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Civilization and its Discontents in Mozart's *Don Giovanni* & Verdi's *Rigoletto*

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We are threatened with suffering from three directions: from our own body, which is doomed to decay and dissolution and which cannot even do without pain and anxiety as warning signals; from the external world, which may rage against us with overwhelming and merciless forces of destruction; and finally from our relations to other men”(Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*)

Introduction

The operas of Mozart and Verdi have long been among the most beloved in the repertory. While the manifest content of these operas reflects socio-cultural realities of other times and places, they have endured not only because of their musical beauty and dramatic strength, but also because they encompass emotional dynamics that transcend time and place. Like other 19th and 18th century opera composers, Mozart and Verdi were responding creatively to the enduring issues of love, sex, and power, as well as the difficulties of living within the civilized cultural frameworks of their times and dealing with the broader existential challenges of life. Their operas beautifully exemplify, dramatize, and highlight many of the emotional issues that take center stage in clinical work, and it is in this spirit that I offer some reflections on Mozart's *Don Giovanni* (1787) and Verdi's *Rigoletto* (1851).

In putting an opera ‘on-the-couch’ there are several possible angles of approach. The first is to treat the opera as a creative expression of the artist’s unconscious dynamics, and to examine it with the aim of developing a psychobiography of neurotic concerns and conflict. Such an approach follows a venerable tradition begun by Freud in his analysis of numerous works of art and literature (1910a, 1911, 1914, 1928). A second approach is to treat the opera as if the characters were real people with individual inner lives that we analyze as if they were on the couch. A third approach assumes that the opera consists of “crystallized condensations of complex, over-determined, and enduring emotional themes” (Rather, 2012, p. 25), and that we identify with the characters and respond deeply because the opera presents a psychodrama of our own inner lives. Blending these latter two approaches, I will consider *Don Giovanni* and *Rigoletto* as beautifully rendered mythic psychodramas in which the individual characters represent aspects of the self in tension with other aspects of self and the external world. Both operas lend themselves to multiple lines of interpretation, but in the spirit of the epigraph at the beginning of this paper, I will narrow the lens to focus on the way each dramatizes the fundamental challenges of ‘civilization and its discontents’. A brief synopsis of each opera is included to highlight the scenes and arias to which I will refer.

Part I: Don Giovanni

Synopsis

The opera opens with Leporello complaining of life as a servant while he waits for his master to finish taking sexual advantage of his latest conquest. Don Giovanni bursts on stage pursued by Donna Anna and her angry father (the Commendatore), whom he then kills in a sword fight. Anna and her betrothed, Ottavio, vow revenge against the disguised assailant. While escaping, Don Giovanni and Leporello come across another of the Don’s seduced and

abandoned women (Elvira). In the famous 'catalogue' aria, Leporello sings her a list of his master's vast sexual conquests.

In the next scene, master and servant come across a group of peasants celebrating the imminent marriage of Zerlina and Masetto, Don Giovanni uses all his charm to seduce the flirtatious bride, but his efforts are interrupted, and the bride is reproached by the bridegroom for her flirtations. At this point, Elvira, Anna and Ottavio who have recognized Don Giovanni as the disguised assailant, approach in disguise and are invited to a ball at his palace. Don Giovanni tries again to seduce Zerlina, but when she screams, the three masked visitors reveal themselves and accuse Don Giovanni of murder and sexual exploitation.

After a more misadventures involving disguise and seduction, Don Giovanni and Leporello come together in a cemetery, where the stone statue on the tomb of the Commendatore comes to life threatening Don Giovanni with the consequences of his misdeeds. The bemused and unconcerned Don Giovanni simply invites him to dinner. In a final scene, the statue is heard slowly approaching to the terror of Leporello and Donna Elvira, who is still trying to reform him. The statue of the Commendatore knocks ominously at the door, enters, and demands that Don Giovanni repent. Don Giovanni defiantly refuses and is dragged down into the fiery pit of hell that opens before them.

Don Giovanni is Mozart's rendering of the Don Juan legend, generally traced to a 17th century Spanish monk, Tirso de Molina, and his play *The Trickster of Seville and the Stone Guest* (1986). The tale appears to have struck an unconscious chord and many versions followed as artists including Moliere, Pushkin, Dumas, and Shaw composed plays, Byron an epic poem, Strauss a symphonic poem, and E.T.A Hoffman a novella (Rushton, 1981). Camus (1938/1955), Kierkegaard (1843/1992), and Jung (1938) are among those who have commented on the psychological and philosophical implications of the legend.

