

Freedom, Oppression, and Celebration: Rossini's *Guillaume Tell*.

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Introduction

It is a commonplace that literary romanticism carried with it a marked interest in the Middle Ages, an interest also connected with the rise of nationalism. Similar to what is found in the period's literature, opera at this time often deals with chivalric themes from medieval literature and history, notably in operas by Carl Maria von Weber (1786-1826 and Franz Schubert (1797-1828 , but also (and in a number of cases earlier by French and German composers like André Grétry (1741-1813 , Jean Francois Le Sueur (1760-1837 , Étienne Méhul (1763-1817 , Peter Winter (1754-1825 , and for instance the naturalized Danes Friedrich Kunzen (1761-1827 , C. E. F. Weyse (1774-1842 and Friedrich Kuhlau (1786-1832 .

Certainly, medieval history and narrative had been used in operas from the very beginning of the history of the genre, though early operas, to a large degree, seem to have been based upon medieval material first of all (but not exclusively through two almost canonical literary works of the Italian Renaissance, the *Gerusalemme Liberata* (1575 by Torquato Tasso and the *Orlando Furioso* (1516-32 by Ludovico Ariosto. Moreover, neither composers nor authors of the librettos before 1800 seem to have put much interest in the mediocrity of the subject matter as it – for instance – is apparent in Joseph Haydn's *Orlando Paladino* from 1782 with a libretto that is set in what must be the Middle Ages but is only recognizable as such if by reference to the *Orlando Furioso*, on which it is remotely based.

Gioachino Rossini (1792-1868 holds a unique transitional position between what is often identified as classical and romantic musical styles partly due to his Italian nationality. Rossini would not normally be rubricized as a romantic composer in spite of his birth date and the nineteenth-century attributes clearly in line with musical romanticism that can be found in much of his music. The work that I will be discussing here, his last opera *Guillaume Tell*, first performed at the Académie Royale in Paris on August 3, 1829, in many ways prefigures the romantic Italian operas by Bellini, Donizetti and Verdi. Opera in Italy in the early nineteenth century had not broken away from the old Metastasian *opera seria* genre as in Germany and France. At the same time, the temperament of Rossini was not a "romantic" one, but rather one of comedy and satire. Julian Budden – one of the major authorities on romantic Italian opera – thus characterizes Rossini as

the reluctant architect of Italian romantic opera ... a composer who sums up all the paradoxes and ambiguities of the ottocento (Budden I, 8 .

Similarly, Rossini is not often associated with the medievalism of especially his German contemporaries, although a number of his operas are set in the Middle Ages. *La donna del lago* (1819) was based on a typically literary example of medievalism, Sir Walter Scott's chivalric poem from 1810, but also *Tancredi* (1813, based on Voltaire's play of 1760), *Otello* (1816, after Shakespeare), *Armida* (1817, after Tasso), and – the work under discussion here – *Guillaume Tell* indirectly constitute a reception of the Middle Ages.

Just as in the mentioned Haydn opera, there are virtually no direct suggestions of the Middle Ages in Rossini's *Guillaume Tell*. Only the prior knowledge of the figure of William Tell makes the listener aware of the mediocrity of the subject. Conversely, *Guillaume Tell* shows a clear and loyal interest in the underlying narrative. It would be easy to detach the opera from its chronological context but not, in contrast, from its geographical or political "Sitz im Leben." The opera shows – in short – no sense of the alterity of its medieval subject matter in its historical presentation but a strong sympathy for the inherent aspect of liberation from oppression in this material.

The main theme of Rossini's opera concerns the Swiss people and their fight for freedom. The opera has appropriated the attitude of Schiller's famous drama (1804), which was also the immediate source for the original libretto by Victor Joseph Étienne de Jouy (1764? -1846) who may, however, have been influenced to some extent also by Grétry's opera on the same subject that was given in Paris in 1791 to a libretto by Sedaine. The libretto by Jouy was partly rewritten by Hippolyte Louis Florent Bis (Bartlet, XXII). The focus of the opera is not the psychological portrait of the protagonist William Tell – or other important characters.

