Friedrich Schiller's Anatomy of Power – With Particular Reference to *Don Carlos*

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»One will have to begin creating citizens for the constitution before one can give the citizens a constitution«, thus argued the deeply republican-thinking Friedrich Schiller in a letter dated 13th July 1793 to his aristocratic benefactor, Prince Frederick Christian of Holstein-Augustenburg.[1] By then it had become clear that the French Revolution would come close to ending in carnage as it betrayed its originally foremost concern, to secure the freedom of the people and establish fraternity amongst them on the basis of equal rights for all. Since August 1792 Schiller was honorary citizen of the French Republic but he increasingly mistrusted the way in which the revolution handled the people's power it had unleashed. In fact, the dramatist and author of ground-breaking plays like *The Robbers*, *Intrigue and Love*, *Fiesco*, and *Don Carlos* had turned into a historian and philosopher with works on the liberation of the Low Countries from Spanish rule, the history of the Thirty-Years War and the meaning of what he termed ›universal history‹. Moreover, he developed an actual programme for the aesthetic education of Man. Creating citizens meant to him educating them in the direction of intensified sensitivity by means of making them aware of beauty, grace and human dignity. It is telling that Schiller had enclosed with his

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1 | »Man wird damit anfangen müssen für die Verfassung Bürger zu erschaffen, ehe man den Bürgern eine Verfassung geben kann.« In: Friedrich Schiller: Werke und Briefe in zwölf Bänden. Ed. v. Rolf-Peter Janz assisted by Hans Richard Brittnacher, Gerd Kleiner and Fabian Störmer. Frankfurter Ausgabe. Bd. 8: Theoretische Schriften, S. 504 (my transl.). In this letter, Schiller goes beyond his earlier statement, expressed in *Über das gegenwärtige teutsche Theater* (1782), suggesting that the audience has to be educated before it can have a proper theatre. In: Friedrich Schiller: Sämtliche Werke [SW]. Bd. 5: Erzählungen. Theoretische Schriften. Ed. by Gerhard Fricke and Herbert G. Göpfert. 9th Ed. Darmstadt 1993, p. 814 (if not indicated otherwise, all quotations from Schiller's works refer to this edition). Cf. Carsten Zelle: Die Notstandsgesetzgebung im ästhetischen Staat. Anthropologische Aporien in Schillers philosophischen Schriften. In: Hans-Jürgen Schings (Ed..): Der ganze Mensch. Anthropologie und Literatur im 18. Jahrhundert. Stuttgart/Weimar 1992, p. 440–468, here p. 459.

aforementioned letter to Prince Frederick Christian an offprint of his essay on *Grace and Dignity* thus symbolically associating the call for education with this edifying ambition.

In Schiller's mind, the power of beauty, be it in a sculpture, verse of dramatic structure, in melody or the human body, began to rival expressions of power in political contexts, which he had explored in his dramas to date. It was to take Schiller ten years after the completion of *Don Carlos* before he succeeded in presenting his audience his next major investigation into the nature of political power in the shape of his *Wallenstein*-trilogy. As the producer Peter Stein once pointed out Wallenstein lives under the illusion that he was powerful, that is to say, free to act. But as soon as he acts he loses his power and imagined freedom.[2]

The power of nature, though, held an incalculable risk for Schiller, his own and increasingly notorious ill-health. By June 1791 he was even purported to have died. His interest in the nature of power had turned existential into the effects of nature's power on his well-being. It was at that time, in spring 1791, when Schiller engaged with Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Judgement*. And it was there where Schiller found under the heading of »The Dynamically Sublime in Nature« in § 28 of the philosopher's third and most compelling critique the following definition of ›Nature as Might‹: »Might is a power which is superior to great hindrances. It is termed dominion if it is also superior to the resistance of that which itself possesses might. Nature, considered in an aesthetic judgement as might that has no dominion over us, is dynamically sublime.«[3] Reading this definition of »might« as an ability to counteract, if not overcome, obstacles and of a force strong enough to challenge those in power must have seemed to Schiller like an equivalent to the situation he had unfolded in his drama *Don Carlos*. He may have taken comfort from Kant's assertion that there were aspects of nature's might that would not affect us immediately, say, when we gaze at the sea or alpine landscapes. They will cause a sensual or ›aesthetic‹ sensation in us yet, in most cases, will not lead to illness.

