

The concept of the postmodern seducer: Don Juan or James Bond?

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Abstract

The French thinkers Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari in their theory of the concept claim that every concept is a point of coincidence, or accumulation of its own components, i.e. the other concepts that it consists of. The concept of Don Juan as 'the archetypal seducer' has been circulating in Western culture for several centuries. Independently of epoch and national character, therefore, the figure of Don Juan has been a point of coincidence for three important concepts associated with the character: seduction, transgression, and power/domination. The aim of this article is to consider the development of the Don Juan concept in postmodern society. The article suggests that the established Don Juan concept, based on prohibition, became obsolete at the end of the 20th century, and has been replaced by a new seducer figure – that of the film hero James Bond.

Key words

critical theory, Don Juan, James Bond, seduction

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Résumé

Selon la théorie de Gilles Deleuze et Félix Guattari, chaque concept est un point de coïncidence ou une accumulation de ses propres

composants, c'est-à-dire les autres concepts dont il est fait. Le concept de Don Juan comme le « séducteur archétype » a circulé dans la culture occidentale pendant plusieurs siècles. Indépendamment des époques et du caractère national, la figure de Don Juan a été le point de coïncidence des trois concepts importants associés avec le caractère : séduction, transgression et pouvoir / domination. L'objectif de cet article est de considérer le développement du concept de Don Juan dans la société postmoderne. L'article suggère que le concept établi de Don Juan, basé sur la prohibition, est devenu désuet à la fin du XXème siècle, et qu'il a été remplacé par une nouvelle figure du séducteur – le héros du cinéma, James Bond.

Mots-clés

Don Juan, James Bond, séduction, théorie critique

Pojęcie postmoderniczno-uwodzicielskie: Don Juan czy James Bond?

W swej teorii pojęcia francuscy myśliciele Gilles Deleuze i Felix Guattari twierdzą, że każde pojęcie jest punktem zbiegu, bądź też akumulacji jego komponentów, czyli innych pojęć, które się na nie składają. Pojęcie Don Juana jako „archetypowego uwodziciela” funkcjonuje w zachodniej kulturze od kilku stuleci. Niezależnie od epoki i charakteru narodowego, postać Don Juana stała się punktem przecięcia trzech istotnych pojęć: uwodzenia, transgresji oraz władzy/dominacji. Celem artykułu jest ukazanie rozwoju pojęcia Don Juana w społeczeństwie ponowoczesnym. Artykuł dowodzi, że w dwudziestym wieku ogólnie przyjęte pojęcie Don Juana, oparte na zakazie, stało się przestarzałe i zastąpił go nowy uwodziciel: filmowy bohater James Bond.

Słowa kluczowe

Don Juan, James Bond, teoria krytyczna, uwodzenie

1. Introduction: Seduction in postmodernism

The concept of *seduction* in Western culture is organised around *prohibition*. ‘Diverting from the right path’¹ must be against a set of rules, however, otherwise it would simply be taking another path. In patriarchal society, seducing a man is a crime against moral law (as the seduced disobeys the commandment of God), while seducing a woman is a crime against social law (as the seducer infringes another man’s possession; in capitalist society – interferes in the process of commodity exchange on the marriage market). In both cases the participants of the seduction process violate the prohibition of employing eroticism outside the framework of lawful marriage.

The figure of Don Juan is a product of patriarchal society – his existence is dependent on the social restrictions that he violates. If there were no ban on free eroticism and sex, the character of Don Juan would be meaningless, and his violations could not happen. The figure of Don Juan and the cultural concept that it embodies, therefore, are based on prohibition of sexual freedom, and his popularity is based on the attempts of society to incorporate the natural human need for unrestricted individual eroticism into the system of duty and collective regulation, including the sphere of erotic desire.

Western Christian culture was governed by this system for nearly two thousand years. Avoiding or outwitting the system in one way or another was one of the major social occupations until the occurrence of social change that pushed the freedom of eroticism out of the list of primary human concerns. According to Jean Baudrillard, seduction was still possible in the pre-industrial age. Industrialism and the capitalism that followed put an end to it however, as “The bourgeois era dedicated itself to nature and production, things quite foreign and even expressly fatal to seduction” (Baudrillard 1979: 1). Therefore, according to Baudrillard, result-oriented phallic masculine seduction has prevailed in Western culture ever since. Never-

¹ *Se-ducere* in translation from Latin.

theless it was based on prohibition that only dissipated due to the cultural changes of the mid-20th century, especially the sexual revolution of the 1960s.

