

THE LAST OF THE HOMERIDAI:
GOETHE'S ROAD TO *HERMANN UND DOROTHEA*

DISSERTATION

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By

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ABSTRACT

Johann Wolfgang Friedrich von Goethe (1749-1832) studied Homeric epic for most his life. He first began to learn Greek in the summer of 1758, at the age of eleven. His earliest known readings of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* took place in Strasbourg in the winter of 1770-1771. In the summer of 1772, he wrote various reviews of contemporary Homeric scholarship for the *Frankfurter Gelehrte Anzeigen*, as well as a physiognometric analysis of a bust of Homer. He translated Pindar's Fifth Olympian Ode in the spring of 1773. Homeric echoes abound in *Die Leiden des Jungen Werthers*, published in 1774.

After his move to Weimar in 1775, Goethe's court duties kept him too busy for much classical study, but he did interest himself in the Homer translations of Gottfried August Burger and Johann Jakob Bodmer. His first trip to Italy (1786-8), a country he identified with the mythical Arcadia, reawakened his interest in the ancient world, inspiring him to write *Ulysses auf Phaä*, later retitled *Nausikaa*, an unfinished tragedy based on the Phaiakian section of the *Odyssey*. *Versuch eine Homerische dunkle Stelle zu erklären*, Goethe's first and only piece of serious textual criticism of Homeric epic, was written upon his return to Rome from Sicily in 1788.

His *Römische Elegien*, written when he came back to Weimar in 1789, display considerable Homeric influence. Stimulated by Johann Heinrich Voss' 1794 visit to Weimar, he translated the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* and passages from the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* into German hexameters. The following year, Friedrich August Wolf stayed in Weimar. His theories on the oral transmission of Homeric epic initially repelled Goethe, but ultimately made it possible for him to compose *Hermann und Dorothea*.

Goethe's creative response to the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* was typically personal. In Homeric epic, he found idealized Arcadian landscape and noble, deeply passionate characters. He imported sentimental love into his vision, and integrated into it the affectionate nostalgia that informs *Hermann und Dorothea*, a unique poem in which Homeric landscape coalesces into Arcadia and epic and idyll combine.

Dedicated to my family

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CJ = The Classical Journal.

DKV = Goethe. Sämtliche Werke, ed. D. Borchmeyer et al. Frankfurt: 1985 - (Deutscher Klassiker Verlag Ausgabe).

DVjs = Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte.

FA = Goethe. Sämtliche Werke, Briefe, Tagebücher und Gespräche, ed. Hendrik Birus et al. Frankfurt: 1987 - (Frankfurter Ausgabe).

GQu = The German Quarterly.

GR = The Germanic Review.

GRM = Germanisch-romanische Monatsschrift.

HA = Goethe. Werke, ed. Erich Trunz, Hamburg 1948-64 (Hamburger Ausgabe).

IJCT = The International Journal of the Classical Tradition.

JbFDtHochst = Jahrbuch des Freien Deutschen Hochstifts.

JEGP = Journal of English and German Philology.

MA = Goethe. Sämtliche Werke nach Epochen seines Schaffens. Münchner Ausgabe, ed. Karl Richter et al. Munich: 1985 -

TAPA = Transactions of the American Philological Association.

WS = Wiener Studien.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Johann Wolfgang Friedrich von Goethe's life-long love of ancient literature is well-documented. He was well-grounded in both Greek and Latin, and not only a devoted reader, but also a competent and painstaking textual critic. The Homeric corpus was among his favorite Greek reading. Although he was never a professional philologist, he took his Homeric studies seriously, and all his life collected editions, commentaries, and other scholarly works on Homer. He took his Homer texts along with him on trips for company, and even late in life, interested himself in the selection and production of engravings to illustrate the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*.

This dissertation is a study of the influences and experiences that shaped Goethe's understanding of the Homeric corpus and eventually made it possible for him to create *Hermann und Dorothea*, an epic as much Homeric as it is Goethean. Goethe's responses to the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* will be examined, with a view to a better understanding of eighteenth century German attitudes toward Homeric epic as well as Goethe's own typically idiosyncratic and deeply personal engagement with the Homeric corpus.

Goethe numbered among his acquaintances many famous translators of Homer and scholarly luminaries of his day, including Carl Ernst Schubarth (1796-1861), Johann Jacob Bodmer (1698-1793), Graf Friedrich Leopold Graf zu Stolberg-Stolberg (1750-1819), and Karl Philipp Moritz (1757-1793). The *Freitagsgesellschaft* (Friday club) that met during the autumn and winter of 1794 at Goethe's house often discussed Homeric epic and contemporary Homeric scholarship. One member of the circle was Professor Johann

Heinrich Voss (1751-1826). Friedrich August Wolf (1759-1824) attended one session. The poets Christoph Martin Wieland (1733-1813) and Johann Christoph Friedrich von Schiller (1759-1805) were often in attendance, as was the director of the Weimar Gymnasium, Karl August Böttiger (1760-1835), whose letters to Wolf record some of the group's proceedings. Their seminar-like meetings involved not only declamation of Homer, but also close textual analysis.

As well as completing a set of prose summaries of all of the books of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, Goethe himself translated *Od.* 7.78-131 (the garden of Alkinoos), *Od.* 8.267-353 (Ares and Aphrodite), and *Il.* 14.329-351 (Hera's seduction of Zeus). He also translated the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*. His versions are both meticulously accurate and characteristically elegant. Translation was one of his keenest interests in the field of Homeric studies. Practically every edition of Homer he owned is a German translation or contains a Latin translation.

His own thoughts on the Homeric question are somewhat surprising for a man of his day and age. He was heavily influenced by his friend Wolf's *Prolegomena ad Homerum* (Halle, 1795), a book that he read the year it was published, and continued to read and reread for the next 25 years. Wolf's argument that Homer was not the work of a single poet originally caused Goethe some disquiet, but by 1819, he grew to believe that the Homeric poems are the result of centuries of oral transmission, and not composed by literate poets.

Goethe's initial acceptance of Wolf's theory of oral transmission liberated him to compose *Hermann und Dorothea*, arguably his only successful and popular epic poem. Goethe's works directly and solely inspired by Homeric epic are few, and mostly unfinished, perhaps due to anxiety of influence. The most notable of these are the 1787 verse play he originally called *Ulyss auf Phaä* and later retitled *Nausikaa*, which was abandoned after only some hundred lines were written, and the unfinished 1799 tragedy

Achilleis. His fragment *Helena*, written in 1800, owes more to the Greek tragedians than it does to Homer. *Hermann und Dorothea*, however, was written swiftly and easily, and immediately gained an enduring popularity. Such was its success that during Goethe's lifetime, a Latin translation of the epic was published, which he himself in his later years claimed to prefer to the original.¹ A translation into classical Greek also exists, published in 1888.²

The principal biographical sources for this dissertation are Goethe's school exercise books (*Labores Iuveniles*), his letters and journals, his autobiographical writings (*Dichtung und Wahrheit* and the *Italienische Reise*) and letters about Goethe by his contemporaries, as published in Wilhelm Bode's *Goethe in vertraulichen Briefen seiner Zeitgenossen* (Revised edition, Berlin 1982). Goethe's conversations with Johann Peter Eckermann (1792-1854) and other contemporaries have also been consulted upon occasion, collected in *Goethe: Begegnung und Gespräche*, Ernst Grumach and Renate Grumach, eds. (Berlin 1965).

Major secondary sources include Elizabeth Schippel Mentzel's *Wolfgang und Cornelia Goethes Lehrer: Ein Beitrag zu Goethes Entwicklungsgeschichte nach archivalischen Quellen*, (Leipzig 1909), still recognized as the one of the best sources for Goethe's early education, Peter Boyle's *Goethe: The Poet and the Age, Volume I: The Poetry of Desire (1749-1790)* (Oxford 1997), and *Volume II: Revolution and Renunciation (1790-1803)* (Oxford 2000), valuable for their completeness and historical background, and Karl Otto Conrady's *Goethe: Leben und Werk* (Königstein 1984).

Since Humphrey Trevelyan's *Goethe and the Greeks* (Oxford 1941), Otto Regenbogen's *Griechische Gegenwart, Über Goethe's Griechentum* (Leipzig 1942), and Walter Grumach's monumental two-volume study *Goethe und die Antike* (Berlin 1949), there have been few full-length studies of Goethe and the ancient world.

Walther Rehm's *Griechentum und Goethezeit: Geschichte eines Glaubens* (Munich 1952) and Wolfgang Schadewalt's *Goethestudien: Natur und Altertum* (Zürich 1963) are the two most recent treatments of the subject. Neither focuses exclusively on Homer. One particularly useful article, however, is Joachim Wohlleben's "Goethe and the Homeric Question."³

Quotations from Goethe's works, letters, and journals are as printed in the *Deutsche Klassische Verlag* edition (*DKV*), useful for its excellent notes. The facsimile edition was used for the *Labores Iuveniles*, and for the *Römische Elegien*, quotations were made from both the *DKV* edition and Dominick Jost's 1974 edition, helpful for its complete *apparatus criticus*. Where a poem exists in more than one version, the earliest form has been preferred to the later, except in cases where the context demands that both texts be included or variants noted. For the sake of convenience, original translations in English have been included after all foreign-language quotations except where noted. If not otherwise noted, all quotations from ancient authors are from the Oxford Classical Text editions. Citations from Stephan Bergler's 1777 Homer text and translations and from Johann Jacob Bodmer's 1778 Homer translation are from the first editions.

Greek proper names and toponyms (*Achilleus, Killa*) are transliterated without latinization although in a few cases where genuine English forms exist, they have been used. Similarly, most European toponyms have not been anglicized, but are cited according to local present-day usage. Exceptions have been made in quotations, where original spellings have been retained. In cases where a place-name has been changed entirely, the modern name is given in parentheses. Titles, apart from very common ones (*Graf, Prinz*), have been rendered by an English equivalent, if one exists (e.g. *Oberstallmeister*: Chief Equerry). In places where Goethe's orthography is not consistent, his own spellings have been retained. Although Greek quotations from the *Frankfurter Gelehrte Anzeigen* were originally printed without any accents apart from

rough and smooth breathings, accents have been restored for the sake of intelligibility. Similarly, Goethe himself seldom bothered to include accents in his Greek. Where he has been quoted, accents have been added.

While Goethe followed the convention of his times in capitalizing the first letter of each line of a poem, in the English translations this practice has been eliminated. Also in the translations, sentences have been separated and punctuation added as seemed necessary for clarity. In the few cases where more than one reading is possible, notes have been added to this effect.

¹ Joseph von Verlichingen, *Hermann und Dorothea von Göthe ins Lateinische übersezt* (Jagsthausen 1828).

² Augustus Dühr, *Goethes Hermann und Dorothea ins Altgriechische übersetzt* (Gotha 1888). This was dedicated to Heinrich and Sophia Schliemann, and includes an original poem to them in Greek hexameters.

³ Joachim Wohlleben, "Goethe and the Homeric Question." *Germanic Review* 62 (1967) 251-275.

CHAPTER 2

“DIES IST DER OLYMP!”

Sources for Goethe's early education are not numerous. Some primary material is found in the first four books of *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, but it is important to remember that autobiography (as a literary genre) is not always reliable historically. Since the first five books of *Dichtung und Wahrheit* were written between January and May of 1811, when Goethe was sixty-two,⁴ they are problematic in terms of accuracy. Goethe himself addressed this issue in his introduction to the work. He admitted freely that so much time had gone by that it was hard for him to remember everything accurately, and in addition, few written records from those days survived.⁵ In the opening of the book he also noted how hard he found it to recapture the memories of his earliest youth.⁶ By its very nature as literary autobiography, *Dichtung und Wahrheit* is half historical and half poetical, as Goethe himself recognized when he titled his book.⁷ Since Goethe could not separate himself from the present time of his writing, the question of historical veracity becomes terribly complicated, and therefore diaries and other documents are safer sources for facts.⁸

One important surviving document from Goethe's childhood is a set of three notebooks and a few odd leaves of his schoolwork, later bound as one book and entitled *Labores Juveniles*.⁹ The Latin and Greek exercises in the *Labores Juveniles* date from 1757-9, when Goethe was eight, nine and ten years old. They will be discussed in greater detail below on pages 10-12. The writing is in Goethe's already well-formed hand, with a

few corrections in a second hand, probably that of Johann Jacob Gottlieb Scherbius, his first Latin tutor. That the young Goethe's handwriting is calligraphic is not surprising as he and his sister Cornelia had been studying under a well-known local *Schreibmeister*, Johann Henrich Thym, for nearly a year before Scherbius was hired.¹⁰

Goethe learned his first Latin and Greek as a child in Frankfurt, when his father hired the half-Turkish Scherbius to teach him Latin and, after a year, Greek as well. Caspar Goethe's household account book shows that the first lesson took place on November 1st, 1756, when Goethe was seven years old.¹¹ Other basic subjects including calligraphy, arithmetic, geography, and history were covered by Schreibemeister Thym.¹²