Mozart's operatic version is an unsettling piece that blends the serious, the tragic, and the comic, with sublime music that shifts between deep majesty and everyday merriment. We already know the character of Don Giovanni and his fate through literary and cultural hearsay before the curtain rises to reveal him taking advantage of Donna Anna and slaying her angry father, the Commendatore. Despite the lack of actual suspense, we sit as spellbound as children, eagerly awaiting the satisfaction of having a fairy tale retold. The Overture opens with a ferocious D minor chord, which moves quickly to a dominant A major chord, before returning to the D minor. These foreboding chords are a hint of the future, a harbinger of the thunderous diminished chords that will accompany the Commendatore's menacing reappearance. We let ourselves be taken along on a journey, well aware that the Don will not travel for free but will have his ticket punched and fare collected at the gates of hell, as virtue triumphs over vice.

Anyone wishing to speculate on Mozart's attraction to the Don Juan myth could certainly consider his relationship with his father, Johann, a musician who gave up composing when his son's superior talents became obvious. In this way, young Mozart's musical life begins with an Oedipal victory as the father/Commendatore is 'slain' quite early. As a 6-year-old musical genius, Mozart began touring with his father, easily seducing and enchanting all with his musical charms. It's easy to imagine young Wolfgang developing a sense of himself as a sort of Don Giovanni, with a 'catalogue' of musical conquests in the courts and chapels of Europe. Later, Mozart defied his father's wishes by relocating to Vienna, and by entering a marriage that his father opposed. Perhaps these father-son dynamics are reflected in the defiance of Don Giovanni who refuses to repent, and perhaps the Commendatore's harsh return represent the judgments

of the super-ego in response to Oedipal guilt. Psychobiography aside, we can consider to what extent the unconscious appeal of *Don Giovanni* lies in its Oedipal dimensions. Killing off the law of the father (the Commendatore), and defiantly seducing every woman possible dramatizes in exaggerated form certain dynamics of the male Oedipus complex. Indeed, Freud, though describing himself as ‘tone deaf’, counted *Don Giovanni* among his favorite operas and made reference to Leporello’s ‘catalogue aria’ (Gay, 1988, p. 168, citing Freud, 1988). The opera’s dialectic of vice and virtue resonates well with Freud’s perspective on the conflict between id and superego. It also dramatizes Freud’s anthropological speculations in *Totem and Taboo* (1913) that civilization began when the primal sons, guilty over having killed and eaten the primal father and taken his women, recognized the need for a collective morality that would allow civilized social life to continue more safely for all.

At the manifest core of the Don Juan legend is the notion of the ‘womanizer’, the man who is unable to commit and is dedicated to pursuing new women. In this sense, *Don Giovanni* is rooted in the cultural trope that women are fated to wrangling their free-roaming men into corrals of monogamy. In Scene 2, Leporello stumbles comically as he tries to explain Don Giovanni’s basic nature to Donna Elvira: “*Madam, when it happens that a square is not a circle....*” He doesn’t get far, but it could sound like the beginning of a clichéd ‘Mars and Venus’ conversation ala Grey (1992). On the other hand, the conceit that men are more tempted to roam than women is given the lie by the fact that two of the women who are tempted by Don Giovanni’s seductions appear quite ambivalent about their own relationships; Zerlina flirts with the Don on the very eve of wedlock, and Donna Anna appears to be delaying her marriage to Don Ottavio even at

the end of the opera. *Don Giovanni* may center on the ‘womanizer’ who takes the heat in this legend, but the real heat may come from the friction of monogamy and its ‘discontents’ rubbing up against temptation for both genders.

Psychologically speaking, the extent to which ‘Don Juanism’ is actually about sexual satisfaction is always open to question. In Scene 2, Leporello marvels that the Don is able to catch the faintest scent of a nearby woman, and it might appear that the Don is obsessed by sex and driven with lust. But later, in the ‘catalogue aria’ Leporello sings about his master to Donna Elvira: “*Observe and read along with me. In Italy 640, in Germany 231, in France 100, in Turkey 91, in Spain already 1003*”. Mozart’s orchestral accompaniment, especially the violins, is pointed and rhythmic here and could convey an image of busy scribes checking of the lines of a ledger. Indeed, Leporello and the Don come across much like accountants, and, given that bookkeeping is not normally considered a sensual activity, the scene gives off the scent of acquisition and conquest rather than sexual pleasure. But analytically speaking, there need be no real contradiction. Contrary to popular misconception, Freud was not interested in sexuality per se, but in ‘psychosexuality’, and he was clear about the distinction (ie, Freud, 1910b). While sexuality is biologically driven and satisfied by orgasmic release, psychosexuality is emotionally driven and fulfilled by weaving somatic sensation with psychic narrative. In other words, psychosexuality is concerned with wishes, hopes, fantasies, fears and dreads.

