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Love and Intrigue

FRIEDRICH SCHILLER

TRANSLATED BY FLORA KIMMICH

INTRODUCTION BY ROGER PAULIN



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Translation and Notes to the text Flora Kimmich © 2019

Introduction Roger Paulin © 2019



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Translator's Note

Schiller's *Kabale und Liebe*, a title usually rendered in English as *Love and Intrigue*, presents a text that is "low" style: in prose, highly colloquial, sometimes to the point of slang, and strongly marked by class distinction. Translation of such a text proceeds, necessarily, largely by ear and instinct. Spoken language, which is ephemeral, leaves a blank that must be filled by words in current usage, the old forms having vanished. I cannot claim to have escaped anachronism; my best hope is to have avoided jarring anachronism that injures the illusion of an action that took place more than two hundred years ago.

German texts set in previous centuries, especially comedy, enjoy the advantage of four forms of direct address: second- and third-person, singular and plural. These many forms create social distinctions, convey nuances of hierarchy, and color expressions of contempt and deference in ways that do not survive in English. Thus Wurm's abjectness and malice, read in the original, plumb new depths of squalor. And his retribution at the end of the play acquires new pungency and a satisfying ring of social justice when he turns on his ennobled master, who has always addressed him, with proper condescension, as "Er," and whom he has addressed, deferentially, as "Sie," and the two men square off on a common level of reciprocated contempt, addressing each other as "du." These small carriers of meaning are lost in translation.

Here again, as in translating *Don Carlos*,¹ I have pruned certain exuberances of the original—restatements that do no work, flights of

1 *Don Carlos Infante of Spain: A Dramatic Poem* by Friedrich Schiller. Translated by Flora Kimmich (Cambridge, UK: Open Book Publishers, 2018), <https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0134>; <https://www.openbookpublishers.com/product/711>

fancy that know no end, interjections that break an effective flow of expression—in the interest of good rhetoric and good argument. My object here again is to gain felicity and persuasion at no expense of meaning.

This translation, like the others in the series of Schiller's major plays, which Open Book Publishers makes freely available to a wide readership,² is intended for young people in college-level instruction and for the general reader. The endnotes undertake to ease the reader's way through an old text by situating the play in its period and remarking on its structure.

I gratefully acknowledge my debt to Gerhard Kluge, editor of the edition *Deutsche Klassiker*, Frankfurt am Main, 1989, the text on which my translation is based, whose commentary gave me valuable guidance in preparing the endnotes. My debt to Roger Paulin grows with each new volume of the series. The present text has been greatly strengthened by his fine ear, his command of both languages, and his learning. Alessandra Tosi presided over it all with vigilance and resourcefulness. Christoph Kimmich, once again, provided me with everything I needed.

2 See <https://www.openbookpublishers.com/section/40/1>

Introduction

Roger Paulin

Friedrich Schiller wrote *Love and Intrigue* (*Kabale und Liebe*) in 1782 after having fled from his native Württemberg, and completed it in early 1784. It was ready for the first stage performance in Mannheim on 13 April 1784.

Duke Karl August, the ruler of Württemberg, had not appreciated Schiller's talent and was more interested in his services as an army surgeon. Schiller had escaped across the border to the more congenial Mannheim, where he was to see the first two of his plays, *The Robbers* and *Fiesco*, completed and performed. His absences had incurred the Duke's displeasure. This was not to be taken lightly: in 1777, Karl Eugen had had the poet and journalist Christian Daniel Friedrich Schubart arrested and incarcerated for speaking things he did not wish to hear. While Schiller was at the cadet school founded by the Duke, the Hohe Karlsschule, the pupils were taken to see Schubart in prison. The message was clear: toe the line, or else.

During his incarceration, Schubart had written a poem, a vision of a royal burial vault, where lay side by side the good princes, the fathers of their people, and those whose reigns had spelt oppression and misrule, extravagance and favouritism. Whatever they might think of the rest of the play, audiences and readers of *Love and Intrigue* are unfailingly moved by the old retainer's account in Act Two, Scene Two, of the sale of 7,000 soldiers to fight in the American War of Independence (so-called Hessians) in order to pay for Lady Milford's diamonds. It rings true. In fact Karl Eugen did not sell his soldiers, but he did grind his subjects to build palaces for his mistress.

To this is added the subject of love across the social divide of aristocracy and commoner. In these terms, the play could be read as an anti-monarchist, anti-aristocratic tract, an indictment foreshadowing demands expressed violently in France in 1789 — just a few years ahead — and calling for a reordering of society's values. Unlike *The Robbers*, where anarchy threatens to break out, or *Fiesco*, where a regime is overthrown, *Love and Intrigue* offers no such challenges to the established order. The explosive charges mentioned in the text — by the First Minister and by Lady Milford — are metaphorical only: they are not laid under the palace (and the Duke never appears). Despite suitable punishment of wrongdoers at the end, the system does not change. At least in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, with which this play is often compared, the families cease feuding at the sight of the dead lovers. But we do not sense any change of heart here, nor are we led to expect any.