It has frequently been noted how a *ranz des vaches* – a traditional Swiss tune – forms an important musical motif permeating the whole opera. This, among other things, creates in the opera a unity limiting the role of subjective feelings, well in line with Rossini's general tendency to compose in absolute musical forms thereby avoiding – or missing – the subjective dramatic feeling often associated with romantic opera. In *Guillaume Tell*, to the contrary, this objective feature is combined with a high level of emotional and dramatic intensity. Undoubtedly, for Rossini, the William Tell material was inviting for contemporary political reasons. The gradually rising consciousness of an Italian nationalism, also engaging Rossini's father in the years following the French revolution and during the Napoleonic wars and invasions (even if it did not at that time become an important political factor in Italy), must be noted as part of the background of Rossini's upbringing in spite of his later conservatism (Osborne, 2-3).

Sources, Traditions and History

In Rossini's opera – in contrast to Schiller's play *Wilhelm Tell* – the figure of William Tell of Uri is not only the leading figure in the well known narratives about the individual confrontations between Tell and the bailiff Gesler centering on the famous episode where Tell is forced to shoot down an apple placed on the head of his son, an episode later leading Tell to kill Gesler. But he is, at the same time, depicted as a leading figure for the assemblies of the three cantons, Uri, Unterwald, and Schwyz, in the scene where an oathbound confederation between them is established at Rütli.

A pact between these three cantons from August, 1291 has indeed been preserved in a single copy found 1758 in Schwyz but with no mention of William Tell, who – as it has been pointed out many times by scholars – is difficult to place between fiction and history. The existing sources explicitly mentioning him are relatively late, none before the fifteenth century. The mentioned pact – in Latin – does not mention the names of its negotiants and is held in a very moderate tone, also emphasizing the need for law and order internally. It does reflect the fight against the Habsburg domain, however, as it is concretely manifested in the denunciation of judges, having bought their authority or of a judge who is not our inhabitant or a member of our province (*qui noster incola vel conprovincialis non fuerit* (Bergier, 336-37).

The establishing of the oath-bound confederation is mentioned in the Swiss chronicles preserving the William Tell narratives as well. The earliest of these, the so-called White Book of Sarnen (*Das Weisse Buch von Sarnen* was brought to light in 1856 – and thus did not directly take part in the reception of the Tell legend that was the basis for Schiller's or Rossini's works. It is not properly speaking a chronicle but a register of public documents between 1315 and 1474 (with a later addition that, at the end, has incorporated an account of the birth of the Swiss confederation, also including a version of the Tell legend (Bergier, 65-71; *Quellenwerk*. Ed. Wirz, 1-41).

The White Book is dated to approximately 1470, but textual details seem to indicate that the narrative part possibly was based on an account written half a century earlier (*Quellenwerk*. Ed. Wirz, LIII-LIV). Thus, the traditional material, for instance, as Schiller received it – mainly in the version of the sixteenth century chronicler Aegidius Tschudi – through the finding of the early chronicle was brought back about one hundred years closer to the historical events it seems to record. Tschudi's *Chronicon Helveticum* was finished before 1571, compiling all available information at his time (Bergier, 16-19; Feller and Bonjour, 78-79 and 263-76; Seidel, ed., 386; Mettler and Lippuner, 14-15).

The account in the White Book does not in itself make a strong case for the historicity of the legend of William Tell. Most importantly, the motif of the apple shooting has been shown to originate from much earlier Nordic narrative traditions (Bergier, 69-70). Helmut de Boor has discussed the traditions of this literary motif in detail. It occurs with some variations in the *Gesta Danorum* by the Dane Saxo Grammaticus (written before 1219), in the *Viellandroman*, as it was received in the Norwegian *Thidrekssaga*, compiled 1250-60, in two different versions in the Icelandic *Flateyjarbok*, compiled around 1360, also in Nordic ballads (but only preserved from much later), in the story of William of Cloudesly in an English ballad only preserved from the sixteenth century, in some German narratives whose traditions cannot be followed back beyond the eighteenth century, and finally, in the Swiss legends of William Tell (De Boor, 3*-5*).

Helmut de Boor concluded that the Saxo version, in spite of being the oldest preserved literary source of the motif, must have employed an already existing Norwegian narrative. Saxo apparently transferred the story to a historic figure, Toko, fitting it into a fairly unprecise knowledge of the death of King Haraldus (Bluetooth or *Harald Blaatand*, the tenth-century king who assembled and christened the Danes). According to the oldest sources (among them, Adam of Bremen in the eleventh century), Haraldus died of wounds obtained during a civil war between him and his son Sveno Forkbeard (or Sven Tveskæg).

