



The Legend of Don Juan in Different Cultures

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الأسطورة
لـ
دون خوان
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Abstract

Don Juan figure has appeared in different literary works. This playful figure first appears in Tirso de Molina's play *El Burlador de Sevilla* or *The Trickster of Sevilla* (1630). This play is the earliest complete surviving play on the subject of Don Juan, and it is the source of all subsequent works devoted to Don Juan directly or indirectly. The different Don Juans provide multiple literary allusions with multiple audiences' responses. The figure of Don Juan becomes over time a type, a theme, and a legend that can be adapted and employed in any way to write about any social or moral issue.

The Hungarian Ödön Von Horváth adapted Don Juan and wrote his play *Don Juan Returns from the War* (1936). Horváth presents a soldier (Don Juan) who does not believe in wars and looks forward to peace. The American playwright Paula Vogel depicted also this figure in her play *Don Juan Comes Home from Iraq* (2017). She presents Don Juan as a veteran who participates in the war in Iraq. This paper deals with the presentation of the figure of Don Juan in these two works. Both Horváth and Vogel discuss posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in veterans after coming back from the war.

Keywords: legend, adaptation, trauma, the war, social issue, playful figure

Don Juan Comes Home from Iraq and Don Juan Returns from the War

In truth, Brecht and Horváth had worked for the future, and their famous ‘influence’ was only felt much later, and in a [mediated] way by becoming essentially an affair of theater people, authors, journalists and critics.

Jean-Claud François, "Brecht, Horváth and the Popular Theater"

The German writer Ödön Von Horváth (1901-1938)¹ wrote in the forward of his play *Don Juan Returns from the War* (1936) that “[w]e do not know whether Don Juan ever had a historical existence. All that can be established is that there was once a Don Juan type, and consequently it is clear that there still is and always will be. I have, therefore, felt free to describe a Don Juan of our time, since our own times are always more immediate to us” (7). The writer started writing this play in 1934 and finished by 1936. He wrote this play during a catastrophic time of the Nazi Germany, referring to the catastrophe of the World War I and the empty optimism after the war. Being himself Austro-Hungarian-born, Horváth suffered much personal difficulty and rootlessness during and after the time of writing this play, as the translator of the play points out (5). What the American playwright Paula Vogel (1951) actually adapts, in her play *Don Juan Comes Home from Iraq* (2017), from Horváth is the idea of putting a “lothario” in the military (Tran 23) to treat two main issues. One is discussing the posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in veterans after coming back from the war, and the other issue is to reveal the society’s ignorance about and negligence of what veterans suffer and feel during and after wars.

Vogel first read Horváth’s play in her twenties, and she said that her play is a “homage” to Horváth; she further explained that “[f]or a long time, I’ve had an obsession with Don Juan—someone who treats other people as if they’re not sentient beings, as though they’re just bodies” (Tran 23). Actually, the figure of Don Juan is depicted differently through ages. Vogel herself admits that it is very challenging to adapt the figure of Don Juan:

There are a lot of voices here. There’s a dead playwright from 100 years ago, Ödön Von Horváth. There’s a playwright from 300 years ago, Tirso de Molina, who wrote the first “Don Juan” play. There are Don Juans from the last 300-plus years that have been inspirational,

including Molière and Don Giovanni. It's a wonderful, rich process for me and I am constantly challenged and never get bored for a moment. (Nicholas 24-25)

Vogel contends that she mainly adapts Horváth's play; however, she alludes to the figure of Don Juan in general and to the controversies in adapting or treating this character. The main focus of this paper is Vogel's adaptation of Horváth's play, but it is apt to have an overview of the figure of Don Juan in some literary works and how it is adapted differently to treat a certain social issue. The figure of Don Juan becomes over time a type, a theme, and a legend.

Don Juan figure first appears in Tirso de Molina's play *El Burlador de Sevilla* or *The Trickster of Sevilla* ² (1630). This play is the earliest complete surviving play on the subject of Don Juan, and according to J. W. Smeed, it is the source of all subsequent works devoted to Don Juan directly or indirectly (1). Tirso's Don Juan is a libertine who seduces women by his charm and words. His goal is to destroy the honor of the deceived woman. He has pride and a reckless courage. By the end of the play, he is invited to repent by the statue of a father of one of Don Juan's victims. First, the proud Don Juan refuses and then decides to repent but after it is too late; he is dragged to Hell as a punishment. The intention of the writer is didactic (Smeed 1). Don Juan is shown by the writer paying finally for his wickedness or his debts to the creditor (God); the idea is that every debt will fall due and Don Juan's debt is his weight of sin (Smeed 2-3). Another play with the same figure appeared under the name *Don Giovanni* (1787), an opera by W. A. Mozart and the Italian libretto by Lorenzo Da Ponte. Don Giovanni, or Don Juan, in this Italian version appears more sinful and villainous than Tirso's Don Juan. Don Giovanni is not willing to repent even at the end of the play. Don Juan is the Don Juan that appeared in Molière's play *Dom Juan or the Feast with the Statue* (1665). He is the atheist womanizer who believes that he is beyond good and evil. He never repents and he is punished by Heaven. Last but not least, the legend of Don Juan is depicted by the romantic German and French writers, among them significantly is E. T. A. Hoffmann and his tale "Don Juan. A Fantastic Event Which Befell a Travelling Enthusiast" (1813),³ to be "a great rebel, consumed with divine discontent and roaming the world in a hopeless quest for an ideal" (Smeed 145).