Titles and subtitles matter in plays. Schiller's first title for this play was *Luise Millerin*, the heroine's name. From this one might infer that he was placing her not merely in the centre of the action (she engages with all of the characters) but that her personal tragedy represented the main dramatic interest (as indeed it does in Verdi's opera, *Luisa Miller*). Instead, he chose a more speaking title, *Kabale und Liebe*, the only one in his oeuvre that does not name the main character directly or the milieu in which he or she operates. Was it his intention to place the court cabal in the foreground and all that it entailed, with its machinations frustrating and ultimately destroying the love that forms the second component of the title? Or do Love and Intrigue balance each other equally, the one conditional on the other? Certainly, English titles since the first translation in 1795 have reversed Schiller's order — more natural in English — as *Love and Intrigue*, as good a rendition as we shall ever get, 'cabal' in English having too strongly political overtones. But another early translator rendered the title as *The Minister*, which, while not Schiller's original, does foreground Walter's corrupt and inhuman calculations and schemings, in the toils of which the lovers are inextricably caught.

The subtitle of the play, in German 'bürgerliches Trauerspiel', is harder to render, for the simple reason that English has no such term. True, the 'middle-class tragedy', the French 'drame bourgeois', owed its origin to an ultimately English source: George Lillo's *The London*

Merchant (1731). That play seemed to upset the traditional subdivision of the dramatic genre into characters of high station (tragedy) and the lower orders (comedy). It was in prose, thus going further than Shakespeare, whose high characters may only occasionally speak in this form. Instead, it proposed that high sentiments, pathos, tragic confrontations and emotional entanglements may be experienced not only by kings and potentates, but by those of lower social rank, the 'middle class', who now acquire a dramatic dignity hitherto denied them by neo-classical poetics. In France, Denis Diderot stresses the domestic sphere as the place of dramatic conflict; he praises the high pathos of the middle-class family scene in painting. Both in France and Germany, the notion of a 'middle-class tragedy' goes hand in hand with the cult of feeling, German 'Empfindsamkeit', French 'sensibilité', with its appeal to the heart, to human goodness, to tears, as exemplified in England by the novels of Samuel Richardson (the kind of novel that Luise in *Love and Intrigue* has been reading). And the tragedies would be in prose, not in verse.

In Germany, Gotthold Ephraim Lessing took up this mode with his *Miss Sara Sampson* of 1755 (note the English title), with its endangered virtue and high emotional turmoil. But his second major tragedy, *Emilia Galotti* of 1772, and thus chronologically closer to Schiller, introduced elements that we see recurring in *Love and Intrigue*: the conflict between social classes and stations, the corruption of courts, the moral dilemma of the heroine. Set in an Italian court, Lessing's play reduces the action to a short span of time and a tightly reduced number of characters, all this in five acts — features adapted from the traditional classical tragedy. Schiller follows this scheme, but takes the bold step of placing his action at a German court.

Schiller has a similarly spare cast — eight main characters — and the action is restricted to two private spheres, the antechamber of a court, where the ruler, although omnipresent, never actually appears, and the domestic quarters of the Miller family. We no longer have the huge cast lists of *The Robbers* or *Fiesco*, or their frequent changes of scene. In this respect, *Love and Intrigue* foreshadows the tighter action of *Don Carlos*, the second and third parts of *Wallenstein*, and *Maria Stuart*. We are reminded, too, of how the action in *Wallenstein* is directed by the absent Emperor, who, like the Duke in *Love and Intrigue*, never intervenes personally in the action.

The classically tight *dramatis personae* also reflect the close interaction of the characters. Those around whom the main action revolves, Luise, Ferdinand, the First Minister, and Wurm, all confront each other both in the commoner's house and in the palace. Miller and his wife never leave their sphere, Kalb and Lady Milford similarly. We note certain imbalances: the First Minister has no wife and Ferdinand has no mother (she is never mentioned). Luise, on the other hand, has her father and her moral and filial duty towards him (her mother is a caricature and hardly developed). The constellations as they are set up are such that there is no female character to balance or restrain Walter senior in his corrupt dealings or to rein in Walter junior's extravagances and flights. Indeed those characters beginning with 'W' arouse our attention: Walter (which in German can suggest 'he who is in control'), and Wurm (meaning worm), who is his creature, raised from nothing to carry out his master's bidding. (The course of the action will show that the worm has more devilish cunning than the man in charge). Kalb, a figure of fun, is a useful idiot created for Walter's use, whereas Lady Milford, the only character who has the real personal freedom to rise above love and intrigue, breaks loose from the court and exercises a kind of moral awareness. She will, of course, be replaced. Nothing will have changed. There are very small grounds indeed for believing that the catastrophe in the Miller and von Walter families will effect a change of heart in the Duke.