Saxo, as it seems, let Toko be the murderer of his king as a consequence of the king's tyranny. The direct cause was the boasting of Toko (having drunk too much) that he would be able to hit a small apple with an arrow in one shot at a certain distance, but the king, upon hearing this, in an evil twist demands the apple to be put on Toko's son's head, announcing Toko to be killed if he misses the apple. Toko tells the child to remain absolutely calm and – as opposed to the later Tell stories – turns him around so that he will not be frightened by the approaching arrow. Saxo praises the courage of the son and the artfulness of the father equally as Toko hits the apple and thereby both avoids killing his relative and being killed himself by the king.

Before shooting, Toko had taken three arrows and when asked afterwards by the king why he did so when he was only allowed one shot, he – like William Tell some centuries later – answers:

So that if my first should miss, he said, I might avenge myself on you with the others; then my innocence would not suffer while your cruelty went unpunished. (vt in te (inquit) primi errorem reliquorum acumine vindicarem: ne mea forte innocentia poenam: tua impunitatem experiretur violentia (Saxo, I, 12-13).

The king does not directly punish Toko for this as does Gesler with Tell. However, he later compels Toko to ski down the steep slope of Kullen (placed in what is now southern Sweden). Toko also survives this venture but, in the mentioned civil war, he sides with the king's son Sveno. The chapter goes on to tell about this civil war and how king Haraldus' own men deserted him because of the heavy burdens of his reign. It is, however, also made clear that the conflict between Sveno and Haraldus is one of religion, Sveno still adhering to the old Norse Gods (Saxo (Christiansen), I, 12-15 and 175 n. 51).

Regardless of the questionable historicity of the account of Saxo and the origin of the narrative, Helmut De Boor sees the "Sitz im Leben" of the original "Apfelschuss" narrative as tied to the rise of the power of a Christian monarchy in the North in conflict with the former freedom of the large farmers, a conflict suppressed in a number of the literary versions as the view point changed to side with the royal power. The Saxo version (among some others) remained surprisingly faithful to this original basic intention of the narrative. On De Boor's account, such a faithfulness lies behind the narrative's successful intertwining with the Swiss freedom fight (De Boor, 24*-26*).

The White Book is probably not the earliest preserved reflection of the penetration of the apple shooting episode in Swiss traditions, even though it does constitute the oldest extant manuscript containing the episode. But apart from the chronicles on the early history of the Swiss confederation, there exists another Swiss literary tradition dealing with this matter.

A large ballad – sometimes referred to as the *Bundeslied* – is preserved in several (to some extent varying) manuscripts and prints. The earliest of these is dated to 1499 (in the manuscript) and probably achieved its final stage in 1477 during the Burgundy War. Literary scholars have argued that the first nine stanzas of this ballad form a unit of their own – possibly a part of an earlier ballad about William Tell (these stanzas relate the apple shooting episode – and that this unit seems to reflect a level of transmission of the Nordic narrative, which is closer to the origin than what is found in the White Book (*Quellenwerk*. Ed. Wehrli, 5-10, 14-30, and 34-51; Bergier, 71-79).

Among the specific traits distinguishing the ballad text from the narrative of the chronicles, it must be noted that in the ballad there is no mention of the Rütli episode of the founding oath of the confederation between the three cantons – except for a brief, final, and general remark (maybe not originally belonging to the old ballad) about the early confederation as a result of the episode between Tell and the bailiff. The omission could, of course, be due to the fragmented preservation as the *Tellenlied* was incorporated into the later *Bundeslied*.

More reliable traits to note are the ones directly connected to the transmission of the apple shooting episode: The first name of Tell is mentioned here as Wilhelm (it is not mentioned in the White Book, while the name of the bailiff – oppositely – is not mentioned in the ballad. There is no hint of the episode with the bailiff's hat, no cause is given for the apple shooting except the despotism of the bailiff who also here threatens to kill Tell unless he hits the apple in the first shot. In opposition to the White Book, the ballad specifies the distance for the shooting (one hundred and twenty steps).