The Don Juans described above provide multiple literary allusions with multiple readers' responses. Smeed in his book *Don Juan: Variations on a Theme* describes Don Juan as a type, and Armand E. Singer describes him as a theme in his article "The Present State of Studies on the Don Juan Theme." Don Juan is a type and a theme that can be adapted and employed in any way to write about any social or moral issue. As Singer puts it: "[t]he Don Juan theme is luckily notable in more than one respect, among the most remarked of which is its chameleon ability to mirror each new literary age" (4). A writer can depict Don Juan to reflect a theme, and another writer can portray him as the rebel, traveler, seeker of the idea, or the seducer. Furthermore, as Singer reports, Horváth presents Don Juan the "pacifist" (4).

Horváth presents a soldier (Don Juan) who does not believe in wars and looks forward to peace. Horváth used to believe, as a young writer, the proposition that "political institutions could effect definite social and economic progress toward an ideal millennium of peace and prosperity" (Kling 183). Later and after his bitter experience as an exiled writer, he experiences "first skepticism, then bitter criticism, and finally rejection of this proposition, and he came to see all political parties and institutions, as well as other established organizations, as destroyers ... of humanity of their adherents" (Kling 183). When the Nazis came to Germany in 1933 and burned many works among them Horváth's, he felt forced to leave Germany to Austria where he experienced the personal trauma of exile. Paul M. Malone discussed in an article about Horváth as a writer in exile that Horváth's real trauma was not because he was obliged to leave Germany and experience homelessness. The reason behind his personal trauma was that the "banishment of his works resulted in a developing estrangement from that [German culture] which had sustained him" (qtd. in 59). Furthermore, "Horváth sees [in some of his works] the importance and prevalence of exile in the world around him" (Malone 67). That is why his plays after 1933, including *Don Juan Returns from the War*, are set in remote times and places and concentrate mostly on the individual who derives human stature only from his inner dimensions (Kling 182). His *Don Juan Returns from the War* is set in autumn 1918 in a theater in a barrack (not in a specific country). Don Juan, a soldier, appears "wearing filthy uniform, no decorations, unarmed" (Horváth 13). The war is over. Nothing

is changed and there seems no peace or prosperity as expected by the characters. For example, Grandmother says, "I'm seventy-six years old and I've seen it all, war and peace and revolutions . . . so I'm not going to change! Now I want everything locked and bolted!" (Horváth 16). Another conversation at the beginning of the play between two women shows that after the war, nothing is better: "FIRST WOMAN. No bread, no salt, no lard . . . is this supposed to be peace? . . . so, war or peace, it's all the same to me" (Horváth 14). The characters of Horváth seem affected by the bad economy after the war and they are unhappy. There is even a plague in the area and "people are dying like flies" (Horváth 19). They find the results of the war not satisfying and feel that war did not really worth the sacrifice and the death of their men. Don Juan meets thirty-five women in this play; most of them try to seduce him, but he is busy looking for his fiancée.

He has just come from the war and he writes a couple of letters to his fiancée with no response. She changes her address. Horváth presents Don Juan as a wanderer who is looking for his betrothed; he moves among unnamed places (small town, a theater, a street corner, a hospital, a house, or a café). Even the women he meets are unnamed (First Girl, Second Girl, Maid, Grandmother, Nurse, Widow, First Designer, or Second Designer). Don Juan even does not specify where he was fighting during the war; he just says "[e]verywhere" (Horváth 20). Don Juan appears sick most of the time: hallucinating, having fever, exhausted, and having a pain in his heart. The women in the play mock Don Juan. They are aware of his figure as a seducer. Grandmother is so severe with him, and she blames him for being unfaithful to her granddaughter (his fiancée), and she further suggests that his treason to her granddaughter is the reason behind her death. However, Don Juan assures Grandmother that he is faithful to his fiancée and he is changed "since the war" (Horváth 20). Hence, the Don Juan myth is changed. Horváth states in his forward to his play that Don Juan is an "enigma" that people or even writers attempt to solve but still this enigma is "insoluble." Horváth further adds that this character undergoes many "disparate" transformations: the seducer, the murderer, the adulterer, and even the "dissected weary cavalier." Finally, Horváth concludes that Don Juan is seduced by many women who all succumb to him, but no woman really loves him; that is why there is no single love scene in the play (7). Horváth's Don Juan admits that he does not force himself on any women

