SKENÈ

Journal of Theatre and Drama Studies

Friedrich Schiller

Über den Gebrauch des Chors in der Tragödie / On the Use of the Chorus in Tragedy

Introduction *by Stephen Halliwell*

Schiller's essay "On the Use of the Chorus in Tragedy" is an important document in the history of modern attempts to make poetic and aesthetic sense of the function of the chorus in ancient Greek tragedy. It forms part of an intricate web of German writings on Greece whose criss-crossing lines of argument have been extensively studied elsewhere and obviously cannot be pursued in detail here. The purpose of these brief introductory remarks is to suggest that we can continue to learn from Schiller's engagement with the subject, not only because of the essay's significance in its own historical context but also because it prompts reflection on fundamental questions about modernity's relationship to Greek antiquity, and because, at a certain level, its problems are still our problems too.

Writing the piece at an advanced stage in his career as both playwright and philosopher of culture, Schiller was influenced by, and contributed to, a major shift in late eighteenth-century and early nineteenth-century German theory and aesthetics of drama (as well as of art more generally). Reacting against the perceived formalism and moralism of French neoclassical theatre, in which the chorus had been either dispensed with altogether or reduced in scope in ways which were thought conformable with the ruling canon of *vraisemblance* (including the unities of time and space), Schiller sought to justify a reinvention of the tragic chorus on the contemporary stage which would satisfy the essential aim of art, conceived by him (along partly Kantian lines) as being to enable the human soul or spirit to find and exercise freedom through the living play of all its faculties ("die Freiheit des Gemütes in

dem lebendigen Spiel aller seiner Kräfte”). The best art, according to Schiller, can never be concerned with naturalistic, let alone illusionistic, appearances; through the power of creative imagination (*Einbildungskraft*) it transcends the constraints of the material world and provides insight into the deep truth that lies within, but not on the surface of, ‘nature’ (itself an idea generated by the spirit, not a set of material laws). The chorus is a vital means to this end, according to Schiller, because its lyric freedom can safeguard tragedy against the encroachment of unwanted and reductive verisimilitude.

The central thrust of Schiller’s essay brings together, and somehow hopes to fuse into a unified aspiration, the original Greek institution of the tragic chorus with the governing principles of German aesthetic idealism. That fact alone makes the essay both remarkable and problematic. One crucial consideration which arises in this connection is how the imperatives of idealism are to be translated into fully theatrical effectiveness. Schiller himself was not blind to this issue; after all, he wrote the essay in somewhat anxious response to the first productions of *Die Braut von Messina.* At the very outset, Schiller insists that use of the chorus would speak for itself in a properly presented performance, which for him means one involving a sensuously powerful accompaniment (“diese sinnlich mächtige Begleitung”); even more fundamentally, he asserts that tragedy requires such performance in order to realise its complete unity of language, music and dance. But the prominent position of these statements might be thought less a symptom of Schiller’s practical priorities than of his implicit sensitivity to the potential disparity between idealism and physical *Inszenierung.* That sensitivity betrays itself immediately when he feels the need to introduce a contrast between the existing conventions of theatre and those of a “possible” theatre (“eine *mögliche* [Bühne]”, with Schiller’s own emphasis). Before performance can speak for itself, it seems, the conditions of performance themselves need to be reconstructed (or reimagined) in accordance with the demands of an idealist aesthetic.

It is easy to underline that tension in Schiller’s position by stressing, as many have done, how little practical detail the essay contains about either the original theatrical circumstances of choral performance or the proposed recreation of the chorus on the modern stage. But I would like to make a different point, one which treats this aspect of the essay as more intelligible and less of a simple shortcoming. Schiller is grappling in his own way with a recalcitrant problem that inevitably confronts any careful perspective on the chorality of Greek tragedy. The tragic chorus – inheriting this feature from the larger choral traditions of archaic Greece – is a poetically and aesthetically complex entity, suspended ambiguously (in its dramatic voice and consciousness) between collective and individual identity, between the status of observer and participant, between the frameworks of myth and actuality, and, most broadly

of all, between reflective abstraction and sensuous immediacy. A recognition of these ambiguities can be discerned at several junctures in the essay, but especially in the paragraph beginning 'Und dieses leistet nun der Chor in der Tragödie' ('And this is just what the chorus accomplishes in tragedy'). If Schiller fails fully to reconcile his idealist with his theatrical terms of reference, that is in part, then, because of his awareness of the subtle, elusive fluidity that belongs to the aesthetics of the Greek tragic chorus in its own right.

The task Schiller sets himself, however, is not so much the reconstruction of tragic chorality in historically close detail (something, as mentioned, which he does not purport, and was in fact not well equipped, to undertake) as the shaping of a self-conscious cultural relationship between the modern and the ancient. Here it is to his great credit that he does not claim a facile continuity or a readily achieved rapport. On the contrary, he makes things harder for his own arguments by adopting a particular account of the original standing of the tragic chorus. While (implicitly) following Aristotle's *Poetics* in seeing the chorus as the poetic origin of tragic drama, he superimposes on this premise a distinctively modern (and proto-romantic) conception of an archaic Greek world in which the chorus was itself a *social* phenomenon. Schiller formulates this conception rather strangely by saying that ancient tragedy 'found [the chorus] in nature, and employed it because it had found it' ('sie fand ihn in der Natur und brauchte ihn, weil sie ihn fand'). What he appears to mean by this is that at a very early stage of Greek society, when it was a world of "heroes and kings", social action of significance was conducted in the presence of a chorus-like public, so that the subsequent use of a chorus in tragedy paradoxically "derived from the poetical form of real life" ("er folgte schon aus der poetischen Gestalt des wirklichen Lebens"). Whereas modernity, on this view, is marked by a conflict between the social and the poetic, no such conflict existed "in those simple and primeval times" ("in der einfachen Urzeit"). Schiller's essay projects back a myth of aesthetic harmony onto the supposedly 'childlike' cultural purity of ancient Greece. And despite its strong sense of the gap between ancient and modern, it proposes that the reinstatement of an authentically handled chorus can somehow enable "the modern ordinary world" to be transformed into "the ancient poetical world" ("die moderne gemeine Welt in die alte poetische verwandelt").

Like much other philhellenism of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Schiller's vision of the tragic chorus as a medium through which to recover a Greek aesthetic is unmistakably stamped with nostalgia. It is impossible, for instance, not to hear overtones of Winckelmann's "edle Einfalt und stille Grösse" in the rather one-sided thesis that the chorus brings to the action of tragedy "the beautiful and elevated calm which must feature in a noble work of art" ("die schöne und hohe Ruhe, die der Charakter eines edeln Kunstwerkes

sein muβ"). In this and other respects, the essay's argument is an expression and advocacy of cultural ideals more than an exercise in historical analysis. It is also fascinating testimony to an unusual kind of self-interpretation: an attempt by Schiller the philosopher to make retrospective, theoretical sense of the work of Schiller the playwright. But these historical and personal factors in no way limit the lasting interest of the essay for students of theatre. One reason why that should be so is that the genealogy of our own attitudes to Greek antiquity is inescapably entangled with German philhellenism. Another is that we cannot confidently claim to have an appreciation of the tragic chorus superior to Schiller's. Schiller himself, I have suggested, possesses a shrewd awareness of the dialectical subtleties built into the peculiar workings of the chorus as a lyric presence within the structures of drama. Reading his essay, therefore, is one valuable way of addressing the challenges which the Greek chorus poses to our understanding and imagination.

University of St Andrews
http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/
fsh@st-andrews.ac.uk

Friedrich Schiller

Über den Gebrauch des Chors in der Tragödie

On the Use of the Chorus in Tragedy

Translation, notes and Note on the text
by Guido Avezzù

Über den Gebrauch des Chors in der Tragödie

Ein poetisches Werk muß sich selbst rechtfertigen, und wo die Tat nicht spricht, da wird das Wort nicht viel helfen. Man könnte es also gar wohl dem Chor überlassen, sein eigener Sprecher zu sein, wenn er nur erst selbst auf die gehörige Art zur Darstellung gebracht wäre. Aber das tragische Dichterwerk wird erst durch die theatralische Vorstellung zu einem Ganzen; nur die Worte gibt der Dichter, Musik und Tanz müssen hinzukommen, sie zu beleben. So lange also dem Chor diese sinnlich mächtige Begleitung fehlt, so lange wird er in der Ökonomie des Trauerspiels als ein Außending, als ein fremdartiger Körper und als ein Aufenthalt erscheinen, der nur den Gang der Handlung unterbricht, der die Täuschung stört, der den Zuschauer erkältet. Um dem Chor sein Recht anzutun, muß man sich also von der wirklichen Bühne auf eine *mögliche* versetzen, aber das muß man überall, wo man zu etwas Höherm gelangen will. Was die Kunst noch nicht hat, das soll sie erwerben; der zufällige Mangel an Hilfsmitteln darf die schaffende Einbildungskraft des Dichters nicht beschränken. Das Würdigste setzt er sich zum Ziel, einem Ideale strebt er nach, die ausübende Kunst mag sich nach den Umständen bequemen.