Clinically, this means there are many varieties of Don Juan and, while outward behavior may be similar, inner dynamics will be uniquely individual. For example, sexual

pursuit may be the arena where issues such as the need for reassurance or the hostility against women are acted out. Don Juanism might mean defying fathers or authority generally, or it might consist of reenactments of trying to charm an unreachable mother. It might mean the repetition of a cycle of hope and betrayal turning passive into active. It might be a hedge against anxieties of impotence or latent homosexual yearnings (Leporello and Don Giovanni?). It might represent a fear of engulfment by an overbearing m/other. It might represent a dread of attaching and investing emotionally in someone as a protection against the risk of loss and abandonment. The possibilities are many.

Initially, I found it puzzling to move back and forth from these reflections on Don Juanism in general, to Mozart's *Don Giovanni* in particular, since Mozart provides no hint of a 'back story' for his emotional motivations as an incorrigible seducer of women. In fact, in spite of the overall richness of the opera, the character of Don Giovanni is actually rather flat and one-dimensional. He has no long soul-searching aria, and, in fact, never sings about himself as the other characters do. Leporello, Donna Anna, Donna Elvira, Masetto, and Zerlina are easily imagined as real persons. Compared to Rigoletto, as we will see shortly, he is utterly unreflective and unconflicted. He does not develop psychologically over the course of the opera, he has no conventional arias, and his singing centers on hedonistic drinking songs and serenades. One way of understanding this is that Mozart's Don Giovanni represents much more an *emotional truth* than a complex *person*. His character is primarily a placeholder for *desire*, just as the Commendatore's character is a placeholder for the reality of prohibition and

consequence. It is here that we can turn more directly to the theme of civilization and its discontents.

It is a basic psychoanalytic assumption that each of us is born with a powerful and natural wish for omnipotence, ie, the sense that one can be all, have all, and control all (Freud, 1910; Ferenczi, 1923). The wish is wrapped up with the pleasure principle, and its gradual renunciation is wrapped up with the reality principle (Freud, 1900). Tempering one's desire for omnipotence is central to becoming a person who is truthful, authentic, and assertive, and yet operates with restraint, empathy, gratitude, and concern for others. The arc from the child's world of wishful omnipotence to the adult's more realistic world of choices, boundaries and limits, is rocky, and as we know from our clinical work, forever in process. The sense of lost entitlement as we enter the world of civilization and its discontents involves tolerating frustration, and the inability to do so may devolve into the ruthless narcissism of Don Giovanni. Don Giovanni's appeal lies in the fact that he represents our desire to be free from constraint, free from the rules, and free from concern, knowledge, guilt, and responsibility towards others. He represents the most primitive stage of moral development, "Don't get caught!" (Kohlberg, 1971).

For all its complexity, life throws two fundamental types of problem our way, both reflected in Freud's comment on the threats of suffering. The first is the fact that some things cannot be completely controlled (the nature of body, the destructive forces of nature). The second, perhaps more relevant to *Don Giovanni*, is that some things that may in principle be possible, are prohibited by civilized custom and law. In Scene 2 Donna Elvira accuses the Don of acting "...*contrary to the laws of heaven and earth*". The Don

is unable to renounce his omnipotent narcissism and the endless repetition of the same scenarios in which he defies his actual position under the laws of heaven and earth. From this perspective, Don Giovanni represents that part of us which wishes to escape feeling ‘enslaved’ by the laws of heaven and earth and the discontents they may bring. That more ordinary position is instead split off and is represented by Leporello, who in the very first moment of the opera, accompanied by the repetitious rhythmic figure pushed by the double basses, sings: “*Night and day I slave...I want to give up my servitude*”. Don Giovanni represents that part of ourselves which longs for limitless omnipotence. He travels the same road as other mythic figures in opera such as Faust in his quest for unlimited knowledge, and Wotan, Alberich, Fasolt, and Fafner all striving to obtain the ring that will allow them to dominate all in Wagner’s Ring cycle.