How a Turk came to be the Goethe's Latin teacher is a convoluted tale. In 1683, Vienna was besieged by the Grand Vizier Kara Mustapha, and the Turks in Hungary were being defeated and persecuted by Jan Sobieski, the King of Poland. The 1680's and '90's were the twilight of Ottoman rule in Hungary. By the time of the Treaty of Karlowitz in 1699, the Ottomans would have to evacuate the district completely.¹³

Scherbius the tutor was the son of a Turk named Peri Cherbi, also called Reschab Cherbi. Cherbi, probably an alternative form of Çelebi, is a title rather than a name, approximately equivalent to "Excellency." Peri Cherbi's father was said to be an *agha*, which is a military title, and a native of Palotta in southern Hungary, which had been under Ottoman rule for nearly two hundred years. Peri Cherbi was born in 1684. In 1687, somewhere between Palotta and Belgrade, an Austrian *Freikorporal*, Pancratius von Matter, discovered the boy by the body of his father the *agha*, who had been run through with a broadsword. How von Matter knew that the father was an *agha* is unclear. He may have been informed by the costume of the dead man, or learned it from the toddler Cherbi. Von Matter took Peri Cherbi to Vienna, where he sold him for fifteen gulden to a postman called Zacharias Kromester or Kromster. After Kromester had had Cherbi instructed in the

Christian religion, he gave him as a gift to the Rektor of the University of Nürnberg, Georg Richard Kammer. Cherbi was baptized in 1690 in the small Bavarian town of Altdorf, southeast of Nürnberg, and given the name Georg Gottlieb Scherbius.¹⁴ Around 1720, he settled in Frankfurt, where he made his living as a printer and engraver. In 1726, he married Anna Elizabeth Alss, daughter of a military cadet from Hesse-Kassel. Their only son was Goethe's tutor, Johann Jacob Gottlieb Scherbius. Scherbius was educated at the Frankfurter Gymnasium, where he proved himself an excellent student, earning the respect of his instructors. He was a poor boy, burdened for most of his adolescence and young manhood with the support of his ailing father. When he graduated from the Gymnasium, he was given a small bursary from the city council, and eventually went to Jena to study theology. He remained there for five years, from 1751 to 1756, and also spent a academic term in Leipzig in 1753. In April 1756, he graduated with the title *Candidat der Theologie*, a prerequisite for ordination in the Lutheran Church.¹⁵

Unfortunately, when Scherbius returned to Frankfurt to apply for a then-vacant pastorage at the Nicholaikirche, although he performed more than adequately, preaching a competent trial sermon, and satisfying the church examiners of the *Constitorium* as to his suitability for a clerical post, he did not get the job. Two other applications to nearby country parishes were also unsuccessful. Mentzel speculated that either he was not the best of public speakers, or that German congregations of that place and time were simply unwilling to accept a Turk as a spiritual leader. The later suggestion seems somewhat far-fetched, since Scherbius was completely assimilated.¹⁶ A more likely explanation was that he was a victim of unfortunate demographics. At that time, academically qualified candidates significantly outnumbered the available parish postings.¹⁷ Like many of his contemporaries, Scherbius had to seek other work. Friends of Caspar Goethe suggested him as a tutor for the Goethe children. Scherbius, then twenty-seven years old, was hired

to give Wolfgang and his sister Cornelia weekly lessons.¹⁸ Despite his exceptional academic qualifications, he was only paid fifty kreuzer per month, not a high salary. He was paid less than Thym, the writing master, who was receiving a monthly stipend of two gulden.¹⁹ Scherbius seems to have been good value for the money: he was a highly qualified tutor, if anything, over-qualified to teach pupils so young. Goethe, however, was a bright and unusually gifted child. To judge from the variety of amusing exercises and imaginative writing Scherbius assigned, he must have been a lively and interesting teacher. He had Goethe work on projects that would most appeal to a boy of his age, and was content to allow grammar to serve as a tool for prose-composition rather than insisting that it be the main course of study. While keeping his pupil's interest, he must also have pleased Caspar Goethe: some of the later composition subjects, chosen to give the boy some familiarity with specialized legal terminology, have to do with court cases. Goethe's childhood composition exercises include a painstakingly copied glossary of legal terms.

The first five books of *Dichtung und Wahrheit* contain most of what Goethe himself said about how he began to learn ancient languages. He himself wrote nothing about Scherbius and the *Labores Juveniles*. What little he recorded of his early language learning in his autobiography, however, is both significant and typical. He disliked Latin grammar, he wrote, because it seemed to him an arbitrary system (“*willkürlich und lächerlich*”) containing too many exceptions that had to be learned individually. But a rhyming Latin book for beginners appealed to him,²⁰ perhaps Johann Gottfried Gross' *Der Angehende Lateiner, d.i erste Übungen der lateinischen Sprache nach der Langeschen Grammatik*, of which Goethe's father owned the 1747 edition.²¹

If grammar did not appeal to Goethe at the age of eight, rhetoric did. He excelled in writing “*Chrieen*” (short essays on assigned themes), he said, although his marks were often lowered for grammatical errors. The essays, however, delighted his father, who

would give him money as a reward.²² Goethe's *Labores Juveniles* contains several of the essays Caspar Goethe liked.²³ Equally to his taste must have been his "*Felicitationes matutinae singulis diebus per totum Augustum 1758 excogitatae et patri charissimo apprecatae*" ("Morning salutations written for each day of the month of August and dedicated to my dear father") and the "*Novae Salutationes matutinae*," ("New morning salutations"), collections of short greetings and good wishes for his father. The first includes thirty-one sentences, four in Greek. The second set consists of seven simple greetings in Latin with Greek translations. Initially Goethe's Greek script is clumsy, compared to his elegant Latin hand. The errors in these exercises show that they were probably not reworked by Scherbius, but rather Goethe's own. The mistakes also bear witness to the young Goethe's early distaste for grammar and detail: he hardly ever used the iota subscript, for instance.²⁴ There were also some problems with spelling.²⁵

The Latin dialogues are accompanied by the German originals from which they were translated. Both the Latin and the German are in Goethe's hand, but they are in different scripts. Scherbius did not impose a dry and formal style on his pupil. Not only is the diction of the Latin versions colloquial with a flavor of Roman comedy: ("*immo, licebit!*" "*profecto!*")²⁶ ("indeed, it will be allowed!" "surely!") the German here and there shows traces of the Frankfurt dialect ("*weisstu?*")²⁷ ("d'ye know?"). In the first of the two dialogues the father and son go down into the wine cellar to see the foundation stone of the rebuilt house on the Grosser Hirschgraben. The father jokingly promises his son a genuine piece of timber from Columbus' ship. The son laughs and replies that he will treasure it until Damasippos²⁸ comes to buy it from him.²⁹ In the second dialogue, the boy shows his father a set of figures he has molded from wax, among them a cat and a whale.

*F. ...ast vide qualis et quantus factus sim brevi tempore ceroplastes!*³⁰
*P. Immo potius cera corruptor.*³¹

Son: ...but see what a wax-worker I have become in a short time!
Father: More like a wax-destroyer.

Goethe's father teasingly calls the figures *monstra* (monstrosities), but hopes the boy will continue to enjoy his hobby. These surprisingly accomplished little dialogues show a real feeling for both idiom and characterization: they are impressive work for a ten-year-old.

After three years of work with the young Goethe, Scherbius left the household, since his wife was seriously ill following a difficult pregnancy. At this point, Goethe's Greek studies seem to have been mostly confined to the New Testament. His only original Greek composition from this time is the lost *Roman in mehreren Sprachen* (*Novel in various Languages*), an epistolary work in which seven siblings around the world write letters to one another in various languages. One brother, a theologian, includes the occasional Greek postscript to his Latin letters.³² By this time, Goethe's study under Scherbius had equipped him well enough so that he was able to read Greek and Latin on a level with the *Primaner* (the top class) at the Frankfurter Gymnasium. Since his father's library contained some 1600 volumes, by this time Goethe would also have been widely read.³³

Goethe's next Latin and Greek tutor was the Rektor of the Frankfurter Gymnasium, a converted Jew called Johann Georg Albrecht, who is more thoroughly discussed in *Dichtung und Wahrheit* than any of Goethe's other childhood tutors.³⁴ Although Rektor Albrecht was the most intellectually impressive and best qualified of Goethe's childhood teachers, the boy learned less from him than he had from Thym and Scherbius.³⁵ Albrecht was something of an eccentric, described by his contemporaries as a hedgehog.³⁶ His sarcastic streak terrified his other pupils, but not the young Goethe, whose ready wit and quick answers delighted him. Long a friend of Caspar Goethe, Albrecht had known Johann Goethe from childhood. Although Albrecht must have been fond of his friend Caspar's son, when he was presented with a request for Hebrew lessons, he immediately

demurred, saying that he could not see the use of it. The boy protested that he wanted to read his Old Testament better, but he also had his own private reasons for wanting to know more Hebrew. Yiddish had fascinated him for some time, and in 1761 he had even had a few lessons in the language with a certain Christamicus, probably, judging by his name, a converted Jew.³⁷ An interest in Yiddish would have been natural to Goethe, since Frankfurt, at that time a city of 30,000, had a population of 2,500 Yiddish-speaking Jews who lived in a ghetto of 200 households and a synagogue between the *Graben* and the city wall.³⁸ That the Goethe family had friends in the ghetto is shown by the fact that when Goethe's maternal uncle was married in 1766, a representative from the Frankfurt Jewish community recited a congratulatory poem in Yiddish.³⁹ Goethe himself was a frequent visitor to the ghetto and had close friends there. Whatever his feelings about the language they spoke, he was fascinated with his Jewish friends and their ceremonies. He even attended a circumcision, a wedding, and a celebration of Succoth, the Feast of Tabernacles.⁴⁰ Although the Yiddish language seems to have had a simultaneous charm and repulsion for the Goethe, he earnestly desired to master it.⁴¹

Ambivalence about Yiddish is reflected in the *Roman in mehreren Sprachen*, in which the youngest of the polyglot siblings is forced to write his letters in that language because all of the other languages had already been taken by his elder brothers and sisters. The diction used by Goethe when describing the sound of Yiddish, "*der Akzent einer unerfreulichen Sprache*,"⁴² ("the accent of an unpleasant language") also reflects some uneasiness.

Albrecht consented to try and teach the boy the fundamentals of Hebrew, which he felt could be accomplished in two or three months' time with daily lessons.⁴³ They began with the alphabet, which at first seemed easy. The consonants and the vowels that had their own letter forms were not hard to learn, but the pointing seemed puzzling and

arbitrary, and was soon too much for the patience of Goethe, who lost interest in learning more about the Hebrew language, and shifted his focus to the text itself. Albrecht resisted this tendency to shirk grammar and recitation at first, but finally gave in, amused, and allowed their sessions to degenerate into free-ranging explorations of the stories and characters of the Old Testament.⁴⁴ The extent to which the world of Old Testament captivated the young Goethe's imagination is reflected not only in the lengthy Biblical rhapsody that dominates Book IV of *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, but also in the fact that one of his many ambitious youthful projects was a prose epic on the subject of Joseph.⁴⁵

By the time Goethe was ready to go to university in 1766, he wanted to study philology and eventually to have an academic career. He hoped to go to Göttingen, where the philologist and educationalist Johann Mathias Gesner (1691-1761), founder of the new German Humanism, had begun teaching in 1735. Eminent himself, Gesner had gathered a community of able scholars in the city, including Christian Gottlob Heyne (1729-1812) who had been teaching there for two years.⁴⁶ The *Eclogues*, the first volume of Heyne's famous edition of Virgil, would come out in 1767. Also on the faculty was Johann David Michaelis (1717-1791),⁴⁷ a well-known scholar who taught theology and oriental languages, and who might have made some headway with Goethe's Hebrew.

Goethe could now read Latin fluently and well, but he knew that his Greek was still weak. He was anxious to continue his studies of ancient literature. Caspar Goethe was firm, however: his son would go to Leipzig and study law as he had always planned. His father's will prevailed. Goethe had to give in, abandoning his plans to go to Göttingen. He secretly planned to study philology anyway, but ended up being thwarted once more.⁴⁸

When Goethe arrived in Leipzig, he revealed his philological leanings to his mentor, Professor Johann Gottlieb Böhme (1717-1780), himself a lecturer on history, historiography, and constitutional law. Böhme, although he seems to have published a

book of Latin poetry in 1757,⁴⁹ was adamantly opposed to his protégé's plans for humanistic studies, and gave him a good scolding, strongly discouraging him from deceiving his father by wasting time studying antiquity when he should have been applying himself to the law. The charming Madame Böhme also did her best to convince Goethe to abide by his father's intentions.⁵⁰ Goethe gave in once more, and shelved philology for a later time. A further discouragement came when he happened to meet up with some Greeks at a fair outside the city, and was crushed to discover that the language they spoke bore no resemblance to the Greek he knew and wanted to learn more thoroughly.⁵¹ To hear the difference between modern and ancient Greek was a crushing disappointment. For Goethe, the Leipzig years were fallow years for classical studies, although Johann August Ernesti (1707-1781) and Samuel Friedrich Nathanael Morus (1736-1792) were both teaching there at the time. While Goethe was in Leipzig, Morus would have been working on his edition of Longinus, which was published in 1769. Curiously, although Goethe dined with Morus repeatedly, and even discussed antiquity with him, he never sought him out as a tutor.⁵² Ernesti had just published his edition of Polybios in 1763-4, and his edition of Kallimachos had been printed the previous year. He had also edited Minucius Felix in 1760 and Tacitus in 1752. Ernesti's *Clavis Ciceroniana*, originally published in 1739, was in its second edition, and a third edition was in preparation. Although Goethe seems to have been using his Homer edition later on, around 1770, Ernesti seems not to have been an acquaintance of his.⁵³ Ernesti's edition was probably the first Homer Goethe owned, and so he made it Werther's first as well.⁵⁴ Another Leipzig scholar who might have tutored him was Johann Jacob Reiske (1716-1774).⁵⁵ During Goethe's university days, Reiske edited three very different texts: Theokritos in 1765-6, the *Greek Anthology* in 1766, and Porphyry's *De Abstinentia* in 1767. Though Goethe did not become a better Greek scholar during his Leipzig years,⁵⁶ he did not lose sight of the charms of antiquity,

since it was in Leipzig that he first read the works of the seminal Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717-1768), who was one of the first scholars to seriously study the history of art.