One of the main challenges Schiller faced as a maturing dramatist was to reconcile idea and action. One could therefore discuss Schiller under the heading: How to stage a philosophical thought? Or: How to turn an abstraction like ›Freedom‹ or ›claim to power‹ into a theatrical event? And, by the same token, how faithfully does a playwright need to follow his own theories about passion, the sublime, or indeed ›aesthetic education‹? Interestingly, the latter question

2 | Peter Stein: Schillers Wallenstein-Trilogie auf der Bühne. The 2008 Bithell Memorial Lecture. University of London School of Advanced Study 2009, p. 7.

3 | »Macht ist ein Vermögen, welches großen Hindernissen überlegen ist. Ebendieselbe heißt eine Gewalt, wenn sie auch dem Widerstande dessen, was selbst Macht besitzt, überlegen ist. Die Natur im ästhetischen Urteile als Macht, die über uns keine Gewalt hat, betrachtet, ist dynamisch-erheben.« (Immanuel Kant: Kritik der Urteilskraft. Ed. by Karl Vorländer. Hamburg 1974, p. 105.

Schiller had prefigured in his speech delivered in the Mannheim National Theatre as early as 1784 on *The Stage considered as a Moral Institution*. From then on, he remained serious about this very task of the stage, an ambition only matched some one-and-a-half centuries later by Bertolt Brecht, though under very different political and ideological circumstances.

In Schiller's artistic development the drama *Don Carlos* represented a significant threshold, if not a turning point. In terms of structure and metric form (iambic pentameter) it pointed the way towards Classicism, even though it is emotionally charged to an extent that counteracts the equanimity of classical expression. This is most prominent in the often-short phrases, interjections, broken up sentences, exclamations as well as questions posed by calculating *and* confused minds of his protagonists. As refined as the speech is, in *Don Carlos* contemporary critics were not far off the mark when they noted that such refinement only concealed the blurring of lines between good and evil which even led the man of good will and reconciliation, Marquis de Posa, Carlos's only friend, resorting to dishonest, manipulative and dangerous means to achieve positive results.

In Schiller's pursuit of an anatomy of power and an investigation into the nature of love and betrayal his drama *Don Carlos* plays a pivotal role. He called it a »dramatic poem« not even a play, let alone drama or tragedy. After all, at the end of it, Marquis de Posa is killed in front of his friend's, Don Carlos's eyes by the henchmen of his father, King Philipp II; and Carlos himself, as a suspected traitor, was to be interrogated by the grand inquisitor, whereby the outcome of this inquisition was easily predictable. Incidentally, this final scene that finds Posa killed by order of the sovereign is strangely reminiscent of the execution of Crown Prince Frederick of Prussia's closest friend, the Lieutenant Hans Hermann von Katte in 1730, who like Posa wanted to help his friend escaping from the claws of his over-bearing father.[4] But with Don Carlos there is another complication caused by his love for his stepmother, Queen Elizabeth of Valois, his former fiancée, who was taken away from him by his father when he had chosen her to be his queen. And there is Princess Eboli who confuses power games and love, luring Carlos to her side whilst pretending that the King fancies her.

Arguably, Schiller's ›anatomy of power‹ can be seen as in line with Robert Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*, first published in 1621. Its renaissance in the late Enlightenment and Romanticism, that is to say in Schiller's time, as a groundbreaking investigation into the anthropological foundation of a cultural phenomenon informed debates on the meaning of human behavior patterns from Shaftesbury to Ferguson, Kant and indeed Schiller, not to speak of John Keats's fascination with Burton's approach.

4 | R. L. Crawford: Don Carlos and Marquis Posa: The Eternal Friendship. In: Germanic Review 58 (1983), p. 97–105.