and that they are the ones who force themselves on him and even exploit him. He also explains that sometimes he finds some women not attractive or not his ideal and refuses them; however, they still follow him. As about his fiancée, we learn from First Woman that “[Don Juan] deserted his fiancée just before the wedding, just before the war . . . [she] was pure as the driven, a proper angel. And now, it seems, he’s regretting it” (Horváth 16). He has a bad reputation in the town and is known for his “scandalous love-affairs” (Horváth 16). But now, after the war, he is changed and this change is significant to the theme of this play and even to Vogel’s play, as I will discuss later. Nurse comments on Don Juan’s condition after the war, saying that “judging by his scars, that he must have been seriously wounded . . . [he says] he was sorry for everything Real mortal sins, he was talking about, terrible, . . .” (Horváth 22). Don Juan’s change includes also a feeling of loss. In a conversation with Widow he states that “I think I’ve been transformed by the war,” and she asks “[w]ith your talent?” Don Juan answers that “I think I’ve lost that” (Horváth 27). Grandmother explains that “[h]e says he’s searching for his soul” (Horváth 23). Don Juan’s change is a state of a spiritual loss and a physical sickness. As he moves from place to place to find his fiancée, he cannot achieve any positive communication with the people around him. Everyone is remembering only his shameful past with women and mocking the war and his participation in the war. People cannot comprehend or even appreciate his participation in the war: what he has seen, faced, or suffered. The war brings no good to the town and the returning veteran (Don Juan) is sick and feeling lost.

Vogel’s returning veteran Don Juan feels lost and sick as well but this is only after his experience in the war in Iraq. He appears in the first scene, while he is still in Iraq, bossy and cruel. Cressida Morrison, his lover and a sergeant in the U.S. Army, refuses his orders to the platoon to close the ranks because they hit an Iraqi girl and she is bleeding. Cressida wants to help the girl but captain Don Juan refuses and replies coldly, “[w]hat the fuck do I look like? Mother Theresa?” (Vogel 3). Then, an explosion takes place, and Cressida vanishes. Upon his return from the war, the marine Don Juan follows “a surreal journey through the streets and history of Philadelphia” (Nicholas 24). Vogel’s Don Juan has also a bad reputation. He is known for his love affairs with other female marines or female

members in the U.S. Army who are willing to have sexual relations with him, and one of them even cheats her lover with Don Juan. However, one of the female marines, Ashley, is not willing to have a sexual affair with Don Juan, but he forces her to do so. She blames him when she sees him after the war. She is now in a wheelchair because of the war. She says, “[y]ou covered my mouth! My commanding officer! I stood there and took it!” (Vogel 67). Don Juan tries to refuse her claim, and then he says “whatever happened. Between us? That was a crazy time! I’m trying to... I’ve reformed” (Vogel 67), and later he also admits “I swear! I am a changed man” (Vogel 88). Obviously, Vogel’s Don Juan admits his change after the war like Horváth’s Don Juan. Vogel’s Don Juan seems faithful now to Cressida and insists on finding her. He undergoes also a sense of loss and feeling of illness. He has a headache, a ringing in his ears throughout the play, and sometimes dizziness. He does not know where he is (which street or area), and he does not know his way. He wanders from place to place in Philadelphia: “Don Juan walks. Walks. Don Juan walks the streets of Philadelphia” (Vogel 71).

The diorama scenes put Don Juan in a dream-like world or in a continuous hallucination. The diorama takes him and the readers to the past, but the readers are not sure whether this past really happened to Don Juan or he is imagining it. He appears with Cressida in a couple of dioramas. They appear as real lovers. They walk and talk about different matters. Cressida expresses to him her hopes to join the army so her tuition fees will be paid. Don Juan dislikes the idea, and he says that women are not strong enough to do the duties of the army. He appears lost even in the diorama and cannot read the map that he has. In another diorama, he and a couple of marines speak about girl soldiers. The marines, including Don Juan, find girl soldiers either bitches or whores. Don Juan appears playful: he contends that “with a woman: I have no defense” (Vogel 41). In these dioramas, Don Juan appears like the legendary Don Juan: seductive, untrustworthy, and proud. However, when we go back to present and meet Don Juan in Philadelphia after the war, we see him astray. Both Vogel and Horváth present a past womanizer and now a “shell-shocked soldier returning from [a war]” (Tran 23). This shell-shaking condition has a reason: trauma.