It was about this time that interest in the Don Juan figure also began to fade, with the last important works on the theme belonging to existentialist writers; Albert Camus' version being the most interesting among them.² All later versions, including films, are re-workings of *versions* of the Don Juan legend,³ rather than re-workings of the legend itself; they are extremely interesting, yet it is difficult to name at least one which has had an important impact on the development of the Don Juan theme. It is obvious, therefore, that the Don Juan character had become dated by the 20th century, where everybody, including women, could be a Don Juan – it was now a recognizable behavioural pattern, and a psychological description of a person, a rule more often than an exception. Indeed, since the mid-20th century there has been no prohibition for Don Juan to resist, and as a result his figure has become unnecessary.⁴

Another important cultural change of the 20th century that has happened gradually, yet irrevocably, has been determined by advances in technology and globalisation. It is the post-modern merging of 'high' and 'mass' culture, and the resulting trend of culture commercialisation. Both phenomena were predicted by the very first representatives of critical theory

² See Albert Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, 1942.

³ Some films, such as Joseph Losey's *Don Giovanni* (1979), and Jacques Weber's *Don Juan* (1998) are screen adaptations of previously created versions of the legend (Mozart's *Don Giovanni* and Moliere's *Dom Juan* respectively), others are directors' interpretations of the narrative (such as Ingmar Bergman's *The Devil's Eye* (1960) and Roger Vadim's *Don Juan, or if Don Juan Were a Woman* (1973)).

⁴ This does not mean to say that the Don Juan concept has disappeared from Western culture. There are some very fine examples of Don Juan in contemporary, 20th century contexts, especially in Spain, e.g. Calixto Bieito's staging of Mozart's *Don Giovanni* (2001), beautifully discussed in Sarah Wright's book *Tales of Seduction: The Figure of Don Juan in Spanish Culture*, or Jeremy Levens's film *Don Juan de Marco* (1995), starring Johnny Depp. The *concept* of Don Juan, however, seems to be established, and has not acquired, nor does it require new constituent concepts.

(Adorno, Horkheimer, etc.) as well as later Marxist and neo-Marxist thinkers (Debord etc.). Towards the end of the 20th century the tendency grew evermore rapidly; while popular, or mass culture, gradually earned recognition among intellectuals.⁵ The increasing number and variety of popular forms of mass media contributed greatly to this process of acknowledgement, as well as to a gradual change in human reality itself.

In connection with this, according to Baudrillard, the world at present lives in a virtual reality, illusions and appearances being its most important elements. In addition, the rapid growth of mass communications, in the form of 24-hour, multi-channel worldwide television, of information technology, the Internet, and cybernetic systems of control, has produced information over-load, the effect of which is to destabilise meaning in a radical way. Indeed, so much information is now presented to us that we (subject) have merged into the information (object). Moreover, so many images of the truth are available that the very idea of a real world about which a truth can be known has become problematic. In the language of Saussure, the stable if arbitrary relationship between signifier and signified has broken down and society now lives in a world where signifiers are so plentiful that they have become 'free-floating'; where a signifier is able to take up a variety of cross-boundary relationships with other signifiers. The result is that meaning is permanently "up for grabs", and concepts such as social class can be seen as ephemeral as any other (How 2003: 146-147).

In the 1980s, Baudrillard developed three notions to describe the emerging situation: simulation, implosion and hyperreality. He maintains that people now live in an era where the mass media simulate reality to the point where reality, in-

⁵ The proof for this claim, I believe, can be found in the fact that one of the greatest scholars of the 20th century, Italian semiotician Umberto Eco is best known worldwide for his detective novels – a form of writing, though masterfully re-worked by Eco, still definitely belonging to the sphere of pop, or mass, culture. Similar examples can also be found.

cluding people themselves, must be understood as a media product, as there is no 'real' independent of the media. Baudrillard does not identify the political or economic forces which might be behind this change, but regards simulation as the overwhelming factor defining the era, whatever forces produced it. In the process of simulation, the image or representation of the 'object' collides with the 'real object' and the two implode, or collapse into one another, destabilising any fixed notion of the real. Gradually, a state of hyperreality comes into existence, where what has been simulated, namely the model or representation, replaces any residual element of the real, and *becomes the real* in its place (How 2003: 147).

In such an environment, seduction also experiences an irrevocable mutation. The masculine productive mode and the feminine seductive mode,⁶ in Baudrillard's view, are subsumed by the "cold" seduction of media images pumped out by television, radio and film. However, this type of seduction is incapable of enchantment, instead, "an era of fascination is beginning" (Baudrillard 1979: 158). Seduction, as well as the whole of social life, becomes simulated through communication; and, although it is constantly moving and may give the impression of an operative seduction, it is not so. "[S]uch seduction has no more meaning than anything else, seduction here connotes only a kind of ludic adhesion to simulated pieces of information, a kind of tactile attraction maintained by the models" (Baudrillard 1979: 163). If feminine seduction of the aristocratic age had passion as its driving force, and masculine seduction of the industrial era had production as its aim, the seduction that happens in the virtuality of nowadays is "an empty declaration formed of simulated concepts" (Baudrillard 1979: 174). The world "is no longer driven by power, but fascination, no longer by production, but seduction" (Baudrillard 1979: 174), yet this seduction is meaningless, as it suggests a social world that we do not comprehend anymore, and a political world whose structures have faded (Baudrillard 1979: 174). In