The ›anatomy‹ of physical and psychological conditions was intended to uncover the structures and patterns of the enigma called ›life‹. Descartes had famously explored them in his investigation into the ›passions of the soul‹ and later, Kant too, whose influence on Schiller was nothing short of seminal, was seeking to establish his examination of the rationale within reason on decidedly anthropological grounds. In their respective ways, poets and thinkers alike were all engaged in writing their ›essay on man‹ to borrow Pope's title of his poetic study on human nature. David Hume investigated the phenomena in the ›human character‹, and John Locke attempted to explore the essence of ›human understanding‹, whilst, at the same time, considered the most fundamental principles of politics and the separation of state power in his *Two Treatises of Government* (1689) in direct response to the so-called ›glorious revolution‹. It can be said that Locke's *Treatises* answered Thomas Hobbes's conception of absolute power as conducted by an undivided government, based on a social contract and the unifying sovereign in his *Leviathan* (1651) conceived in the troubled times of the English Civil War.

But not everything that unifies also edifies, and by the time these discourses reached German intellectuals during the second half of the 18th century, and with them the young Schiller, they were associated, if not charged, with distinctly humanist concerns. The same applied already earlier, in 1736, when the aforementioned Crown Prince of Prussia, Frederick, published a refutation of Machiavelli's treatise *The Prince* suggesting a form of government in contrast to Machiavelli, which would rest on the principles of restraint and communality. However, no sooner was Frederick Prussian King and he abruptly changed his mind favoring preemptive strikes against the alleged enemies of his country. Small wonder that Schiller was later tempted to write a drama on Frederick the Great but, as he put it in a letter to Goethe, he found it impossible to »idealize« the King sufficiently for being turned into an object of dramatic art. In short, by the time Schiller embarked on his career as a dramatist, famously and spectacularly with *Die Räuber* (*The Robbers*) in 1782, which was soon to become the most widely known play by a German dramatist receiving rapturous reception even in Britain, he surrounded himself with issues relating to the nature of power and the need to identify its various strands, ranging from domestic power conflicts with its paternalistic structures to rebellion, revolution, and high politics if we think of *Wallenstein* and *Mary Stuart*. Schiller portrays the criminal aspect in any rebellion, be it in *The Robbers*, *Fiesco* or *The Bride of Messina*; he investigates the assuming power through deception (in his *Demetrius* fragment) and the interconnection between rebellion and national identity as seen in his drama *Wilhelm Tell* and his preoccupation with the liberation of the Low Countries. But the main problem he addresses in all his dramas in relation to power is the position of the individual versus the machinations of the powerful, the rise and fall of the charismatic character or the dilemma of the hesitant leader in the case

of his Wallenstein, who cannot decide in time, or rather confuses indecisiveness with tactics until his own position has become politically untenable.

But let us return to the ›anatomy of power‹ in *Don Carlos*. Schiller famously associated *Don Carlos* with *Hamlet*[5] energized by his, Schiller's very own, pulse. In his twelve letters of interpretation on his ›dramatic poem‹ he felt the need to clarify Don Carlos's friend, Marquis de Posa, identifying with his love of humanity and rebellion against political and social tyranny. In Schiller's play, both friends want to support the Low Countries in their struggle for independence from Spanish colonial rule. Research has likened Posa's position to Benjamin Franklin's final efforts to persuade George III to let go of the American colonies and of Thomas Jefferson's early revolutionary writings, which focus on the pursuit of happiness and the surrendering of hereditary rights to the people. In the famous audience scene with Philip II, Posa invokes the political conception of happiness twelve times suggesting literally ›happiness around the clock‹. Posa's proverbial demand to Philip II, »Give us freedom to think«[6] is puzzling though as ›freedom of thought‹ is the only thing that a sovereign cannot take away from people in the first place and therefore cannot grant it either. ›Freedom of speech‹ would sound more appropriate a demand. But, perhaps, Posa knows that his King would not be prepared to even consider ›freedom of speech‹ and therefore asks for something so blatantly absurd.

Heinrich Heine argued in his 1836 polemic *The Romantic School*: »Schiller wrote for the great ideas of revolution, he destroyed the Bastilles of the mind [...] culminated in a love for the future, which had previously bloomed forth like a forest of flowers in Don Carlos.«[7]

Let us now examine the various stages that constitute Schiller's anatomy or critique of power in his play *Don Carlos*. At the beginning of the play we find ourselves in the gardens of the Royal Estate of Aranjuez. We would be forgiven for perceiving this idyll, even though anachronistically, through the music composed by Joaquín Rodrigo, his *Concierto de Aranjuez* (1939), in particular the incomparably yearning second movement of this composition, as Schiller's opening scene offers some pointedly melodic phrases elegiacally tempered by the very first sentence: »The beautiful days in Aranjuez / Are coming to an

5 | Schiller, Briefe über Don Carlos. In: SW II, 240.

