

INTERTEXTUALITY IN MUSIC SINCE 1900

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JULIAN JOHNSON (Royal Holloway, University of London)

João Pedro Cachopo (postdoc CESEM (FCSH-UNL))

“An Inverted Palimpsest? Re-reading *Don Giovanni* with Joseph Losey and Kasper Holten”

“Film opera” – whether defined as a sub-genre or simply as opera adapted to the screen – stands out as a multi-layered object of inquiry, in which the stakes of intermediality and intertextuality are inextricably bound up with each other. Indeed, the film adds another layer of complexity to the already dense web of “texts” that constitute all and every opera (from the immediate interaction between musical and textual notation to the mediation of all sorts of archi-, meta-, and para-textual elements).

Drawing on Genette’s approach to transtextuality, I will bring the concept of hypertextuality to bear on film operas that reshape, in a more or less drastic way, a pre-existing opera. My aim is (1) to shed light on both the connection and distinction between intermediality and intertextuality, and (2) to discuss the extent to which the concept of hypertextuality (and the inquiry on intertextuality more generally) may broaden and enrich the debate on the encounter between opera and film.

Against this background, I will focus on two film versions of Mozart’s *Don Giovanni*. Carefully pondered, Joseph Losey’s *Don Giovanni* (1979) and Kasper Holten’s *Juan* (2010) appear as re-readings of Mozart’s and Da Ponte’s masterpiece in which “class” and “gender” come to play a major role. This contrast – between the emphasis on “class” (Losey) and “gender” (Holten) – seems to tell us a big deal about the uses of opera in contemporaneity, as if these two historical moments (late 1970s and early 2010) were the erased text of a culturally and artistically saturated palimpsest.

So seen, it is the present, rather than the past, that is hidden – but not as hidden as to become invisible – behind the cinematic re-writing of the opera. What can we learn about the very tension between these two “presents” by comparing them with their common “past”? And what does such deciphering tell us about the (changing) role of opera in late modernity? These are among the questions to be raised in the wake of a comparative analysis of Losey’s and Holten’s works that will nonetheless unfold with the above-mentioned questions in mind.

Biographical Note

João Pedro Cachopo is a postdoctoral researcher at the CESEM (FCSH-UNL), where he currently develops a research project on the aesthetic and political implications of the

encounter between opera and cinema. He is the author of *Verdade e Enigma: Ensaio sobre o pensamento estético de Adorno* (Vendaval, 2013), which won the First Book Award from the Portuguese PEN Club in 2014. His work has also appeared in journals such as *Artefilosofia*, *Colóquio/Letras*, *Música Hodie*, *Opera Quarterly*, *Parrhesia: a Journal of Critical Philosophy*, *Theoria & Praxis: International Journal of Interdisciplinary Thought*, *Viso – Cadernos de Estética Aplicada*, among others.