⁶ Types of seduction discussed in Baudrillard's study *Seduction* (1979).

this world, everything, including desire and passion, is measured by *exchange value*. “It is no longer a matter of seduction as passion, but of a *demand for seduction*. Of an invocation of desire and its realisation in place of the faltering relations of power and knowledge that inhere in love and transference” (Baudrillard 1979: 176). With the help of mass media, seduction is imitated and modulated, and thus, placed within the capitalist supply-demand system, becoming “*nothing more than exchange value*, serving the circulation of exchanges and the lubrication of social relations” (Baudrillard, 1979: 176, original emphasis).

In 1967 Guy Debord developed the concept of society as “spectacle”, which perceives the history of social life as declining from “being into having, and having into merely appearing” (Debord 1994: Thesis 17). The spectacle is the inverted image of society in which relations between commodities have supplanted relations between people, in which “passive identification with the spectacle supplants genuine activity” (Debord 1994: Thesis 4). In a consumer society, social life is not about living, but about having; the spectacle uses the image to convey what people need and must have. Consequently, social life moves further, leaving a state of “having” and proceeding into a state of “appearing”; namely the appearance of the image (Debord 1994: Thesis 17). In his early work Baudrillard drew on Debord’s neo-Marxist ideas but, during the 1970s, gradually came to believe that the era to which Marxist concepts such as “alienation” and “commodity fetishism” applied, had passed. We were now thoroughly immersed in a postmodern world where the “spectacle” was no longer an illusion but the real thing (How 2003: 145). “Appearing” is the first and foremost important feature in consumer society that perceives consumption of images as its basic and characteristic quality.

The theme of cold seduction is continued in Baudrillard’s work *The Ecstasy of Communication* (1985), where he discusses how humans surrender themselves in an “ecstasy of communication” to the seductive power of the mass media – televi-

sion, ads, films, magazines, and newspapers. The luminous eyes of television and computer screens penetrate into people's private spaces in an ecstatic and obscene way, depriving them of their secrets, and turning the images they consume into something more and more pornographic. Meanwhile, the distinction between public and private disappears, and advertising invades everything, as "the scene excites us, the obscene fascinates us. With fascination and ecstasy, passion disappears" (Baudrillard 1985: 132). This is one of the reasons too, why Don Juan, a symbol of erotic passion, is no longer of interest.

"Cold" seduction (or mass media seduction) is not based on prohibition, which inspires the illusion that its violation would imply some transformation of the violator or his/ her partner (as in the case of transgression, defined by Bataille and Foucault⁷). It does not offer transgression or transformation in exchange, just satisfaction (or disappointment), void of any transcendence. It is a simulated image producing fascination that may have a social value yet no ontological meaning whatsoever. In such a world, anything can become seductive – from a pair of shoes to a holiday in the Bahamas, and eroticism seems to be irretrievably lost in the ever-growing crowd of pornographic images/ representations of sexuality.

The result of the permanently multiplying mass media – growing in terms of amount as well as variety – has caused, among other things, an important cultural change that has been termed the "visual turn". The phenomenon explains why Western cultural trends of the late 20th century emphasise the visual rather than textual forms of cultural creation. Cinema, as one of the most important means to exercise "cold seduction", has become the leading sphere of production and promotion of seductive images, as well as fascination and ecstasy, the latter being the most important characteristics for all successful products of pop culture, from film heroes to music

⁷ See, for example, Michel Foucault's "A Preface to Transgression", or George Bataille's *Death and Sensuality: A Study of Eroticism and the Taboo*.

icons. The ability to appeal to the largest audience with the smallest effort on its (the audience's) part (even those who cannot read are able to watch a film, and most of the world's inhabitants can afford a cinema ticket from time to time) makes the film industry one of the most powerful and influential shapers of contemporary social and cultural life. It is no wonder then, that film and not literature produces contemporary cultural heroes (even though they may have emerged as heroes in literature first of all, as happened with such figures as Harry Potter, Sherlock Holmes, Bridget Jones, Don Corleone etc.).

Among these there is a hero who equals Don Juan in popularity, although perhaps not yet in cultural impact. The Don Juan concept, based on ideas of power, transgression and seduction, which became obsolete by the mid-20th century due to cultural changes, finds its counterpart in the figure of His Majesty's Secret Agent 007, James Bond. Indeed, Bond is a character that comes very close to the Don Juan concept, and it is my claim that he is the postmodern Don Juan. In the remainder of this article, therefore, I will attempt to distinguish whether Bond is a postmodern version of the Don Juan concept, or an independent cultural figure, constructed upon the Don Juan concept as an organising principle.