6 | Friedrich Schiller: Don Carlos and Mary Stuart [DC & MS]. Translated with Notes by Hilary Collier Sy-Quia. Adapted in verse drama by Peter Oswald. With an Introduction by Lesley Sharpe. Oxford: OUP 1999, p. 116, v. 707/7 [all quotes from this edition]. (»Geben Sie/ Gedankenfreiheit«. In: SW II, 126.)

7 | In: Heinrich Heine: Sämtliche Schriften. Ed. by Klaus Briegleb. Vol. III. München 1997, p. 393: »Schiller schrieb für die großen Ideen der Revolution, er zerstörte die geistigen Bastillen [...]; er endigte mit jener Liebe für die Zukunft, die schon im ›Don Carlos‹ wie ein Blumenwald hervorblüht [...].« (My transl.)

end. Your Royal Highness leave it behind with little serenity.«[8] We learn that Carlos has not yet broken his bizarre silence and has failed to connect with his father, King Philip II. But Carlos will break his silence by means of a striking discord, which Carlos himself calls a burning secret.[9] It is nothing less than the evocation of the first type of power in this drama, namely love, pure *and* sinful, blissful *and* fateful, as the Prince admits to his being in love with the Queen, his stepmother. After this admission the gardens, and with them nature, will close behind him for good. Henceforth, all other scenes with Carlos will take place indoors.[10]

The second feature of power is that of speech. But as much as Carlos will find his love for the Queen become an object of intrigue against mind, masterminded by Princess Eboli, his sublime rhetorical skills as displayed in his first encounter with his father in the first scene of Act II will turn against him. The more Carlos implores his father to let him take over the command of the troops deployed to Flanders the sterner and more resolute the King becomes. Even though he does not say much in this dialogue, in which Carlos begs him to soften his stance against him and »dream through life's dream once again« together with him, his one and only son, the King speaks the final verdict or »Machtwort«: »You stay / In Spain; the Duke [of Alba] shall go to Flanders instead.«[11] It is clear that this is a decision in favour of suppression and bloodshed, which Carlos wanted to avoid. He would have seen his army as one of liberation, but Alba obsessed with the lust for power guarantees autocratic rule and hardship for the Flemish provinces.

Carlos can initially accept his humiliation because he thinks he has received signs of love from his stepmother and former fiancée, namely a key to her chamber. As it turns out it is a key to Eboli's apartment. There are moments in the play, in particular when a page boy delivers this love token to Carlos, when Schiller points to the senses as instruments to counteract the mechanisms of power. Both know they cannot speak freely as the walls have ears. In the Palace of Aranjuez Carlos is spied on all day and night. Hence, he says to the page-boy that he would read his gestures, which he refers to as »listening with looks«.[12]

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8 | DC & MS, p. 3 (v. 1): »Die schönen Tage in Aranjuez / Sind nun zu Ende.« (SW II, 9).

9 | DC & MS, p. 11: »The secret in me burns, / It is a horror destined to be known.« / »Ein entsetzliches Geheimnis brennt auf meiner Brust. Es soll, / Es soll heraus.« (SW II, 17).

10 | Cf. Allan G. Blunden: Nature and Politics in Schiller's *Don Carlos*. In: Deutsche Vierteljahreeschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte 52 (1978), p. 241–56; Klaus Bohnen: Politik im Drama. Anmerkungen zu Schillers *Don Carlos*. In: Jahrbuch der Deutschen Schillergesellschaft 24 (1980), p. 15–31.