Es ist nicht wahr, was man gewöhnlich behaupten hört, daß das Publikum die Kunst herabzieht; der Künstler zieht das Publikum herab, und zu allen Zeiten, wo die Kunst verfiel, ist sie durch die Künstler gefallen. Das Publikum braucht nichts als Empfänglichkeit, und diese besitzt es. Es tritt vor den Vorhang mit einem unbestimmten Verlangen, mit einem vielseitigen Vermögen. Zu dem Höchsten bringt es eine Fähigkeit mit, es erfreut sich an dem Verständigen und Rechten, und wenn es damit angefangen hat, sich mit dem Schlechten zu begnügen, so wird es zuverlässig damit aufhören, das Vortreffliche zu fodern, wenn man es ihm erst gegeben hat.

---

[1] *Tat*: here the performance of the dramatic work, its theatrical 'doing', and, more in general, any performance whatsoever (the performative event per se).

[2] By saying that the words of an 'inappropriately performed' chorus, that is, lacking the accompaniment of music and dance, chill the audience, Schiller seems to bear in mind the Aristotelian doctrine regarding the chilling effect (τὸ ψυχρόν, the *psychron*) produced by high diction in dramatic dialogues characterised by an everyday-type of communication. Without music or dance accompaniment, it simply does not rise above ordinary language, while sounding mismatched in respect to its dramatic context.

[3] With 'the practising art' ("die ausübende Kunst") Schiller significantly contrasts the truly inspired artist with theatrical practitioners by referrring to the latter via the minor form of art they practice: one which is attuned to circumstantial needs rather than to higher spiritual goals. Below (l. 28) with "contingent, limited and practising [art]" ("*die bedingte, beschränkte,*

On the Use of the Chorus in Tragedy*

A poetical work must justify itself, and where the deed[1] does not speak, words will not be of much help. Thus, one might well let the chorus be its own spokesman, provided that it were appropriately performed. But the tragic work of art achieves wholeness only through the theatrical performance: the poet provides only the words, music and dance must be added in order to make them come alive. Therefore, as long as the chorus lacks this sensuously powerful accompaniment, it will appear to be a thing external to the economy of the tragic drama like a foreign body and a resting-point which only disrupts the progress of the plot, disturbs the illusion, and chills the spectator.[2] Thus, in order to do justice to the chorus, one must relocate oneself from the actual stage to a *possible* one, but this is what one has to do whenever one wants to achieve something higher. What art does not have yet, this it must obtain; the fortuitous lack of resources must not be allowed to constrain the poet's creative power of imagination. He aims at what is most worthy, he strives towards an ideal, whereas the practising art may accomodate itself to the circumstances.[3]

It is not true, as one hears it usually claimed, that the audience degrade art: the artist degrades the audience, and at all times when art declined, it fell because of the artists.[4] The audience need nothing more than receptivity, and they do have it. They step in front of the curtain with a vague yearning, with a manifold capacity. They bring along a flair for what is highest; they enjoy what is sensible and right and yet, if they once begin to be satisfied with what is poor, then they will certainly cease to demand what is excellent, even when it is provided.

ausübende Kunst") he alludes again, and more explicitly, to the practical contingencies of theatrical performance. Reigner (Schiller 1869: 255): "c'est à l'art qui exécute de s'accommoder aux circonstances".

[4] 'Declined' and 'fell' are meant to render in English the spatial metaphor of descent, meaning degeneration, suggested by the verbs *verfallen* and *fallen*. It is important to note that this axiological opposition concerns exclusively the aesthetic sphere, cf. Schiller's *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man* (1794), 10: "It is certainly a matter requiring reflection that, at almost all the periods of history when art flourished and taste held sway, humanity is found in a state of decline" ("In der That muß es Nachdenken erregen, daß man beinahe in jeder Epoche der Geschichte, wo die Künste blühen, und der Geschmack regiert, die Menschheit gesunken findet").

Der Dichter, hört man einwenden, hat gut nach einem Ideal arbeiten, der Kunstrichter hat gut nach Ideen urteilen, die bedingte, beschränkte, ausübende Kunst ruht auf dem Bedürfnis. Der Unternehmer will bestehen, der Schauspieler will sich zeigen, der Zuschauer will unterhalten und in Bewegung gesetzt sein. Das Vergnügen sucht er und ist unzufrieden, wenn man ihm da eine Anstrengung zumutet, wo er ein Spiel und eine Erholung erwartet.

Aber, indem man das Theater ernsthafter behandelt, will man das Vergnügen des Zuschauers nicht aufheben, sondern veredeln. Es soll ein Spiel bleiben, aber ein poetisches. Alle Kunst ist der Freude gewidmet, und es gibt keine höhere und keine ernsthaftere Aufgabe, als die Menschen zu beglücken. Die rechte Kunst ist nur diese, welche den höchsten Genuß verschafft. Der höchste Genuß aber ist die Freiheit des Gemütes in dem lebendigen Spiel aller seiner Kräfte.

Jeder Mensch zwar erwartet von den Künsten der Einbildungskraft eine gewisse Befreiung von den Schranken des Wirklichen, er will sich an dem Möglichen ergötzen und seiner Phantasie Raum geben. Der am wenigsten erwartet, will doch sein Geschäft, sein gemeines Leben, sein Individuum vergessen, er will sich in außerordentlichen Lagen fühlen, sich an den seltsamen Kombinationen des Zufalls weiden, er will, wenn er von ernsthafterer Natur ist, die moralische Weltregierung, die er im wirklichen Leben vermißt, auf der Schaubühne finden. Aber er weiß selbst recht gut, daß er nur ein leeres Spiel treibt, daß er im eigentlichen Sinn sich nur an Träumen weidet, und wenn er von dem Schauplatz wieder in die wirkliche Welt zurückkehrt, so umgibt ihn diese wieder mit ihrer ganzen drückenden Enge, er ist ihr Raub, wie vorher, denn sie selbst ist geblieben, was sie war, und an ihm ist nichts verändert worden. Dadurch ist also nichts gewonnen, als ein gefälliger Wahn des Augenblicks, der beim Erwachen verschwindet.

Und eben darum, weil es hier nur auf eine vorübergehende Täuschung abgesehen ist, so ist auch nur ein Schein der Wahrheit oder die beliebte Wahr-

---

[5]Cf. n. 13.

[6]Here Schiller is evidently assuming that 'play' (*Spiel*) is deemed coterminous with 'entertainment' (cf. *unterhalten*, ll. 30 and 89), and by stressing the audience's disappointment at being confronted with an unexpected intellectual effort, proposes a different conception of theatrical art as spiritual engagement. *Spiel* is translated as 'playfulness', as opposed to 'seriousness' (*Ernst*) at l. 90. 'Play' has elsewhere deeper implications, see for instace l. 43ff., where Schiller contrasts 'theatre' (*Schauplatz*, here equivalent to *Theater* or *Bühne* ['stage'] where people feed upon unreal visions (*Traüme*), with 'the real world' (*die wirkliche Welt*).

[7]Cf. 'Note on the text', **3**.

[8]*Gemüt*: cf. 'Note on the text', **3**.

The poet, one hears it objected, may well work according to an ideal, the critic may well judge according to ideas, but art, contingent, limited and practising as it is, rests on needs.[5] The entrepeneur wants to survive, the actor wants to show himself, the spectator wants to be entertained and moved. He seeks enjoyment and is dissatisfied if one demands an effort from him, where he expected a play[6] and recreation.

But by treating theatre more seriously one does not suspend the spectator's enjoyment, rather one ennobles it. It should remain a play, but a poetical one. All art is dedicated to joy, and there is no higher or more serious task than to make people happy. Proper art[7] is only that which produces the highest pleasure – but the highest pleasure is the freedom of the soul[8] in the living play of all its faculties.

Every one, indeed, expects from the imaginative arts a certain liberation from the bounds of reality; in this way he wants to enjoy the possible, and give room to his own fantasy. He who has the lowest expectations, still wants to forget his business, his ordinary life, his individuality. He wants to feel himself in extraordinary situations, to feed upon the strangest coincidences of chance, and, if he is of a more serious nature, to find upon the stage that universal moral rule which he fails to meet in real life. But he is also well aware that he is engaging only in a play, that, in the true sense, he is only feeding upon dreams, and when he returns from the theatre into the real world, this surrounds him again with its all oppressive constrictions – he is its prey as he was before because the world itself has remained as it was and in him nothing has changed. Therefore, nothing has been gained but a pleasant, fleeting delusion which vanishes when one awakens.

And just for this reason, since only a transient illusion is shown here, what is necessary is only an appearance of truth, or the well-beloved verisimilitude,

30

35

40

45

50

55   scheinlichkeit nötig, die man so gern an die Stelle der Wahrheit setzt.

Die wahre Kunst aber hat es nicht bloß auf ein vorübergehendes Spiel abgesehen, es ist ihr Ernst damit, den Menschen nicht bloß in einen augenblicklichen Traum von Freiheit zu versetzen, sondern ihn wirklich und in der Tat frei zu *machen*, und dieses dadurch, daß sie eine Kraft in ihm erweckt,
60   übt und ausbildet, die sinnliche Welt, die sonst nur als ein roher Stoff auf uns lastet, als eine blinde Macht auf uns drückt, in eine objektive Ferne zu rücken, in ein freies Werk unsers Geistes zu verwandeln und das Materielle durch Ideen zu beherrschen.

Und eben darum weil die wahre Kunst etwas Reelles und Objektives will,
65   so kann sie sich nicht bloß mit dem Schein der Wahrheit begnügen; auf der Wahrheit selbst, auf dem festen und tiefen Grunde der Natur errichtet sie ihr ideales Gebäude.