Although there is a lot of scholarship about trauma, I choose the following definition and two different illustrations of traumatic memory and narration to better understand Vogel's adaptation. Trauma is defined simply by Ernst Van Alphen in his article "Symptoms of Discursivity: Experience, Memory, and Trauma" as a "failed experience;" it is failed "because in the case of a traumatic event the discursive process that enables experience to come about has stalled" (36). Among trauma responses are "depression, inability to concentrate, lack of interest in activities that used to give life meaning, and a sense of a foreshortened future" (Brison 40). Trauma victims suffer also from insomnia (both Don Juans yearn to sleep) and wretchedness. The victims suffer also from physical symptoms like the ringing ears and the recurrent headache of Vogel's Don Juan, and heart ache and high temperature of Horváth's Don Juan. The physical state becomes the incarnation of a cognitive and emotional paralysis of the trauma victim (Brison 42). Both Don Juans (Vogel's and Horváth's) undergo a life threatening event: the war. Vogel describes an explosion that Don Juan witnesses and how he is lifted up "into the air, and for an impossibly long time, he is in the air—swimming, tossing, hands clawing" (4). Wars are among the experiences that will leave their soldiers with trauma. Joshua Pederson states, "[a]rmy doctors would call soldiers psychologically haunted by their military experiences 'shell shocked'" (340). To be more specific, wars will leave their soldiers with PTSD. Both Don Juans are suffering from PTSD: "many authors have previously pointed out [that] World War I gave rise to one of the first rough efforts to name what we now call post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)" (Pederson 340). Horváth's play shows the PTSD of a veteran who experiences these symptoms as early as WWI. In Vogel's adaptation, the PTSD is even more emphasized. PTSD is presented mainly through memory and narration of the traumatic event in her play.

Before considering trauma memory and narration in the discussion of the adaptation here, it is important to look at two different accounts of traumatic memory and narration. The theorist Cathy Caruth finds out that "trauma is an experience so intensely painful that the mind is unable to process it normally . . . the victim may totally forget the event. And if memories of the trauma return, they are often non-verbal, and the victim may be unable to describe them with words" (Pederson 334). The

researcher Richard McNally, on the other hand, states that “traumatic amnesia is a myth, and while victims may *choose* not to speak of their traumas, there is little evidence that they *cannot* . . . For McNally, unlike for Caruth, trauma is memorable and describable” (Pederson 334). Furthermore, McNally explains that the memory of the trauma survivor “may be altered, but he rejects the notion that it is absent” (Pederson 338). Hence, the memory of the trauma event cannot be claimed by the survivor at least non-verbally according to Caruth, whereas McNally finds out that the trauma survivor can remember and claim the trauma event verbally but may be with alteration. McNally’s theory will apply to Vogel’s veteran.

The veteran of Vogel’s play remembers what happened and speaks about it but not in an organized way. McNally calls that process “extreme dissociative alterations of consciousness” (Pederson 338). Vogel’s Don Juan remembers events in a fragmentary way. In the dioramas, Don Juan recites or sees a variety of past scenes with Cressida, other male marines, and other female marines. He recalls an event which happened to him in Iraq immediately before missing his lover in the explosion when she tried to save the bleeding Iraqi girl. He recalls it in front of an American policemen who is about to ignore a boy asking for help while there was fire because of an explosion took place in an avenue in Philadelphia. Don Juan remembers and says,

Let me spell it out for you: you’re going to find it harder and harder to sleep from this day forward. You’ll start to doze, and then you jump out of your skin in bed when you hear a truck backfire. Soon your eyelids will feel ripped away. Then you reach the state where you don’t know if you’re awake or you are sleepwalking. And your Girlfriend will keep saying, get some help, get some help, until she stops thinking you can be helped. I had a chance once... to save a child. (Vogel 60)

Thus, not only does Don Juan remember the event, but also what happened after it. Ashley, another veteran in the play, recites her trauma so clearly as well:

... [S]o many of us coming back have these dreams—dreams where we can walk, where we can run—dreams where I can bend over and tie my fucking shoes. But I have these fantasies—where I balance on the arms of this wheelchair and swing my body upright—and I look

down and see that legs have suddenly grown back. Bionic legs. I can rise from this chair. (Vogel 66)

Later in the play, Cressida writes a letter to her mother explaining that her trauma is also caused by the war of Iraq:

I am sick to my soul. I don't know if I can ever recover. I am getting used to seeing dead bodies. Rubble where I had handed out candy just last week. Men stretched out, missing shoes, bloating in this heat. Hands supplicating in rigor mortis. Women crumbled in on themselves. The sight of dead children is What the sight of dead children does... what the sight of dead children feels like....

Now when I look into the eyes of Iraqis here, they look back with deadness in their eyes. I must have the same deadness in mine.