Goethe was much inspired by Winckelmann's *Gedanken über die Nachahmung der Griechen* (1755), and later much disturbed by the news of the great scholar's murder.⁵⁷ During this period, he studied drawing from plaster casts of ancient art under the famous Adam Friedrich Oeser (1717-1799), director of the Leipzig Art Academy, who had been the teacher of Winckelmann himself.⁵⁸ Few casts and fewer originals were available, but Oeser recommended *Dactylotheca* (1755-1768), by Phillipp Daniel Lippert (1702-1785), a collection of casts of ancient cameos and intaglio. This book, together with the plaster casts of a dancing faun with cymbals and the central figure from the Laokoon group from Oeser's academy,⁵⁹ opened Goethe's eyes to images of the Greeks not, as they had been in his great-uncle von Loen's mythology book of his childhood, in French theatrical dress, but in their own costumes. Later that year, Goethe became an intimate of the household of the music printer and publisher Bernard Christoph Breitkopf (1695-1777), and was given free access to the family's fine library, which included a collection of sulphur casts of ancient jewelry. Since this collection had fallen into disorder, Goethe reorganized it, and in the process consulted the *Dactylotheca* and other books.⁶⁰

After two years, in September 1768, Goethe left Leipzig for Frankfurt, ill and exhausted, without a degree. He had had a hemorrhage in his throat, the result of "tubercular lymphatic swelling," which eventually required surgery.⁶¹ He had planned to study more Greek during his convalescence, which was painful and prolonged, and had acquired the necessary texts from his friend the Wölfenbüttel librarian Ernst Theodor Langer (1743-1820), with whom he had studied at Oeser's art academy. There is, however, no evidence that he did any scholarly work at all in this period.⁶² The years from

1768 to 1770 were spent at home in his father's house, despondent, unwell, and generally unproductive. The household was less happy than it had been in Goethe's boyhood. He squabbled constantly with his father, who was irritable out of anxieties for his son's prospects and his health.⁶³ Finally Caspar Goethe determined to send his son to Strasbourg, like Leipzig, a university he himself had attended, to take a doctoral degree in law. Goethe again asked to go to Göttingen, but his father refused him.

Goethe went away to Strasbourg at the age of twenty-one, in April of 1770. His *Strasbourger Tagebuch* reveals how little he could content himself with merely studying law. Among the classical writers he commented on are Plato,⁶⁴ Livy, Tacitus, Pliny, Seneca, Juvenal, Lucan, and Propertius.⁶⁵ The preponderance of Romans in this list suggests that his Latin was still better than his Greek. Academically, his legal studies progressed well, since having been drilled by his father, he had a good background in the subject. In the following September (1770) he passed his licentiate examinations with distinction.⁶⁶

Johann Gottfried von Herder (1744-1803), a pivotal figure for Goethe's lifelong views of the ancient world in general and Homeric epic in particular, arrived in Strasbourg that same month. Herder was already famous for his wide learning and for his theological writings. He had come to the city to be treated for a blocked lachrymal duct. The treatment, which was unsuccessful, eventually included eye-surgery. Goethe was a faithful visitor to Herder's sickroom, and became a close friend. While Herder was convalescing from his surgery, he worked on his *Abhandlung über den Ursprung der Sprache*, which Goethe read avidly, section by section, as it was written. Herder's original contribution to contemporary thought on the the origin of language was the idea that speech is not a special gift from a divine exterior source, but rather something intrinsic to the nature of human beings. To Herder, speech and language were compendia of the heritage

of all previous expressions in any given tongue. Each individual invents and creates, and so any language constantly changes and develops in a process of continuous birth. As Nicholas Boyle summed it up, “the ‘chain of culture’ that joins together the nations of the human race is a chain whose links are originalities.”⁶⁷ Speech for Herder was the vehicle for national identity and culture. He felt that the genius of a language not only rides on national identity, but also changes and develops this identity through the original creative efforts of writers. Consequently, the literature Herder found most valid and esteemed most highly was not literary, sophisticated, or belletristic. He preferred the voice of what he perceived to be the self-taught genius that reflects in words the natural and human world around it, free from formal constraints and academic conditioning. Prizing, as he did, culture itself above cultivation, Herder was the first collector of folk songs in Germany.

Homer, Plato, and Ossian were at the top of Herder’s canon.⁶⁸ Accusations of fraud had followed soon after the publication in 1761 of James MacPherson’s (1736-1796) purported translation of a great epic by a Highland bard named Ossian, whose *Fingal* and the other Highland fragments Macpherson claimed to have translated, but Ossian’s works nevertheless became widely popular.⁶⁹ They caught the imagination of the reading public throughout all Europe. The vogue for Macpherson’s forgeries in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century seems mysterious to the modern reader, but there were many reasons for their acceptance. The passionate emotion that runs through the poems appealed to budding *Sturm und Drang* sensibilities, the free and savage nature of the ancient society depicted attracted readers who had been inspired by Rousseau, and the supposed great age of the poems, supposedly dating from the third century AC,⁷⁰ gave them a status and stature that no modern poetry could have had. Herder found the poetic language of the Macpherson poems with its many elisions and inversions particularly attractive and powerful; later, Goethe’s Werther himself would find his own prose style criticized for the same flaws,⁷¹

and would recite Ossian to his Lotte. This in turn fueled the Ossian rage, and even inspired Napoleon, who had read *Werther* over and over,⁷² to travel with his own copy of Macpherson's poems.⁷³ Herder's reverence for Ossian was typically idiosyncratic in origin, however, stemming from his belief, in spite of the rumors that the poems were forgeries, that since the poetry itself contained true Gaelic material of outstanding quality, the circumstances of its transmission were a comparatively unimportant issue. This attitude was later reflected in Herder's disinterest in Wolf's work on the origins of Homeric texts.⁷⁴ Both Ossian and Homer met Herder's criteria for excellence: they were to him the genuine folk-voices of ancient nations, vigorous, unsophisticated, and unspoiled by foreign polishing.⁷⁵

Since the national and the natural were Herder's deities, he insisted both that literary works be read in their original languages whenever possible and also that children be educated first and foremost in their own native language and their own national literature. Only once the native language was mastered should other languages be learned thoroughly in order to reap the benefits of works written in the mother tongues of other nations. A proper knowledge of one's own language, Herder wrote, would be the key whereby the treasure chambers of other countries' native works could be unlocked.⁷⁶ Herder had addressed this question in the essay, *Über den Fleiss in Mehreren Gelehrten Sprachen*, written in 1764. Having named a few foreign writers highly esteemed in his day (Bacon, Newton, Locke) he insisted that such great foreign works should be read, but never translated.

*Es gibt immer Schönheiten die durch den Schleier der Sprache mit doppelten Reizen durchscheinen; man reiße den Schleier weg; und sie verlieren sich! Es gibt Rosenknospen, die mit Dornen verwebt sind; Blüte, die man zerstört wenn man sie entfaltet.*⁷⁷

There are always beauties that shine through the veil of language with a double enchantment. If you rip away the veil, they

disappear! There are rosebuds that are interwoven with thorns, blossoms that you destroy when you unfurl them.

Goethe found Herder's views overwhelmingly attractive. Herder gave him the impetus to go back to Homer and begin to work again on learning Greek. He used Ernesti's edition, with Samuel Clarke's facing translation into Latin.⁷⁸ This seems to have been his first extensive and systematic study of Greek. In a 1774 letter to the novelist Sophie La Roche (1730-1807), he described the method he recommended for learning Greek, which must have been the same way he was learning in the winter of 1770 in Strasbourg.⁷⁹

*“So du einen Homer hast ist's gut, hast du keinen kauffe dir den Ernestischen, da die Clärkische wörtliche Uebersetzung beygefügt ist; sodann verschaffe dir Schaufelbergs Clavem Homericam und ein Spiel weisse Karten. Hast du dies beysammen so fang an zu lesen die Ilias, achte nicht auf Accente, sondern lies wie die Melodey des Hexameters dahinfließt und es dir schön klinge in der Seele. Verstehst du's, so ist alles gethan, so du's nicht verstehst, sieh die Uebersetzung an, lies die Uebersetzung, und das Original, und das Original und die Uebersetzung, etwa ein zwanzig dreisig Verse, bis dir ein Licht aufgeht über Construcktion, die in Homer reinste Bilderstellung ist. Sodann ergreiffe deinen Clavem wo du wirst Zeile vor Zeile die Worte analisirt finden, das Praesens und den Nominativum schreibe sodann auf die Karten, steck sie in dein Souvenir, und lerne dran zu Hause und auf dem Feld, wie einer Beter mögt, dem das Herz ganz nach Gott hing. Und so immer ein dreisig Verse nach dem andern, und hast du zwey drey Bücher so durchgearbeitet, versprech ich dir, stehst du frisch und frank vor deinem Homer, und verstehst ihn ohne Uebersetzung Schaufelberg und Karten. Probatum est!”*⁸⁰

“If you've got a Homer, good. If not, buy yourself the Ernesti edition with Clarke's literal translation, and get yourself Schaufelberg's *Clavem Homericam* and a pack of white cards. Once you have these, just start reading the *Iliad*. Pay no attention to the accents, but just read as the hexameters' melody flows along and it sounds beautiful to your soul. If you understand it, you're all done. If you don't understand it, have a look at the translation, read the translation and the original, the original and the translation, for about twenty or thirty verses, until you suddenly understand the structure, which is nothing but a set of pictures in Homer. Then take your *Clavem*, in which you'll find the words analyzed line by

line, and write the present and the nominative on the cards. Stick them in your pocket-book, and study them at home and out in the meadow, the way someone prays if his whole soul is set on God. Go on that way, always thirty verses at a time, and once you've worked through two or three books, you'll look be able to look your Homer right in the eye and understand him without the translation, Schaufelberg, and the cards. It's worth trying!"

This total immersion method of learning Greek is practical and sensible, since it combines both grammatical study and close reading. It cannot be proven that Goethe invented flash cards, but it seems suggestive that he needed to describe them to his addressee as though they were something unfamiliar. The idea that learners of Greek should simply ignore accents is an unfortunate one, however. Occasionally, the meaning of a Greek word can only be determined by how it is accented. It may be possible to learn to read Homer without a full understanding of accents, but the the process is made much easier by their use. Goethe's dislike of detail is evident in his prejudice against accents, an attitude left over from his boyhood.

Apart from this piece of very poor advice, Goethe's recommendations are on the whole workable ones that a beginner might not arrive at intuitively. Breaking down study sessions into relatively short units allows for good close reading and also prevents the mental fatigue that comes from biting off more text than the mind can chew. Carrying flash-cards around for frequent study is an efficacious way to learn vocabulary. Short and frequent drills are the best way of memorizing for most people. Early reliance on translations rather than dictionaries is to be discouraged in the initial stages of language learning, especially when the student is ill-equipped to judge the merits of any given translation. Goethe, although he did recommend a reliable facing translation, suggested that the first reading be done without its aid and that the translation and the specialized dictionary should be used only in the last resort, when the text itself makes no sense. Ideally, over time, the crutches of the translation and the dictionary can and should be

discarded, as he describes, so it is possible for readers to stand on their own two feet, *frisch und frank*. The method seems to have worked for Goethe, for by June of 1771, in a letter to his former fellow-lodger at Strasbourg, J.D. Salzmann (1722-1812) he was able to claim that he could nearly read Homer without using a translation.⁸¹

It was in late August of 1771 that Goethe returned to Frankfurt. In the early summer of that year, he had had a brief and passionate love-affair with Frederike Brion (1752-1813), daughter of a parson at the neighboring village of Sesenheim, but he had parted from her at the end of June.⁸² His legal studies were nearing their close. Although his dissertation on the relationship of church and state, *De legislatoribus*, had been rejected by the university, he was allowed to obtain his Licentiate in Law by composing and publicly defending a set of legal theses. The debate, which was conducted in Latin, took place on 6 August. At this point, although not strictly entitled to it, owing to the rejection of his dissertation, Goethe nevertheless took to using the title *Doctor juris*.⁸³

Upon his return to Frankfurt, Goethe settled in again at his parents' house, but found himself no more happy there than he had been after his Leipzig days. His father busied himself with looking over Goethe's Strasbourg prose and poetry, arranging and classifying the works and urging his son to complete them. He was also pleased with the dissertation, despite its rejection, and made arrangements to have it published.⁸⁴ The social circle of Goethe's sister Cornelia included their childhood friends Johann Peter Horn (1749-1806), and Johann Jakob Reise (1746-1827), as well as the brothers Schlosser, Hieronymus Peter (1735-1797) and Johann Georg (1739-1799), who was later to become Goethe's brother-in-law.