11 | DC & MS, p. 44 (v. 210): »Du bleibst / In Spanien; der Herzog geht nach Flandern.« (SW II, 51)

12 | SW II, 56: »Ich höre dir mit Blicken zu.«

Carlos is the object of paternal rule but he is also a victim of emotional power that can turn physical. This is obvious when he finds himself in Eboli's instead of the Queen's chamber and wishes to leave. The stage direction for Eboli is clear: »She holds him back with force.«[13] She pulls him back onto the sofa (we are in the eighth scene of Act II), involves him in loving verbal exchanges to which he responds by falling in love with Eboli, too. Eboli gets the best metaphors in this dialogue of lovers, for instance: »A Kiss is the enchanting consonance of souls«.[14] The build-up in this scene is remarkable, for Carlos also with hindsight, when he learns that his father allegedly desires Eboli, too.

There is only one scene in the play, albeit the most central in respect of the performativity of ideas, the tenth in Act III, when the conventional power structure at Court is shifting and unexpected interpersonal relations, in this case between the King and Posa, gain the upper hand. The King seems to soften towards Posa's humanistic approach to policy making, culminating in the plea that the King should »restore the lost nobility of humanity« in his realm. The King is visibly taken with Posa's humanism, so much so that he instructs the guards to allow Posa free access to Philip's chamber whenever needed.

In his ensuing conversation with the Queen (scene 21 of Act IV) he even speaks of a »new state« born of the spirit of friendship or, in the language of the time, *fraternité*. But towards the end of Act IV (Scene 23) it becomes evident that Posa, by now seen as the King's confidante, has attempted to pact with William of Orange against his own King to support the uprising in the Low Countries, which amounts to high treason. The multiply betrayed King is then reported by the courtiers to have lost his composure and cried. Thomas Mann, in his early novella *Tonio Kröger*, was to add to the immortalization of this scene reflecting the King's utter loneliness and isolation, by declaring it the most moving of the entire play.

The power of emotion is here beyond cathartic effects; rather, it supplies this drama with a precarious force that edifies and undermines personalities. Ultimately, or so it seems, it is the power of the cleric which appears to triumph over nature and sentiment and even over the King's authority as the latter basically passes on – in the spirit of the Counter-Reformation – his decision making to the Grand Inquisitor. The final love scene between Carlos and the Queen overheard by the King and his men, including the Cardinal, ends with the ultimate but paradoxical sign of disempowered love when the Queen, suddenly realizing that her husband had watched this scene, sinks unconsciously into Carlos's arms. At this moment the King instructs the Cardinal ›to do his bit‹ and subject his son to radical scrutiny.

Perhaps surprisingly given his early identification with Carlos, Schiller himself argued that the effect of this tragic drama would depend on the way in

13 | SW II, 68: Sie »hält ihn mit Gewalt zurück.«

14 | SW II, 73: »Der Seelen / Entzückender Zusammenklang – ein Kuß –«.

which the character of King Philip is portrayed on stage thus suggesting that his tragedy is indeed about the collapse of authority and moral credibility. Whilst the air of rebellion is surrounding him Philip continues to cling to power thus risking the well-being of his state and dynasty. But the overarching question is, as so often with Schiller, the problem of free will in our actions, most prominently raised in *Wallenstein*. In the opening of the fourth scene of Act IV of the third part of the *Wallenstein*-trilogy the main protagonist famously asks himself (here in Samuel Taylor Coleridge's admittedly somewhat flowery rendering):

> Is it possible?
> Is't so? I can no longer what I would?
> No longer draw back at my liking? I
> Must do the deed, because I thought of it,
> And fed this heart here with a dream?[15]

And shortly later Wallenstein wonders:

> The free-will tempted me, the power to do
> Or not to do it. – Was it criminal
> To make the fancy minister to hope,
> To fill the air with pretty toys of air,
> And clutch fantastic scepters moving t'ward me?[16]

Undoubtedly, this struck a chord with Coleridge who, in *The Ancient Mariner* will put the question whether free will or fate determined matters for the captain.

Schiller, the philosophical anthropologist that he was, investigated the problem of will in his *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man* by showing that the will consists of two fundamental ›drives‹ – the drive to form and to matter. Both drives would be brought together by the drive to play, meaning to engage in acts of production and the aesthetic realization of one's inner potential. He identified the interplay of these drives as the very basis of cultural productivity with the arts being the most sublime of it all. And this tallies neatly with Hegel's reference to power and will in his *Introductory Lectures on Aesthetics*, which can be understood in places as a systematic unfolding of a Schillerian approach to identifying the driving forces behind artistic production. Hegel argues as follows: »This

15 | SW II, 414: »Wärs möglich? Könnt ich nicht mehr, wie ich wollte? / Nicht ehr zurück, wie mir's beliebt? Ich müßte / Die Tat vollbringen, weil ich sie gedacht, / Nicht die Versuchung von mir wies – das Herz/Genährt mit diesem Traum [...].«.