2. The postmodern Don Juan – a contemporary film hero

The idea of James Bond as a contemporary Don Juan figure has been circulating in the field of culture studies for a number of years. D.T. Gies considers the affinities between the two, drawing on the works of Hermann Broch, who says that "Art always reflects the image of contemporary man" (Broch, in Gies 1992: 191). Gies, meanwhile, claims that the images of Don Juan that are reflected in many icons of our contemporary culture, mean a "systematic degradation of the Don Juan myth, a degradation which [after Zorilla] led first to parody, then to burlesque satire, and from there to mass mentality"

(Gies 1992: 193). Gies also claims that the figure of Don Juan “has entered the popular consciousness at a deep level and remained there immersed in the black waters of our Jungian collective unconscious” (Gies 1992: 193), explaining this development by the characteristic features of popular culture, which is “voracious and culinarily imperialistic: it gobbles up every valid artifact, chews it up, and spits it out in a more accessible form” (Gies 1992: 193). Indeed, this claim resonates well with Adorno’s general view of mass culture, and his discontent with its commercialisation. Adorno regards the term “mass culture” in itself as insufficient, as implying that modern culture is in some sense the product of the masses, when in fact it is an industrial product sold to the masses as a commodity (Adorno 1991: 85–7). Additionally, juxtaposition of “culture” and “industry” determined that culture should now be “thought less a vital human expression of social integration, more the manipulative product of interlocking commercial interests” (How 2003: 34).

The processes underlying the output of mass culture, the resulting narratives, popular mythology and its relation to myth make a subject of extreme interest, requiring a separate extensive study. One of my arguments against writing off popular mythology in favour of the traditional myth, however, is their common background in, as Gies puts it, the “Jungian collective unconscious”. Yet it is the absence of a transgressive quality in popular myths that causes most doubts as to their validity, and I agree that from this point of view the transfer of myth to mass mentality may be regarded as a degradation.

Before continuing the discussion of the idea of a comparison between a mythical figure and a pop culture icon, I would like to consider first the affinities between the figures of Don Juan and James Bond, especially because critics agree that the two are quite close in a number of aspects. Gies, for example, says that E.T.A. Hoffmann’s description of Don Juan could “just as well be a description of James Bond as depicted by Sean Connery or Roger Moore” (Gies 1992: 194). Hoffmann wrote: “His

was a strong, magnificent body, an education radiating that spark which kindled the notion of the most sublime feelings of the soul, a profound sensibility, a mind that apprehends swiftly” (quoted in Gies 1992: 104). Apart from physical (and mental) affinities, that cannot, in fact, be the only point of departure, as they are quite arbitrary and prone to change, there are certain qualities shared by Don Juan and James Bond that also testify to their similarity in social meaning. Indeed, there is a certain likeness between the cultural messages that the two figures display, yet there is also one important difference.

Both are fictional characters who are the result of an exceptionally male fantasy.⁸ First and foremost, they are irresistible seducers and their self-confidence is indefatigable, even if their methods are different. Don Juan is never rejected, even though he sometimes pretends to be someone else in order to achieve his aim. James Bond never pretends to be someone else and always achieves his aim, even though the initial effort may lead to rejection. Bond, as well as Juan,⁹ never fails to notice a pretty female face or figure, and try to form a more intimate acquaintance. Bond, like Juan, is also a perfect lover – although the reputation of the latter may rest on rumour rather than evidence displayed for the audience to see, while the reputation of the former is quite often illustrated right before the eyes of the spectator. The result of seduction is the most important for Don Juan; James Bond, however, is more often concerned with the process (*as well as* the result). Both heroes are brave, young, and belong to the highest social classes. And, even if their motives for fighting are different, they demonstrate courage and skill. Don Juan – especially at the end of the 19th century – is a dandy, concerned about his effect on men as well as women. His appearance is most polished. Bond, however, surpasses Don Juan in this respect. Even after a most ferocious fight, he emerges in a freshly-ironed shirt and

⁸ The influence of the latter fact on their success is a separate very interesting point for discussion that deserves a separate article.

⁹ Especially Mozart's Don Juan.

an untouched tie, to say nothing of his suit that has become the uniform of the spy. Similar to Juan, Bond seems to have no scruples about women, even though the audience does learn about his beloved wife who was killed shortly after their wedding.¹⁰ Bond does not encounter supernatural forces, for the milieu of his existence is totally different from that of Don Juan's, yet his ability for survival more than makes up for it. Indeed, this is one of the greatest differences between the two characters: Bond encounters death more times than Don Juan as he has a licence to kill, and makes good use of it. Juan's relation to death is of a totally different kind: his first encounter with it is a challenge (the result of a fight with a Commendatore, which the latter loses), the second is a warning (dinner with a dead man's statue), and the third is a punishment (he descends into Hell). In spite of these differences, the concept of death is associated with both figures: Don Juan's end is almost invariably repeated in the majority of the versions of the legend and is a familiar feature in the popular consciousness; Bond's nickname 'Mr. Kiss Kiss Bang Bang', meanwhile, sums up the perception of his character in the best way possible for the pop culture which he represents.