Wie aber nun die Kunst zugleich ganz ideell und doch im tiefsten Sinne reell sein – wie sie das Wirkliche ganz verlassen und doch aufs genaueste mit
70   der Natur übereinstimmen soll und kann, das ists, was wenige fassen, was die Ansicht poetischer und plastischer Werke so schielend macht, weil beide Foderungen einander im gemeinen Urteil geradezu aufzuheben scheinen.

Auch begegnet es gewöhnlich, daß man das eine mit Aufopferung des andern zu erreichen sucht und eben deswegen beides verfehlt. Wem die Natur zwar
75   einen treuen Sinn und eine Innigkeit des Gefühls verliehen, aber die schaffende Einbildungskraft versagte, der wird ein treuer Maler des Wirklichen sein, er wird die zufällige Erscheinungen, aber nie den Geist der Natur ergreifen. Nur den Stoff der Welt wird er uns wiederbringen, aber es wird eben darum nicht unser Werk, nicht das freie Produkt unsers bildenden Geistes sein und kann also
80   auch die wohltätige Wirkung der Kunst, welche in der Freiheit besteht, nicht haben. Ernst zwar, doch unerfreulich ist die Stimmung, mit der uns ein solcher Künstler und Dichter entläßt, und wir sehen uns durch die Kunst selbst, die uns befreien sollte, in die gemeine enge Wirklichkeit peinlich zurückversetzt. Wem hingegen zwar eine rege Phantasie, aber ohne Gemüt und Charakter, zuteil
85   geworden, der wird sich um keine Wahrheit bekümmern; sondern mit dem Weltstoff nur spielen, nur durch phantastische und bizarre Kombinationen zu überraschen suchen, und wie sein ganzes Tun nur Schaum und Schein ist, so wird er zwar für den Augenblick unterhalten, aber im Gemüt nichts erbauen und begründen. Sein Spiel ist, so wie der Ernst des andern, kein poetisches. Phan-
90   tastische Gebilde willkürlich aneinanderreihen, heißt nicht ins Ideale gehen,

---

⁹ *Stoff... das Materielle*: cf. 'Note on the text', **3**.

that people so easily substitute for truth.

But true art does not aim at a play soon to be forgotten; its seriousnesss does not simply consist in situating people in a dream of freedom lasting the twinkling of an eye, but in *making* them really and in fact free, and this by awakening, exercising, and developing in them a power to drive into an objective distance the sensuous world, which otherwise would weigh upon us like coarse fabric and would press upon us as a blind force, to transform it into a free work of our spirit, and to dominate the material[9] by means of ideas.

55

60

And just for this reason, because true art wants something real and object-ive, she cannot be satisfied merely with the appearance of truth; upon truth itself, upon the firm and deep foundation of nature, she builds her ideal edifice.

But now, how art can be at once altogether ideal and yet in the deepest sense real – how she must and can utterly distance itself from the actual and yet be in the most perfect harmony with nature, this is what few understand, hence the squint perspective on poetic and plastic works of art, since in the ordinary way of judging these two claims seem to counteract each other.

65

Furthermore, it is habitually contended that by sacrificing the one one seeks to achieve the other, and exactly in this way one misses both. He who was endowed by nature with a true sensibility and deeply ingrained feelings, but was denied the creative imaginative power, will be a faithful painter of the actual, will be able to grasp accidental appearances but not the spirit of nature. He will be able to reproduce for us only the stuff of the world, but in this way it is not our own work, the free product of our creative spirit, nor does it have the beneficial effect of art, whose foundation is freedom. Serious, indeed, yet unpleasant, is the mood in which such an artist and a poet leave us: we see ourselves painfully thrown back into our mean and narrow reality by the very art which should have liberated us. On the other hand, an artist who shares in a vivid fancy, but is destitute of soul and character, will not bother about truth at all: instead, he will only play with the stuff of the world, and seek to surprise us with fantastical and whimsical combinations; and since his whole performance is nothing but foam and appearance, he will, to be sure, entertain us for the twinkling of an eye, but will fail to build up and found anything in the mind. His playfulness, like the seriousness of the other, is thoroughly unpoetical. To arrange fantastic shapes in an arbitrary sequence does not

70

75

80

85

und das Wirkliche nachahmend wieder bringen, heißt nicht die Natur darstellen. Beide Forderungen stehen so wenig im Widerspruch miteinander, daß sie vielmehr – eine und dieselbe sind; daß die Kunst nur dadurch wahr ist, daß sie das Wirkliche ganz verläßt und rein ideell wird. Die Natur selbst ist nur eine
95 Idee des Geistes, die nie in die Sinne fällt. Unter der Decke der Erscheinungen liegt sie, aber sie selbst kommt niemals zur Erscheinung. Bloß der Kunst des Ideals ist es verliehen, oder vielmehr, es ist ihr aufgegeben, diesen Geist des Alls zu ergreifen und in einer körperlichen Form zu binden. Auch sie selbst kann ihn zwar nie vor die Sinne, aber doch durch ihre schaffende Gewalt vor
100 die Einbildungskraft bringen und dadurch wahrer sein als alle Wirklichkeit und realer als alle Erfahrung. Es ergibt sich daraus von selbst, daß der Künstler kein einziges Element aus der Wirklichkeit brauchen kann, wie er es findet, daß sein Werk in *allen* seinen Teilen ideell sein muß, wenn es als ein Ganzes Realität haben und mit der Natur übereinstimmen soll.

105 Was von Poesie und Kunst im Ganzen wahr ist, gilt auch von allen Gattungen derselben, und es läßt sich ohne Mühe von dem jetzt Gesagten auf die Tragödie die Anwendung machen. Auch hier hatte man lange und hat noch jetzt mit dem gemeinen Begriff des *Natürlichen* zu kämpfen, welcher alle Poesie und Kunst geradezu aufhebt und vernichtet. Der bildenden Kunst gibt man
110 zwar notdürftig, doch mehr aus konventionellen als aus innern Gründen, eine gewisse Idealität zu, aber von der Poesie und von der dramatischen insbesondere verlangt man *Illusion*, die, wenn sie auch wirklich zu leisten wäre, immer nur ein armseliger Gauklerbetrug sein würde. Alles Äußere bei einer dramatischen Vorstellung steht diesem Begriff entgegen – alles ist nur ein
115 Symbol des Wirklichen. Der Tag selbst auf dem Theater ist nur ein künstlicher, die Architektur ist nur eine symbolische, die metrische Sprache selbst ist ideal, aber die Handlung soll nun einmal real sein und der Teil das Ganze zerstören. So haben die Franzosen, die den Geist der Alten zuerst ganz mißverstanden, eine Einheit des Orts und der Zeit nach dem gemeinsten empirischen Sinn
120 auf der Schaubühne eingeführt, als ob hier ein anderer Ort wäre als der bloß ideale Raum, und eine andere Zeit als bloß die stetige Folge der Handlung.

Durch Einführung einer metrischen Sprache ist man indes der poetischen Tragödie schon um einen großen Schritt näher gekommen. Es sind einige lyri-

---

[10] *Alles Äußere*: reference to all that does not belong intrinsically to the materiality of theatre and rather relates to its illusionistic power (as Schiller explains soon afterwards, the illusion of daylight, architecture and so on which belong to the real world, not the stage itself).

[11] *Der Teil das Ganze zerstören*: the "part" he speaks of here is the action itself, whose reality dismantles the overall theatrical illusion.

mean to enter into the ideal, and closely to reproduce reality does not mean to represent nature. These two claims are so little contradictory that they rather are one and the same, because art is true only if it altogether forsakes actuality and becomes pure ideal. Nature herself is just an idea of the spirit, which does not fall under the senses. She lies beneath the veil of appearances, but never appears herself. The art of the ideal alone is granted, or rather appointed, to grasp this spirit of the universe and bind it to a corporeal shape. But not even this art can present it to the senses by means of her creative force, rather she can present it to our imaginative faculty and consequently be truer than all actuality, and more real than all experience. It follows, self-evidently, that the artist can use no single element taken from actuality as he finds it, that his work must be ideal in *all* its parts in order to possess reality as a whole and to be in harmony with nature.

What is true of poetry and of art in general also holds for all their genres, and what has just been said may be applied to tragedy with no difficulty. Here, too, one had, and still has, to contend with the ordinary concept of the *natural*, which altogether dissolves and annihilates all poetry and art. The fine arts are somehow granted a certain ideality, on conventional rather than intrinsic grounds. But from poetry and, especially, the dramatic one, one demands *illusion*, which, even if it were achievable, would only be the poor trickery of a charlatan. In a dramatic performance all that is external[10] is contrary to this notion – everything is but a symbol of the real. In the theatre, the day itself is only artificial, the architecture symbolic, the metrical language itself ideal, but at least the action must be real – and the part destroys the whole.[11] Thus the French, who first wholly misunderstood the spirit of the Ancients, introduced on the stage the unities of space and time in the most ordinarily empirical sense, as if it were a place other than a purely ideal space, and time were other than the purely consistent sequence of the actions.