16 | SW II, 414: »Die Freiheit reizte mich und das Vermögen. / Wars unrecht, an dem Gaukelbilde mich / Der Königlichen Hoffnung zu ergötzen?« – Some of Coleridge's contemporaries, J. G. Lockhart for one, believed this translation even to be an »improvement« on the original. Cf. Richard Holmes: Coleridge. Darker Reflections. London: Harper Collins 1998, p. 508.

awakening of all feelings in us, the dragging of the heart through the whole significance of life, the realization of all such inner movements [...] all this was what [...] constituted the peculiar and pre-eminent power of art.«[17] It is therefore the ›power of art‹ that can most powerfully engage with the dissection of the components of power in more general, and indeed also political, terms. Its sheer ›power‹ enables art to encounter other forms of power as equals.

Where does all this leave us at a time of disturbingly bad political theatre worldwide whereby some parts of the world stage, some very close to home, excel in particularly distasteful, if not deliberately shocking or merely amateurish productions. Schiller, like Shakespeare, was concerned with aberrations of power, its abuse and manipulative dimension. He did not imply that power is evil *per se*, rather that it contains elements of negativity. If they are allowed to ferment they can trigger chain reactions of an unpredictable nature.

Studying Schiller's *Letters on Aesthetic Education* with his students in 1936/37, the controversial philosopher Martin Heidegger, who had compromised himself three years earlier when giving his emphatic support to the new regime in Germany, noted that the only power of Man is his will.[18] Revealingly, it was no longer the Nietzschean analysis of Man's ›will to power‹ that Heidegger subscribed to but this significant variant. The might of the human will, be it in the shape of personal or political ambition, or in aesthetic terms, in the form of Schiller's famous three inner drives – as mentioned above: the drive towards matter, form and play –, this force within us requires cultivation. Self-criticism, accountability, consciousness and conscience obtain crucial roles in this process of cultivation. When reviewing Schiller's major plays, we find that these components are weighted differently depending on the characters and their individual circumstances. In his *Mary Stuart* for example the Queen of Scots is portrayed as morally superior to Elizabeth in their power struggle notwithstanding her own failings. But what strikes us most in Schiller's depiction of conflicting interests in power and influence is that, with the notable exception of Wilhelm Tell, his

17 | Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel: Introductory Lectures on Aesthetics. Transl. by Bernard Bosanquet. Ed. with an Introduction and Commentary by Michael Inwood. Harmondsworth: Penguin 1993, p. 52. (»Diese Erweckung aller Empfindungen in uns, das Hindurchziehen unseres Gemüts durch jeden Lebensinhalt, das Verwirklichen aller dieser inneren Bewegungen durch eine nur täuschende äußere Gegenwart ist es vornehmlich, was in dieser Beziehung als die eigentümliche, ausgezeichnete Macht der Kunst angesehen wird.« [Gerg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel: Werke 13: Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik. Ed. by Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp 1970, p. 72. Cf. Gerhard Göhler: Hegels Begriff der Macht. In: André Brodocz u. a. (Ed.): Die Verfassung des Politischen. Festschrift für Hans Vorländer. Wiesbaden : Springer Verlag 2014.

18 | Martin Heidegger: Übungen für Anfänger. Schillers Briefe über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen. Ed. by Ulrich von Bülow. With an Essay from Odo Marquard. Marbach am Neckar 2005.

characters end up in utter loneliness. In this respect there is little difference between Philip of Spain or Elizabeth of England, Wallenstein and his Jeanne d'Arc. This existential condition of loneliness is only matched by their sense of isolation in political terms.