The major difference between the two, however, is that Bond has a profession, and is constantly on a mission, women being, to a greater or lesser extent, an element of secondary importance, even though at times their participation or presence is crucial for the accomplishment of the mission. In the case of Don Juan women *are* his mission, and fighting is the consequence or the means of its accomplishment. D.T. Gies, comparing the two figures, writes about Bond: "He is a great lover and, like Don Juan, he is proud, imperious, egocentric, strong, confident, danger-loving, and impious. He is also witty, immoral, seductive, clever and handsome. And he has seduced a generation of women – on and off the screen – who find his

¹⁰ *Casino Royale* (2006, dir. Martin Campbell). It is a re-make of a previous version; the original story comes from the very first James Bond novel, Ian Fleming's *Casino Royale* (published in 1953).

character irresistible” (Gies 1992: 194). The comparison seems to suggest that both heroes are constructed according to the same scheme – the archetype of an irresistible lover, an “*homme fatal*”, Don Juan being, obviously, himself one of the forms of that archetype.

3. The concept of Don Juan versus (the concept of) James Bond

The French thinkers Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari in their theory of the concept claim that every concept is the point of coincidence, or accumulation of its own components, i.e. the other concepts that it consists of. The concept of Don Juan as “the archetypal seducer” has been circulating in Western culture for several centuries. Independent of epoch and national character, therefore, the figure of Don Juan has always been the point of coincidence for three most important concepts associated with his character in Western consciousness: seduction, transgression, and challenge to authority. It has served as a literary, social and philosophical prototype, and has become a household word in a number of European cultures (like Spanish, Russian, Lithuanian, etc.). James Bond, in turn, is a figure familiar to a quarter of the human beings on the planet (Dodds 2005: 266), and an officially acknowledged symbol of British culture (the character, played by Daniel Craig, appeared in the opening ceremony of the 2012 London Olympics as the escort of Queen Elizabeth II).

A comparison on the conceptual level requires the application of the same pattern of conceptual analysis to both figures. This, however, causes certain doubts. Is it actually possible to say that James Bond is a cultural concept, like Don Juan? According to Deleuze and Guattari, a concept is an answer or a solution to an acute, pending problem (“concepts are only created as a function of problems which are thought to be badly understood or badly posed” (Deleuze and Guattari 1994: 16)); thus a cultural concept is a solution to an acute cultural

problem. After the problem has been solved, the concept will most likely continue its existence in culture, yet it will change in tune with the changes of the culture itself: "Although concepts are dated, signed, and baptized, they have their own way of not dying while remaining subject to constraints of renewal, replacement, and mutation that give philosophy a history as well as a turbulent geography, each moment and place of which is preserved (but in time) and that passes (but outside time)" (Deleuze and Guattari 1994: 8). It must also be added that these cultural changes may push the concept out of the central position it used to occupy as new problems and new concepts enter the field of reflection.

Don Juan is a concept that deals with the problem of individual eroticism and sexuality against social restrictions requiring duty and continence; it is based upon prohibition of erotic freedom and is an instrument for testing the validity of the control system that society has created for supervising the eroticism of its members. The Don Juan concept as it is known today is the result of a patriarchal Christian society which sees woman as a commodity on the marriage market; to it, the figure of Don Juan is a threat that must be eliminated, as he appeals to the woman herself, not to her use value, thus disrupting the market exchange process. But what about James Bond? Is it possible to claim that his figure revolves around a certain social (or perhaps ontological) problem? And if yes, is that problem universally human, or is it a temporal complication?

A full answer to this question would be away from the main propositions of this article, therefore I will not expand on it here. I would, however, like to point out briefly that the figure of James Bond, or a government super-agent that has emerged in Western culture in the middle of the 20th century, is first of all a typical hero figure. He falls into the category of "classical heroes" and, although he demonstrates many of the features peculiar to the traditional classical hero (he is very strong, fearless, extremely intelligent, fighting for the well-being of his

community, devoted to his mission), he is a genuine product of the 20th century, equipped adequately for his mission (he has a team of helpers or allies, the newest and most effective instruments such as guns, cars, and/or gadgets, possesses a good sense of humour and irony, is “cool, calm and collected”, and seems to be immune to death and love, but susceptible to female charms). Therefore he should be contrasted to Don Juan rather than compared to him, as Don Juan is a villainous character. He is a problem, and has evolved around a problem; James Bond is a heroic character meant to perform deeds and missions, to solve problems, and not explore them.

