

Any comparison between two plays as different as Schiller's tragedy 'Die Raeuber' of 1781 and Ostrovsky's comedy 'Les' ('The Forest') published in 1871 seems a rather forced, maybe even chancy, exercise considering that the plays are of such a divergent nature. However, Ostrovsky's work provides us with textual evidence for a link to Schiller's work (i.e. 'Die Raeuber') and philosophy, hence justifying a closer look. This, however, is not an exercise in motive or content comparison for, any such action, given the dissimilar plots of the two plays, would be too speculative. Instead, the goal of this essay is two-fold: 1) to show the textual link between 'Les' and 'Die Raeuber'; and, having established such a link 2) to examine how the Schillerian permutations of the concepts of "Wille" and "the Ganze Kerl" are manifested in both works. Thus, when at the end of the play Neschastlivtsev exclaims, "I feel and speak like Schiller" (458) we will be able to judge to what extent this is true.

1: The Schillerian Connection in "Les"

In order to justify the application of Schillerian philosophy to Ostrovsky's work we must first establish proof that linkage exists. Little secondary material documenting a concrete biographical or philosophic connection between the two authors

exists. Kostka, for example, in his extensive study of Schiller in Russian literature makes no references to Ostrovsky¹. Lacking any secondary sources the evidence of a possible philosophical link between Ostrovsky and Schiller must be extracted from the text itself. What follows, then, is an examination of those passages in Ostrovsky which document direct and indirect linkage to Schiller, especially to his play 'Die Raeuber'.

1.1: Direct Textual Evidence

The formulation 'direct textual evidence' here is meant to include those quotes in "Les" that can either be directly attributed to Schiller's work, or that make reference to the german author himself. For example, towards the end of the play, while describing himself as Arkasha's saviour, Neschastlivtsev exclaims:

Mankind, Oh, Mankind. You race of crocodiles, you. Your tears -- nothing but water. Your hearts -- made of hard damascus steel. Your kisses -- daggers in our bosom. Lions and leopards nourish their young. Predatory ravens care for their fledglings. And she, what does she do? Is this love for love? Oh, if I were only a hyena! Oh, if I could send enraged all the bloodthirsty inhabitants of the woods against this hellish generation! (458).

By putting this passage into quotes, Ostrovsky creates the impression that his protagonist is quoting directly from

¹see Edmund Koska, Schiller in Russian Literature (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1965).

Schiller's play. The first seven sentences are indeed lifted from Karl Moore's speech verbatim. What follows after that, however, must be viewed as Ostrovsky's creation for it in no way resembles the original text². The reasons behind this change are more or less obvious, for Ostrovsky must somehow integrate the Schillerian dialogue into the context of his play. Thus, when Neschastlivtsev wishes to be "a hyena" and to "send enraged all the bloodthirsty inhabitants of the woods against this hellish generation" he is, in effect, continuing to use the animalistic/naturalistic imagery found in Schiller's play, all the while modifying the original content of the dialogue so as to fit it into his broadsided attack of the Russian upper class. Here, then, Ostrovsky provides us with a synthesis of Schillerian rhetoric applied towards contemporary Russian social reality, although why he chooses, through stylistic means, not to separate the Schillerian dialogue from his own remains a point of contention.

Further on in the play, we are given more direct evidence that Ostrovsky's protagonist is indeed linked with Schillerian

²Schiller's original dialogue goes as follows: "Menschen-Menschen! falsche, heuchlerische Krokodilbrut! Ihre Augen sind Wasser! Ihre Herzen sind Erzt! Kuesse auf den Lippen! Schwerter im Busen! Loewen und Leoparden fuettern ihre Jungen, Raben tischen ihren kleinen auf dem Aas, und Er, Er- Bosheit habe ich dulden gelernt, kann dazu laecheln, wenn mein erborster Feind mir mein Herzblut zutrinkt-... (37).

philosophical concepts. Stage directions show us that Neschastlivtsev "takes out a copy of Schiller's play 'The Robbers'" and goes on to proclaim: "I feel and speak like Schiller"(458). It is this sentence in particular that provides us with the necessary evidence needed to justify any further, more intricate, investigation into the links with Schiller's work. Were it not for this exclamation, a study of the connection between the two plays could not be justified, for the two pieces of evidence cited here provide us with the only direct evidence of linkage.