Meanwhile, by introducing metrical speech, a large step closer to poetical tragedy has been taken. Some lyrical experiments have been successfully

90

95

100

105

110

115

sche Versuche auf der Schaubühne glücklich durchgegangen, und die Poesie
hat sich durch ihre eigene lebendige Kraft, im einzelnen, manchen Sieg über das
herrschende Vorurteil errungen. Aber mit den einzelnen ist wenig gewonnen,
wenn nicht der Irrtum im Ganzen fällt, und es ist nicht genug, daß man das
nur als eine poetische Freiheit duldet, was doch das Wesen aller Poesie ist. Die
Einführung des Chors wäre der letzte, der entscheidende Schritt – und wenn
derselbe auch nur dazu diente, dem Naturalism in der Kunst offen und ehrlich
den Krieg zu erklären, so sollte er uns eine lebendige Mauer sein, die die Tragö-
die um sich herumzieht, um sich von der wirklichen Welt rein abzuschließen
und sich ihren idealen Boden, ihre poetische Freiheit zu bewahren.

Die Tragödie der Griechen ist, wie man weiß, aus dem Chor entsprungen.
Aber so wie sie sich historisch und der Zeitfolge nach daraus loswand, so kann
man auch sagen, daß sie poetisch und dem Geiste nach aus demselben entstan-
den, und daß ohne diesen beharrlichen Zeugen und Träger der Handlung eine
ganz andere Dichtung aus ihr geworden wäre. Die Abschaffung des Chors und
die Zusammenziehung dieses sinnlich mächtigen Organs in die charakterlose
langweilig wiederkehrende Figur eines ärmlichen Vertrauten war also keine
so große Verbesserung der Tragödie, als die Franzosen und ihre Nachbeter
sich eingebildet haben.

Die alte Tragödie, welche sich ursprünglich nur mit Göttern, Helden und
Königen abgab, brauchte den Chor als eine notwendige Begleitung, sie fand
ihn in der Natur und brauchte ihn, weil sie ihn fand. Die Handlungen und
Schicksale der Helden und Könige sind schon an sich selbst öffentlich und
waren es in der einfachen Urzeit noch mehr. Der Chor war folglich in der alten
Tragödie mehr ein natürliches Organ, er folgte schon aus der poetischen Gestalt
des wirklichen Lebens. In der neuen Tragödie wird er zu einem Kunstorgan; er
hilft die Poesie *hervorbringen.* Der neuere Dichter findet den Chor nicht mehr
in der Natur, er muß ihn poetisch erschaffen und einführen, das ist, er muß

---

[12]In his letter of 28 March 1803 to Christian Gottfried Körner (Schiller 1984: 25, n. 33), Schiller
wrote that "a great part of the German public is not able to renounce its prosaic concept of what
it supposes to be natural in a poetic work" ("ein großer Theil des ganzen Deutschen Publicums
seine prosaische Begriffe von dem Natürlichen in einem Dichterwerk nicht ablegen kann"). On
April 25th, Körner replied: "The wrong notion of our public about what is natural has to some
degree compelled some art theoreticians to debase art to a trade. Opinions about painting most
often seem more reasonable, but about a poem etc." ("Die falschen Begriffe unsers Publikums
über das Natürliche sind wohl zum Theil einige Kunsttheoretiker veranlaßt worden, die Kunst
gerne zu einem Geschäft herabwürdigen möchten. Über Gemählde hört man auch öfter ein
gesundes Urtheil, als über ein Gedicht etc."; Schiller 1987).

[13]Cf. F. Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, ch. 7: "An infinitely more valuable [*than that of A.W.*

staged, and poetry, in some individual cases, has prevailed over current pre-
judice by its own living force. But in individual cases little is gained if the
error is not definitely eradicated, and it is not sufficient that what in fact is
the essence of all poetry be tolerated as poetical licence. The introduction of   120
the chorus would be the last and decisive step – and even if it only served to
openly and honestly declare war upon naturalism in art,[12] the chorus should
be to us a living wall which tragedy draws around itself in order to guard itself
from the world of actuality, and maintain for itself its own ideal ground, its
poetical freedom.[13]   125

Greek tragedy, as is well known, originated from the chorus.[14] But al-
though historically and in the course of time it cut itself loose from the chorus,
even so one may say that poetically and in spirit it arose precisely from the
chorus, and that without such a persistent witness and bearer of the action a
completely different poetical genre would have grown out of it. The dissolution   130
of the chorus and the conflation of this sensitive and powerful organ with the
characterless, boring, and ever recurring figure of a simple confidant[15] were
by no means such a great improvement of the tragedy as the French and their
imitators have imagined.

Ancient tragedy, which originally dealt only with gods, heroes, and kings,   135
required the chorus as a necessary accompaniment; it found it in nature, and
employed it because it had found it. The deeds and fates of the heroes and kings
are public in themselves, and in those simple and primeval times they were
even more so. Thus, in ancient tragedy the chorus was more than a natural
organ, in so far as it derived from the poetical form of real life. In modern   140
tragedy, it becomes an artificial organ; it helps to bring poetry forth. The
modern poet no longer finds the chorus in nature, he must create it poetically
and *introduce* it, that is, he must make such a change in the plot he is handling

---

Schlegel] insight into the significance of the chorus was displayed by Schiller in the celebrated
Preface to his *Bride of Messina*, where he regards the chorus *as a living etc.*" (Nietzsche 2000:
58; my emphasis; "Eine unendlich werthvollere Einsicht über die Bedeutung des Chors hatte
bereits Schiller in der berühmten Vorrede zur *Braut von Messina* verrathen, der den Chor als
'eine lebendige Mauer etc.'"). As remarked by Silk and Stern, "Nietzsche sees [the separateness
of stage and auditorium] at one and the same time as a physical fact, an aesthetic phenomenon
and a metaphysical-religious condition" (1983: 350).

[14]Schiller refers to Aristotle's *Poetics* 1449a10f.: "The (tragedy) came from the leaders of the
dithyramb" ("γενομένη... ἡ [τραγῳδία] ἀπὸ τῶν ἐξαρχόντων τὸν διθύραμβον").

[15]Schiller alludes to the conflation of the choral collective into an individual character who,
among all the chorus's privileges, maintains only that of receiving the confidences of the main

mit der Fabel, die er behandelt, eine solche Veränderung vornehmen, wodurch sie in jene kindliche Zeit und in jene einfache Form des Lebens zurückversetzt wird.

155   Der Chor leistet daher dem neuern Tragiker noch weit wesentlichere Dienste, als dem alten Dichter, eben deswegen, weil er die moderne gemeine Welt in die alte poetische verwandelt, weil er ihm alles das unbrauchbar macht, was der Poesie widerstrebt, und ihn auf die einfachsten, ursprünglichsten und naivsten Motive hinauftreibt. Der Palast der Könige ist jetzt geschlossen,

160   die Gerichte haben sich von den Toren der Städte in das Innere der Häuser zurückgezogen, die Schrift hat das lebendige Wort verdrängt, das Volk selbst, die sinnlich lebendige Masse, ist, wo sie nicht als rohe Gewalt wirkt, zum Staat, folglich zu einem abgezogenen Begriff geworden, die Götter sind in die Brust des Menschen zurückgekehrt. Der Dichter muß die Paläste wieder auftun, er

165   muß die Gerichte unter freien Himmel herausführen, er muß die Götter wieder aufstellen, er muß alles Unmittelbare, das durch die künstliche Einrichtung des wirklichen Lebens aufgehoben ist, wieder herstellen und alles künstliche Machwerk an dem Menschen und um denselben, das die Erscheinung seiner innern Natur und seines ursprünglichen Charakters hindert, wie der Bildhauer

170   die modernen Gewänder, abwerfen und von allen äußern Umgebungen desselben nichts aufnehmen, als was die höchste der Formen, die menschliche, sichtbar macht.

       Aber ebenso, wie der bildende Künstler die faltige Fülle der Gewänder um seine Figuren breitet, um die Räume seines Bildes reich und anmutig

175   auszufüllen, um die getrennten Partien desselben in ruhigen Massen stetig zu verbinden, um der Farbe, die das Auge reizt und erquickt, einen Spielraum zu geben, um die menschlichen Formen zugleich geistreich zu verhüllen und sichtbar zu machen, ebenso durchflicht und umgibt der tragische Dichter seine streng abgemessene Handlung und die festen Umrisse seiner handelnden

---

characters. How the collective became an individual corresponds to the history of the dramatic chorus since its rediscovery in the sixteenth century (see here Bigliazzi, this issue: 101-33).

[16]"In jene kindliche Zeit und in jene einfache Form des Lebens": cf. 150. ("in der einfachen Urzeit"), 124 ("die einfachsten, ursprünglichsten und naivsten Motive"). See 'Note on the text', 4.

[17]*Aufstellen*: rather than resurrecting the gods, the idea is that of restoring their statues.

[18]The expression "all artificial and poor efforts" ("alles künstliche Machwerk") is eventually referred to "the artificial frame" ("die künstliche Einrichtung") of real life' (ll. 170ff.) with a clearly ironic and derogatory meaning.