It is difficult to deny, however, that the affinities between the two characters are impressive. There is no other figure in contemporary culture that is closer to Don Juan than James Bond in conceptual as well as other terms. Moreover, in order to maintain the theoretical framework of concept analysis, it is necessary to look at James Bond as a conceptual figure matching the Don Juan concept. Therefore, following the scheme of Deleuze and Guattari, this involves finding the concepts that the figure of Bond is constructed upon (or primarily associated with).

It is necessary to mention here that the very first important analysis of James Bond's character was performed in the 1960s by Umberto Eco, who dealt with the figure as it appears in its “primary form”, i.e. Ian Fleming's novels. Eco applied a structuralist analysis to Fleming's narrative, suggesting that most of the Bond novels follow the same narrative structure and conventions, based essentially on a sequence of “moves” in which the same archetypal characters play out familiar situations (Chapman 2007: 25), thus creating a world based on the conflict between good and evil; the “play situations” that the characters find themselves in and the binary oppositions that they are structured upon emphasise the Manichean characteristics of that world (Eco 2014: 45-47).

Eco's structuralist scheme was modified by the cultural theorist Tony Bennet, who argued that the Bond novels can be

understood through a series of narrative codes which regulate the relationships between characters. He identifies three such codes – the “sexist code”, the “imperialist code” and the “phallic code” – that are recurrent throughout the stories. The “sexist code” regulates relations between Bond and the heroine. The heroine is usually out of place, either sexually, in the sense that she is initially resistant to Bond (such as Vesper Lynd in *Casino Royale*), or ideologically, in the sense that she is in the service of the villain (Solitaire in *Live and Let Die*, Tatiana Romanova in *From Russia, With Love*), or both (Tiffany Case in *Diamonds are Forever*, Pussy Galore in *Goldfinger*). Bond’s seduction of the heroine therefore serves an ideological purpose in that he “repositions” her by putting her into her “correct” place: “In thus replacing the girl in a subordinate position to men, Bond simultaneously repositions her within the sphere of ideology in general, detaching her from the service of the villain and recruiting her in support of his own mission” (Bennet, quoted in Chapman 2007: 27). The “imperialist code” regulates the relations between Bond and his allies, who are usually loyal colonial or pro-British characters (such as Quarrel in *Live and Let Die* and *Dr No*, and Kerim in *From Russia, With Love*) who defer to Bond and are in a subordinate power relationship towards him. Finally, the “phallic code” regulates the relationship between Bond and M, a symbolic father-figure who endows Bond with power and authority (his “licence to kill”), and between Bond and the villain, who threatens Bond with emasculation through torture. “This process is enacted quite literally in *Casino Royale* where Le Chiffre whips Bond’s genitals with a cane carpet-beater” (Chapman 2007: 27).

The three narrative codes lead to the conceptual reading of Bond’s character, or the concepts associated with the figure in cultural consciousness. Obviously, the very first concept is that of seduction, based on sexual attractiveness. According to Bennet, Bond uses seduction for ideological purposes, but – undeniably – for other purposes as well, his own pleasure being one of the first on the list. The power concept (the output

of the “imperialist” code) resonates perfectly with the notion of Bond’s superiority over his allies, his colleagues, and people in general, his exceptionality and his domination over society. The “phallic” father-figure code points to the concept of authority and the challenge involved in obeying as well as disobeying authority – the notion of transgression.

Not surprisingly, these are the same three concepts that make up the concept of Don Juan: (serial) seduction, power/domination, and transgression. The balance of importance in the constituent concepts is also very much the same in both figures: in Bond, as well as Don Juan, his seductive power and female irresistibility to his charms are pre-emphasized (Bond being a government super-agent is not the reason but an additional quality of his charm). This, I believe, suggests that both figures are built on the same seducer archetype; it also suggests that the Bond figure draws heavily on the Don Juan concept. Yet in order to establish whether it is a variant of Don Juan, or an independent cultural figure constructed upon the Don Juan concept, a closer comparison is necessary.

The first and foremost concept related to Don Juan is seduction: seduction of women, to whom he promises eternal love and marriage instantly after sex. At the heart of this lies deception, and the promises are never fulfilled. The purpose of Don Juan’s seduction (except his Romantic treatment, Hoffmann being the best example) is tricking the woman, i.e., the main element of his seduction is deceit. Bond, in his turn, also uses deceit under cover of his seductive acts – yet not necessarily deceit of the woman in terms of sex. This is because sex is not his goal, but a tool for achieving other goals (gaining useful information, winning some time, merely spending some time, etc.), the woman is deceived rather in terms of “ideology” (she may have to betray a secret or not achieve her own goals, etc.), therefore is less affected personally, perhaps, yet the element of deceit remains. Different to Don Juan, however, Bond is capable of emotional attachment, and the physical contact is as important to him as the deceit (*if* deceit is involved, that is).

As Tony Bennet puts it, it often involves “repositioning” the girl in her correct place (quoted in Chapman 2007: 27).