With Schiller it is fascinating to see how he shifts in his later works the attention to the female when considering manifestations of power and the powerful. Even though we all think of *Mary Stuart* in this connection it is his drama *The Maid of Orleans* (1800), in which Schiller exposes the magic of the political sphere. His version of Jeanne d'Arc consists of a maid with a mission that drives her to fuse gentleness with brutality, beauty with sheer horror in combat. Schiller's Jeanne d'Arc is a Christian amazon and he discovers in her the sinister side of someone, who initially seems to represent pure innocence; after all, she is called the virgin of Orleans. Schiller portrays her as a military genius, a female version of Napoleon back in the days of the Hundred Years War. But, tellingly, her strategic inspiration ends when she is falling in love with the Dauphin whom she crucially helps to be crowned King. He will abandon her, however; and the English will capture and accuse her of witchcraft, which will lead to her being sentenced to death.

Schiller occasionally spoke of a ›dark total idea‹ that dominates a work of art from the very beginning. We remember Hegel's comment on the »power of art«, which seems intimately associated with Schiller's conception of a dark or even sinister idea that conditions each individual piece of art. The magic of art and the related magic of power are in this case informed by the necessity to accomplish an apparently sacred mission even though it is soiled by cruelty, finally ending with the maiden's fall literally from grace.

What could be more significant than the fact that Schiller, after completing his *Maiden of Orleans*, became interested in two historical cases of false pretenses in politics: first, in the Perkin Warbeck rebellion that threatened the reign of the early Tudors with Warbeck claiming to be Richard of Shrewsbury, the Duke of York, and second: Demetrius, the rise and fall of a false czar. Both remained fragments for different reasons but somehow suggesting, if by intention or default, that the act of deliberate deception in politics cannot be brought to a satisfactory conclusion.

The scenarios of emotional and political power games with their often bitter and disillusioning consequences in reality condition the best part of Schiller's dramatic works. And yet, in spite of all the illusions, high-minded and basic intensions, Schiller pointed towards the fundamental belief in personal freedom that governs us humans, literally against all odds.

Schiller's life-long investigations into the mechanisms and mechanics of power also provide us with fundamental truths about inter-personal dependencies, and indeed about the dependencies the structures of power subject people to. We can regard the famous phrase in the 15th letter *On the Aesthetic Education of Man* in direct response to these insights: »For, to declare it once and for all«,

Schiller writes with characteristic emphasis, »Man plays only when he is in the full sense of the word a human, and *he is only wholly Man when he is playing*.«[19] Perhaps, we have not even begun to comprehend the extent of this bold claim, which contains Schiller's aesthetic anthropology in a nutshell. And perhaps it is time to read the *Aesthetic Education of Man* as Schiller's response to the obsessive if not lustful power mongering in all times; as a fresh approach to the relationship between the individual and the collective; and as a remedy against collective hysteria on the arrival of yet another so-called ›charismatic‹ leader figure.

One of the great post-war poets in Germany after 1945, Günter Eich, conceded at the end of his life that the only thing he wanted to do now before dying was to play; or rather for playing taking over and art finally being in charge of what is left in life. Egotistical power games were not what Eich had in mind but playing for the sake of self-oblivion, or even self-abandonment. And this is where we are with Schiller – in a sphere or space that allows this kind of playing to happen. But Schiller wanted more than self-oblivion. His ambition connected with the *Aesthetic Education of Man* was to enable, or should we say empower, Man to realize his full potential and to create an alternative space to political scheming, intrigue, betrayal and disillusionment.

It is almost uncanny just how much Schiller has to tell us today, exposed as we are to potentially catastrophic outcomes of selfish if not delusional ways of politicking, reckless experimenting with established values of communality, wilfully distorting or even inventing facts, and confusing short- with far-sightedness. Schiller knew that the arts are able to open our eyes by depicting blissful idylls and dark abysses alike. It is indeed always too soon that the »pleasant days in Aranjuez are over«. But it should never be too late for us to be able to assess what this really means in our time – and why not with, and through, Schiller's works, powerful as they are in dissecting the nature of power, its wilful abuse and – if uncontrolled – tragic consequences.

19 | SW V, p. 618: ([…] der Mensch spielt nur, wo er in voller Bedeutung des Worts Mensch ist, und er ist nur da ganz Mensch, wo er spielt.«); Friedrich Schiller: On the Aesthetic Education of Man. Transl. With an Introduction by Reginald Snell. New York: Dover Publications 2004, p. 80.