The *Rede zum Shakespears Tag*, a speech delivered on Shakespeare's Name Day, (14 October, 1771) to this group of Frankfurt friends, shows how he was influenced and inspired by what Greek reading he had done up to that point. In the course of decrying the

artificiality of French tragedies based on classical themes, he rhapsodized on the authenticity and profound spiritual meaning he himself had found in Greek literature. For its original audience, he said, tragedy aroused feelings of wholeness and nobility in the soul.

*Und in was für Seelen!
Griechischen! ich kann mich nicht erklären, was das heisst,
aber ich fühls und berufe mich der Kürze halber auf Homer
und Sophokles und Theokrit, die habens mich fühlen
gelernt!*⁸⁵

And in what souls!
Greek ones! I cannot express what that means, but I feel it,
and for the sake of brevity, I mention Homer and Sophokles
and Theokritos, the ones who taught me to feel!

In February of 1772, Johann Heinrich Merck (1741-1791), who had just become the editor of the *Frankfurter gelehrte Anzeigen*, asked Goethe to become a reviewer for the journal and a member of the editorial board.⁸⁶ Goethe described Merck, to whom the younger Schlosser had introduced him, as a man of exceptional incisiveness, candor, and Swiftian venom.⁸⁷ These qualities were reflected in the lively style of his journal. Reviews were not limited to books and engravings published in Germany, but included English and French art and literature as well.⁸⁸ The reviews in the journal were all unsigned, but Hermann Bräuning-Oktavio, whose work is the most comprehensive study of the subject to date, attributed sixty-eight of them to Goethe, with a further thirteen identified as pieces of which he was a co-author.⁸⁹ The exact number of reviews Goethe authored and to which he contributed will probably never be known for sure.⁹⁰ These reviews do not fall into any one category, but range from a commentary on Anakreon⁹¹ to a some German poems by an unnamed Polish Jew⁹² to a book of parlor games called *Geschenk des Sylphen Pläsir für junge Herrn, sich in Gesellschaften unentbehrlich zu machen*. (*An Offering from the Sylph Pleasure by which Young Gentlemen May Become*

Indispensable in Society.)⁹³ In his old age Goethe was not ashamed to look back on this work. Indeed, on 11 June, 1823, during his second meeting with Johann Peter Eckermann (1792-1854), who was to become his Boswell, Goethe asked the younger writer to look over the 1772-3 *Frankfurter gelehrte Anzeigen* reviews, which he owned in two bound volumes, with a view to publishing some of them in a future edition of his collected works. No, the reviews were not marked, he said, but Eckermann would have no trouble distinguishing them from the work of the other staff members because of their style!⁹⁴ Eckermann apparently had no trouble identifying Goethe's pieces and writing a short index to them. The task was apparently completed within two months, but the index does not survive.

During the winter of 1771-2, when Goethe was writing these reviews, he was also a frequent traveler to the nearby city of Darmstadt, where Merck was *Kriegsrat* (military adviser) to the court of the Landgravine Karoline, acting ruler of Hesse-Darmstadt. As a friend of Merck's, Goethe would no doubt have had recourse to the excellent library there. Merck also took Goethe to visit the celebrated author Sophie von La Roche (1730-1837), who had recently published a popular epistolary novel entitled *Die Geschichte des Fräuleins von Sternheim*.

In September of 1772, a new commentary on Homer by David Christoph Seybold (1747-1804), a professor at Jena, received a vitriolic review in the *Frankfurter gelehrte Anzeigen*. This piece has generally been accepted as Goethe's work.⁹⁵ Goethe's fondness for Homer might well have led him to attack Seybold for the abstract analysis the book offered in place of a close reading of the text. It appears that Seybold claimed that the main theme of the *Iliad* was the war at Troy. The context of this statement seems to have been an argument that Homer chose the material for his epic poems purely for their appeal to a Greek audience, an idea that does not seem in the least radical to readers of the present day,

but which may well have looked unusual to the audience of the eighteenth century. The twenty-three-year-old Goethe, impatient with a cultural analysis that took the focus away from the text itself, mocked Seybold and his work.

*Man sollte denken, er kenne nur das Gedicht aus dem
Überschrift; aber der Herr Professor haben's gelesen,
schlimmer! studiert! immer schlimmer! wer interessiert sich
einen Augenblick für Troja? Steht nicht die Stadt durchaus
nur als Coulisse da? Ist zum Anfange die Rede von
Eroberung der Stadt, oder von was anderem? Erfährt man
nicht gleich, Troja wird trotz aller Bemühungen der
Griechen, diesmal nicht eingenommen? Setzt ja kaum einer
einmal einen Fuß an die Mauer. Ist nicht das Hauptinteresse
des Kampfs bei den Schiffen?*⁹⁶

You'd think he only knew the poem from its title, but our respected Professor has read it. Terrible! He's studied it! Even worse! Who gives a damn about Troy? Doesn't the city merely serve as a backdrop throughout? Are we going to find out that this time, despite all of the Greeks' best efforts, Troy will not be sacked? Does the opening focus on the city's fall, or on something else? He hardly sets foot on the walls. Isn't the main theme the battle by the ships?

Seybold also seems to have identified the main theme of the *Odyssey*, probably in the same context of cultural analysis, as the return of the Greeks. This idea evoked an indignant and incredulous response.

*Nun Stoff der Odyssee! Rückkehr der Griechen!
der Griechen? oder eines einzigen, einzelnen, und noch
dazu des abgelegtesten der Griechen? dessen Rückkehr oder
Nichtrückkehr nicht den mindesten Einfluß auf die Nation
haben könnte.*⁹⁷

Now, *the theme of the Odyssey! The return of the Greeks!* The Greeks? Or is it the return of a single unique man who was, even so, the most obscure of the Greeks? The return or failure to return of this man couldn't have had the slightest possible impact on the nation.

It might be possible to detect in this review an echo of the *Rede zum Shakespears Tag*, which had been delivered only five months before the publication of this review, in the following indignant outburst. Seybold seems to have remarked on the value of Homeric texts as a source of information about Bronze Age customs and culture.

*Sitten! und da, anstatt Gefühls des höchsten Ideals menschlicher Natur, der höchste Würde menschlicher Thaten, entschuldigt er den Homer, daß seine Zeit, Tapferkeit für die höchste Tugend hielt...!*⁹⁸

Customs! And then, in place of [Homer's] feeling for the highest ideals in human character, for the superlative value of human deeds, he excuses Homer for having lived in a time when bravery was considered the noblest virtue...!

To a man who had enthused so unrestrainedly in his *Rede zum Shakespears Tag* over the power of the Greek literature to awake profound and noble feelings, Seybold's approach to Homer would have been insupportable.

Another review published in the next issue of the *Frankfurter gelehrte Anzeigen*, and also attributed to Goethe reveals even more the intensity of his feelings for the sacredness of Homer's text and Goethe's abhorrence of abridgment and generalization. *Franken zur Griechischen Literatur* appears to have been a periodical that claimed to have the unrealistically ambitious program of providing readers with an epitome of everything excellent in all Greek literature! Goethe responded that if the author intended to carry out all of his colossal undertaking, he had better pray to live as long as Methuselah did. The picture of Homer the periodical presented was utter blasphemy in Goethe's eyes.

O ihr große Griechen! und du Homer! Homer! -- doch so übersetzt, kommentiert, extrahiert, enucliert, so sehr verwundet, gestoßen, zerfleischt, durch Steine, Staub, Pfützen geschleift, getrieben, gerissen

...οὐδε τί οἱ χρώς σήπεται, οὐδέ μιν εὐλαί
ἔσθουσ'...
ὥς τοι κήδονται μάκαρες θεοὶ...
καὶ νέκυός περ ἔόντος...⁹⁹

Oh, you great Greeks! And you, Homer! Homer! but so translated, analyzed, abridged, dissected, so terribly wounded, impaled, flayed, eroded with stones, forced through dust and puddles, lacerated

*But his body does not decay, nor do the worms eat him up... [Il. 24.414-5]
for the blessed gods pity him,
even though he is dead... [Il. 24.422-3]*

Only by resorting to a quotation from the text itself could Goethe adequately express his contempt and outrage at an author who offered only an epitome in place of the real thing, and assert that Homer, protected by divine power, would ultimately emerge unscathed from the butchery of this book.

However satisfying it may have been to Goethe himself, such literary work did nothing to advance his legal career. Most of the cases that his father had arranged for him to take on when he returned from Strasbourg he had quietly handed over to others. The elder Goethe, frustrated by his son's lack of professional advancement, determined to send him to Wetzlar, to the *Reichskammergericht*, the Imperial Cameral Court. It was customary for young lawyers to spend some time at this court of appeals. In Wetzlar, there was a backlog of cases reaching back for decades and even centuries. Competing political interests and complicated questions of precedence served only to slow down the progress of such cases. In May of 1772, Goethe arrived in Wetzlar, but there is no record that he ever did any legal work there.¹⁰⁰ Instead, he divided his time between his literary studies and the group of friends he soon made in the city. This group of young lawyers included Johann Friedrich Wilhelm Gotter (1746-1797), a legation secretary, who had connections with a group of Klopstock devotees in Göttingen.¹⁰¹ Gotter was an editor of the *Göttinger Musenalmanach*, which was published by this circle, later known as the *Göttinger Hain*. That summer, Goethe also met Charlotte Buff, the fiancée of Johann Christian Kestner (1741-1800).¹⁰² His unhappy passion for her provided some of the

inspiration for the story of Werther. He also renewed his acquaintance with a young lawyer called Karl Wilhelm Jerusalem (1747-1772), whom he had known slightly in Leipzig.¹⁰³ The Wetzlar summer provided ample time for both social life and study, and he enthusiastically immersed himself in both especially in his relationships with the Göttingen group. Other members of that circle included Christian Graf zu Stolberg-Stolberg (1748-1821), his younger brother Graf Friedrich Leopold (1750-1819), the poet Gottfried August Bürger (1747-1794), the philologist and poet Johann Heinrich Voss (1751-1826), and the lyric poet Ludwig Heinrich Christoph Hölty (1748-1776), authors of the *Göttinger Musenalmanach*, and all great devotees of Klopstock's poetry. The contemporary resurgence of interest in Homeric epic also interested the Göttingen circle:

Auch das Homerische Licht ging uns neu wieder auf, und zwar recht im Sinne der Zeit, die ein solches Erscheinen höchst begünstigte: denn das beständige Hinweisen auf Natur bewirkte zuletzt, daß man auch die Werke der Alten von dieser Seite betrachten lernte. Was mehrere Reisende zu Aufklärung der heiligen Schriften getan, leisteten andere für Homer. Durch Guys ward man eingeleitet, Wood gab der Sache den Schwung. Eine Göttinger Rezension des anfangs sehr seltenen Originals machte uns mit der Absicht bekannt, und belehrte uns, wie weit sie ausgeführt worden. Wir sahen nun nicht mehr in jenen Gedichten ein angespanntes und aufgedunsenes Heldenwesen, sondern die abgespielte Wahrheit einer uralten Gegenwart, und suchten uns dieselbe möglichst heranzuziehen. Zwar wollte uns zu gleicher Zeit nicht völlig in den Sinn, wenn behauptet wurde, daß, um die Homerischen Naturen recht zu verstehen, man sich mit den wilden Völkern und ihren Sitten bekannt machen müsse, wie sie uns die Reisebeschreiber der neuen Welt schildern: denn es ließ sich doch nicht leugnen, daß sowohl Europäer als Asiaten, in den Homerischen Gedichten schon auf einem hohen Grade der Kultur dargestellt worden, vielleicht auf einem höhern, als die Zeiten des Trojanischen Kriegs mochten genossen haben. Aber jene Maxime war doch mit dem herrschenden Naturbekenntnis übereinstimmend, und in so fern mochten wir sie gelten lassen.¹⁰⁴

Also, the light of Homer was rising upon us anew. Indeed, this was very much in accordance with spirit of the day, which was most favorably inclined toward such a development. The incessant allusions to Nature eventually brought it about that people learned to regard the works of the ancients from this perspective. What sundry travellers had contributed to the understanding of Holy Scripture,

others did for Homer. We were initiated by Guys; Wood energized the subject. A Göttingen review of the original, which was at first little known, familiarized us with his views, and taught us the extent to which they were carried out. No longer did we see in these poems a lively and indistinct heroic plane, but rather the reflected truth of a present primaeval time that we sought to understand as clearly as possible. At the same time, however, we were not entirely convinced by the claim that a proper understanding of the Homeric character required knowledge of savage tribes and their customs as presented in travellers' descriptions of the New World. For it could not be denied that both Europeans and Asiatics are portrayed at a high level of culture, perhaps a higher level than they might have attained at the time of the Trojan War. But this dictum was in accordance with the understanding of Nature that prevailed at the time, and as far as that goes, we let it pass.