[19]Albeit etymologically close to the word *Geist*, which in these pages normally has the meaning of 'spirit' rather than 'mind', here *geistreich* conveys an idea of ingenuity, cleverness, rather than inspiration.

whereby it is brought back to that childlike time and to that simple form of life.[16]

145

Therefore, the chorus renders a more substantial service for the modern tragedian than it did for the ancient poet, precisely for this reason, because it changes the modern ordinary world into the ancient poetical one, because it makes all that goes against poetry useless to the poet, and drives him aloft to the most simple, original, and naive motifs. The palace of the kings is now closed, the courts of justice have withdrawn from the city gates into the interior of abodes, writing has replaced the living word, the people itself – the sensuous, living mass –, when it does not act as brute force, has become the state and thereby an abstract concept, the gods have retreated into the bosom of man. The poet must open the palaces again, he must lead the courts out under the open heavens, he must restore[17] the gods, he must re-establish all that is immediate and was dissolved by the artificial frame of real life, and cast off all artificial and poor efforts[18] *on* and *around* man, which prevent the manifestation of his inner nature and original character, just as the sculptor casts off modern robes, and nothing takes of the external circumstances, but what makes the highest of all forms, the human ones, visible.

150

155

160

But just as a painter spreads the profusion of pleated garments around his figures in order to richly and gracefully fill the space of his pictures, combine its several parts in regular and balanced proportions, give room to play to colour, which entices and refreshes the eye, ingeniously[19] veil human shapes and at the same time make them visible, so the tragic poet interlaces and surrounds his rigorously proportioned plot and the firm outlines of his acting figures with a splendid, lyrical fabric, in which the acting characters freely

165

180 Figuren mit einem lyrischen Prachtgewebe, in welchem sich, als wie in einem
weit gefalteten Purpurgewand, die handelnden Personen frei und edel mit
einer gehaltenen Würde und hoher Ruhe bewegen.

In einer höhern Organisation darf der Stoff oder das Elementarische nicht
mehr sichtbar sein, die chemische Farbe verschwindet in der feinen Carnation
185 des Lebendigen. Aber auch der Stoff hat seine Herrlichkeit und kann als solcher
in einem Kunstkörper aufgenommen werden. Dann aber muß er sich durch
Leben und Fülle und durch Harmonie seinen Platz verdienen und die Formen,
die er umgibt, geltend machen, anstatt sie durch seine Schwere zu erdrücken.

In Werken der bildenden Kunst ist dieses jedem leicht verständlich, aber
190 auch in der Poesie und in der tragischen, von der hier die Rede ist, findet
dasselbe statt. Alles, was der Verstand sich im allgemeinen ausspricht, ist
ebenso wie das, was bloß die Sinne reizt, nur Stoff und rohes Element in einem
Dichterwerk und wird da, wo es vorherrscht, unausbleiblich das Poetische
zerstören; denn dieses liegt gerade in dem Indifferenzpunkt des Ideellen und
195 Sinnlichen. Nun ist aber der Mensch so gebildet, daß er immer von dem
Besondern ins Allgemeine gehen will, und die Reflexion muß also auch in der
Tragödie ihren Platz erhalten. Soll sie aber diesen Platz verdienen, so muß sie
das, was ihr an sinnlichem Leben fehlt, durch den Vortrag wieder gewinnen,
denn wenn die zwei Elemente der Poesie, das Ideale und Sinnliche, nicht innig
200 verbunden *zusammen wirken*, so müssen sie *nebeneinander* wirken, oder die
Poesie ist aufgehoben. Wenn die Waage nicht vollkommen inne steht, da kann
das Gleichgewicht nur durch eine *Schwankung* der beiden Schalen hergestellt
werden.

Und dieses leistet nun der Chor in der Tragödie. Der Chor ist selbst kein
205 Individuum, sondern ein allgemeiner Begriff, aber dieser Begriff repräsentiert
sich durch eine sinnlich mächtige Masse, welche durch ihre ausfüllende Gegen-
wart den Sinnen imponiert. Der Chor verläßt den engen Kreis der Handlung,

---

[20]Schiller again resorts to a spatial metaphor of verticality ("higher"), implying a positive value
judgement, in order to signify here the work's refined articulation. Shortly afterwards the
vertical metaphor returns to denote the heavy pressure exerted by materiality which degrades
the work of art and prevents it from achieving the ideal through spiritual elevation.

[21]Also in this case Schiller opts for an abstract terminology which does away with all idea of
phenomenological and elemental reality in order to foreground elementarity as a general/onto-
logical concept.

[22]Schiller suggests a conceptualisation of the chorus, neither an individual nor only a crowd
of individuals, but a concept (*Begriff*), yet able to make itself perceptible as a "sensuous and
mighty mass". In his Basle lecture on the "Greek Music Drama" (1871) Nietzsche will similarly
emphasise the chorus as a formidable singleton, whose singularity is quite different from

and nobly move, as in a purple multipleated garment, with sustained dignity and high composure.   170

   In a higher organisation,[20] the stuff or the elementary[21] must no longer be visibile – chemical colours dissolve into the fine carnation of the living subject. But the stuff, too, has its own splendour, and as such can be included in a work of art. But then it must earn its place with liveliness and fullness and harmony, and confer value on the ideal forms which it surrounds, rather   175 than overwhelm them with its gravity.
   This may be easily understood in the fine arts, but the same may be found also in poetry and the tragic, of which we are talking here. All that our under-standing expresses in general, is precisely like that which simply excites the senses, only stuff and raw element in a poetical work, and if it predominates, it   180 will inevitably destroy the poetical, because this lies precisely at the midpoint between the ideal and the sensible. Now, the human being is so constitued that he always wants to proceed from the particular to the general, and reflection must have its place in tragedy. But if it is to earn this place, it must regain what it lacks in the sensuous life through the performance. If the two elements   185 of poetry, the ideal and the sensuous, do not *work closely together*, they must work *side by side*, otherwise poetry is lost. If the scale is not in perfect balance, the equilibrium may be restored only by *swaying* the pans of the scale.

   And this is just what the chorus accomplishes in tragedy. The chorus *per se* is not an individual, rather a general concept; but this concept shows itself in   190 a sensuous and mighty mass, which appeals to the senses with its pervading presence.[22] The chorus leaves the narrow boundaries of the action in order to

---

the individuality of the characters: "although a multiplicity of persons, the chorus does not musically represent a mass of people, but only an enormous individual being endowed with supernatural lungs" ("obschon eine Mehrheit von Personen, stellt er doch musikalisch keine Masse vor, sondern nur ein ungeheures, mit übernatürlicher Lunge begabtes Einzelwesen"; Nietzsche 1980: 15f.).

um sich über Vergangenes und Künftiges, über ferne Zeiten und Völker, über das Menschliche überhaupt zu verbreiten, um die großen Resultate des Lebens zu ziehen und die Lehren der Weisheit auszusprechen. Aber er tut dieses mit der vollen Macht der Phantasie, mit einer kühnen lyrischen Freiheit, welche auf den hohen Gipfeln der menschlichen Dinge, wie mit Schritten der Götter, einhergeht – und er tut es, von der ganzen sinnlichen Macht des Rhythmus und der Musik in Tönen und Bewegungen begleitet.

Der Chor *reinigt* also das tragische Gedicht, indem er die Reflexion von der Handlung absondert und eben durch diese Absonderung sie selbst mit poetischer Kraft ausrüstet; ebenso, wie der bildende Künstler die gemeine Notdurft der Bekleidung durch eine reiche Draperie in einen Reiz und in eine Schönheit verwandelt.

Aber ebenso, wie sich der Maler gezwungen sieht, den Farbenton des Lebendigen zu verstärken, um den mächtigen Stoffen das Gleichgewicht zu halten, so legt die lyrische Sprache des Chors dem Dichter auf, verhältnismäßig die ganze Sprache des Gedichts zu erheben und dadurch die sinnliche Gewalt des Ausdrucks überhaupt zu verstärken. Nur der Chor berechtigt den tragischen Dichter zu dieser Erhebung des Tons, die das Ohr ausfüllt, die den Geist anspannt, die das ganze Gemüt erweitert. Diese eine Riesengestalt in seinem Bilde nötigt ihn, alle seine Figuren auf den Kothurn zu stellen und seinem Gemälde dadurch die tragische Größe zu geben. Nimmt man den Chor hinweg, so muß die Sprache der Tragödie im Ganzen sinken, oder was jetzt groß und mächtig ist, wird gezwungen und überspannt erscheinen. Der alte Chor, in das französische Trauerspiel eingeführt, würde es in seiner ganzen Dürftigkeit darstellen und zunichte machen; eben derselbe würde ohne Zweifel Shakespeares Tragödie erst ihre wahre Bedeutung geben.

So wie der Chor in die Sprache *Leben* bringt, so bringt er *Ruhe* in die Handlung – aber die schöne und hohe Ruhe, die der Charakter eines edeln

---

[23]The word "power" here renders the original "*Kraft*" as in previous occurrences, in order to respect the iterative lexical choices of the author, although its meaning is now closer to that of 'vigour'.

[24]In this case Schiller does not use exactly the same verb as before (l. 223: "compel"/*zwingen*) to convey an idea of 'obligation', thus sacrificing perfect parallelism and choosing to emphasise a more physical, material, overtone, tinged with a connotation of inevitability – here rendered by the verb "push" ("*auflegen*", almost as if it were *auferlegen*).

[25]Nietzsche will recall the gigantism of Greek tragedy in his "Greek Music Drama": "For what else, other than puppets, would call those beings, standing on high heels or on *cothurni*, with giantsized, gaudily painted masks …" (Nietzsche 2013: 12). It is worth noting that both Schiller and Nietzsche, as many others, emphasised the raised *cothurni* against

encompass the past and the future, distant times and nations, and humanity in general, so as to draw conclusions on the grand results of life and pronounce the teachings of wisdom. But it does so with the full power of fantasy, with a bold lyrical freedom, which ascends to the highest summits of human things with almost god-like step – and it does so with the accompaniment, in its accents and movements, of the full sensuous power of rhythm and music.