I am breathing in death. In and out. I am breathing their deaths inside me. In and out. (Vogel 69)

Ashley is lamenting her loss of her legs in the war of Iraq. Now bending to tie her shoes becomes a dream. Cressida's description of her trauma sounds more bitter than Ashley's. Cressida even has no hope of recovery; she feels that she is dead alive. Vogel seeks to underline the traumatic experience of these veterans and their suffering of PTSD. She shows her veterans narrating their stories to the readers. However, these narrations, especially Cressida's, seem cut and disturbed: "trauma narratives in PTSD will show high fragmentation, short length, abundance of sensory details and emotions, and alterations in the narrator's temporal sense and sense of self" (Crespo and Fernández-Lansac 2). Such traumatic narrations are not found in details in Horváth's play. Vogel emphasizes the condition of veterans and their traumatic experience in the war and their PTSD in a more detailed and clearer way than Horváth. The latter reinforces more the condition of people in general after the war. His Don Juan may have experienced naturally traumatic experience in the WWI and have had his own PTSD, but it does not appear direct in the play. Horváth's Don Juan is depicted to be more regretful of what he has done to his fiancée, and he appears also totally preoccupied in searching for her. Horváth's Don Juan feels, while wandering from a place to place, "out of step with society" (Nicholas 24). Vogel's Don Juan is not only exposed to be out of society, but also out of time and place.

Jonathan Boyarin discusses in his article “Space, Time, and the Politics of Memory” that there is a distinction between spatial extension and temporal succession: “[t]ime has only one dimension; different times are not simultaneous but successive (just as different spaces are not successive but simultaneous)” (5). Vogel proposes that both time and place in her play are simultaneous. Don Juan is in Philadelphia after the war of Iraq, and the museum diorama can take him to Iraq during the war in 2004, place him in a scene with Cressida in 2000, take him to Jefferson Hospital in the 1880s, or let him spend a night in a hotel in Philadelphia that was closed forty years ago. Don Juan also can enter a historical plaque: “Tun Tavern 1693-1781 which is regarded the traditional birthplace of the United States Marine Corps” (Vogel 72). Actually, in both plays, time is slowing down and everything is emerging to be unreal, as any trauma narration may emerge to be (Pederson 338). The readers of both plays will conceive that there is “some sort of spatial and temporal distortion in recalling” (Pederson 349) the events which is typically a state of PTSD patient’s memory. On the one hand, a reader can acknowledge that the structure of Vogel’s play imitates the narration structure of a person with PTSD. On the other hand, the readers do not discern that time and place are out of order in Horváth’s play. What Horváth does in his play, in contrast, is to create a dream-like atmosphere in which places and names of characters, other than Don Juan, are not identified. Jean-Claude François, a critic of Horváth’s writing, pinpoints that there is a “dream-like element” in Horváth’s play (140); another critic, Vincent R. Kling, finds out that some of Horváth’s plays can be deemed as “indulgence in a fond dream” (187). The purpose behind this dream-like world is to highlight political and social vices:

[It becomes] more and more clear to Horváth . . . that evil and vice are not external, but inherent in the human soul, so that no political institution would ever be able to lead humanity to a utopian tomorrow. The human condition is unchanging; basic experiences are not linked to time or place, and so progress toward a better world through collective action, the kernel of all political programs, is absolutely a sham. (Kling 184)

Horváth displays a hopeless society after the war. People’s problems and suffering are the same after the war, if not worse. People realize that they have been exploited by the government and even by the army as a part of

the government. First Daughter tells Don Juan that “[i]t’s obvious you know nothing about the appalling sufferings of the broad masses . . . thanks to terror, murder and oppression . . . there are only two classes: exploiters and exploited . . .” (Horváth 52). Grandmother states addressing Don Juan, “[y]our ‘new era’ didn’t last long, then, did it? Beggars are still beggars. It says in the paper the old times are on the way back” (Horváth 24). Mother tells Don Juan that her husband died because of the inflation that happened after the war and he did not raise their daughters with her: “[y]ou can tell their father hasn’t been able to bring them up. (*She sighs.*) So many sacrifices, so much suffering, and it just gets worse and worse. My husband was a university professor” (Horváth 35). Don Juan himself cannot be optimistic: “[t]here’ll always be wars . . .” (Horváth 34).

Therefore, Horváth concentrates more on the outcomes of the war on society, whereas Vogel concentrates more on the consequences of the war on the veterans. However, it is noticeable that both writers use almost the same structure: Horváth uses a sketch-like structure and Vogel uses flashbacks, blackouts, or a hallucination-like structure. It is noteworthy, again, that this framework identifies with the mentality with which a person with PTSD narrates a story: “the lack of a plot or narrative frame, by means of which the events can be narrated as a meaningful coherence” (Alphen 28). The narration may not have coherence because trauma can be mostly recalled or narrated in flashbacks or in dreams; the narratives themselves are prone to be short. The trauma narrations are short and disassociated because trauma memories are usually involuntary memories (Pederson 337; Crespo and Frenández-Lansac 1-2). The short scenes of the two plays are represented by the same format the trauma memory is represented. The Don Juans narrate their stories helplessly the same way they have lived the original traumatic experience helplessly (Brison 43). Trauma shadows both plays; it shapes the structure, subject matter, and purpose of the plays. There is a difference (or infidelity), though, in the use and presentation of trauma between the original and the adaptation— trauma is central in Vogel’s play more than Horváth’s play.