But as operas such as *Faust*, *The Ring of the Nibelung*, and *Don Giovanni* suggest, the quest for omnipotence is the destructive enemy of humanity and psychological aliveness. After Don Giovanni battles with the Commendatore in the opening scene, Leporello asks: “*Who’s dead, you or the old man?*” Though played for humor, this is also a dead-serious psychological question that hovers over the opera and our response to it: which one is more truly alive, the one who surrenders to and accepts the laws of heaven and earth, or the one who goes down in flames defying them? For us, the question is unsettling and forever unsettled, psychologically speaking. Fortunately, the dénouement of *Don Giovanni* allows us to have it both ways. Don Giovanni the ‘troublemaker’ is banished to the underworld, ie, the omnipotent troublemaking part of the self is banished to live on in the unconscious. For us to fully embrace Mozart’s operatic fairy tale, this ending is essential. It reconfirms and supports our own renunciations yet allows us to

simultaneously honor our hatred of renunciation and constraint. “Repent” says the Commendatore. “No” says Don Giovanni. In the words of the Commendatore, our civilized ambassador from the super-ego has spoken. In the words of Don Giovanni, our discontented omnipotent id has spoken.

Part II. Rigoletto

Synopsis

Rigoletto is a hunchbacked court jester who helps the Duke seduce women of the court. For his malicious mockery, Rigoletto draws hatred from the courtiers, many of whom have been cuckolded with his assistance. The tension escalates with the angry arrival of Count Monterone whose daughter has been dishonored by the Duke. Monterone puts a curse on Rigoletto. Meanwhile the courtiers suspect that Rigoletto himself has a mistress and hatch a plan for revenge. Threading his way home in darkness, Rigoletto meets Sparafucile, an assassin who offers his services if ever needed. Rigoletto broods over the similarity between his own murderous tongue and the assassin’s murderous dagger. Arriving home, he lovingly greets his daughter, Gilda, whom he believes safely sequestered from the dangers of men. Unbeknownst to him, Gilda is being wooed by a man posing as a student who is, in fact, the Duke.

The courtiers, mistaking Gilda for a mistress, take revenge by kidnapping her for the Duke, and they hoodwink Rigoletto into helping by fooling him into believing they are abducting someone else. When he realizes the vengeful trick, Rigoletto hires Sparafucile and they plan that when the Duke visits Maddalena, Sparafucile’s sister whom the Duke is also seducing, he will be killed.

Rigoletto tries to end Gilda’s love for the Duke by making her witness the tryst with Maddalena. Maddalena, also smitten with the young man, changes her mind and persuades Sparafucile to spare him. He agrees that if any other man should come before midnight, he will kill that man instead, and give Rigoletto the body in a sack, as agreed. Witnessing this scene, Gilda decides to sacrifice herself for her

beloved, and, disguised as a man seeking shelter, is the one murdered. The sack is delivered to a triumphant Rigoletto, but his sadistic pleasure is destroyed when he opens the sack to gloat over the Duke and finds his daughter's body instead. The curtain falls as Rigoletto screams: "The curse!"

Rigoletto, based on a play by Victor Hugo, is a grim tragedy of love, hate, and revenge gone wrong, all expressed through beautifully orchestrated arias. Verdi had at first titled the opera *La Maledizione* ("The curse!") and he opens with a prelude featuring the curse motif in a menacing minor tonality that builds quickly into music of mounting tension before exploding into a dark chord of catastrophe. As the curtain rises, we are given a glimpse into the despairing soul of Rigoletto behind the jester's mask for just a moment before being thrown headlong into the jocular but mean-spirited atmosphere of the court. *Rigoletto* is straightforward as melodrama but, like *Don Giovanni*, allows for different lines of interpretation. I will continue my focus on its relation to civilization and its discontents by exploring the nature of the curse that initiates and ends the dramatic action. Contemporary audiences may no longer believe in the supernatural power of a curse, but the curse, as a sort of character, has played a long role as a simple dramatic device moving plots along toward tragedy. Nonetheless, however important the curse might have been to Verdi, it is notable that we can easily imagine the plot unfolding perfectly well without it. This raises the question of whether the curse is simply a spicy theatrical touch or whether it reflects a deeper meaning.

The manifest source of the curse is Count Monterone, an aggrieved father whose daughter's sexual honor the Duke has ruined aided as usual, by Rigoletto. At the same time, Rigoletto is himself the protector of a beloved daughter, and for her sake as well as his own, he tries to keep his Gilda pure and angelic, safe from the Don Juans of the

world, devoted to him alone. As he sings against the lush background of Verdi's haunting music of sadness and love (*Deh non parlare al misero*), she is all he has: "My soul, family, country, my entire universe is you". He keeps her sequestered mistakenly assuming she is closely guarded by Giovanna. As we learn, this powerful dynamic of father-daughter love is intensified for Gilda by the loss of a mother, and for Rigoletto, both by the loss of a wife and by being a hunchback who does not find love easily.