Further, in the ballad, Tell re-comforts his son and prays to God. His skill as a shooter is noticed and that he had set aside an extra arrow. Immediately after his successful shot, he also tells the bailiff how he would have shot him if the boy had been killed – but not as a response to a question from the bailiff. The bailiff arrests Tell and orders him thrown into the lake of Uri. The episode abruptly ends with a statement of how the bailiff's order hurt the heart of William Tell but that no one came to his rescue. It seems that Tell is killed in the episode and the consequence mentioned in the final stanzas of this (part of the old *Tellenlied* is a riot leading to the first confederation in order to throw out the bailiffs (but no details are given). These stanzas celebrate the loss of power of the bailiffs, which was the outcome of this action through an oath-bound alliance and end with a prayer to God (*Quellenwerk*. Ed. Wehrli, 14-16; Bergier, 73-75).

A play dealing with the Tell narrative, *Das Urner Tellenspiel*, seems to be based upon the ballad (and on Etterlin's chronicle, which was written and printed in 1507). It is dated to 1512-13, the earliest extant text of the play being a printed version from 1540-44; probably under the influence of the Reformation, some minor changes in certain parts of the original play seem to have been made. The printed version also mentions a performance of the play in the canton of Uri – probably in Altdorf (*Quellenwerk*. Ed. Wehrli, 55-76, and 69-99; Bergier, 77-79).

The play follows the ballad in not giving the name of the bailiff (although Etterlin's chronicle did give the name *Grisler* as opposed to *Gesler* in the White Book) and in stating the first name *Wilhelm* for Tell. The playwright further gives the name for the place of the oath of the confederation, *Rütli*, which, in the White Book, is called *Rüdli* (*Quellenwerk*. Ed. Wehrli, 70 and 77; *Quellenwerk*. Ed. Wirz, 15).

More importantly, the play combines the traditional Swiss chronicle version of the Tell narrative (as it is presented for the first time in the White Book), which motivated the apple shooting through the refusal of Tell to greet Gesler's hat in Altdorf, with the rise of the confederacy of the three cantons and thus constructs Tell as a leading figure in the oath-

taking. This may be inspired by the *Tellenlied* in its unclear presentation (or incomplete preservation) of the confederation (*Quellenwerk*. Ed. Wehrli, 19 and 67).

Interestingly, this is also the approach of the Rossini opera, as opposed to Schiller who, in his drama, made a point out of characterizing Tell as an individualist – and a man of action, not of words or political manifests – for what reason he does not participate at Rütli in Schiller's drama. On the other hand, he seems, through the apple shooting episode, to become aware of Gesler as a political evil and is brought to kill Gesler at the end of the drama (Mettler and Lippuner, 64-83).

III. Dramatizing the William Tell Narrative

Max Wehrli, the modern editor of both the Tell ballad and play, has made the claim that the fact that both these – against the testimonies of the chronicles – present the apple shooting episode as the single direct cause for a confederate liberation movement is not the effect of a special tradition from Uri, but much rather connected to artistic demands for unity in the ballad and play (*Quellenwerk*. Ed. Wehrli, 57). It must be noted, of course, that we have no knowledge of how the original ballad treated (if it did) Tell in connection with the Rütli oath.

The dramatic genre brought also with it traditions connected to the original proximity of medieval dramas to the Latin liturgy. One particular aspect seems to be a particular structure, characteristic for the so-called medieval Latin music dramas since their beginnings within the liturgy, and one that even seems to have been carried over to the music dramas or operas of later times, including, as we shall see, Rossini's *Guillaume Tell*. It may also – to a smaller degree – have influenced the spoken dramas.

The short *Quem quaeritis* dialogues (between the women at the grave of Jesus and one or more angels named after the opening line of these early short texts) revealing Christ's resurrection Easter morning, which appeared in liturgical manuscripts from the tenth century onwards clearly functioned as introductory speech lines that concluded in a liturgical announcement of the resurrection. This is true, whether the dialogue was set before the introit of the Easter Mass, at a procession before Mass, or at Matins Easter morning. In fact, such a linear narrative representational use taking off from a seemingly more strict and traditional ritual use and concluding in such a ritual use again in the form of announcements, prayers, or liturgical praisings seems characteristic for all these Latin music drama during the centuries following the first *Quem quaeritis* ceremony. This feature also is detectable in the larger of the Latin religious music dramas of the high Middle Ages as, for instance, the *Visitatio sepulchri* play from the Fleury *Playbook*, the *Ordo Virtutum* by Hildegard of Bingen, both from the twelfth

century, and in the thirteenth century *Danielis ludus* from the Beauvais cathedral school (Petersen, 1996; Petersen, 1998; Petersen, forthcoming 2002; Petersen, forthcoming 2003).