The main fidelity, however, is in the “return” itself from a war. The veterans Don Juans are both returned transformed from the war. They return seeking their lovers and seeking a listener to their stories, but do they find real listeners to their narratives? Do they meet listeners who

understand and contain the stories of the veterans? The listener of the trauma victim's story is expected to feel the bewilderment, injury, and the confusion of that victim (Gobodo-Madikizela 261). Caruth describes it as "listening to another's wound" (qtd. in Gobodo-Madikizela 262). The relationship between the listener and the trauma victim is important; the response of the listener to the trauma victim's story is significant as well. The listener's response and understanding have a "reparative element" that upholds the trauma victim to regain his sense of humanity and to help him to build a new future (Gobodo-Madikizela 263-264). Some trauma studies even argue that with the listeners' help and response, trauma victims may be normal again. Susan J. Brison distills in her study "Trauma Narratives and the Remaking of the Self" that "one can no longer *be oneself* even to oneself, since the self exists fundamentally in relation to others," and that trauma victims need to tell their stories to survive (41, 49). Sometimes, the listeners reject the trauma victims' stories and this rejection might have negative effects on the victims.

The relationship between trauma victims and listeners or civilians is another main core in Vogel's adaptation. She says that she spent two years of research and organizing workshops in Philadelphia among and about veterans, especially veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan wars. She spent two years talking to the veterans and listening to their experience in the wars. She does not use anybody's actual experience or words. Her play, besides adapting Horváth's play, is a composite of two years of reading and conducting interviews with the veterans; she says, "[d]efinitely the generosity of the veterans that talked to me and worked with me in my workshops were inspirational and informed my creation" (Nicholas 24). Vogel also spent several weeks wandering in the streets of Philadelphia as a part of her research to identify with her veteran Don Juan who spends the play wandering in the streets of the city. Vogel sees the original Don Juan play of the seventeenth century as a morality play; accordingly, she sees her play as "a cautionary tale . . . I think it's a great parable for America" (Tran 23).

Vogel, therefore, depends on Horváth's play as a main resource for her play, and she depends secondarily on the original play or figure of Tirso's Don Juan. She explains that she chose the figure of Don Juan for her play because this figure, through history, is overwhelmed by his

desires. In her opinion, “[w]e [American people] are being consumed by our own desires—for faster fuels, for consumerism, all of our physical desires. Like Don Juan, we are living in the now, instead of looking toward the future” (Tran 23). Spending time with the veterans, Vogel realized that there is a gap between returning veterans and civilians:

[Veterans] returned home to a place where their fellow citizens had little or no direct connections with the war . . . I was very scared when I started [researching] because there has never been in my lifetime such a rupture between the people who serve our country in the military and us as civilians. We have almost a news blackout in terms of our attention as Americans and we should be ashamed. We should become allowed to become aware and get active. I really feel, after 10 years in Iraq, people are paying a price and we as Americans aren’t paying attention. (Nicholas 24, 25)

Because of this gap and this division between veterans and civilians, Vogel considers her adaptation “a repentant play in a way” (Nicholas 24). Her aim here aligns with Tirso’s didactic purpose in his play. Through her adaptation, she seeks to build a better understanding and an awareness of what veterans undergo in wars and to achieve a closer relationship between people and returning veterans. Vogel says that “the process of writing and researching the play has forever changed her own views of how America perceives and treats its war veterans” (Nicholas 25). Thereupon, even Vogel admits that the reality of veterans and people’s relationship changes her own views; she recognizes even her own lack of previous awareness of veterans’ experience and feelings after wars.

In many occasions, Vogel portrays in her play some of people’s reactions towards and evaluation of veterans’ experience. Marine One laments that “[i]t all went downhill since they blew up Veterans Stadium. How’s that for a welcome home? We’re blowing up your stadium; now you can cheer in stadiums named for banks! Rah! Citizens! Rah Lincoln Financial” (Vogel 52). Don Juan says bitterly to Policeman Two as the latter complains of breathing fumes of a fire, “[w]ell take a big breath in, because this is what we breathed in every fucking day over there! Feel the heat?! SUCK IT UP AMERICA! This is what Your fighting men have been doing! Cleaning up your shit while you sleep in your beds!” (Vogel 59). He also tells another policeman, who tries to cuff Don Juan because he

is wandering and screaming for Cressida, “I’ll go voluntarily. No need. No need. Look, man, I’m just—ya know, I fought for our freedom, right? No need to cuff me” (Vogel 80). Even the children are not aware of what happens in a war. They have not been educated by their families or society regarding what veterans did in wars to protect their country. Aggie, who is the daughter of the landlady, believes that what a war does and what the army does are no more than what she finds in a video game that she is playing:

So is it like that? What you’ve done? You just have to shoot, cause if you hesitate, then you have to start again after you’ve wasted your life lines? Is it like that when you see bodies through the scope? Or how you have to shoot anything on the edge of your vision, only sometimes it’s not the enemy, it’s just some kid, or a mother, or a goat? But you can’t even stop to say you’re sorry, cause just as you take a moment to say, oh shit, sorry, then a real insurgent comes leaping out: ahhh! And you got to take him out? (Vogel 10)

Later, she tells Don Juan “[h]ey—Psycho Man. I tried to be nice to you. Now I’m up to level 14 . . . I’m a better soldier than you’ll ever be” (Vogel 81). Moreover, veterans end up being homeless like Homeless Woman, a veteran who used to work with Cressida, and like Don Juan himself who appears finally as a homeless man at the end of the play:

He lands on his feet on the streets of Philadelphia. He puts on a ratty parka over his uniform. Juan slides down to the pavement against a wall until he is sitting. He puts a cup for change on the pavement. But he seems detached as to whether or not anyone will put any money in his cup. At this time of night there are not many souls on the street. (Vogel 89)

Hence, what happens to these veterans is either they die in the war or return to their country as strangers and end up as homeless. They come to a society where they cannot meet their lovers and they cannot find somebody who listens to them and appreciates what they have endured in the wars.

Similar situations are located also in Horváth’s play. Widow tells Don Juan “[w]hy aren’t you dead and buried? What is it you want from people? You just bring bad luck, wherever you turn up, nothing but bad luck,” (Horváth 26) and First Daughter tells him “I can’t understand it, a man . . . [like you], what’s the point of living?” (Horváth 34). Later,

Second Daughter says, “[i]f I were you, I wouldn’t want to go on living” (Horváth 49). These women simply wish him death and consider him bad luck. Actually, reading Horváth’s play, one may see clearly that it is Don Juan’s journey to death. Horváth indicates that Don Juan is “yearning for death” (8). The play is “a dark renunciation of war,” and to this day “[Horváth’s] plays are an indictment of the dark recesses of the human psyche caught in mental and social pauperization of modern society” (Herzfled-Sander xviii, xix). Even the end of the play does not carry a clear hope to the readers. Don Juan visits the grave of his fiancée; it is a snowy, dark, and cold night. When he tries to leave, “(. . . *his coat is caught on the railings round the grave*)” (Horváth 63) as if his fiancée is holding on him or inviting him to die and rest with her in the grave. Finally, he sees himself like a snowman: “Will it be long? . . . What harm’s the snowman done to you? (*He smiles gently.*) Never mind, hit him, he’ll be gone tomorrow anyway. . . It’s getting warmer all the time . . . Goodbye, snowman . . .” (Horváth 64). The image of snow in Horváth’s play is connected with emotional coldness and death (Balme 205). His Don Juan seems abandoned. It is not clear whether tomorrow will bring hope by bringing warm weather, or it will bring the death of Don Juan or the snowman, which will melt by the warm weather. Horváth’s play reflects a serious examination of moral concerns (Balme 223). In Horváth’s opinion, wars will continue and corruption in governments will remain. He refers to ministers’ bribing in his play. His play is pervaded also by the fear or the existence of inflation. Horváth comments on inflation saying that “from a broader point of view, we are still living in times of inflation, and there is no telling when they will end” (7).

Vogel’s and Horváth’s aim is moral; however, this aim seems more intensified by Vogel in her play. Vogel calls essentially for a repentant society where veterans should be appreciated or even forgiven. As it is time to understand the veterans, it is time to forgive Don Juan’s seduction or desires because even Don Juan changes after the war, and this change is typically part of the trauma itself: “[s]urvivors of trauma frequently remark that they are not the same people they were before they were traumatized” (Brison 39). Going back to the role of trauma narration and listeners, it appears that

. . . [B]earing witness to trauma testimonies brings survivors and listeners to share in the common idiom of humanity and binds them together in the act of bearing witness, through speech and through the very subtle elements of intersubjectivity in their encounter . . . Shared narratives can serve the important function of *recognition* of victims and survivors from all sides of the past and open up a space for shared mourning and the possibility of transformative moments . . . The issue of transformation and reconciliation requires thoughtful debate and mutually respectful dialogue. (Gobodo-Madikizela 265-266)

Vogel really cares for this recognition among civilians; of course, this recognition needs a respectful conversation and understanding. Civilians who will listen and support the traumatized veterans will enable those veterans to gain more control over the traces of their trauma and help them to remake a self (qtd. in Pederson 339). Vogel wants people to support traumatized veterans, like the ones whom she met, and comprehend their suffering. The reaction of the listeners (whether they are family, lovers, friends, or neighbors of the returning veteran) is really significant for the trauma survivors to overcome their past traumatic experience. The marines in Vogel's play themselves do not like wars; after wars everything change "[w]ants. Desire. Appetite. It's terrible thing. War" (Vogel 69). Marines have bad conscience after wars like Don Juan: "[b]ad conscience? . . . Did you shoot anyone? Kill anyone?" (Vogel 54, 8). Veterans are human beings; they go to war out of duty. Sometimes, they dislike going to wars: they do not know why they are going to a war or whom they are fighting.