This fascination with Homeric epic would prove a lasting one for several members of the *Göttinger Hain*, not the least of them Goethe. Voss' fine hexameter translation of the *Odyssey* was published in 1781, and his *Iliad* translation in 1793. He also edited the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* in 1781. Friedrich Leopold Stolberg's German version of the *Iliad* came out in 1778.¹⁰⁵

At this time in his life, Goethe's understanding of the ancient world was heavily influenced, as he admitted, by that of his contemporaries. Wood felt comparative ethnographic studies were valuable for the appreciation of a Homeric society he saw as pre-civilized.¹⁰⁶ Although Goethe naturally resisted the notion of comparing Achilles and Hektor to the primitive savages of the New World, and made the telling guess that the Homeric narrative preserves details from a culture later and more sophisticated than the Bronze Age, he had made an important intellectual leap. To Goethe, the characters in Homeric epic were no longer giant titanic beings in an idealized story-land, but rather human beings set in a real society, however far-off and misty. Although he had only recently rejected Seybold's ethnological approach to the Homeric texts, the above passage shows how far Wood and the Göttingen circle had led him beyond merely appreciative reading. The world of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* was still a place into which to escape, but it

had become clearer to Goethe that it was a world that demanded and repaid intellectual analysis. It must be remembered, however, that his account of this time stems from *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, written some forty years later. To some extent, he overstated the impact of Wood's work on him, for remnants of a more simple and appreciative reading of Homeric texts would remain with him well into the 1790's.

By the early 1770's, Goethe had more than a basic reading proficiency in Greek, and was ready for the challenges of authors more difficult than Homer. In July of 1772 he wrote to Herder that he had enlarged his repertory, first reading Xenophon and Plato, then Theokritos and Anakreon. Then he began to read Pindar, and was overwhelmed by his *Virtuosität* and the musicality of his diction.¹⁰⁷ Herder, a lover of Pindar, had infected his protégé with his own enthusiasm. Not surprisingly, both Goethe and Herder subscribed to the prevailing notion of the times that Pindar's Odes were freeverse. Eighteenth century scholars had not yet recognized Pindar's metrical rigidity.¹⁰⁸ Goethe's poem, *Wandrer's Sturmlied*, which was published in the *Göttinger Musenalmanach*, dates from this spring. The poem owes much to his perception of Pindar's style, and indeed, closes with a direct address to Pindar, here cited in the earliest extant version, a manuscript of 1774:¹⁰⁹

*Wenn die Räder rasselten Rad an Rad
 Rasch ums Ziel weg
 Hoch flog siegdurchglühter Jünglinge Peitschenknall
 Und sich Staub wälzt
 Wie von Gebürg herab sich
 Kieselwetter ins Tal wälzt
 Glühte deine Seel Gefahren Pindar
 Mut ...¹¹⁰*

When wheels clattered, wheel on wheel
 swift along to the finish-line
 high flew the whipcrack of youths on fire for victory
 the dust rolled
 as from mountains
 hail rolls into a valley
 In the face of dangers, Pindar, your soul shone
 courage...

The compounds of the third line of the stanza, “*siegdurchglühter Jünglinge Peitschenknall*” are a graceful imitation of Pindar’s typical bold coinages. Goethe also imitated Pindar’s tendency to stretch the syntactic limits of the Greek language: this Pindaric strophe also goes beyond the limits of normal German usage: in normal speech, the verb “*glühen*” is intransitive.¹¹¹ Here, however, “*Mut*” must be taken as an accusative, “*Gefahren*” as a dative.¹¹²

At the end of the summer, Goethe left Wetzlar first for Ehrenbreitstein, where he spent some time with the von La Roche family, and then later for Frankfurt, where he would live for the next four years before departing for Weimar. His unhappy attachment to Charlotte Buff had left him emotionally wounded. When her fiancé Kestner wrote him that Jerusalem had committed suicide on 30 October, 1772, using pistols he had borrowed from Kestner the news made a deep impression on Goethe.¹¹³

In Frankfurt, Goethe as if for therapy for his romantic unhappiness, turned again to his literary pursuits. Merck published his *Götz von Berlichingen*, which Goethe had begun before the Wetzlar summer and spent some time revising in 1773; it was a popular success, although not a financial one. Various finished and unfinished works were also written during this period, including the satirical pamphlet *Götter, Helden und Wieland*. Also in 1773 he made a version of Pindar’s fifth *Olympian Ode*, his first extended piece of translation.¹¹⁴ It is not known what edition of the text of Pindar Goethe has used when he had first tried to read Pindar, early in 1772, but notably, it seems to have been without a facing Latin translation. Goethe admitted at the time that he was occasionally overwhelmed by the challenging text that faced him. Not only do Pindar’s difficulty and complexity make his work especially daunting for beginners, but at that point the *Odes* were by no means commonly read. Editions of the poems were few. Heyne’s 1773 edition with its accompanying Latin version would play a great part in popularizing Pindar, and it was this

edition Goethe had in front of him when he began to make his German translation. Perhaps it was the availability of the new Heyne edition, which was in his father's library, that provided the impetus for his return to Pindar in 1773. By this point, Goethe was reading Pindar's Greek critically and carefully, if not quite as well as he could read Heyne's Latin. His growing ease in reading Greek is shown by the passages where he chose, whether wisely or not, to depart from the Latin translation of the famous scholar. Some of these choices are mildly inaccurate, but at least one place, line 14, he made an arguably better translation simply by sticking to a literal rendering. *Zum Licht* is a simpler and less prescriptive version of ἐς φάος than Heyne's *ad prosperitatem*, which limits the benefits conferred by Psaumis on his fellow townsmen to purely material gains. In several places, minor departures from Pindar were imported into Goethe's translation via Heyne's Latin version, but this was only to be expected in the case of a young poet confronted with an extremely difficult text recently edited by an important and highly-esteemed scholar such as Heyne. Naturally, there are places when he depended on Heyne to know better than he himself did and followed Heyne's readings, in the process preserving in his own translation ideas that Heyne had imported into the Latin. But Goethe did not depend on Heyne to such an extent as to preclude close examination of the Greek text. His growing self-confidence with Greek had made it possible for him to develop some intellectual independence.

The Heyne text Goethe used differed somewhat from that of modern editions. The poems had not yet been separated into periods instead of cola: August Bocke was the first to do that, and his 1811-1821 edition lay some forty years in the future.¹¹⁵ Goethe chose to translate into a line of roughly three beats, mostly dactylic, but with some substitutions of iambic feet where necessary. He followed Heyne's line-breaks assiduously, and faithfully

kept to the word order of the original Greek whenever possible. These decisions kept a tight rein on the structure of the poetry he had perceived as wild and free, bringing it closer to the original than he understood.¹¹⁶

A close reading of Goethe's translation of the fifth *Olympian Ode* shows that although it demonstrably owes something to Heyne's admirably lucid and condensed Latin translation, Goethe was not merely using the Heyne Latin translation in place of Pindar's own text. The strict attention given to the line-breaks of the original and the preservation of gaps between strophe and antistrophe show that he read the Greek carefully, as does Goethe's willingness to imitate Pindar's word-coining by using invented German words of his own ("wolkenthronender," "mannswerten"). Another sign that he worked with the Greek text is that sometimes he went astray where Heyne did not. Since by this time Goethe's Latin was excellent, the small blunders noted below cannot be blamed on misreadings of the Latin version. For example, in line 4, Goethe rendered λαοτρόφον (people-nourishing) as "bevölkertes" (settled or populated). Heyne translated it as "populorum altricem." In line 9, he changed the difficult hapax μοναμπυκία ("horse-racing" -- as opposed to chariot racing), to the vivid coinage "Springrossen" ("stallions"), although Heyne had opted for the more literal "singularique equo." The rendering of ὑψίγειον ἄλσος as "hocherhabne Gipfel" is somewhat puzzling, since he had Heyne's version, "altam silvam," in front of him. Above, in line 10, Goethe had correctly translated ἄλσος as "Hain." This mistranslation suggests either that he was offended by the boldness of the metaphor of a grove made out of sturdy buildings, or that, while the Greek line was unclear to him, he was either overlooking the Latin solution or disagreed with it. This passage seems to have been a particularly tricky one for Goethe, since he also missed the demonstrative τόνδε, and despite Heyne's offering of "huncce," translated it as a possessive. The difficulties Goethe found in this section do not end here. He translated

ἀμφ' ἀρετᾶσι as “*an der Tugend Seite*,” although ἀμφί with a dative cannot mean “next to.” Even without the grammatical difficulty here, Goethe’s choice does not make much sense. Heyne’s translation “*in magnis*” is cautiously vague. Since the passage is not an easy one, translators over the years have tended rewrite it in some way.¹¹⁷ There may be no perfect solution to this predicament, but “*an der Tugend Seite*” is obviously wrong. The other inaccuracies in Goethe’s translation are trifling by comparison, and poetic license might afford them some excuse. That he chose to import the idea of enthronement into ὑψινεφές Ζεῦ in line 18 by rendering it as “*wolkenthronender Zeus*” is only a venial sin, if a sin at all. In Heyne’s version, Zeus is not enthroned; he is merely among the high clouds (“*in altis nubibus*”). Goethe’s use of the epithet “*wolkenthronender*” is perhaps a little more dramatic than the text calls for, but is an attractive choice of diction. In line 20, Goethe does not reflect the future tense of ἀιτήσω, although Heyne translated it “*petiturus*.” Yet a German future participle might have made for a lumpier line than a poet would find desirable. A mistake that is less excusable, however, is that in line 21 Goethe chose to translate δαιδάλλειν εὐανορίασι κλυτᾶις (“to adorn with man-exalting famous [deeds]”) as “*Mannswerten Ruhm befestigen*”¹¹⁸ (“to fortify man-exalting glory”). It was natural for Goethe, who had grown up in a walled city, to think of an ancient city as being fortified. It is only a slight metaphorical leap to think of it as being decorated, but this leap, it seems, was not one Goethe was willing to make, even though Heyne had translated the phrase as “*ornes strenuis viris inclitis*.”

Occasionally, when Goethe was puzzled by the Greek text, he did have recourse to Heyne’s translation. The results were not always happy ones. In line 14, for example, he allowed himself to be led astray by a trifling vagueness within Heyne’s text. Carrying Heyne’s reading a step further, probably for dramatic reasons, Goethe further distorted the reading of this line. Justifiably, Heyne had chosen to concretize ἀμαχανίας

(“resourcelessness” or “lack”) as “*reruminopia*” (“poverty”). Had Goethe been more familiar with the term, he might not have, in turn, transformed the word into “*Niedrichkeit*” (“lowliness or baseness”), a term with strong pejorative implications that are not present in the Greek. An alternative explanation for this translation might be that Goethe was remembering Homer’s use of the adjective ἀμήχανος (“unmanageable” or “intractable”), applied to human beings in the *Iliad*. From intractability to *Niedrichkeit* might not have been a great mental leap.

A more compelling example of Goethe’s occasional dependence on the Latin rather than the Greek is in line 6, where Goethe read “*fünftägigem Kampf*” (“in a five-day battle”), following the Latin “*quinque dierum,*” (“for five days”) which Heyne had somewhat surprisingly chosen, departing from his own edition of the text at this spot. Most manuscripts are unanimous in giving πεμπτάμεροις (“on the fifth day”), and Heyne had followed them, but had not reflected this decision in his own Latin version. The Π³⁹ reading, πεμπάμεροις (“for five days”), may well be preferable, since the horse-racing events seem to have been held early in the Olympic schedule.¹¹⁹ Goethe may not have perceived Heyne’s inconsistency here, but when in doubt, he opted for the Latin version. In line 9, Goethe translated νέοικον (“newly built”) as “*neubewohnte*” (“newly settled”), following Heyne’s reading of “*recens habitatam.*” Heyne imported a note of nationalism in line 11, where he translated ἐγχωρίαν λίμναν as “*patriamque paludem.*” Goethe intensified this nationalism in his own version, “*des Vaterlandes See.*” The word ἐγχωρίαν does not have such an emotional freight, however. It means something like “countryside,” or even “neighboring,” or “local.”

Goethe’s version of the ode is smooth and elegant. In places, it is far easier to read than the original, even though he seldom resorted to changing the text. The only place where he departed from his close reading of both the Greek and of Heyne’s Latin version is

at lines 7-9, τὴν δὲ κῦδος ἄβρὸν/ νικάσας ἀνέθηκε, καὶ ὄν πατέρ' Ἄκρων
ἐκάρυχε καὶ τὰν νέοικον ἔδραν. Heyne's Latin version reflects the paratactic
construction of the lines:

*Tibi autem gloriam eximiam victor comparavit, et suum
patrem Acronem proclamavit et recens habitatam sedem.*¹²⁰

For you, however, the victor furnished a notable honor,
and glorified his father Akron and you, recently settled site.

Here Goethe made the decision to subordinate the last two clauses, departing from his
original, but at the same time making it significantly clearer. He marked the subordination
as follows:

*Dir aber siegend
Lieblichen Ruhm bereitete,
Da seines Vaters Akrons
Name verkündigt ward
und deiner, neubewohnte Stätte.*¹²¹

To you, however, in winning,
he gave cherished fame:
for his father Akron's
name was made known
and yours, recently settled stead.