In dramas of the medieval liturgy, this structure consists in the movement between two uses of the liturgy: the telling of the basic mythic narratives underlying the Christian faith and the celebration during the actual ritual time *hic et nunc* of the efficaciousness of these events from past or mythic times. The form type constituted thus typically takes its point of departure in the latter (which I have called the ritual use of the liturgy from where it, at certain points, seems possible and relevant to fold out the narrative connected to the ritual celebration. Such a representational use of the liturgy could, as it was the tradition for centuries, take the form of narrative songs, readings, processional movements re-presenting in some way the original event (as, for instance, in the Palm Sunday procession, which reflected the entrance of Jesus into Jerusalem and had been known since the fourth century). But – as it appears during the centuries following the Frankish import of the Roman liturgy in the eighth to ninth centuries – it could also be in the form of a deliberately acted representation, what we – in anachronistic terms – would now call a drama.

From the later Middle Ages – basically since the twelfth century – also a number of vernacular more or less devotional plays exist. These had a much less direct connection to the liturgical ceremonial and employed music to a much smaller degree, but even they do carry at least some marks of what I have just described, as for instance in the occasional use of liturgical songs in the so-called cycle plays (Rastall).

Around the time of the reformation (mainly out of educational concerns in both the Protestant and the Catholic worlds), school dramas and educational devotional dramas in general add to the picture at the same time as the number of liturgical plays decreases and these plays disappear many places (as they do, of course, in the Protestant world). They do not disappear everywhere in Southern Europe, however, and at the time of the creation of the opera in Florence around 1600, and even in the area surrounding Salzburg as late as the second part of the eighteenth century, one finds a living tradition of *Quem quaeritis* plays, as well as gradually arising genres of drama developing from the Jesuit plays, as for instance the so-called *Kloster Operetten*. These are *Singspiele* of a more or less devotional and entertaining character forming a genre to which, for instance, Joseph Haydn contributed. Similarly, the young Mozart – at the age of 11 – among a few educational-devotional music dramas also wrote a devotional (liturgical) dialogue (*Grabmusik* much in the tradition of the so-called *sepolcro*, which since the baroque age had been an important

contribution to the oratorio in Vienna with dramatized performances during Holy week at a Holy Sepulchre in churches, attended by the imperial court (Smither I, 366-82; III, 35; Badura-Skoda; Fellerer, 116 .

The *Urner Tellenspiel*, as it is preserved, starts with a prologue in three parts spoken by three heralds pointing forward to the presentation of the Tell narrative as well as back to the history of the Swiss people. The first herald, however, first addresses God:

O herre Gott im ho^chsten thron,
Wir so^end dir billich dancken schon,
Dann du bist durch din barmhertzigkeit
Den verlassnen allzyt zu^o hilff bereit.

Correspondingly, the play concludes in a prayer-like formula spoken by the Jester (*der Narr*) after a sermon-like appropriation of devotional aspects of the related events:

. . .
So wirt vns Gott ouch nit verlon!
Vnsre altuordern hand sich thuⁿ massen.
Darumb hat sy Gott nie verlassen.
Ich hoff, wir so^ellend nachfolgen jn,
Des wir werdend han grossen gwin.
Darzu^o helff vns die dryfaltigkeit,
Das wir all la^ebind in einigkeit.
Sy hand vns noch nie verlan
Vnd thu^end allzyt truwlich by vns stan.
Wir so^ellend vns all han zu^osamen.
Wa^r das begert, der sprech amen.

end diss spyls. (*Quellenwerk*. Ed. Wehrli, 71 and 98-99

When the bailiff has ordered Tell to shoot the apple from the head of his (youngest) son, prayers form part of the lines of William Tell (*Quellenwerk*. Ed. Wehrli, 83-84 . Prayers at this point would, of course, seem to be part of a normal contemporary piousness as well as natural to the disastrous situation he faces. At other important points, prayers are inserted, however, that seem to be due to a feeling of the needs of the dramatic genre as much as a reflection of the piousness of the time.

At the point where Tell has spoken and convinced the people to join him in the oath – also, certainly, in a pious manner referring to their faith in God – there follows the response of the assembled:

Ach herre Gott, wie gn^edigklich
Hast vns erh^ort in dinem ryck!
Darumb so wend wir zu^o uch stan.
Nun gebend vns schnell den eyd an!

