase is deployed as a stabilizer, whose mere recurrence marks the aria's major hinges. It begins the piece (with two strains), shapes the return to the tonic (with four strains, separated by two extended cadential phrases consisting only of two-measure units of I<sup>4</sup>-V), and anchors the coda (with one strain as part of an orchestral postlude); figure 5 is a detailed map of the deployment of the tonic phrase. The remaining material of the aria is also shaped into two- or four-measure units, so that even the twenty-four-measure phrase forming the second key area drives to its cadence on the dominant by dint of repetition (of units which grow from two to four measures) rather than by means of a more organic form of development. Only four times are there phrases which contain other than an even number of measures. The extensions to phrases in the X-section and return (mm. 65-69, 93-96, 116-19), because they begin as incessant four- or two-measure repetitions, sound more like the musical equivalent of "and so on" than the climactic exclamations which extensions usually provide. And the elisions in the coda (mm. 127 to the end) are in the service of avoiding threatened cadences in order to add another repetition, in a relentless *moto perpetuo*. In short, lost in the incessant repetitions, we only know where we are when we hear yet another tonic phrase; even the tonic return has an additive effect. In the columnar contredanse or "longways," our Virginia reel, the dance comes to an end not as a result of some climactic maneuver, but when yet another do-si-do happens to deliver the lead couple back to their proper place — a choreography as arbitrary as the shape of a list.

Since the list as a form of ordering is in truth an analogue of anarchy, it is akin to the middle-class contredanse, which is placeless and in a special way classless. From ancient times the placeless had been considered to bear a peculiar menace: the Greek word *átopos*, literally "without a place," came to mean "strange" or "paradoxical," and, particularly when extended to human beings, "repugnant" or "harmful." Giovanni's menace seems to be of the same nature. Just as the contredanse cuts across the established orders of dance gestures, so does the Don cut



Figure 5 "Fin ch'han dal vino"

Phrase	# of measures	Key Area	Groupings	Type
1	8	I	<u>2+2+2+2*</u> (I . . . . V, I)	tonic phrase (Orchestra only)
2	8		<u>2+2+2+2</u>	tonic phrase
3	8	↓	2+2+4	
4	8		2+2+2+2	
5 a)	24 { 4 8 12	V	2+2	
b)			2+2+2+2	
c)			4+4+4	
6	13	X	4+4+5 (i $\frac{6}{4}$ , V...)	extension
7	8	I	<u>2+2+2+2</u>	tonic phrase
8	8		<u>2+2+2+2</u>	tonic phrase
9	11		2+2+2+2+3 (i $\frac{6}{4}$ , V...)	extension
10	8		<u>2+2+2+2</u>	tonic phrase
11	15		2+2+2+2+2+5 (i $\frac{6}{4}$ , V...)	extension
12	8	Coda	<u>2+2+2+2</u>	tonic phrase
13	15		1234123(4) 12121234(5)	extension and elision
14	18		(5) <u>1212121(2)</u> 12121234567	tonic phrase elided with extended phrase - orchestra postlude

\* Underlining indicates tonic phrase.

across the world of Donna Anna and the other characters, threatening to subvert it. What has brought this rootless creature into being is left unexplained. He is merely a phenomenon whose nature has been molded not by the proper moral orders, but by an illusory liberty whose obverse is an *idée fixe*. Although he is hardly aware of the threat he poses, its power to destroy the world of the other characters is unmistakable.

To counter Giovanni's anarchic contredanse no human music will suffice. Only divine justice can take on a man for whom there is no judgment on earth, and only the superhuman rhythms of the *alla breve* pathetic fantasy can be measured against the breathless, intemperate music of the "danceless dance." Yet — and this is symptomatic of the Don's moral neutrality — the instrument of his punishment must issue from a situation which is related only indirectly to the crimes he is to be punished for — a situation in which, according to some criteria, he can be said to have acted well. The murder of the Commendatore, by redeeming Giovanni from the perpetual venality of a career of seduction, makes him worthy of punishment on a celestial scale. Giovanni's transgressions are all concentrated into that one stroke of the sword. The spectral hush of the Commendatore's requiem music raises the moment out of the opera's time, to compel recognition of the horror and pathos of the act itself, free of any moral palliative (Giovanni's quasi-decent behavior, for example). It renders inexorable the ultimate arrival of the divine avenger: his retribution will be postponed only until Giovanni has thoroughly demonstrated the mean and trivial preoccupations of the dedicated seducer of women.

