

Family matters

Schiller shows Francis and Charles Moor, and actually all other characters of his play "The Robbers", as disintegrated individuals, outsiders to the traditional social order, and destroyers of what is left of social values. This happens on side of love and sentiment (Count Moor, Daniel, Amalia), and on the side of protest. Francis' and Charles' aggressive energies define and evolve from the latter. Francis feels never have been loved by his father; Charles feels not to be loved anymore by him. Francis destroys what was left of this family; Charles takes the robber band as a compensation for the lost family. In "The Robbers", the closest social relations deteriorate more and more due to a suppressed will for freedom.

Already in the first scene, the family relations appear widely destructed: the deficits and differences between Francis and his father become immediately obvious, while Francis and his father seem not directly aware of this.

Despite such a basic constellation, the unequal brothers Francis and Charles seems to hope in their own way for a "restoration" of the lost family: Charles by the failing attempt to return to an ideal state, Francis by becoming the new "family head", even if this means to destroy the old situation, before a new one may be created.

It is ostentatious that Charles idealizes the return to his father's castle. The childhood landscape (including such details as the swallow's nest at the castle's gable or the creaking garden's door) becomes a set of symbols of a return into the „ancestor's bosom“.

The father, Count Moor, seems not really aware of his feelings and convictions as "family head", becoming therefore subject to the authorities of Francis, but also of Amalia and Charles, and - to some extent - even of Daniel and Hermann. The traditional authority situation is already at the beginning mainly upside down. The endangered family, its destruction, and the attempt of its reincarnation are the centre of "The Robbers".

Being subject to the authorities of others may be (most likely in difference to Schiller's intentions) understood as a laconic perspective of an older generation on a young generation, which is seen as unable to make its own reasonable decisions. But why the young generation not reaches enough confidence and independence - this remains to the older a mystery. Here, the play may be interpreted that, instead of reflecting "subjective failures" of the young generation, "objective conditions", turning against this generation, must be examined.

In respect to Latvia today, where the young generation seems to become more and more successful, such a perspective may appear rather odd. It will be of great interest, if and how our theatre production will differentiate - that on is not totally bound to the Latvian view.

Francis quarrels with nature, setting him into, as he feels, a „naked and poor“ condition, where he has nothing left than his imagination. He sees existence as a fight between egoist beings - alone, only interested in themselves, their private survival and success. He considers moral as fiction. Emotions appear to him unimportant. He feels only the need for his role as a genius of destruction, for such an „creative“ force, which the reader and viewer does not accept as truly creative.

Charles is, besides his high abilities for self-reflection, a changing character, tending yet to actionism. He celebrates his freedom, but dreams still of a safe return home. Right there, and not to revolution, leads the path of his future life. In his first appearance on stage, he refers to his plan to end the "student life" and to get home – as if he made a "Tour de cavalier" to live out his youth and return. Charles is a character of revolt and not of revolution. His attitude remains rather weak. Changing from the family to the robber band is, due to his father's ban, an act of desperation.

If an older generation still insists on "out-dated" demands, then one may argue that "The Robbers" is about this generation, about survivors with an out-dated world view – because, after the death of Francis, Amalia, and after Charles' disappearance, only the old Moor, Daniel, Herman, and the pastors 'happily' survive.

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