Tell then gives them the oath:

Das wir keinen tyrannen mee dulden,

Versprechend wir by unsern hulden.
 Also sol Gott vatter mit sim sun,
 Ouch heiliger Geist vns helffen nun.

At this point, the fourth herald enters with a long – historic – appropriation of the consequences of the oath leading to the above mentioned conclusion (with the jester . In the first lines before his historical account, this herold addresses not the audience, but God:

O du rycher Christ von himmelrych,
 Wa'r mag dir dancken vollkommenklych
 Der gnad, so du vns hast erzeugt
 Vnd dich so va'tterlich geneigt,
 Vnsem altuordem sta'g vnd wa'g geben,

Das sy mo'chtend fristen jr la'ben! (*Quellenwerk*. Ed. Wehrli, 89-90)

It should come as no surprise if – at a time where the so-called liturgical drama and the processional (stational) liturgy of the medieval Catholic church were so near in time and place – it would have felt natural at certain points of the play, between a representation of the (mythic) narrative and devotional and educational appropriations of this narrative, to turn to a (representation of) a liturgical situation.

Before turning to a reading of Rossini's *Guillaume Tell*, I will note that even Schiller's spoken drama seems to have preserved reminiscences of such a structure, in a context, of course, where individual observations may be explained differently. The fact, on the other hand, that all five acts of Schiller's play end by reflecting in some way or other (in a stronger or weaker way) a (representation of a) kind of ritual situation as opposed to one of narrative representation might be taken to indicate some general underlying structure.

In the first act, Arnold vom Melchtal, who has been told about the blinding of his father through the Austrians, makes a solemn declaration together with Werner Stauffacher and Walter Fürst. These three apparently historical figures declare to work towards a confederation of their three cantons "Auf Tod und Leben!"

The act ends by Melchtal addressing a declaration to his father who is not present, a vow with clear ritual connotations:

Blinder alter Vater!
 Du kannst den tag der Freiheit nicht mehr *schauen*,
 Du sollst ihn *hören* - Wenn von Alp zu Alp
 Die Feuerzeichen flammend sich erheben,
 Die festen Schlösser der Tyrannen fallen,
 In deine Hütte soll der Schweizer wallen,
 Zu deinem Ohr die Freudenkunde tragen,
 Und hell in deiner Nacht soll es dir tagen (Schiller, 29 .

In the second scene of act two, the oath at Rütli takes place, a scene having in itself ritual connotations. It ends, however, even more solemnly at dawn; the rising sun is treated as a symbol of the dawn of freedom in a statement by Walter Fürst. The solemnity of the occasion that brings with it the experience of hope through nature itself is expressed in a rubric of the play:

Alle haben unwillkürlich die Hute abgenommen und betrachten mit stiller Sammlung die Morgenrote.

Similarly at the very end of the act an end rubric states:

Indem sie zu drei verschiedenen Seiten in grosster Ruhe abgehen, fällt das Orchester mit einem prachtvollen Schwung ein, die leere Szene bleibt noch eine Zeitlang offen und zeigt das Schauspiel der aufgehenden Sonne über den Eisgebirgen. (Schiller, 51)

At the end of act 3 the apple shooting episode has led to the traditional results and as Tell is being brought away by Gessler's soldiers his son, Walter, in despair calls out for his father who - with equal despair - refers him to God in Heaven. The act ends, however, with a declaration of trust in God, as Tell exclaims:

Der Knab' ist unverletzt, mir wird Gott helfen. (Schiller, 72 .

The fourth act brings the famous scene with the killing of Gessler. The act ends with the arrival of "sechs barmherzige Brüder" concluding the dramatic and (from Tell's side thoughtful scene in what clearly is a representation of a liturgical situation:

Barmherzige Brüder (schliessen einen Halbkreis um den Toten und singen in tiefem Ton . Rasch tritt der Tod den Menschen an, Es ist ihm keine Frist gegeben;

Es stürzt ihn mitten in der Bahn, Es reisst ihn fort vom vollen Leben. Bereit oder nicht, zu gehen, Er muss vor seinen Richter stehen!