The chorus thus *purifies* tragic poetry, while separating reflection from the action, and, by means of this separation, supplies reflection with poetical power[23] – just as the artist transforms the ordinary necessity of clothing into charm and beauty by means of a rich drapery.

But just as the painter feels himself compelled to intensify the shade of his living subject in order to maintain a balance between his powerful materials, so the lyrical language of the chorus pushes[24] the poet to proportionally heighten his entire poetical language, and thus to intensify the sensuous force of the expression in general. Only the chorus justifies the tragic poet in this heightening of tone, which fills the ear, strains the spirit, and expands the entire soul. This one giant form in his picture obliges him to place all of his figures upon cothurni, thus giving his painting tragic greatness. Should the chorus be taken away, then the whole language of tragedy would inevitably be lowered,[25] or what is now great and mighty would appear contrived and overstrained. The ancient chorus, if introduced into the French tragic drama, would reveal its full poverty and unmake it to nothing;[26] exactly the same thing would doubtlessly give Shakespeare's tragedy its true meaning for the first time.[27]

As the chorus brings *life* to language, so it gives *calm* to the action – but the beautiful and elevated calm which must feature in a noble work of art.

---

archaeological evidence (see Taplin 1985: 14).

[26] *Zunichte machen*: elsewhere in this text Schiller uses images of destruction and annihilation (cf. l. 92), but never with such emphasis, due to the collocation of two strong words side by side; hence the expressive redundancy in English of "unmake… to nothing" which foregrounds, by antithesis, what he says soon afterwards about Shakespeare.

[27] Richard Wagner will express a different view on this subject: "Shakespeare's tragedy unconditionally stands above that of Greece, in so far as it has enabled artistic technique to dispense with the necessity of a Chorus" (Wagner 1995: 6of.) ("Shakespeare's Tragödie steht insofern unbedingt über der griechischen, als sie für die künstlerische Technik die Nothwendigkeit des Chores vollkommen überwunden hat", Wagner 1869: 52f.). On the chorus in Shakespeare see Bigliazzi, this issue: 101-33.

Kunstwerkes sein muß. Denn das Gemüt des Zuschauers soll auch in der heftigsten Passion seine Freiheit behalten, es soll kein Raub der Eindrücke sein, sondern sich immer klar und heiter von den Rührungen scheiden, die es erleidet. Was das gemeine Urteil an dem Chor zu tadeln pflegt, daß er die
240 Täuschung aufhebe, daß er die Gewalt der Affekte breche, das gereicht ihm zu seiner höchsten Empfehlung, denn eben diese blinde Gewalt der Affekte ist es, die der wahre Künstler vermeidet, diese Täuschung ist es, die er zu erregen verschmäht. Wenn die Schläge, womit die Tragödie unser Herz trifft, ohne Unterbrechung aufeinander folgten, so würde das Leiden über die Tätig-
245 keit siegen. Wir würden uns mit dem Stoffe vermengen und nicht mehr über demselben schweben. Dadurch, daß der Chor die Teile auseinanderhält und zwischen die Passionen mit seiner beruhigenden Betrachtung tritt, gibt er uns unsre Freiheit zurück, die im Sturm der Affekte verlorengehen würde. Auch die tragischen Personen selbst bedürfen dieses Anhalts, dieser Ruhe, um sich
250 zu sammeln; denn sie sind keine wirkliche Wesen, die bloß der Gewalt des Moments gehorchen und bloß ein Individuum darstellen, sondern ideale Personen und Repräsentanten ihrer Gattung, die das Tiefe der Menschheit aussprechen. Die Gegenwart des Chors, der als ein richtender Zeuge sie vernimmt und die ersten Ausbrüche ihrer Leidenschaft durch seine Dazwischenkunft bändigt,
255 motiviert die Besonnenheit, mit der sie handeln, und die Würde, mit der sie reden. Sie stehen gewissermaßen schon auf einem natürlichen Theater, weil sie vor Zuschauern sprechen und handeln, und werden eben deswegen desto tauglicher, von dem Kunsttheater zu einem Publikum zu reden.

Soviel über meine Befugnis, den alten Chor auf die tragische Bühne zu-
260 rückzuführen. Chöre kennt man zwar auch schon in der modernen Tragödie, aber der Chor des griechischen Trauerspiels, so wie ich ihn hier gebraucht habe, der Chor als eine einzige ideale Person, die die ganze Handlung trägt und begleitet, dieser ist von jenen operhaften Chören wesentlich verschieden,

---

[28]Here Schiller alludes to both the chorus's interventions dividing the acts of the play – like the *stasima* (choral songs, sung by the chorus when 'stationary') of Greek tragedy and his own (half-)choruses in the *Bride* (Zimmermann 2011: 302) – and to the chorus's contributions to the characterisation of their interlocutors by intervening in, or breaking up, their dialogues.

[29]Here "force" (*Gewalt*) has the meaning of 'impulse' of the moment, referring to the subjective response to circumstances.

[30]This too is a somewhat dense image suggesting a distinctly Schillerian stylistic choice, which may be paraphrased as 'the deep core' or 'heart' of humanity, and which Lodge (Schiller 1863) significantly rendered as "deep things of humanity".

[31]Lodge (Schiller 1863) did not translate the German text corresponding to ll. 235-40. In these enigmatic words of Schiller we can envisage two, so to speak, concentric theatres: a "natural"

Because the audience's mind ought also to maintain its freedom even in the midst of the fiercest passion; it should not fall prey to impressions, rather always clearly and serenely detach itself from the emotions it suffers. What in the ordinary way of judging is objected to the chorus, that it suspends the illusion and breaks the force of affections, this credits it with the highest recommendation, because precisely this blind force of affections is what the true artist avoids, this illusion is what he disdains to excite. If the blows with which tragedy strikes our hearts followed one another without interruption, then suffering would win over action. We would be confounded with the stuff, and no longer float above it. Thus, since the chorus holds the parts asunder[28] and steps between the passions with its calming considerations, it gives us our freedom back, which would be lost in the storm of affections. Also the tragic characters themselves need this pause, this calm, in order to collect themselves; because they are no real beings, who merely obey the force[29] of the moment and merely represent one individuality, rather ideal characters and representatives of their species, who express the depth[30] of humanity. The presence of the chorus, which listens to them as a judging witness and by its own intervention harnesses the incipient outbursts of their sufferings, motivates the reasonableness with which they act and the dignity with which they speak. To some extent they stand in a natural theatre, because they speak and act in front of spectators, and therefore they will speak even more appropriately to their audience from an artificial theatre.[31]

Thus much on my right to reintroduce the ancient chorus upon the tragic stage. Indeed, choruses are already known in modern tragedies; but the Greek tragic chorus, such as I have employed it here, the chorus as a single ideal person furthering and accompanying the whole action, this is essentially different from those operatic choruses,[32] and when sometimes I hear talk about

220

225

230

235

240

245

---

one, where characters speak to the choral collective "derived from the poetical form of real life" (l. 140), as their immediate spectators, and an "artificial" one, where characters and chorus play in front of their actual audience. In a sense, it is as if the chorus, "create(d) and introduce(d)" by the modern playwright who "no longer finds (it) in nature" (ll. 142f.) but in "childlike", "original", "primeval", and "simple" forms of life (cf. n. 16), always had their back turned to the audience, just like a "living wall" (l. 123).

[32]Here Schiller seems to anticipate Wagner's well-known position against operatic choruses (Wagner 1995: 60-63; 282f.; 335f; 303-306).

und wenn ich bei Gelegenheit der griechischen Tragödie von *Chören* anstatt
von einem Chor sprechen höre, so entsteht mir der Verdacht, daß man nicht
recht wisse, wovon man rede. Der Chor der alten Tragödie ist meines Wissens
seit dem Verfall derselben nie wieder auf der Bühne erschienen.

Ich habe den Chor zwar in zwei Teile getrennt und im Streit mit sich selbst
dargestellt; aber dies ist nur dann der Fall, wo er als wirkliche Person und als
blinde Menge mithandelt. Als *Chor* und als ideale Person ist er immer eins
mit sich selbst. Ich habe den Ort verändert und den Chor mehrmal abgehen
lassen; aber auch Aeschylus, der Schöpfer der Tragödie, und Sophokles, der
größte Meister in dieser Kunst, haben sich dieser Freiheit bedient.

Eine andere Freiheit, die ich mir erlaubt, möchte schwerer zu rechtferti-
gen sein. Ich habe die christliche Religion und die griechische Götterlehre
vermischt angewendet, ja, selbst an den maurischen Aberglauben erinnert.
Aber der Schauplatz der Handlung ist Messina, wo diese drei Religionen teils
lebendig, teils in Denkmälern fortwirkten und zu den Sinnen sprachen. Und
dann halte ich es für ein Recht der Poesie, die verschiedenen Religionen als ein
kollektives Ganze für die Einbildungskraft zu behandeln, in welchem alles, was
einen eignen Charakter trägt, eine eigne Empfindungsweise ausdrückt, seine
Stelle findet. Unter der Hülle aller Religionen liegt die Religion selbst, die Idee
eines Göttlichen, und es muß dem Dichter erlaubt sein, dieses auszusprechen,
in welcher Form er es jedesmal am bequemsten und am treffendsten findet.