This decision was a sensible one: Goethe made this passage significantly clearer for the
reader without doing much violence to the Greek.

This period in Goethe's life (1772-3) may have been the acme of his linguistic
competence in Greek. Trevelyan asserted that for most of his life Goethe could not read
most Greek authors without a translation. Homer however, was the exception to this rule.
Goethe was to re-read the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* frequently enough through the coming years
that Homer's Greek would never seem especially taxing to him.¹²²

Goethe turned from purely philological pursuits to literary composition in the spring
of 1773, when his old love Charlotte Buff married Kestner. Goethe's letters to Kestner

from the preceding winter are full of affection for both of them and renunciation of Charlotte. His feelings are reflected in his first novel, which he worked on during and after that spring. *Die Leiden des jungen Werther*, published in 1774, is the story of a young man who falls in love with a young woman called Lotte, who is engaged to someone else. She rejects Werther, marries her fiancé, and Werther shoots himself. The book was a colossal success all over Europe, and remained a best-seller for decades.¹²³ Sophie von La Roche's *Geschichte des Fräuleins von Sternheim* may have influenced Goethe's decision to use the epistolary form for *Werthers Leiden*,¹²⁴ since Merck had published the novel and von La Roche was Goethe's friend, but the choice of form was probably not solely determined by this book. The epistolary novel had enjoyed a widespread vogue in England and on the Continent beginning with the mostly English and French forerunners of Samuel Richardson (1689-1761). These included Daniel Defoe (*ca.* 1660-1731) who had published his novel *The Storm* in 1704 and Charles de Secondat Montesquieu (1689-1755), whose *Lettres persanes* came out in 1721. *Lettres de la Marquise de M**** by Claude Prosper Jolyot de Crébillon, *filis* (1707-1777) was published in France in 1732. Richardson's *Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded* came out in 1740. The book's immediate popularity led to the publication in the following year of not one but two parodies of the story, a revised and expanded edition, and a sequel of doubtful authorship called *Pamela in High Life*. Richardson's *Clarissa* was published in 1748; a German translation came out the following year.¹²⁵ *The History of Sir Charles Grandison* was published in 1753. The German translation of this book, which was published in 1755, was by Bodmer. All of these popular epistolary novels contain letters from two or more correspondents, just as had Goethe's incomplete childhood project, *the Roman in mehreren Sprachen*. An innovative feature of *Werthers Leiden* is that the book contain letters from only one writer: Werther. He writes to multiple addressees, but the reader is left to imagine the other side of

the correspondence. In addition to popular fiction of the day, Goethe may also have been influenced by a book by the celebrated Christian Fürchtegott Gellert, whose lectures and essay-writing class he had attended while a student in Leipzig in 1765-6, and whose friendship he valued.¹²⁶ This book, *Briefe, nebst einer praktischen Abhandlung vom guten Geschmacke in Briefen* (1751), contains model letters of all sorts.¹²⁷

The fictional character Werther is much influenced by the fiction he himself reads, and the book is full of references to texts familiar to Goethe's intended audience. *The Vicar of Wakefield*, by Oliver Goldsmith (1728-1774) a book to which Herder had introduced Goethe,¹²⁸ proves to be a link between Werther and Lotte, as does a shared love of the poetical works of Ossian and Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock (1724-1803). Indeed, Lotte's fondness for Klopstock's poetry proves to be the token ("Losung") by which Werther recognizes her as a kindred soul. When Werther and Lotte find themselves alone for the first time, they have only met hours before. A thunderstorm is raging outside, and they stand at the window. Lotte, looking up at the heavens, exclaims "Klopstock!," referring to his ode, *Die Frühlingsfeier*.¹²⁹ Werther is immediately overcome by deep emotion, bursts into tears, and kisses her. The mere name of the poet, by metonymy, stands for a sensibility Werther at least believes that he and Lotte share.¹³⁰ Unlike Lotte, Werther is passionately fond of Homer, especially of the *Odyssey*, which he reads and re-reads, seeing reflected in himself the figure of Odysseus.

The parallels between the stories of Odysseus and Werther are many, going much further than Werther is able to perceive. Both Odysseus and Werther are characters who, through fatal circumstances, find themselves separated from society. Each is the story of a man desperately trying to attain reintegration into a world with which he has lost touch. Odysseus, because of fate, the enmity of Poseidon, and the misdeeds of his men (*Od.* 12.340-365), is condemned to wander and suffer.¹³¹ Werther, on the other hand, is a man

making his way through the world who repeatedly ends up in awkward predicaments, partly through bad luck, partly through his own immaturity, and partly through fatal elements in his own character. Both Odysseus and Werther make their own progress more difficult by abusing the proprieties associated with guest-friendship (ξενία) and both are depicted vigorously weeping over their own fates, Odysseus, most notably, at the court of Alkinoos (*Od.* 8.83-9, 8.521-534), Werther, almost continually.¹³² Both men are afflicted by deep and paralyzing sadness. After the debacle of the Laistrygonian episode (*Od.* 10.143-4), Odysseus despairs of returning to Ithaka. He sinks into hopeless melancholy for two days and two nights. Werther, once he recognizes that a happy outcome for his fatal love is not possible, ultimately gives way to despair. Odysseus' trip to the home of the dead teaches him that life is the supreme good, no matter how bitter the experience of living may be. In the world of the *Odyssey*, death is so colorless and meaningless that even the proud Achilles would rather be a slave on earth than a lord in the land of the dead (*Od.* 11.488-90). Werther, on the other hand, has no clear picture of death at all. He writes:

*“Den Vorhang aufzuheben und dahinter zu treten! das is alles! Und warum das Zaudern und Zagen? Weil man nicht weiß, wie es dahinten aussieht? und man nicht wiederkehrt?”*¹³³

“To raise the curtain and walk behind it! Why the dallying and flinching? Because you don't know what it looks like back there? Because no one returns?”

Goethe's unusual decision to include only Werther's letters means that Werther tells much of his story in his own words. Only about a fifth of the narrative is taken up by the generally dispassionate chronicler who introduces the book and, at the close of the story, summarizes the events surrounding Werther's death. Like Werther, Odysseus relates a good portion of his own story. Through a combination of first and third person narration,

both Homer and Goethe allowed readers both to see the hero from the viewpoint of an omniscient narrator, and to gain insight into the heroes' mental states. This device is particularly useful for characterization. Odysseus' speech designedly reveals him as proud, clever, and tactful. Werther, however, ingenuously reveals himself as self-obsessed, melancholy, and occasionally charming. His writings become more fragmentary as his mental state worsens.¹³⁴ Both Homer and Goethe used the device of disordered syntax to reveal the mental states of characters under stress.¹³⁵

Werther, like Odysseus, is a good story-teller, and he plays the role of rhapsode to Lotte's younger sisters and brothers.¹³⁶ The story he tells them is of a princess who was waited upon by magical invisible hands.¹³⁷ Here, perhaps, Goethe has endowed his hero with one of his own characteristics: a talent for telling fairy-tales.¹³⁸

Odysseus and Werther are both profoundly moved by poetry and music. When Demodokos sings of the Trojan War, the listening Odysseus weeps, remembering his own exploits in battle (*Od.* 8.81-3, 521-534), and he honors the bard conspicuously (*Od.* 8.477-481, 487-491). Werther tunes Lotte's piano for her. He loves the epics of Ossian, seeing himself and his fate reflected in the bard's lamentations for the passing of an age of heroes. Werther's reading and misreading of the *Odyssey* will be discussed below.

Both Odysseus and Werther wander through the courses of their stories, and their travels are not of their own choosing, but rather determined by important female characters. Odysseus' female guides are Kalypso (*Od.* 5.160-268), Kirke (*Od.* 12.37-150), his mother Antikleia (*Od.* 11.223-4), and most of all, Athena (*Od.* 5.382-87 and *passim*). His last journey is at the behest of his mother. Werther's first journey, to Wahlheim, Lotte's home, is at the request of his mother. He stays there all summer long, unable to keep away from Lotte. He then travels to the city of D., a Scheria-like place surrounded by beautiful scenery, in order to escape the emotional pain of Lotte's nearness. D. is the home of

Fräulein von B., who, like Nausikaa, is young, beautiful, and aristocratic. Odysseus and Werther are both warned that since they are outsiders, their attentions to a nobly-born young girl may compromise her reputation (*Od.6.273-288*), but neither girl conceals the fact that the hero attracts her. In D., lacking Odysseus' perceptive tact, Werther embarrasses himself with a social gaffe at the court, and is so mortified that he leaves his job and accepts an invitation to stay as a houseguest of a prince he has met at court. The prince proves to be a tedious dilettante; restlessness and longing for Lotte shortly drive Werther back to Wahlheim, where he kills himself. Before the return to Wahlheim, however, he makes a short visit to the town where he grew up. The visit proves depressing: everything Werther remembers from his childhood is changed for the worse. If his return to his home town is upsetting, coming back to Wahlheim is catastrophic. The town has changed, and not for the better, but Lotte has not. She is a constant Penelope, and her husband is not Werther but Albert. These two returns make Werther's situation clearer to him than it had been before. He begins to understand that he may return to beloved sites as frequently as he likes, but he will never find a place where he feels himself to be at home. Physical return is possible, but not spiritual return.

Lotte and Penelope are both domestic characters, but neither is provincial or ignorant. Both Penelope and Lotte have other men in their lives than the heroes of their stories. When Werther meets Lotte, she is already engaged. When Odysseus returns, Penelope tells him that she is on the point of remarriage (*Od.19.570-81*). Both Penelope and Lotte offer the men who long for them reasons for hope, but in the end, Werther's hope is frustrated, while Odysseus' is not. Both Penelope and Lotte are liminal figures. Penelope is a mother and wife, but has lived a celibate life for twenty years. Lotte, though still single (and thus conventionally virginal) when Werther meets her, is poised on the

threshold of marriage to Albert. In the meantime she enacts the role of her dead mother, cutting bread and butter for her little sisters and brothers. Both Lotte and Penelope run their own households.

Penelope is a mistress of indirection, distraction, and delay, as is Lotte. Penelope's web is certainly the greatest symbol for her skill in deception. Her Book 19 interview with Odysseus shows her manipulating the hero, delaying, withholding information until the last moment. Lotte too, is distressingly ambiguous in her speech with Werther. Like Penelope, she is at times startlingly and suddenly affectionate, at other times proper, rigid, and distant. Both Goethe and Homer succeeded in creating women who are complex, appealing, and believably depicted as suffering from destructive and painful ambivalence.

They are fitting mates for Werther and Odysseus, the only characters capable of reading them accurately, understanding them fully and being romantically concerned by their unhappiness. Both Werther's Lotte and Odysseus' Penelope are women who have suffered and who immerse themselves publicly, unabashedly, and thoroughly in their grief. Penelope mourns continually for her missing husband; Lotte for her beloved mother.

The women both appear most memorably by night. Penelope unravels her day's work by night, as sits close by the hearth in her chamber, talking to the disguised beggar, Odysseus; she also grieves for her lost husband alone in bed by night (*Od.* 19.600-605). Lotte's last appearance before Werther's departure for D. is at night in a darkened garden, where she bids Werther farewell. They discuss death, whether dead people are capable of perceiving what happens in the world of the living, and Lotte's dead mother. He watches as she shimmers out of sight like a Homeric shade: "*ich...sah noch dort unten ihr weißes Kleid nach der Gartenthür schimmern, ich streckte meine Arme aus und es verschwand*"¹³⁹ ("I saw her white dress still, glimmering from beyond the garden gate, I reached out my arms, and it disappeared.") This gesture recalls Odysseus' experience in the world of the

dead: τρις δέ μοι ἐκ χειρῶν σκιῆ εἴκελον ἦ καὶ ὄνειρῳ / ἕπτατ' (*Od.* 11.207-8)
 (“Three times, she vanished from my hands like a shadow or a dream.”) The image also recalls Werther’s letter of a month previous: “*Umsonst strecke ich meine Armen nach ihr aus, Morgens, wenn ich von schweren Träumen aufdämmre... ich weine trostlos einer finstern Zukunft entgegen*”¹⁴⁰ “(In vain I stretch out my arms to her, in the morning, as I wake from bad dreams... I cry inconsolably for my dark fate.”)