That the father-daughter relationship can sail into rough water with puberty is well known to psychoanalytic therapists. First, for the daughter, there are both the tensions of the Oedipus complex and the call to independent attachments beyond the family. Secondly, the father, sensing the beginning of his inevitable demotion as a love object, and being well acquainted with his own inner Don Juan and the games of sexual desire and seduction, does not welcome the prospect of competing with his daughter's new man, and repeating a version of his own Oedipus complex.

The curse gains a foothold when Gilda discovers her first outside love interest in the disguised Duke and falls into romantic-sexual rapture. While the simple and child-like harmonies of her famous aria, *Caro nome (Dearest Name)*, reflect a naïve and innocent young woman, they simultaneously herald the upsurge of sexual passion, the arrival of a rival to her father, and the emergence of a love triangle of conflict and deception for both of them. One way of interpreting the psychological importance of the curse is that it stands for the disturbance of sexuality in the father-daughter relationship. It is as if Count Monterone, had said to Rigoletto: "May you also be cursed with the discontents of your

daughter's sexual awakening that pulls her away from you and into the world of men like you, just as you and the Duke have done to me and my daughter".

The curse can also be considered in terms of empathy that Rigoletto evokes. Without our identification with him, the opera would not work. In his aria *Pari siamo!* (*We are alike!*), Rigoletto likens himself to Sparafucile, the assassin he hires to kill the Duke. While Sparafucile slays with his dagger, Rigoletto slays with his "tongue of malice". Why does this bitter, hostile, and vengeful man tug on our heartstrings? In a compelling and psychologically revealing moment, Rigoletto bemoans his fate (Act 1, Scene 8):

Oh men! Oh Nature!
You have made me a villain!
O fury! To be misshapen, to be a jester!
To have, to be able, to do naught but mock!
Tears, the consolation of all men,
Are denied me! That master of mine,
Young gay, powerful, handsome,
Idly says to me: "Make me laugh fool!"
And I must force myself to obey
O torture!
I loathe you, you sneering courtiers!
How I love to sting you!
If I am evil you alone are the cause!

We know from *Otello*, *Macbeth*, and *Falstaff* (based on Shakespeare's *Merry Wives of Windsor* 1974a) that Verdi loved Shakespeare and we may recognize the similarity of Rigoletto's bitter lament to that of Shakespeare's Richard III (Shakespeare, 1974b) another hunchback. Freud, who also loved Shakespeare, used Richard III as an example of a character type he termed 'the exceptions' (Freud, 1916). The 'exceptions' are people who feel (unconsciously and/or consciously) that, through no fault of their own, that they have been unfairly dealt such a bad hand in life that the world owes them, and they are therefore entitled to operate outside the renunciations required by civilization.

Certainly Rigoletto, a mere court jester is worse off than Richard III who at least becomes king! Rigoletto is a hunchback, disfigured by nature and disparaged by nurture. He has endured and internalized the reactions of others to his deformity, and the hostile mocking noblemen of the court beautifully symbolize both the internal and external persecution he lives within. By contrast, the Duke is handsome, seductive, rich, and powerful, the antithesis of Rigoletto. The Duke is one of the 'beautiful people,' a privileged member of the 1%. He occupies a position forever beyond reach for Rigoletto who, as a lowly deformed servant, is condemned to a world where the privileges of aristocratic omnipotence are tantalizingly visible, but forever out of reach. If "living well is the best revenge," as the proverb suggests, such an avenue of psychic retreat is blocked for Rigoletto. Rigoletto instead identifies with the aggressor by aiding the Duke while also enviously hating the duke for his advantages. To add insult to injury, we learn (Act II: *Deh non parlare al misero: Don't speak of the grief of that terrible loss*) that Rigoletto has also tragically lost the love of his life, Gilda's mother, who loved him

unconditionally. All of this is impossible for him to mourn and accept, and he turns possessively to Gilda, upon whom he projects what is left of his wishes and hopes.