---

[33]In Schiller's *Bride of Messina* the Choruses consist of the Followers of Don Manuel and Don
Caesar, respectively. Akin to their respective masters, the brothers Don Manuel and Don Caesar,
the two Choruses are actually "two real characters, who clash one another" (Luzzatto 1959:
114).

[34]The Chorus exit, for example, at the end of Act 1. Schiller clearly alludes to Aeschylus'
Eumenides, where the Chorus exit at 231 and re-enter at 244 (and between 234 and 235 the
audience must also suppose a lapse of time), and to Sophocles' *Ajax*, where the Chorus exit at
814 and re-enter at 866. However he does not mention Euripides, where we find instances of
the same phenomena (*Alcestis*, 746 and 861; *Helen*, 385 and 515; *Rhesus*, 564 and 674). Indeed, in
post-classical tragedy it was common for the chorus to exit, even repeatedly, during the course
of the drama. Therefore, in this too, modern understanding of the ancient chorus is deeply

choruses of the Greek tragedy instead of a single chorus I become suspicious that the person does not know what he is talking about. The chorus of ancient tragedy, to my knowledge, has no longer appeared upon the stage since the demise of tragedy itself.

I have, indeed, divided the chorus in two parts, and represented it in conflict with itself; but this is only when it partakes in the action as a real person and as a blind multitude. As *chorus* and as ideal person it is always one and the same.[33] I have changed the place and allowed the chorus to exit several times; but also Aeschylus, the creator of tragedy, and Sophocles, the great master of this art, have taken this liberty.[34]

Another liberty that I have permitted myself may be more difficult to justify. I have blended Christian religion and Greek pagan mythology, yes, and even recalled some Moorish superstitions. But the scene of the play is Messina, where these three religions have exerted their influence, partly through living practice, and partly through monuments, and they speak to the senses. And besides I deem it a privilege of poetry to treat the different religions as a collective whole for the power of imagination, where everything that bears an individual character, expresses an individual sensibility, finds its own place. Under the veil of all religions there lies religion itself, the idea of something divine.[35] And the poet must be allowed to express this in whichever form he finds most fitting and appropriate.

250

255

260

265

influenced by late theatrical practices, and, chiefly, by Senecan tragedy (Zwierlein 1966: 80-87).

[35]"Unter der Hülle aller Religionen liegt die Religion selbst, die Idee eines Göttlichen": this sentence achieved resounding success, cf. Feil 2012: 652-66.

Note on the text *by Guido Avezzù*

Schiller appended this short text as preface to the first edition of his *Bride of Messina* (*Die Braut von Messina oder Die feindlichen Brüder, ein Trauerspiel mit Chören*, Tübingen, Cotta, 1803). The play had been first staged in Weimar on 19 March of that year, and then again, in early May, in Hamburg. Schiller worked on this essay in that same month of May and sent it to the publisher on 7 June. On May 24, Schiller wrote to Goethe: "I have had a hard time on another subject, since I am just about to say a few words on the tragic chorus, which are to be the foreword to my *Bride of Messina*".[1] Therefore, it is plausible that, despite its clearly theoretical approach, this piece aimed at justifying and supporting also his own more daring dramatic innovations; it represents the author's final considerations on specific features of its plot. At all events, the interplay between dramatic structure and theories of art in Schiller's *Bride of Messina* was clear to Richard Wagner, who, in his *Opera and Drama* (1853), wrote that "never was anything so purposely planned from a purely art-historical standpoint, as this *Bride of Messina*: what Goethe shadowed in his marriage of Faust with Helena, was here to be embodied through artistic speculation" (Wagner 1995: 146).[2]

1. Text: Schiller 1980; Schiller 1965.
2. Selected translations:
    – in English: Schiller 1847; Schiller 1863; Schiller 2003;
    – in French: Schiller 1869;
    – in Italian: Schiller 1969.
3. Language.
    Schiller's vocabulary, not unexpectedly, exhibits some recurring and interwoven basic antitheses. Some of them concur to drawing a distinctive axiological system, as 'high' *vs* 'low', 'seriousness' (*Ernst*, *ernsthaft*) *vs* 'playfulness' (in two instances, at ll. 35 and 90, the ambiguous *Spiel* is clarified as "*poetisches*" or "*kein p.*") or construct a generic 'psychology' made up of mind, soul, and spirit (I have usually translated *Geist* as "spirit" and *Gemüt* as "soul"). Other antitheses have a more substantial theoretical import:

    – *Trauerspiel* is here translated as "tragic drama", rather than as the literal

---

1. "Ich habe jetzt auch meine Noth mit dem Stoffe anderer Art, denn da ich eben daran bin, ein Wort über den tragischen Chor zu sagen, welches an der Spitze meiner Braut von Meßina stehen soll, etc." (Schiller 1984: 41, n. 51).
2. "Nie ist vom rein kunsthistorischen Standpunkte aus so absichtlich geschaffen worden, als in dieser *Braut von Messina*: was Goethe in der Vermählung des Faust mit der Helena andeutete, sollte hier durch künstlerische Spekulation verwiklicht werden" (Wagner 1969: 134).

    "mourning-play", or the more current "tragedy"; however, "tragedy" is used for the same word at l. 264, because there *das griechische Trauerspiel* refers to ancient tragedy, which Schiller normally calls *Tragödie*.

– *(Die) wahr(e) Kunst* is rendered as "true art" (ll. 47, 65, 95) and *(der) wahr(e) Künstler* as "true artist" (l. 245), whereas *die rechte Kunst* is translated as "proper art" (l. 37). More complex is the juxtaposition of "true", "reality", and "real" at ll. 100-2: "this art … can … be truer (*wahrer*) than all reality (*Wirklichkeit*), and more real (*realer*) than all experience (*Erfahrung*)".

– *Natur*, *natürlich*, *Wirklichkeit*, *wirklich*, and *Kunst*, *künstlich* articulate various substantial oppositions; the most controversial seems to be the one between a "natural" and an "artificial theatre" (ll. 259-61), for which see n. 31.

– *Stoff*, sing. (frequently *Weltstoff* and similar) and collective, is always translated as "stuff" except for l. 61, where "ein roher Stoff" seems to allude to the recurring imagery of clothes; but *Stoffen* as "materials" at l. 224. "*Das Materielle*" ("material", l. 63) is used as synonym of 'elementary' and appears connected with the plain, raw, and constraining reality (*Wirklichkeit*, etc.), as opposed to the freedom of the spirit and the power of ideas (cf. ll. 57-64; 250ff.).

More generally, Schiller's style here displays signs of an impromptu piece, and indeed we may conjecture that these pages were written after the letter sent by Körner on 25 April (see n. 12), and were completed when Schiller wrote to Goethe on 28 May (see above). This seems to be proved by the often tortuous phrasing, the occasional awkwardness of style and poor lexical variety, the frequent repetitions and iterated discursive schemes, such as "if … then" clauses, testifying to an obsessive effort to make the argument consequential and logically incontrovertible. Abstractions are especially favoured in a revealing attempt to communicate general concepts touching on the essence of dramatic art, with a seemingly total disregard of its practical and actual phenomenology. Being strong stylistic features bearing on the conceptual framework of the piece, they have intentionally been maintained in English.

4. "(Coming) back to (a) childlike time and to that simple form of life" (ll. 155-7): it is very easy to find obvious cross-references to Schiller's essay *On Simple and Sentimental Poetry* (1795-96), e.g., to statements, at its very beginning, such as "this sort of interest which we take in nature is only possible under two conditions. First the object that inspires us with this feeling must be really nature, or something we take for nature; secondly

this object must be in the full sense of the word simple, that is, presenting the entire contrast of nature with art, all the advantage remaining on the side of nature. Directly this second condition is united to the first, but no sooner, nature assumes the character of simplicity".[3] See also: "[T]he child is to us like the representation of the ideal; not, indeed, of the ideal as we have realized it, but such as our destination admitted; and, consequently, it is not at all the idea of its indigence, of its hinderances, that makes us experience emotion in the child's presence; it is, on the contrary, the idea of its pure and free force, of the integrity, the infinity of its being".[4] Therefore, from Schiller's point of view, Euripides obviously was the beginner of 'sentimental' poetry, whereas, among the moderns, Shakespeare is highly representative of "the poet of a young world, simple and inspired" (*der Dichter einer naiven und geistreichen Jugendwelt*).

