

Wallenstein

F.Schiller

June 16-20, 2015

This is a long play in three parts. The first part - Wallensteins Lager, is a prelude, setting the mood of the times, and with no dramatic content at all. First with the second part - Die Piccolomini, does the dramatic plot start to unveil. Wallenstein head of an army is being suspected of treason concerning the Austrian emperor he is supposed to serve. Initially Wallenstein had brought up his own private army doing the biddings very successfully for the emperor. Then at a meeting at Regensburg he suffered the humiliation of having his command withdrawn only to be reinstigated after Tilly's disastrous performance against the Swedes at Breitenfeld. The battle of Lützen was a draw, showing that Gustav II Adolf was not invincible, in fact as we all know he died. Then Wallenstein had been accused of passivity, in fact as noted above, even of treason, of carrying on secret negotiations with the Swedes. Those rumors turn out to be in fact well-founded. Wallenstein for obscure reasons, maybe to enrich himself and enlarge his power, seeks a confluence of the two armies into a huge one able to dominate the scene, maybe even to impose peace conditions. We are never privy to the ultimate plans of Wallenstein, only that he seems to dither, not to take the crucial step, waiting for the favorable moment, as decided by the stars. As he dithers the crucial moment slips away from him, and gradually more and more of his designs are being leaked. Surrounded by old faithful generals, especially Octavio Poccoomini and his son Max, he is sure of their loyalty, but one after the other they fall away, realizing that he is actually defying the emperor and asking them to follow suit. Particularly painful is the loss of Octavio, whom he had trusted the deepest. Max still dithers, his situation complicated by his ties to his father, to Wallenstein himself, his old mentor, and above all to the daughter of the latter - Thekla, with whom he is in love. While convinced of the treachery of Wallenstein, he cannot approve the actions of his father, who is about to gain from them, by assuming the command. Wallenstein implores him to stay with him, playing ruthlessly on former bonds, something that Max naturally resents. The two lovers Max and Thekla decide to separate physically, because that is what Fate has ordained, yet to be conjoined in hearts. As the army around Wallenstein shrinks he decides to seek refuge in Eger, close to the Swedish troops to protect him. The situation has drastically changed of course, initially he had an entire army to offer, now basically only himself as a fugitive. Enclosed in the castle of the town, he is also surrounded by plotters to kill him. To actually have him killed is one thing that most of the men initially shy away from. It is too much like murder and quite different from bringing him alive to Vienna and have him executed as a traitor with due process. But eventually they are seduced into complying. Meanwhile the troops led by Max have been routed by Swedish forces outside the castle, and their commander have been killed under his horse. He is duly buried and the news of it is brought to Wallensteins court and his daughter by a Swedish captain. She is devastated and leaves the castle in search of his grave. And Wallenstein is killed in the night and rolled into a red carpet. And the drama ends.

I find it the most gripping of Schiller's dramas, and in language and execution reminiscent of Shakespeare, although the bard might not have been quite as longwinded yet covering the same terrain. One particular saying, namely the 'Es ist der Geist der sich den Körper baut', which I recall engraved over the Busch-Reisinger Museum at Harvard, strikes me. It turns out to appear in a long monologue by Wallenstein at the 13th Auftritt in the third Aufzug in the final part of Wallensteins Tod, recalling how he was stripped of his army, but anyway able to create a new one from scratch. As noted the parts are divided into Aufzugs, which I guess could be translated with 'Acts' and 'Auftritts' some of them very short, in fact often too brief to be thought of scenes. In fact the principle of the segmentation seems to be that every time a new character steps on to the scene (or leaves) there is a new 'Auftritt', hence the name ('a step-on').

The drama is of course not historically accurate, some characters are pure inventions, on the other hand this is what is called poetic license which is truer to the intrinsic form of events than their actual accidental manifestation.

June 21, 2015 **Ulf Persson:** *Prof.em, Chalmers U.of Tech., Göteborg Sweden* ulfp@chalmers.se