In *Rigoletto*, the curse is a way of characterizing and articulating psychological suffering in life, and it expresses the hatred of what we cannot control. Rigoletto is cursed by the hardships of physical deformity, the death of his wife, and his abject position as an object of contempt by others. These three realities mirror beautifully the three sources of suffering Freud refers to in *Civilization and its Discontents*: our own bodies, the destructive forces of nature, and our conflicts with others. Rigoletto obsessively repeats throughout the opera: “The old man cursed me”. Like Job and like Richard III, the ‘old man’ God, has indeed metaphorically cursed him.

The curse also represents the opposite of acceptance and Rigoletto believes he can ‘get even’ gloating over what he believes is the successful dagger-tongue murder of the Duke by Sparafucile in the last scene.

There he is! Dead. Yes I must see him.

What does it matter? It must be he!

Here are his spurs. Look at me now, O world!

This is a jester, that is a prince!

He lies beneath my foot! Yes he! Oh joy!

At last my grief is avenged!

As an ‘exception’ Rigoletto lacks guilt and remorse, and feels entitled to the murderous solution to his discontents with the court, the Duke, and Gilda. Earlier, when

Rigoletto first encounters Sparafucile and asks who he is, Sparafucile replies: “A foreigner”. The character and menacing music of Sparafucile represent the ‘foreigner within’ capturing this hateful, murderous and destructive aspect of Rigoletto’s and the audience’s inner hatred toward the limits and laws that bind us together. It is dark music of emotional violence directed at the world that often seems to unfairly withhold rather than provide. We empathize with Rigoletto because each of us examining our own inner worlds can find some trace of disavowed ‘exceptionalism’ within ourselves, some trace of unresolved discontented entitlement, which Rigoletto represents for us.

Rigoletto is entirely unconscious of his inner world, with no insight and no ability to process his feelings beyond anger and angry hate. This limitation is beautifully conveyed musically. While Verdi gives him strong emotional expression in the opera, it is not in the form of anything resembling a conventional aria. Even at his most emotional, for example, pleading for his daughter in Act II, his expressions are more *declamatory* than *melodic*. Musically, this reflects his incapacity to develop his emotions sufficiently to mourn, articulate, or process his grief, and consequently as he says: “Tears, the consolation of all men are denied me” (Act II, Scene 8). Even at the climax of the opera as he opens the sack to discover Gilda rather than the Duke, Rigoletto is unable to move beyond blaming the curse of life. Psychologically speaking, this is indeed a curse!

Final Reflections

Regarding the three forms of suffering enumerated by Freud in the quotation with which I began this essay, *Rigoletto* and *Don Giovanni* relate most powerfully to the challenges of dealing with demands and needs of others, and our attempt to accept the

limitations inherent in the group life upon which we depend for survival and so many forms of pleasure. There is no other choice, and one is put in mind of Sartre's character, Garcin, in *No Exit* who opines that "Hell is other people" (Sartre, 1976, p. 45).

Don Giovanni and Rigoletto are both under the sway of illusion that they can get around this aspect of reality: Rigoletto that he can destroy his enemies and keep his daughter to himself rather than let another man "have her", and Don Giovanni that he can have all women. Both are inversions of the same thing. The Don feels entitled through aristocratic power and position, and Rigoletto by his various misfortunes. Both live as 'exceptions', but also embody two different positions on the path to mourning omnipotence and accepting things as they are. Don Giovanni, representing pure desire, embodies the absolute, ruthless, self-centered refusal to accept the laws of heaven and earth. He doesn't deny consequences, but defies them, choosing Hell over repentance in the ultimate existential act of civil disobedience. Rigoletto instead attempts to omnipotently and covertly take control by getting revenge on civilization and its limits. In this sense, he is Leporello 'on the warpath', but perhaps we could think of Rigoletto as being further along than Don Giovanni in psychological development, Rigoletto is capable of love and concern, and, in contrast to Don Giovanni, demonstrates the first stirring of guilt and responsibility. In *Don Giovanni*, we never actually see the Commendatore suffer his daughter's dishonor, nor do we ever see the Don experiencing remorse. In *Rigoletto*, it is as if Don Giovanni has now grown up to be a Father-Commendatore himself and must begin to face the consequences and guilt of his own misdeeds.

I think *Don Giovanni and Rigoletto*, as all great art, function unconsciously, helping us in the ongoing process of working-through civilization and its discontents. Each opera allows the audience to have it both ways: Don Giovanni burns in Hell, but never repents; Rigoletto is punished horribly, but the Duke himself gets away unscathed. As the curtain falls, the audience unconsciously feels its inner voice of protest has been collectively recognized, registered and rendered at the highest level of art. Perhaps, it is now a little easier to exit the civilized cultural space of the opera house and return to the streets of discontent.

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