#### *Giovanni and the Other Characters*

Although the first scene of *Don Giovanni* sets the trajectory of the opera's action, most of the main characters will wait until after the death of the Commendatore to reveal themselves fully, and three of them — Elvira, Zerlina, and Masetto — are creatures without a connection to this central line of action (the murder of Donna Anna's father and his return for vengeance). Irrelevance to the "plot" is not the only dissimilarity between the dramatis personae of *Don Giovanni* and their counterparts in *Le nozze di Figaro*: they are furthermore a radically homeless tribe, without the well-known personal histories of the *Figaro* characters or their local connections to one another, and this lack of a past, plus the musical modes in which they are presented, makes them seem to be statically conceived class-types rather than creatures of flesh and blood. The characters of *Figaro* show themselves in multifaceted surfaces as the opera unfolds. Central to an understanding of them are the duets, six in all, each featuring its heroine Susanna, in delicate inter-

play with her fiancé, with the Countess, with Cherubino, with Marcellina, and with the Count. The characters in *Don Giovanni*, on the other hand, are presented in their separateness: the opera has fewer duets, four instead of six (two of them among the less memorable pieces in the opera<sup>66</sup>), the proportion of solo arias per character is higher than it is in *Figaro*,<sup>67</sup> and several of those arias are formal *da capo* set pieces. In the matter of rhythmic gesture the sphere of *Figaro* is almost entirely *di mezzo carattere*: its noble-born heroine, the Countess, adopts a mixed lyric style that might be dubbed *amoroso-heroico*, and beside its noble refinement high passion dwindles into rant. In *Don Giovanni* only Ottavio inherits the *stile amoroso-heroico*, and the lofty and fulminating *alla breve* is the opera's predominant meter.<sup>68</sup>

These are some of the musical reasons why the characters other than the Don in *Don Giovanni*, while casting longer shadows than their predecessors in *Figaro*, still seem fixed and immobile, presenting not faces but masks. That the gentle *mezzo carattere* center of *Figaro* can be discovered only in the stance of the most ineffectual actor in the drama of *Don Giovanni* is emblematic of the difference between the two operas. *Le nozze di Figaro* studies the luminous possibilities of a web of ordinary human relations—the tender pleasures of friendship and courtship. *Don Giovanni* often concerns the posturings of an unrequited and hermetic passion, and the relations of all the main characters are almost exclusively with one man—the Don. In *Either/Or* Kierkegaard's essayist sees Giovanni as a transfiguring force that brings to fruition the potential for beauty latent in all women. Dealings with the Don in reality, however, seem to have the opposite effect: they fix a character immobile, like a butterfly fluttering on the head of a collector's pin. Paradoxically, Giovanni collects by eluding, and in their efforts to lay hold of the protean Don his "victims" are frozen in near-cartoons of their own natures. Circling around the vibrant nonentity which is No-Man, they are locked in an unceasing struggle merely to retain some dignity for their place.

## CHAPTER NINE

### *The Noble Lovers*

#### *Donna Anna*

Each of the two pairs of lovers in *Don Giovanni*, noble and peasant, shares a certain style of solo music (Elvira falls into a class by herself). Donna Anna's characteristic idiom is the *opera seria scena*, her proper gesture the *alla breve* march. Her brilliant recitative and duet with Don Ottavio following the death of the Commendatore are cast in the exalted style at its most intense. She opens the D-minor duet with a phrase cleverly extended into a super *alla breve*. Only its third member satisfies ordinary periodic expectations; the normal version would be one measure shorter, but, lacking the stirring syncopations over the barline which open the first two phrases, would render the exalted-march affect in a more prosaic style (ex. 9-1'). Mozart's syncopations protract the natural grammatical accent into a written-out pathetic one,<sup>2</sup> giving the phrase an expansiveness which justifies extending the

#### Example 9-1

DONNA ANNA  
actual:   
normal:   
O - ra ch'è mor - to, od - di - o! Chi a me la vi - ta diè.