In terms of power relations and domination, both Don Juan and Bond are dominant figures in their society as well as the productions they feature in (drama, novel, film, opera, etc.). As indicated by Bennet, Bond is in a dominant position with regard to his allies, also with regard to his colleagues – other agents as well as his boss (he is especially favoured by his direct supervisor M, and is allowed more than other agents), which means a dominant position in his circle, to say nothing of the general society that he, as a special agent and a government spy, is high above. As to the dominance of Don Juan over his society, it is necessary to mention that he is constructed as a dominant figure from the earliest version of his legend, with the intentional purpose of showing that everybody must obey the system and follow its requirements, even those at the highest-ranking positions; disobedience is punished most severely.

Overall, it is the concept of transgression that distinguishes the two figures most, one from the other. In the Don Juan concept, transgression can be defined as one of its most important ontological aspects: Don Juan, like the trickster god Hermes, takes young girls through the threshold of maturity into the realm of femininity. In social terms, his appeal to the woman herself intrudes into the process of commodity exchange on the marriage market, influencing the woman’s exchange value, and that becomes the moment of a certain social transgression. Don Juan himself, however, experiences neither transgression nor character development (except in the versions when he is converted due to the love of a virtuous woman, and stops being a Don Juan,¹¹ which eliminates him from the field of the Don Juan concept). A similar situation regarding women is to an extent characteristic of the figure of James Bond. Tony Bennet terms it “repositioning” of the girl (see

¹¹ See, for example, Oscar Milosz’s *Miguel Mañara* (1912) or Prosper Mérimée’s *Les âmes de purgatoire* (1834).

above), yet the ontological significance of it is rather doubtful, for in most cases we do not know whether the girl herself undergoes an irreversible change from a “bad” person into a “good” one, or it is just a change of “camps”, in which case the transgression is an ideological act and does not have the significance of “fissure”.¹²

The concept of transgression, however, is important in yet another aspect, i.e., in its relation to the audience. The social message of the Don Juan concept lies also in the psychosocial plane of his existence; i.e. Don Juan is not only a concept, a character from a play or an opera, but also a social type, a man (or a woman, in our times) whom any person from the audience can encounter at any moment of his/her life – or *be* at any moment of his/her life. Therefore the ontological problem of transgression, as well as the social problem of (dis)obeying the rules is not only an aesthetic matter solved before the eyes of the spectator. The Don Juan concept is an approach to a special cultural issue that is important for a great majority of the members of that culture. A contact with Don Juan – be it direct, “outward”, as in the case of the woman who is seduced by him, or an indirect, “inward”, as in the case of a man who is a Don Juan himself, or is simply close to the seducer – brings about an ontological transgression resulting in a transformation of some sort. In the case of James Bond this type of transgressive moment is non-existent, as the figure itself is a screen illusion that cannot come true. There can be no contact with James Bond in real life, and not only because the reality of government spies has little to do with Fleming’s novels or the Bond film series. The credibility of meeting James Bond round the corner is equal to that of the Commendatore statue shaking hands with a visitor – and that is where an important point of intersection between the figures comes to the fore. James Bond is an illusion, yet a self-

¹² A Foucauldian term, defining the result of transgression, according to Foucault, who explains it as “the excessive distance that it opens at the heart of the limit” (Foucault 1977: 35).

imposed one, a simulated one, and all the extravagance surrounding him attracts, tempts and seduces. That is how the system swallows us – the audience – up. Don Juan lives inside each of us, also fostering an illusion – the illusion of resistance to authority. Don Juan seduces us into a belief that the system can be resisted, and the moment of resistance is an enjoyable one. James Bond seduces us into the belief that the system does not need to be resisted, that it will take care of us in due time, and we have only to enjoy ourselves because resistance is unnecessary.

Because of this, I argue that illusion is the key to the contemporary perception of the 20th century Don Juan concept, i.e. the James Bond figure. Illusion is also the key term to interpret the relation of the concept to its audience, as well as the three constituent concepts: seduction, power/domination and transgression. As in Don Juan, the three concepts work simultaneously in James Bond in order to achieve the main aim – to thrill (or fascinate, to use Baudrillard's term). "Art always reflects the image of contemporary man", says Hermann Broch; Bond is this image of contemporary man in the 20th century, as Don Juan was for nearly 400 years before him. D.T. Gies explains it by drawing on Broch who writes about contemporary society: "The new age, i.e. the age of the middle classes, wants monogamy, but at the same time wants to enjoy all the pleasures of libertinism, in an even more concentrated form, if possible" (quoted in Gies 1992: 191). Today, claims Gies, we have achieved it all, and the figure of our new hero is "the reincarnation of the old Don Juan, tailored to our modern needs" (Gies 1992: 191). James Bond, as one of the "reincarnations" of Don Juan, enables us "to partake vicariously in the adventures of titillation while remaining safely monogamous – and to break that spell of monogamy is surely what lurks at the core of all sexual fantasy" (Gies 1992: 191). With Bond, we can have our cake and eat it, and that is the illusion Don Juan cannot compete with.