(Indem die letzten Zeilen wiederholt werden, fällt der Vorhang. (Schiller, 96

Finally, the conclusion of act 5 (and the play is an appraisal of Tell as a protector and rescuer - "der Schutz und der Erretter!" - ending with an announcement which constitutes the appropriation of the morale of the play by the nobleman Ulrich von Rudenz. To begin with he sided with the Austrians but not the least through his love for the rich Austrian heiress Berta von Bruneck who strongly sympathizes with the Swiss people he in the end comes to participate on the side of the freedom fighters. The last line of the play is his short unqualified announcement of giving freedom to all his servants, "und frei erklär ich alle meine Knechte" (Schiller, 112 . It is narratively irrelevant although it underlines the morale of the play, but in its form of an unprepared declaration it also reads as a representation of a ritualistic announcement made the more evident by its position as the last remark of the play and Rudenz' only line in the whole scene.

IV. Rossini's William Tell

I will mainly concentrate on the way Rossini's opera deals with the apple shooting episode, but I will also briefly review the structure of the opera - referring to the version presented at the premiere. (Even more than many other operas Guillaume Tell underwent several changes laid out in the modern critical edition referred to here .

The first act on the whole constitutes an enormous appraisal of Swiss nature from which the political and human conflicts gradually emerge. The overture - with its four different sections - reflects: a meditative mood, a storm, and the Swiss nature (symbolized by the earlier mentioned ranz des 'Ijaches , concluding finally in the triumphant (and exceedingly famous march (Tell I, 1-89 . The beginning of act I brings back at the same time the meditative mood and the ranz des vaches. But the introductory song is also a song of praise concluding with the following statement:

Par nos travaux, rendons hommage au Createur de l'univers. (Tell I, 104 ff .

Through the unfolding of smaller events - also including songs of praise as for instance the joyful and traditional celebration of marriage in no. 3 - the main conflict between Arnold and Guillaume is brought out (after which another song of praise for the wedding celebration, no. 4, puts everything in perspective . Through smaller events the major conflict is reflected and the Austrians and Tell are shown as the main adversaries of the plot. This in turn is contemplated by a song of prayer by the Swiss people at the beginning of the finale which - after Tell has saved the life of Leuthold from the Austrians - concludes in a choral stretta which I read as a representation of a quasi-ritual situation in its denouncing of the oppressors.

The second act treats one part of the main narrative, the oath at Rutli - though its first part focuses on the love of Arnold and the Austrian princess Mathilde (his reason for siding with the oppressors . This part begins on a note of ritualistic contemplation as the hunters' chorus takes notice of the end of the day with the ringing of the bell and a general meditative attentiveness to the surrounding nature (no. 8, Tell II, 553-58 . From here the aria of Mathilde and her duet with Arnold unfold after which follows the important terzetto between Tell, Walter Furst and Arnold where Arnold must give in to their patriotic demands on him as they tell him about the murder of his father. (His blinding in the traditional narrative which Schiller accepted was sharpened in the opera . At the point where he understands that they are telling him about his own father, his sorrow and pangs of remorse and despair almost bring the music to a halt in a meditative (but even so highly dramatic subdued mood breaking up for a moment the narrative flow of the terzetto before resuming in a rather different mood (Tell II, 696-98 . The narrative flow which here is

brought to a halt for a meditative purpose may also be read in the light of the ritual returns from narrative representation in the Latin music dramas of the Middle Ages.

The third act tells the famous apple shooting episode after a long series of introductory scenes. To begin with Mathilde and Arnold again meet. Mathilde has a deeply felt understanding of Arnold's situation and they decide to go apart. A march of terror and honour for Gesler follows. Here again representation of a ritual use is discernible, also in the words:

A recitative breaks up the terzetto after Arnold's flaming desire to avenge his father has brought it to a new climax. The wish for revenge is transformed to a solemn announcement - "au l'indépendance ou la mort!" - by the three leaders (from the three cantons) before the actual oath scene and clearly representing again a ritualistic situation before the music dramatic flow of the terzett once more is continued (Tell II, 720-22).

The second act finale represents in itself (like the corresponding scene in Schiller's play) a ritual manifestation with the coming of the three parties from the three cantons underlined by Rossini's use of a cappella settings in some choral statements - and the use of announcements as for instance the arrival of the inhabitants from Unterwald (Tell II, 766-7) with an acappella choral statement and a following announcement of vengeance and the appraisal by the three protagonists. The conclusion of the scene with the oath marks the high point of this, bringing an acappella setting of the announcement "Aux armes!" for the three leading figures followed by the people in a choral and orchestral climax (Tell II, 848-49).