1.2: Indirect Textual Evidence

By indirect linkage we refer to those passages in Ostrovsky text that might, in some more obscure way, be linked to Schiller's play. Using a legal analogy, indirect linkage could be compared to circumstantial evidence. Although it is possible to cite a number of similarities between the two plays, one important concept that appears in both works is the idea of the world 'turned upside down'. Neschastlivtsev, for example, at one point exclaims, "Comedians? Oh no, we are artists, noble artists, and you [various landowners present] are the comedians".(458) A similar reversal of roles takes place in Schiller's play:

AMALIA. ...-Bettler, sagt er? so hat die Welt sich umgedreht, Bettler sind Koenige, und Koenige sind Bettler!... Seid verdammt, Gold und Silber und Juwelen zu tragen, ihr Grossen und Reichen! Seid verdammt, an ueppigen Mahlen zu zechen.... Karl, Karl so bin ich dein wert- (43)

Amalia's outburst is in many ways similar to that of

Neschastlivtsev at the end of 'Les'. Here, as in Ostrovsky's

play, the class division is described in a manner that

disfavours the world of the rich and powerful. Amalia's

steadfastness -- her unfading love for Karl -- resembles

Neschastlivtsev's refusal to give in to the world of luxury and

treachery. Furthermore, Amalia's remarks are somewhat similar

in content to a remark made by Neschastlivtsev to his cousin

Aksyusham, when in Act IV he tries to convince her to become an

actress. Describing the metamorphosis an actor undergoes on

stage he states: "I am a beggar, a pitiful tramp. But on stage

I am a prince. I live his life. I am tortured by his

thoughts"(433). Again we witness a reversal of roles, this time

one associated with the acting process.

The act described -- the metamorphosis from beggar to king -- is

essentially a liberating one, though it is of only a temporal

nature. As we shall see in the second part of this essay, this

form of liberation in many ways echoes the transformation of

Karl in Schiller's 'Die Raeuber'. For now, suffice it to notice

that certain similarities exist. Again, caution is in order,

for the above described similarities can at best be viewed as circumstantial and by themselves should not be construed as proof of a philosophical link between Schiller and Ostrovsky. Nevertheless when incidents of indirect linkage, such as these, are combined with examples of direct linkage we possess sufficient material to justify an analysis of Ostrovsky's play using Schillerian concepts as our basis.

2: Schiller's Concept of Freedom

Given the framework of this essay it would be a futile exercise to attempt to fully accurately depict Schiller's concept of freedom . In light of this, we will restrict ourselves to those elements of Schiller's philosophy that can be viewed as pertaining to the plays at hand. This procedure, in turn, has been greatly facilitated by Bruno Schlaepfer whose examination of Schiller's concepts of freedom is structured in a way that lets us extract the relevant information without difficulty. In the third chapter entitled 'Freiheiten' Schlaepfer expounds on the concept of "Wille" ['will'] as it was understood by Schiller. Schiller states: "Der Wille ist der Geschlechtscharakter des Menschens, und die Vernunft selbst ist nur die ewige Regel desselben. ...Alle Dinge muessen; der Mensch ist das Wesen welches will" (Schlaepfer, 27). Essentially,

then, humans, unlike animals, are the only beings that are not enslaved by natural necessity: they can, at least to some degree, control their destiny³. Schlaepfer restates this point in a slightly different way: "Allein, letztlich kann der Mensch mit seinem Willen jede Kausalkette unterbrechen, und das vermag das Tier nicht" (Schlaepfer, 28). The animal/human dichotomy is important when we examine Schiller's as well as Ostrovsky's play. Let us turn once more to the passage in Ostrovsky where Neschastlivtsev quotes directly from Schiller. It is important to note here that the tragedian refers to his aunt's company as a "race of crocodiles". In other words, Neschastlivtsev, by expounding on the upper class' animalistic qualities, attributes to them a lack of 'will' in the Schillerian sense for, they, like the animals, are bound by necessity, in this case a certain behaviour associated with upperclass life, where reason ['Vernunft'] is often superceded by a need for spontaneous gratification. Thus, for example, Raisa appears to be driven by this type of immediate need rather than by reason, as is evident in her business dealings with Vosmibratov: needing money to bestow on her young lover Bulanov -- her relationship

³In his writings Schiller had at one point referred to the universe as "God's Thought" [Gedanke Gottes]. The authority of God, then, supercedes, to some degree, the 'will' of man. Absolute freedom is thus not possible for humankind.

with Bulanov is a somewhat comical invocation of an immediate, animalistic need -- she chooses to sell off parts of her forest at a ridiculously low price. A certain feeling of predetermination permeates her whole attitude towards business dealings: even when she is badly cheated out of a thousand rubles she blames it on her 'feminine' nature. Thus, Raisa, similar to Schiller's animals, is unable to place reason above 'need'. She is also unable to break the "chain of causality" that she has partially created in her mind and partially adopted from social prejudice, hence her learned helplessness in regards to business transactions. Juxtaposed to this image of helplessness is the figure of Neschastlivtsev: it is he who demands back the money that his aunt lost. As the play progresses it furthermore becomes apparent that it is he, more than any other character in the play, who determines his own fate, thereby becoming the torch-bearer of the Schillerian concept of 'will'. A similar way of describing the Neschastlivtsev/society dichotomy is given to us by Hoover who views the play's title as a metaphor: "the barbarous jungle or forest with its inhabitants of unfeeling respectability" (Hoover, 89).