4. The illusion of seduction

If Don Juan transfers us to the erotic cosmos of freedom, at least in our imaginations, as spectators (because both men and women can experience a meeting with Don Juan in real life, for Don Juan is not only an archetype or a concept, but also a behavioural model peculiar to both men and women), so James Bond transfers us into an illusionary reality where freedom does not exist, only its simulation. Don Juan seduces us with the promise of freedom – and we *can* experience the fulfilment of that promise at least for an instant. James Bond seduces us with an illusion that we shall never experience in reality, but the essence of his seduction lies in the postmodernist craving *for* experiencing an illusion. We see through it but we still buy it – and are happy with having had the chance of it.

Women want Don Juan, and men envy him not because of himself, but because of what he embodies – the freedom of choosing a partner. Seduction is a promise that is never fulfilled – it is especially true of the promise of erotic freedom (and any other promise made for seduction). Because the promise itself is an illusion, therefore it cannot come true. The disappointment is not so much about a broken promise, but about a dispersed illusion. The very same is true about James Bond: when he is endowed with more “human” qualities (as in the newest Bond film, *Spectre*, 2015), he becomes a more concrete character. In the space where, for some mysterious reason, the audience could earlier put in their own fantasies about his coldness and misogyny, his vulnerable inner self is now on display, and there is nothing there that surprises the spectator/ reader in a transgressive or any other respect. At this point James Bond stops being an illusion and turns into a simple human being – which is extremely unfair toward a pop hero and a great disappointment to the audience. Bond is no longer a character from an illusionary world, but yet another contemporary individual tormented by worldly

troubles. He is no longer beyond us (or above, if you please), he steps among us, showing weaknesses we do not want to see in an illusionary hero. Both Don Juan and James Bond are empty shells into which every member of culture may put their own fantasy that corresponds with the cultural expectations of the time; Don Juan, however, is in a more personal relationship with his audience – he can show up as one of them, a psychosocial type, a concept or a mode of behaviour. He is not an illusion, and the audience are all fully aware of it. James Bond, meanwhile, does not and cannot have any personal relations with his audience – he is a simulation (a *spectre*, to use Derrida's term), and his success depends on staying on his (the inner) side of the screen.

5. Conclusions

The fading interest of the 20th century in the figure of Don Juan occurred for two important reasons: the lifting of the prohibition it had been based on, and the growing impact of the mass media, which determined the shift of interest from seduction itself to appearances of seduction (or the “cold seduction” of mass media, to paraphrase Baudrillard). The latter is not based on prohibition inspiring an illusion that its violation implies some transformation of the violator or his/her partner (as in the case of transgression). It does not offer transgression or transformation in exchange, just satisfaction (or disappointment), void of any transcendence. It is a simulated image producing fascination that may have a social value yet no ontological meaning whatsoever.

The incessant proliferation of images, the resulting visual turn along with globalisation and its unifying effect on culture has determined the growing importance of the visual media (cinema, TV, etc.) on the popular consciousness. Film heroes become new iconic figures worldwide.

The figure of Don Juan in the postmodern age also finds a new expression in the film hero, the British super-agent

James Bond. He is the new seducer, the “*homme fatal*”, being closest to Don Juan in many of his surface aspects (appearance, courage, serial seduction) as well as in popularity.

Conceptually, both figures are based on the same three concepts: seduction, transgression, and power/ domination. With regard to these, it is in terms of transgression that the two fundamentally differ from each other, as well as the social message that their process of transgression conveys. The social message of Don Juan revolves around a problem (the prohibition of sexual freedom and its restriction to marriage); the Don Juan figure should be regarded as a “tester” of the social system that has formulated the prohibition. He is also a social type that can lie inside every human being, thus a meeting with him (direct as in real life, or indirect as perceived in a stage performance) causes ontological transgression. The figure of James Bond, on the other hand, is a heroic figure whereas Don Juan is not; Bond is not a challenge to the system but an instrument to repress every challenge of vital importance that causes a threat to the system itself. Being merely a screen illusion, he has no connection with real life and cannot come into any personal relationship with his audience. The notion of ontological transgression is non-existent in his character, especially in relation to his viewers. The Bond figure incorporates successfully the Don Juan principle of character organisation, and uses it for the creation of a new, postmodern hero, modifying the already-familiar and socially recognised behavioural pattern accordingly to the needs of the very society that produces it (the Bond figure).

I believe this proves that the 20th century film hero James Bond, though an independent cultural figure, is constructed upon the Don Juan concept as an organising principle, and should therefore be regarded as the postmodern version of the Don Juan concept.

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