The

Claire au pauvre supreme!

Crainte a Gesler qui dispense ses lois! (Tell III, 931-34).

Through a recitative (where Gesler announces the necessity of a pledge of the people towards the German Empire) the Altdorf scene unfolds with forced dancing also showing how Gesler's hat must be greeted by everybody. The very scene with Tell and his (only) son (here named Jemmy and sung by a mezzo soprano) contains most important traditional elements from the long history of the narrative. It is emphasized more clearly than normally that Tell is consciously provoking by not greeting the hat. Only at the point where he realizes that both he and his son may be in mortal danger he changes his tone to one of fear and concern for Jemmy urging him to leave as long as it is possible (Tell III, 1156-83).

loving admonition to Jemmy "Sois immobile" makes for an enormous contrast to the jubilant exclamation of "Victoire" by the Swiss people after the successful shot. The rest of the scene flows on dramatically with its tension between the parallel oppositions of the soldiers and the Swiss, and

Gesler and Mathilde. She manages to rescue Jemmy after the episode with the extra arrow which here prompts Gesler to arrest both father and son. The scene concludes in another

It turns out not to be possible. As Tell sends away Jemmy and tells him to give the signal to the rebellion, Gesler decides to play the horrible game of the apple shooting. For Tell this is the low point of the narrative. He loses all courage and even kneels down in front of Gesler. The dramatic flow is brought to a stop at this point in an attitude of terror (and subordinate supplication to the accompaniment of a series of chords which were later (1833/42 to be reflected in Rossini's *Stabat Mater* (Tell III, 1195, bars 206-11, cf. 1189, bars 175-76). Thereafter the drama resumes its flow again.

Jemmy brings back Tell to his strength by showing courage as well as his confidence in his father. Also here what may be perceived as a quasi-ritualistic halt in the flow is used to obtain the effect of conveying the hic et nunc efficacy of what is happening.

Jemmy's act of faith and love seems to be the redeeming factor for the outcome of this part of the action, in this respect totally different from the much more realistic medieval narrative (notably the version of Saxo where Toko - as mentioned - must protect his son to minimize the boy's terror of the arrow). In the opera Jemmy even rejects being tied as he is able to manage the situation. But before this his announcement of fearlessness and confidence may be heard to be represented as an almost sacramental action. It is given a significant emphasis detaching it from the narrative function through the repeated tone C, as he addresses his father, taken over by the sustained C of the oboe and bassoon altogether causing a musical halt. Tell clearly responds to this in his benediction of the boy (Tell III, 1198-1201 cf. also Tell IV, 1677-1714 showing the originally planned aria of Jemmy which was left out before the premiere).

The meditative tone of Guillaume's famous the opera concludes in victory announcements opening again into the appreciation of the magnificent nature with another appearance of the *ranz des vaches*, present at so many important points of the opera, in a song of praise of God and liberty (prayed to descend from Heaven):

representation of a ritualistic outbreak as the chained Guillaume (who no longer fears Gesler announces his *II Anatheme a Gesler!*) followed up by the Swiss people and even by Mathilde and contrasted by the *II Vive Gesler!* of the soldiers (Tell IV, 1287-1311).

The fourth and last act clears up the plot concerning Arnold and the confederates and - not least - through Tell's advantageous and courageous liberation from Gesler's boat and the killing of the tyrant (original version:

Tell IV, appendix III, 1716-1886 . During the dangerous boating Tell's wife, Hedwige, sings a prayer for him - followed up by Mathilde and the chorus (Tell IV, 1763-82 .

And finally, as everything has been resolved,
A nos accents religieux, Liberte, re descends des cieux.
Et que ton regne recommence! (Tell IV, 1875-86 .

Rossini's opera is not a particularly religious work. Rather, that the formal devices used by Rossini - as it is true for many other operatic works earlier and later - can be read in a meaningful way as representations of reflections of centuries of liturgico-dramatic traditions used in the opera to highlight the dramatic points which the composer wanted to emphasize.

In this way a certain kind of a medievalistic distant perspective is put on the narrative. Through this structure the opera becomes to some extent marked by the alterity of the Middle Ages which otherwise does not surface in the treatment of the narrative material.

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