These dreamlike encounters are strikingly similar to Odysseus’ experiences in the world of the dead. Like Odysseus’ interview with his dead mother (*Od.* 11.155-224), which prompts the hero to leave Kirke and set sail for Ithaka, Werther’s conversation with Lotte on the darkened terrace ends with a resolve to leave a place from which he has found it difficult to depart. Neither hero can embrace the spirit he so ardently desires to touch (*Od.* 11.204-208). Both heroes cry. Like Odysseus’ trip to the land of the dead, Werther’s moonlit farewell to Lotte is placed as close to the center of the work as possible. Werther, however, fails to understand that it is he, not Lotte, who is the ghost: the blood which allows him to speak to her is his own heart’s blood, and he will be a sacrifice to his own fate. Ironically, he has already likened himself to a ghost returning to his palace, and has unwittingly cast himself as a failed Odysseus:

*Wenn ich zum Thor hinaus gehe, den Weg, den ich zum erstenmal fuhr, Lotten zum Tanz zu hohlen, wie war das so ganz anders! Alles, alles ist vorüber gegangen! Kein Wink der vorigen Welt, kein Pulsschlag meines damaligen Gefühles. Mir ist es, wie es einem Geiste seyn müßte, der in das ausgebrannte zerstörte Schloß zurückkehrte, das er als blühender Fürst gebaut, und mit allen Gaben der Herrschaft ausgestattet, sterbend seinem geliebten Sohne hoffnungsvoll hinterlassen hätte.*¹⁴¹

When I go out the gate, on the path I first took to bring Lotte to the dance... how different that was! Everything, everything is gone! No vestige of bygone days, no throb of my former feelings; I feel like a ghost coming back to his charred and ruined castle, that he built as a flourishing prince, and arrayed with all the gifts of his dominion, hoping to leave it, on his death, to his beloved son.

Eventually, upon Werther's return from D., Lotte takes more and more of the characteristics of Kirke and Kalypso. In the last two months of Werther's life, his letters mention her charming her pet bird,¹⁴² and mixing a metaphorical poison for Werther.¹⁴³ In a later letter, she sings magically and enchants him.¹⁴⁴ Both Kirke and Kalypso sing beautifully and seductively (*Od.* 5.61, 10.221). Finally, there is a terrible revelation: Werther learns that a local madman whom he has seen and pitied was driven mad for love of Lotte.¹⁴⁵ Werther is not her only victim.

Despite the parallels between the two stories, in the end, Werther will prove to be no Odysseus, but rather a mere interloper in the place of a rightful husband. It is thus fitting that he perish by means of a pistol he has borrowed from Lotte's husband Albert, just as the suitors perish by Odysseus' bow. Werther's careless misreading of the *Odyssey* is part of his doom. His failure to see his role in his own *Odyssey*-like story is repeatedly specified in the text. Werther's first mention of Homer is in a letter dated 13 May, when he has just arrived at Wahlheim. He tells Wilhelm, the friend to whom he is writing, not to bother sending him his books. He has his Homer (Ernesti's edition),¹⁴⁶ and he is no longer inclined for books which are instructive or inspirational. Homer will serve him as a source of lullabies.¹⁴⁷ Werther, displaying none of his creator's philological interests and insistence on close reading, regards his Homer as simple, pleasurable, unintellectual reading, suitable for a vacation. Ten days later, Werther describes how he has made a habit of drinking his coffee and reading Homer under the linden trees outside the inn at Wahlheim.¹⁴⁸

Before the appearance of Lotte, reading Homer is at best an amusement, at least a source of comfort. Once Werther has met Lotte, his soul becomes full of longing for domesticity, for a wife and children. He describes picking peas, shelling them while he

reads Homer, and cooking them, and absurdly compares himself at his vegetarian meal to the suitors of Penelope roasting their slaughtered cattle. He enjoys the “patriarchal” simplicity of the scene, and he feels quietly content.¹⁴⁹

To some extent Werther does read Homer perceptively, and gains materially thereby. Homer has many functions for him: the text is for him by turns a symbol of the natural world, of joy in life, a restraining influence on his passionate nature, and later, a source of comfort in sorrow.¹⁵⁰ He appears, however, entirely to overlook the significance of the role he has assigned himself in the epic. Although he refers to the suitors as “*übermüthigen Freyer*” (μνηστῆρας ἀγήνορας *Od.* 1.106 and *passim*), he does not recognize that he himself shares in their presumptuous folly. It seems difficult not to regard this as foreshadowing on Goethe’s part. Contemporary readers could have been expected to know that the suitors were going to be slaughtered. Werther is paying court to a woman who is engaged to someone else; the irony of this comparison is grim. In unsuspecting contentment, however, he has identified himself with the only characters in the *Odyssey* who are explicitly doomed.

The summer grows more and more difficult for Werther as he begins to realize the hopelessness of his love for Lotte. Albert and Lotte send him for his birthday (28 August) the two small volumes of an edition of Homer printed by Wetstein in Amsterdam in 1707, which he has been wanting for some time to own. He is delighted with the gift, because it will relieve him of the necessity of dragging around the big quarto edition of Ernesti. The scene on the terrace in which Werther bids Lotte farewell occurs soon after this birthday (10 September).

By the time Werther returns from D. to Wahlheim, Ossian has replaced Homer in his affections.¹⁵¹ Although he has not been a very perceptive reader of Homer’s works, he does have enough sensitivity to realize that at this point in his life he is no longer in any

sense an allomorph of the capable Odysseus. He sees himself better reflected by the fallen heroes of Ossian's twilight world. Werther has failed at court, failed in his relationships with his social superiors, and failed to win the woman he loved. Odysseus, by contrast, is stunningly successful in all three settings. His tact and charm win him the approval of the Phaiakians, the goddess Athena and the nymphs Kirke and Kalypso are fond of him, and he does regain Penelope. Werther's loss of contact with the Homeric world signals a loss of his sense of self.¹⁵² The characters in Ossian's supposed Gaelic lays are all mourners or fallen heroes; they exist in a far off and misty home of the dead. By turning his back on the sun-lit world of Homer, Werther as good as admits to himself that he is no Odysseus.

It is striking to note that although Werther must have mentioned Homer to Lotte and Albert, when he describes himself reading Homer, he is always alone, generally outdoors or in a rural setting.¹⁵³ Homer is as much a symbol of contented solitude and harmony with nature as of the normal domestic life that he observes but cannot share.¹⁵⁴ When Werther reads Ossian, however, he reads the poems aloud and in company. The voices of MacPherson's lamenting bards become his own voice. During Werther's final meeting with Lotte, he is overcome with emotion, and Lotte feels awkward. She tries to play a minuet, but the music will not flow smoothly.¹⁵⁵ Finally she asks if he has anything to read. He has nothing with him, so she offers him the translation he had made of some selections from Ossian's poems.¹⁵⁶ He shudders as he looks at the text, and his eyes fill with tears.

The selection Werther reads from Ossian's *Songs of Selma* repays a closer look. It is a set of three songs of lament, as remembered by the speaker, Ossian, who heard them at a mournful feast. The first song, sung by a female bard called Minona, is in the voice of a woman called Colma, who cries out with longing for her lover, but then discovers that he and her brother have killed one another. She commands that their grave not be filled until

she joins them in death, and obliquely indicates that she will either die of grief or kill herself.¹⁵⁷ The second song is that of a father's mourning for his dead son, the warrior Morar. This song causes the hearers at the feast to weep passionately, especially the chieftain Armin. Armin sings the last song, a lament for his dead son and daughter, Daura and Arindal, who were both killed by an enemy clansman called Erath. The closing tableau is of Daura, marooned on a island in the sea by the traitor Erath, dying of grief for her brother, dead at her feet, and for her lover, who drowned trying to save her.¹⁵⁸

The selection from Ossian is carefully structured. It opens and closes with episodes in which women die of grief for both a dead lover and a dead brother, each murdered before his time. These episodes frame a lament for a hero whose like will never be seen again, but whose glory will live forever in song. Colma and Daura, the women who die of sorrow for their lost loved ones are like Lotte, who at her last parting from Werther in the moonlit scene on the terrace, had wept bitter tears of mourning for her recently dead mother, and who is soon to come close to death when she hears of Werther's fate. "*Man fürchtete für Lottes Leben.*"¹⁵⁹ The great warrior Morar, now vanished from the earth, is the hero Werther might have been. Now determined on suicide, Werther can only take cold comfort in the sorrow of mourning survivors.

Lotte, in tears, urges Werther to read more. The selection he chooses to continue with is from another work of Ossian, a poem called *Berathon*.¹⁶⁰ In it the speaker addresses the springtime zephyr that speaks in vain of love to those doomed to die.

*"Morgen wird der Wanderer kommen, kommen der mich sah in meiner Schönheit, ringsum wird sein Auge im Felde mich suchen, und wird mich nicht finden."*¹⁶¹

Tomorrow shall the traveler come, he that saw me in my beauty shall come; his eyes will search the field, but they will not find me?¹⁶²

At this, Lotte and Werther break down completely in an ecstasy of sorrow. Werther knows that Lotte will not see him again, and Lotte suspects as much. They end up in one another's arms overcome to the point of kissing passionately.¹⁶³ The Ossianic world is an irrational world without gods, in which even the forces of nature only serve to highlight speakers' alienation and isolation.¹⁶⁴ Ironically, neither Goethe nor his creation Werther were to know that in 1773, Macpherson himself was in the course of making a translation of the *Iliad* into his own peculiar bardic idiom.¹⁶⁵

Many years later, in 1829, Goethe spoke disparagingly of Ossian to the English critic Henry Crabb Robinson (1775-1867).¹⁶⁶ Robinson charged Goethe with having played some part in the popularity of Ossian, because of Werther's fondness for the Macpherson poetry. His response as reported by Robinson was: "...it was never perceived by the critics that Werter (sic) praised Homer while he retained his senses, and Ossian when he was going mad. But reviewers do not notice such things."¹⁶⁷

The reverence Werther accords Homer, at least during his saner period, is reflected in Goethe's lyric poem, "*Künstlers Morgenlied*," written the same year as the novel, which invokes Homer's text as "*liturg'scher Lection*," fit to soothe and comfort the restless soul. Goethe was not Werther, but his attitudes toward Homer during this period had much in common with those his protagonist held in the first summer at Wahlheim, during which he had happily read in Homer under the trees, drinking coffee, or while enjoying his "patriarchal" outdoor meals.

During the same months when he was writing *Werthers Leiden*, Goethe also contributed, among other pieces, an essay on the physiognomy of Homer to a monumental four-volume work called *Physiognomische Fragmente zur Beförderung der Menschenkenntnis und Menschenliebe* by the popular Zürich preacher Johann Caspar Lavater (1741-1801), whom he had met the previous year. The idea that a subject's

character, capacities, and propensities can be read from facial features is an extremely old one. Aristotle maintained that under ideal circumstances, differences in physical stature should indicate appropriate social roles for individuals: the free by nature are upright, while those who are born to be slaves are distinguished by their superior strength. (*Pol.* 1254b27-34). Merely by the arrangement and form of their features, the actors' masks used in Greek New Comedy telegraphed to an audience not only characters' ages, sexes, and social classes, but also their dispositions.¹⁶⁸ Perhaps the first systematic student of physiognomy was the second century Athenian sophist and lexicographer Julius Pollux of Naukratis (180-238) the fourth book of whose *Onomastikon* includes a description of forty-four separate types of theatrical mask representing as many different types of character.¹⁶⁹ In the eighteenth century, the study of physiognomy was both widely fashionable and increasingly prestigious among intellectual circles; the subject attracted Goethe and continued to fascinate him all his life.¹⁷⁰

The essay on Homer's physiognomy was begun in November 1774 and re-worked in March 1775.¹⁷¹ Goethe worked from a fragment of sculpture found in Constantinople, as engraved in copperplate by Johann Heinrich Lips (1758-1817). Physiognomy is now a thoroughly discredited discipline; it has long been recognized that physiognomic analyses are purely subjective and speculative. Even if it were granted that an epic bard named Homer actually existed, the chances of a undated, but certainly not contemporary statue from Constantinople bearing any resemblance to the poet would be minuscule. As a piece of Homeric scholarship, therefore, Goethe's essay is valueless. On the other hand, the essay does show exactly what Goethe, at the age of twenty-five, imagined Homer's character might have been like. His reading and his choices of diction are revealing.

Es ist Homer!

Dies ist der Schädel, in dem die ungeheuren Götter und Helden so viel Raum haben, als im weiten Himmel und der grenzlosen Erde. Hier ist's wo Achill

μέγας μεγαλωστί τανυθείς
κεῖτο!¹⁷²

Dies ist der Olymp, den diese rein erhabne Nase wie ein andrer Atlas trägt, und über das ganze Gesicht solche Festigkeit, solch eine sichere Ruhe verbreitet.

Diese eingesunkne Blindheit, die einwärts gekehrte Seekraft strengt das innere Leben immer stärker und stärker an, und vollendet den Vater der Dichter.

Vom ewigen Sprechen durchgearbeitet sind diese Wangen, diese Redemuskeln, die betreten Wege, auf denen Götter und Heroen zu den Sterblichen herabsteigen; der willige Mund, der nur die Pforte solcher Erscheinungen ist, scheint kindisch zu fallen, hat alle Naivetät der ersten Unschuld; und die Hülle der Haare und des Barts, verbirgt und verehrt den Umfang des Hauptes. Zwecklos, leidenschaftlos ruht dieser Mann dahin, er ist um sein selbst willen da, und die Welt, die ihn erfüllt, ist ihm Beschäftigung und Belohnung.

This is Homer!

This is the skull in which the colossal gods and heroes have as much room as in the broad heavens and the boundless earth. This is where Achilleus

lay outstretched, immense in his immensity!

This is the Olympos that bears, like another Atlas, this truly splendid nose, and casts such resolution, such secure tranquillity over the whole face.

This sunken blindness, the gaze turned inward, strive ever more strongly against the inner life, and realize the Father of Poets.