As a matter of fact, it is argued that even Don Juan, the myth of the practice of seduction (Felman 18), is conceived to be a human type that can be treated differently in literature by different writers. This human type can "exist independently of [the previous literary works] and can be encountered and recognized in real life, even if his social class and milieu and the details of his adventures are different from anything come across in play or opera . . . the type [is] there and waiting on literary treatment" (Smeed 121). Don Juan legend is proved to be adaptable. He is an archetype out of which writers have composed countless variations. This legend contains many well-established trends of interpretations that encourage and accept derivative treatment. Writers have found this legend

challenging them to reveal a fresh meaning in it, and this process of variation will continue as long as there are authors who can find a new meaning in Don Juan legend for themselves and for their age (Smeed 150). So stated, Don Juan myth has been a rich source for both Horváth and Vogel to manage another meaning that serves their purpose and suits their age. The Don Juan of both writers is not really seductive and does not even speak an erotic language as usual with other Don Juans that appear in Tirso's play or Don Giovanni. Horváth and Vogel describe that even the seductive Don Juan can return frustrated, sick, and traumatized if he participates in a war. They use this myth to present problems in society and people.

The major fidelity of this adaptation to the original is the return from the war itself, as the title of both plays highlights. It is about the return of a veteran from a war and the way that civilians receive him. The other elements and themes are developed differently in Vogel's play. The theme of trauma, PTSD, traumatic memory, overlapped time and place, play structure, repentance, and reconciliation are treated in a more direct and intensified way in Vogel's adaptation than Horváth's original. Vogel thematizes trauma to become the main concern in her play (Tanderup 3). Those veterans return traumatized. If their community does not take care of them, listen, and help them to recover, then who will do that? Seemingly, Vogel allows her reader to see what is going on inside a traumatized person's mind (Don Juan's mind), and how the world looks from the perspective of PTSD. The whole play is as if taken place inside a trauma victim's mind. Vogel enacts that because the traumatized person can remember his past trauma as a movie, as something unreal (Pederson 349). Don Juan recites his stories in the museum world or the diorama where everything is unreal and out of time and place. Trauma is repeated as long as there are wars. It is a cycle from WWI to the war of Iraq.

Notes

¹ Ödön Von Horváth was born in Fiume, then part of Austria, of Hungarian parents in 1901. He became a freelance writer of plays, novels, and short prose texts. Until 1934, he lived in Murnau near Munich. Then, he spent a few years in Vienna, in the countryside near Salzburg and in Berlin, but when Hitler-Germany annexed Austria in 1938, he emigrated to Paris. A

few months later, standing under a tree on the Champs Élysées, he was killed instantaneously by a falling branch. Besides being regarded as an exile writer, Horváth contributed to the modern comedy because he was the only dramatist of his period who depicted the form of comedy as the form of the modern age. He used comedy to depict the modern world and the consciousness of the contemporary man (Herzfled-Sander xvii; Balme 251-252).

² *El Burlador de Sevilla* or *The Trickster of Sevilla* was written by a monk, Gabriele Téllez, under the pen-name Tirso de Molani and it was first published in Barcelona in 1630. It is the earliest complete surviving play on the subject of Don Juan. Tirso depicted an old legend transmitted in the form of a popular verse romance in which a reckless sinner invites a dead man (or his head, or his statue) to a banquet (Smeed 1).

³ In this tale, “[a] traveler stops for the night in an unnamed small town. To his amazement, he hears the sounds of an orchestra tuning as he sits in his hotel room. It turns out that a theater adjoins the hotel and that *Don Giovanni* is being given that evening. He hurries into the special box reserved for guests, in order not to miss this ‘opera of operas.’ In the course of the first act, he becomes aware that someone has entered the box but he is too engrossed in the work to pay any further heed. When the curtain falls he looks around and discovers to his amazement that his companion is Donna Anna . . . whom he has simultaneously been watching on the stage. She reveals a mysterious knowledge of the traveler, in whom she recognized a kindred spirit, and they talk about the opera. As the bell rings for the second act, she vanishes. That night, after the performance is over, the traveler writes a long letter to a friend, in which he gives his interpretation of the opera and of Don Giovanni’s character in particular. As he finishes, the clock strikes two and he seems to be aware of the opera singer’s perfume and to hear her voice again. Next morning he learns that she had died suddenly during the night, at two o’clock” (Smeed 26-27).

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