Whether one chooses the philosophical or social approach to Ostrovsky's play, one observation remains the same, namely that

Neschastlivtsev and to a similar degree Schastlivtsev, his alterego, enjoy a much greater degree of freedom -- the power over their destinies -- than any of the other characters in the play: the actors are controlled neither by social convention nor by the seemingly burdensome reality of their social position, for Neschastlivtsev, through his profession, can choose to metamorphose into a number of noble characters. It is also important to realize that in Neschastlivtsev's case the concept of ' Schillerian will' cannot be separated from his profession, for it is his will that leads him to act in the first place and it is his acting which reinforces his ability to express his will. Consequently, both his social position and his 'will' give him a degree of freedom unattainable by any of the other characters with the exception of Schastlivtsev, and it is this freedom that makes him a Schillerian persona.

2.2 Neschastlivtsev as a Schillerian Character

To draw parallels between Karl Moor, Schiller's protagonist in 'Die Raeuber', and Ostrovsky's Neschastlivtsev is, from a strictly literary point of view, a risky proposition: while Schiller's Moor is a truly tragic figure struggling with his destiny in what appears to be a highly universalizeable manner, Ostrovsky's Neschastlivtsev can be viewed, in spite of his name,

as a comical figure attempting to distance himself from his hypocritical surroundings. Yet, certain similarities do exist between the two characters, for both have been exiled from their family circle and both, consequently, have chosen to live outside of the social norms, i.e. one becomes a robber, the other an actor. An even more fundamental philosophical link exists, for Schlaepfer, quite justifiably describes Karl Moor as "emotional", overpowered by "Seelenschmerz" and naive heroism (Schlaepfer, 33) -- attributes that can also easily be ascribed to Ostrovsky's protagonist.

Another concept that was wide spread in the literature of the 'Storm and Stress' period and that resurfaces in both plays, albeit to different degrees, is the idea of the 'Ganze Kerl', roughly translated as 'the real man'. Epitomized by Goethe's Goetz Von Berlichingen, the 'real man', in the Schillerian permutation, is a person who "lives according to his will and disregards any social or judicial limitations"(Schlaepfer, 32). Thus, Schiller's protagonist in 'die Raueber' refers to himself as such a 'real man'(Act I, II). The question that must be asked, however, is whether Ostrovsky's Neschastlivtsev falls into the same category. If we disregard the traditional heroic elements that are associated with the 'Storm and Stress' concept, and instead use Ostrovsky's setting as a guideline, the

answer is yes: compared to the other characters in Ostrovsky's work, Neschastlivtsev and his counterpart Schastlivtsev can indeed be viewed as permutations of the 'Ganze Kerl'. Thus, for example, while Schastlivtsev refers to his character as being "free and easy"(395), Neschastlivtsev describes himself as being proud (397). A quality that further marks both actors is a sense of spontaneity similar to the Schillerian sense of 'Willkuer' which in turn is a quintessential element of the 'real man'. A passage that supports this claim is Schastlivtsev's decision to suddenly kill himself. As he describes it:

Thus, all of a sudden at dinner one day, a thought crossed my mind. Maybe I'd better hang myself(396). Another example of this type of spontaneity is Neschastlivtsev's decision to sacrifice his thousand rubles, though he needs this money desperately, so that his cousin is able to get married. Further, Neschastlivtsev's violent behaviour exemplified by his use of a gun against his aunt can also be construed as being part of the general characterization as a Schillerian character. We can subsequently reach the following conclusions: if Schillerian qualities can be detected in Ostrovsky's play, they are to be found in the character of the two actors especially in that of Neschastlivtsev. More specifically, it can be stated that the traditional 'Storm and Stress' persona of 'the real

man' -- the personification of individual freedom -- is resurrected, albeit in a specifically tailored version, in Ostrovsky's characterization of Neschastlivtsev and of Schastlivtsev. To what extent this resurrection is successful remains a point of contention.

Conclusion

The purpose of this essay was two-fold: first to establish a link between Ostrovsky's 'The Forest' and Schiller's 'Die Raeuber'. This has been accomplished primarily by expounding on those passages in Ostrovsky's work that have either been directly lifted from Schiller's text or that, in content, point toward the German playwright. The second motive behind this exercise was to show that some broad, philosophical connection -- we examined Schiller's concept of 'Wille' and the 'real man' -- can be drawn between the two plays. It must be concluded, however, that this exercise was of a highly speculative nature; in fact, given the uncertain nature of this comparison, it is questionable whether any further work in this area is justifiable.

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SCHILLER IN OSTROVSKY'S "THE FOREST"

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