But there are more subtle forms of interrelation: in the modes of address adopted by the characters. English cannot render these, but they deserve mention nevertheless: the formal mode of address ('Sie'), as used between persons of higher station, and by Ferdinand to his father; the intimate ('du') between members of the same family (Walter to Ferdinand, Miller to Luise), but also as a form of insult (Ferdinand to Kalb in Act Four, Scene Three); and the third-person ('Er', 'Sie') used for menials (Walter to Wurm, Lady Milford to Luise at first, but also Luise to her father). These interlocutory forms tell us who belongs where and who defines whose station. They are most revealing of the heroine, Luise. For, at sixteen, she is already educated beyond her station and expresses herself (like Shakespeare's Juliet) with a sophistication beyond her years. This places her a cut above her father, the town musician, and he seems to accept it. But this does not free her from a sense of moral responsibility towards her father, and it is he who persuades her not to

take her own life. In so doing, Miller is appealing to a residual Christian conscience not shared by the characters of higher status. It is this, too, which influences Luise's fatal admission when Ferdinand interrogates her about the letter in Act Five; the truth comes too late to save her. It also enables Luise to worst Lady Milford in moral argument, but by the same token it also delivers her into the hands of Wurm. Where Ferdinand talks lightly of eloping with Luise, she is constrained by a love and a sense of responsibility alien to him. It is not by chance that Schiller has Luise first appearing with a book; it is followed by her avowal that she is a 'great sinner' and has lost the piety that has hitherto sustained her. She is not the only heroine of a 'bürgerliches Trauerspiel' to take upon herself the burden of guilt imposed by another, and Margarete in Goethe's *Faust* is similarly placed. It informs Luise's awareness, expressed in her very first scene with Ferdinand, that their love is fated, their deaths certain. An absolute love without barriers and constraints is impossible, even if the father for whom she has so much affection and for whom she sacrifices her love is only partially worthy of it. And Ferdinand? He would hardly need to open his mouth for us to form an idea of his character. His body language would suffice — in a play where Schiller writes gestures into the text as a dramatic component, not as a mere accompaniment to language. Ferdinand's bespeak grand movements and impetuous gesticulations that go with speech interlarded with exclamation marks and dashes. We do well to study his bodily expression before imputing to him any degree of systematic reflection.

It has become a convention of some recent studies on this play to look beyond its social statement — despite our outrage at the sale of soldiers or our admiration for Miller and his bold stand against Walter — and to see in it patterns that are at bottom philosophical or even theological. Why is the world ordained as it is? Who is responsible? On the one hand, Ferdinand believes — Luise too — that theirs is a love preordained by God, a 'heaven' (Luise uses this word to Lady Milford), a paradisiac state free of social bonds and convections, an encapsulated existence with its own terms of reference, like Romeo and Juliet's, if one will. When it becomes clear to him that this cannot be and that fate or some other agency is conspiring to draw them apart — the 'Intrigue' of the title — we hear much more radical language: that of judgment, revenge, recrimination, divested of its Christian connotations and now

part of a private theology of retribution. There will be propitiation, but on his terms. He is prepared to take upon himself the role of judge and judged. We seem to hear Karl Moor's 'I am my heaven and my hell' from Schiller's first play, *The Robbers*. But Ferdinand acts alone: his favorite word appears to be 'my' or 'mine', '*my love*', '*my understanding of greatness and fortune*', '*trust me*' (my italics). There is no-one to intervene, to tell him that this must end in death — and not only his. Not that this is anywhere systematically formulated. Ferdinand goes, it seems, from one extreme, one overwrought formulation, to the next, in the heat of the moment piling one radical vision on to another. No wonder, therefore, that he does not pause for reflection, ridden as he is by visions that are total and absolute. Despite differences, we see something of Shakespeare's Othello and Leontes in the abruptness of his manic fantasies and frenetic jealousies. Has he, like his Luise, been reading too many books, absorbing too many notions current in the century: sentimental love, 'made in heaven', a world framed by providence, man born free but now in chains? *Love and Intrigue*, like Goethe's novel *Werther* of 1774, demonstrates that the most noble and laudable ideas of the culture of feeling may be turned inwards into personal catastrophe, there a botched suicide, here lemonade laced with arsenic. (We must try hard to forgive Schiller for this 'middle-class' beverage).

Luise is not free of these high-sounding sentiments, but, as said, she is subject to constraints that Ferdinand is not. To save her father, she must place Ferdinand second. Her tormentors play on her moral virtues, knowing that she will not break an oath once given. She demonstrates greatness of soul to Lady Milford, but what good is it to her? Lady Milford, in her turn, has preserved her 'heart', her inner integrity, throughout all the changes of fortune that have landed her here at this court. She can claim to have mitigated abuses, but she is powerless against the system as such. Her decision, as ex-mistress, to leave, is not exactly heroic, but it does not lack a certain grandeur either, and it will certainly spoil the Duke's dessert.

What of the ending? A murder, a suicide, two arrests and two bereft parents. All the talk of forgiveness, of making the journey together, comes too late. Ferdinand's dying challenge to the 'Judge of this world' will not help Luise, the 'angel'. Wurm goes off like the stage villain that he is. Do we believe in the last-minute reconciliation of father

and son, the punch-line of the play? The First Minister certainly does, perhaps the last delusion in a play full of tragic misunderstandings. Or perhaps not?

Further Reading

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