5. The Chorus in *The Bride of Messina*.
On Schiller, Greek tragedy, and *The Bride of Messina* see Schwinge 2008, Oesterle 2008. With regard to the Chorus, an extensive description has been made by Zimmermann 2011: 302-4. Therefore I confine myself to a thorough analysis of the 'choral' portions in Act 1. The Chorus consists of two half-choruses: (1) Cajetan, Berengar, Manfred, Tristan, and eight other followers of Don Manuel; (2) Bohemund, Roger, Hippolyte, and nine others of the party of Don Caesar. They speak mainly in trochees and anapaests, whereas the characters speak in iambics. In order to explain Schiller's admission of having divided his Chorus in two parts (ll. 270ff.), here is a tabulation of the Chorus's interventions in Act 1, based on three different witnesses:

Comparing this chorus with its ancient predecessors, and borrowing classical terminology, the whole 1.3 is as a sort of *parodos* (first song sung by the chorus after their entrance), and the whole 1.8 a *stasimon* (sung by the chorus when *stationary*) and, at the same time, a *metastasis* (exit of the chorus) which preludes to a second *parodos* (*epiparodos*). In 1.7, the leader of the first half-chorus, Cajetan, speaks in iambics, just like an ancient *coriphaeus*, both in short monologues and in the dialogue with

---

3. "Diese Art des Interesse an der Natur findet aber nur unter zwei Bedingungen statt. Fürs erste ist es durchaus nötig, dass der Gegenstand, der uns dasselbe einflößt, Natur sei oder doch von uns dafür gehalten werde; zweytens, dass er (in weitester Bedeutung des Wortes) naiv sei, d.h., dass die Natur mit der Kunst im Kontrast stehe und sie beschäme. Sobald das Letzte zu dem ersten hinzukommt und nicht eher, wird die Natur zum Naiven" (Schiller 1962: 412).

4. "Das Kind ist uns daher eine Vergegenwärtigung des Ideals, nicht zwar des erfüllten, aber des aufgegebenen und es ist also keineswegs die Vorstellung seiner Bedürftigkeit und Schranken, es ist ganz im Gegenteil die Vorstellung seiner reinen und freien Kraft, seiner Integrität, seiner Unendlichkeit, was uns rührt" (Schiller 1962: 416).

act. scene ll.		stage directions		
		A	**B**	**C**
1.3	132-44	1st Chorus	Cajetan	
	145-54	2nd Chorus	Bohemund	
	155-71	1st Chorus	Cajetan	
	172-74	All	–––	
	175-80	1st Chorus	Berengar	
	181-86	2nd Chorus	Bohemund	
	187-89	All	–––	
	190-211	One of the Chorus	Berengar	
	212-27	Another	Cajetan	Manfred
	228-54	1st Chorus	Cajetan	
	255-58	Both Choruses	Cajetan	
	259-66	1st Chorus	Berengar	Bohemund
	277-93	2nd Chorus	Bohemund	277-92: Berengar
				283-: Roger
1.4	324-327	Chorus	Bohemund	
	370-75	Chorus	Cajetan	
	433-38	Chorus	Cajetan	
1.5	460-65	Chorus	Cajetan	
	524-29	1st Chorus	Cajetan	
1.6	530-33	2nd Chorus	Bohemund	
1.7	592-604	Chorus	Cajetan*	
	633-49	Chorus	Cajetan*	
	668-77	Chorus	Cajetan*	
	718-21	Chorus	Cajetan*	
	739-76	[Dialogue]	Cajetan*	
	789-92	Chorus	Cajetan*	
	811	Chorus	Cajetan*	
	844-46	Chorus	Cajetan*	
1.8	861-70	Chorus	Cajetan	
	871-91	One of the Chorus	Manfred	
	892-901	Another	Berengar	
	902-6	Another one	Cajetan	
	907-18	The 1st one	Manfred	
	919-38	The 2nd one	Berengar	
	939-59	The 3rd one	Cajetan	
	960-68	–––	Berengar	
	969-80	Chorus	Cajetan	
			exit Chorus	

A   Stage directions according to the first edition.
B   Additional stage directions according to further editions.
C   *Augsburger Schema* (cf. Schiller 1980: 321-7), only when diverging from **B**.
*   Iambics.

his master Don Manuel (ll. 739-76 are patterned after a classical sequence of two-line speeches in alternation [*distichomythia*]): there is no doubt that the stage direction "Chorus" here means an individual voice. Only in two instances (1.3.172-4 and 187-9) both *hemichoria* (1ˢᵗ and 2ⁿᵈ Chorus) 'sing' in one voice: in both cases, they erupt with shared emotional outbursts, which obfuscates their individual character. However, the capital question was if the Chorus had to sing or to declaim,[5] cf. Zimmermann 2011.

Works cited

Chiarini, Paolo, Walter Hinderer (eds) (2008), *Schiller und die Antike*, Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann.

Feil, Ernst (2012), *Religio*, vol. 4: *Die Geschichte eines neuzeitlichen Grundbegriffs im 18. und früher 19. Jahrhundert*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.

Luzzatto, Guido Lodovico (1959), "Schiller, *Die Braut von Messina* e il teatro greco", *Dioniso*, 22: 112-20.

Nietzsche, Friedrich (1980), "Das griechische Musikdrama" (1870), in G. Colli and M. Montinari (eds), *Friedrich Nietzsche. Sämtliche Werke. Kritische Studienausgabe*, vol. 1, Berlin-New York: De Gruyter: 1980.

Nietzsche, Friedrich (2000), *The Birth of Tragedy* (*Die Geburt der Tragödie aus dem Geiste der Musik*, 1872), in Walter A. Kaufmann (trans. and ed.), *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, New York: Modern Library.

Nietzsche, Friedrich (2013), "Das griechische Musikdrama – The Greek Music Drama", trans. by James Bishop, intr. by J. Marsden, New York: Contra Mundum Press.

Paolo Chiarini and Walter Hinderer (eds) (2008), *Schiller und die Antike*, Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann: 167-75.

Schiller, Friedrich von (1847), "On the Use of Chorus in Tragedy", in *The Works of Frederick Schiller: Historical Dramas*, vol. 3, trans. by Adam Lodge, London: Bohn: 439-49.

— (1863), "On the Use of Chorus in Tragedy", in Friedrich von Schiller: *The Bride of Messina, a Tragedy. To which is prefixed an Essay on the Tragical Chorus*, trans. by Adam Lodge, 3rd ed., London: Day, http://www.gutenberg.org/files/6793/6793-h/6793-h.htm (last access 28 August 2014).

---

5. "Wie behandeln die Theater die Chöre, als Gesang? oder Recitirt?" (Schiller 1980: 321 [March 3 1803]).

— (1869), "De l'usage du chœur dans la tragédie", in *Oeuvres de Schiller*, vol. 4.3: *Théatre*, trad. nouvelle par Adam Regnier, Paris: Hachette: 255-65, http://cdn.notesdumontroyal.com/document/512p.pdf (last access 28 August 2014).

— (1962), "Über naive und sentimentalische Dichtung", in Helmut Koopmann, Benno von Wiese (eds), *Schillers Werke. Nationalausgabe*, vol. 20: *Philosophische Schriften. 1. Teil*, ed. by, Weimar: Böhlau: 413-503, vol. 20.

— (1965), "Über den Gebrauch des Chors in der Tragödie", in Gerhard Fricke (ed.), *Friedrich Schiller: Sämtliche Werke*, vol. 2: *Dramen II*, München: Hanser: 815-23, vol. 2, http://gutenberg.spiegel.de/buch/3316/2 (last access 28 August 2014).

— (1969), "Sull'uso del coro nella tragedia", in Barbara Allason, M.D. Ponti (trans.), *Federico Schiller: Teatro*, Torino: Einaudi: 901-8.

— (1980), "Über den Gebrauch des Chors in der Tragödie", in Siegfried Seidel (ed.), *Schillers Werke. Nationalausgabe*, vol. 10: *Die Braut von Messina …*, Weimar: Böhlau: 7-15, vol. 10.

— (1984), *Schillers Werke. Nationalausgabe*, vol. 32: Axel Gellhaus (ed.), *Briefwechsel. Schillers Briefe. 1.1.1803 – 9.5.1805*, Weimar: Böhlau, vol. 32.

— (1987), *Schillers Werke. Nationalausgabe*, vol. 40.1: Georg Kurscheidt, Norbert Oellers (eds), *Briefwechsel. Briefe an Schiller. 1.1.1803 – 17.5.1805*, Weimar: Böhlau.

— (2003), "On the Employment of the Chorus in Tragedy", in *Friedrich Schiller, Poet of Freedom*, Schiller Institute – Washington, DC, vol. 4, trans. by George W. Gregory, vol. 4, http://www.schillerinstitute.org/transl/Schiller_essays/Chorus_in_Tradegy.html [*sic*] (last access 28 August 2014).

Schwinge, Ernst-Richard (2008), "Schiller un die griechische Tragödie", in Paolo Chiarini and Walter Hinderer (eds) (2008), *Schiller und die Antike*, Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann: 15-48.

Silk, Michael Stephen and Joseph Peter Stern (1983), *Nietzsche on Tragedy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Taplin, Oliver (1985), *Greek Tragedy in Action*, London: Methuen & Co.

Wagner, Richard (1869), *Oper und Drama*, zweiter durchgesehne Auflage, Leipzig: Weber.

— (1995), *Opera and Drama* (*Oper und Drama*, 1853, 1869), tr. by W. Ashton Ellis, London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner (1893) = Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, http://users.belgacom.net/wagnerlibrary/prose/wlpro063.htm#abou (last access 28 August 2014).

Zimmermann, Bernhard (2011), "Teoria e utilizzo del coro in Friedrich Schiller", in Andrea Rodighiero and Paolo Scattolin (eds), *"…un enorme individuo,*

dotato di polmoni soprannaturali". Funzioni, interpretazioni e rinascite del coro drammatico greco, Verona: Fiorini: 291-305.

Zwierlein, Otto (1966), *Die Rezitationsdramen Senecas*, Meisenheim a. Glahn: Hain.

University of Verona
http://www.univr.it
guido.avezzu@univr.it