These cheeks are formed by constant speech, these speech organs are the trodden path on which gods and heroes descend to the mortal plane; the docile mouth that is merely the portal of such manifestations seems to babble childishly, has all of the naiveté of primal innocence; and the covering of the hair and of the beard bedeck and ennoble the compass of the head.

Aimless, unimpassioned, this man reposes; he is here for his own sake, and the world that fills him is for him his calling and his recompense.

Initially, Goethe seems determined to regard Homer as something other than a mere man. His skull becomes by turns a vast celestial and terrestrial landscape in which heroes

and gods move, the shore where Achilleus lies in the dust grieving for Patroklos, a mountain, and then, in an odd mixture of metaphors, a Titan. (His splendid nose, by analogy, must logically be a world in itself.) The blind eyes do not gaze on others, but rather look inward. His identity as a poet has sculpted the form of his cheeks; they have been developed by constant speech. The muscles that produce the voice are mere landscape background for a procession of descending giant figures. Finally, when Goethe examines the mouth of the statue, he concludes that its expression is primitive, primally innocent and immature. The image is without normal human emotions or aspirations, but instead preoccupied by his interior poetic world. Nowhere did Goethe presume to read common human personality traits in the features of the poet.

Something about this picture of a bust of Homer made Goethe shrink back from confronting the image of the bard as a portrait of a man. The engraving he saw seemed less a human face to him than a facial cast. Several factors may have contributed to this perception. Goethe would have been aware of the tremendous temporal gulf separating him from his subject, and doubly aware that he was attempting to apply a science more commonly used on living people to a piece of art, and indeed, not to the work itself, but rather to an engraving, presumably from a drawing. He might have even given some thought to the fact that the statue itself would have been at best the last of a series of copies of copies of portrait busts of Homer. Naturally, Goethe would have felt at a disadvantage, working at half a dozen removes from what might have been a true portrait of Homer. In such a case, prudence would have dictated a certain self-distancing. The norms of the discipline of physiognomy would also have demanded that its practitioners maintain as objective as possible an attitude in their publications; even in its heyday, the discipline was not without scornful detractors.¹⁷³ These considerations aside, however, Goethe may have been overwhelmed by the sheer importance of the subject he was discussing. His own

enthusiasm for Homeric epic may have led him to take refuge in the one-sided metaphorical descriptions he offered, all concentrated on Homer's genius and accomplishments.

Personal observations on the bard's character are few. The one subjective rather than merely appreciative important judgement that he arrived at was that Homer seemed to be an innocent, naive soul.

This assessment of Homer is not far distant from Werther's simplistic attitude toward the poet. At this point, despite his earlier studies of Wood, Goethe still for the most part saw the Homeric world as primitive, situated in an idealized patriarchal pre-lapsarian time, somehow similar to and co-extant with the universe of the Old Testament. The term *der ersten Unschuld* ("primal innocence") may have been chosen with the Pietist Lavater in mind, but Goethe was never to come over to Lavater's spiritual camp. For Goethe, the charm of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* would grow stronger and stronger with time, while his relationship with Lavater and organized religion in general would prove rocky. Soon, he would leave both of them behind and move on to a wider world.

In December of 1774, Prince Carl August Friedrich Wilhelm (1757-1828), who was soon to attain his majority and become the Duke of Sachsen-Weimar-Eisenach, happened to travel through Frankfurt, together with his younger brother Friedrich Ferdinand Constantin (1758-1793) and Constantin's tutor, Karl Ludwig von Knebel (1744-1834). Knebel, a literary man, called upon Goethe, who was already famous for *Werther*, and for the satire *Götter, Helden und Wieland*. The poet Christoph Martin Wieland (1733-1813) was already a favorite at the court of Prince Carl August's mother, Duchess Anna Amalia (1739-1807). In short order, Knebel presented Goethe to the princes, who induced him to come along with them on the next stage of their journey, a visit to the court at Mainz. Later that year, in Karlsruhe, during a three-month journey to Switzerland, Goethe reencountered the Duke, whose betrothal to Princess Louise von

Hesse-Darmstadt (1757-1830) had just been announced. Carl August, taken with Goethe, urged him to visit the court at Weimar, but it was unclear for how long and under what circumstances. Unsure of what to do, Goethe continued on his Swiss journey.¹⁷⁴ He saw his first glimpse of Italy from the peak of the St. Gotthard Pass, but although his travelling companions urged him to continue south with them, he returned to Germany.¹⁷⁵ Upon Goethe's return to Frankfurt, he was invited once more to Weimar by Duke Carl August and Princess Luise, who had married on 10 March, 1775.¹⁷⁶ Yet, through a series of misfortunes and miscommunications, the coach they had arranged to take him to Weimar did not arrive as promised. Encouraged by his father, who had a strong innate suspicion of the patronage of the nobility, Goethe set out instead on his longed-for Grand Tour of Italy. Intercepted by a messenger at Heidelberg, he returned to Frankfurt and thence to Weimar.

The town of Weimar, with its population of only 6,000, was small by comparison with Frankfurt.¹⁷⁷ The court itself was still in ruins from a disastrous fire that had happened during the previous year. Fortunately, the library, which was the third largest in Germany, had escaped the flames, housed in a building of its own.¹⁷⁸ Goethe arrived in November of 1775, and spent much of the next six months as Carl August's boon companion, hunting, riding, swimming, and shooting clay pigeons with him, as well as indulging in drunken pranks and mischief that made the two men the talk of the court.¹⁷⁹ This did not leave much time for literary pursuits, let alone scholarly ones. Goethe continued to read Homeric epic in a relatively simple appreciative fashion, as is shown in the following letter to Carl August written on 24 December 1775 while Goethe was visiting the country town of Waldeck, near Jena. He hoped that the local parson would have copy of Homer in the house: "*Denn unmöglich ist die zu entbehren hier in der homerisch einfachen Welt... Ich muß nach Bürgel zum Rektor schicken um den Homer, hab indeß in der Bibel gelesen.*"¹⁸⁰ ("For it is impossible to do without it in this simple Homeric

world... I must send the Rektor a message asking to borrow it. In the meantime, I have been reading the Bible.”) At this time in Goethe’s life, even on Christmas Eve, compared to Homer, the Bible was only his second choice for reading material! Conveniently, the parson sent him his Homer on the following day.¹⁸¹ Writing again to Carl August, Goethe reported that he had been dwelling on a few lines from the *Odyssey*. “*Und in ihre Felle gehüllt lagen sie am glimmernden Heerde, über ihnen wehte der nasse Sturm durch die unendliche Nacht und lagen und schliefen den erquicklichen Schlaf bis zum spät dämmerden Morgen.*”¹⁸² (“They lay in their hides around the glowing hearth. Over them, through the eternal night, the damp rainstorm blew. They lay and slept a refreshing sleep until the late-dawning morning.”) This is a conflation of two passages from Homer. In the first, *Od.* 14.457 ff., Odysseus tells a story of being caught out on the plain on a sortie at Troy on a freezing night; in the second, the swineherd Eumaios puts the hero to bed by the fire (*Od.* 14.517 ff.). Neither is an exact quotation, and the late-coming dawn is imported into Goethe’s account, probably to correspond with his own late-coming dawn.

In June of 1776, over the objections of some of the older members of his entourage, Carl August appointed Goethe to his first court position, *Legationsrat* (diplomatic advisor). The job was well-paid, and in addition to his salary, Goethe received from Carl August a cottage on the banks of the River Ilm, just outside of the town.¹⁸³ In 1779, after further objections from the nobles at court, Goethe became one of the Duchy’s three Privy Councilors. Besides being sent on numerous diplomatic missions Goethe helped with the administration of mines of Sachsen-Weimar-Eisenach, planned reforms in the army, the exchequer, and the commission on highways and in industry. With such a busy professional life, it is hardly surprising that from a literary standpoint, the years between 1775 and 1786, were relatively fallow ones for Goethe. Many projects were begun, but few were completed.¹⁸⁴ Yet out of his sentimental friendship with Charlotte

von Stein (1742-1827), the wife of Baron Gottlob Ernst Josias von Stein (1735-1793), Carl August's Oberstallmeister (Chief Equerry), grew some of Goethe's loveliest lyric poetry. He also wrote *vers d'occasion* and entertainments for the Court. No large-scale poetical works, however, were brought to fruition during this decade, with the exception of plays performed at court, which were in the main satires on the contemporary literary scene, and *Wilhelm Meister*, which was only finished in 1796. *Iphigenie auf Tauris* and *Egmont* would be completed and revised in Italy.

During this first Weimar period (1775-1786), Goethe wrote very little about Homer. One notable exception is his response to some attempts at translation and questions about Homer raised by Gottfried August Bürger (1747-1794) in the periodical *Deutsches Museum* in 1776. Bürger was attempting in this letter to solicit financial support for his projected translation of the *Iliad*, and Goethe drew attention to this work in the *Teutsche Merkur*, a Weimar publication edited by Wieland, recommending it highly. He also subscribed one *louisdor* to the translation.¹⁸⁵ Wieland wrote to Bürger in April of 1776, telling him that the first six books of his *Iliad* would be printed, including some emendations from Goethe, who had insisted on changing some of Bürger's diction, substituting archaic vocabulary ("*ein ehrliches obsoletes Wort*") for more modern renderings in many places where it seemed to him to make dramatic sense. He also praised him, with Goethe's enthusiastic agreement, for his choice of iambic pentameter for his translation.¹⁸⁶

*Wir behaupten, Homers Versification verliere in jeder Übersetzung nothwendig, würde aber im deutschen Hexameter weit mehr verlieren, als im jambischen Vers, der unserer Meinung nach das echte, alte, natürliche heroische Metrum unser Sprache ist.*¹⁸⁷

We believe that Homer's versification necessarily loses something in every translation, but that in German hexameters, it would lose far more than in iambic verse, which we believe to be the authentic, ancient, and natural heroic meter of our language.

Goethe was a little off the mark in this assessment; iambic verse is common in early German epic, but the pentameter was hardly used at all.¹⁸⁸ Evidently he was still viewing Homeric epic as simple “patriarchal” poetry during this period: hence his willingness to antique Bürger’s language and his pleasure at seeing the *Iliad* in the preferred meter of his other favorite national folk-poet, Shakespeare.¹⁸⁹ Bürger’s *Iliad* translation was never completed; he only finished the first six books.

The next Homer translation in which Goethe interested himself was that of Johann Jakob Bodmer of Zürich (1698-1783), poet and professor of Swiss history, whom Goethe had met in the course of his 1775 Swiss journey. When Goethe and Lavater visited him, Bodmer had long been revered for his epic poems on themes from the Old Testament, including his famous *Noachide*, which had been published in 1752 and his German translation of *Paradise Lost*.¹⁹⁰ To Goethe, Bodmer was a grand old man of German letters. The poet lived on the outskirts of Zürich in a house that had a magnificent view. Bodmer had received the pair graciously.

*Wir dagegen priesen ihn glücklich, daß er als Dichter der patriarchalischen Welt angehörig und doch in der Nähe der höchst gebildeten Stadt, eine wahrhaft idyllische Wohnung Zeitlebens besessen...*¹⁹¹

We, for our part, warmly congratulated him for being a poet who had owned, for his whole life, a truly idyllic residence, close to the patriarchal world, and yet near to the most cultivated of cities.

In describing the 77-year old Bodmer’s appearance, Goethe referred to him as “*unser würdiger Patriarch*”¹⁹² (“our worthy patriarch”). Later on, in Weimar, in accordance with his reverence for Bodmer, he was naturally willing to accept the old sage as a fitting Homer translator. “Patriarchal” seems to be a key term for Goethe when discussing the ancient world. Between Homer’s world and the world of the Old Testament, there was naturally a mental boundary, but this boundary was both blurred and permeable. Thus, in Goethe’s

day, a background in Christian theology seemed a perfectly suitable qualification for a translator of pagan Bronze Age literature. The title page of the Bodmer Homer translation bears the inscription “...*Aus dem Griechischen übersetzt von dem Dichter der Noachide*”¹⁹³ (“translated from the Greek by the author of the *Noachide*”). Goethe acquired Bodmer’s *Iliad* and *Odyssey* in the year they were published, 1778, and his diary entry for 20 June mentions reading them.¹⁹⁴

Goethe chose a classical subject for his next large literary project, *Iphigenie auf Tauris*, the prose version of which he began to write on 14 February 1779, not without some initial difficulties.¹⁹⁵ The play, however, is less a meditation on the Homeric world than a reflection of Goethe’s continuing interest in Greek tragedy, especially in the works of Euripides and Aischylos.¹⁹⁶

Goethe continued to read Homer throughout 1779. He must have liked the Bodmer edition well enough to take it with him on his travels, for during a trip to Switzerland in 1779, on 9 September, he wrote to Charlotte von Stein that he had been reading Bodmer’s translation that day on board a boat on the Thuner See during the rain.¹⁹⁷ In another letter, he described a lady whom he had met in Lausanne: Marchioness Maria Branconi (1751-1793), former mistress of Duke Carl Wilhelm Ferdinand von Braunschweig. Perhaps wishing to forestall any jealousy on Charlotte von Stein’s part, he compared the Marchioness to Odysseus’ depiction of the mountain where Skylla lives, and quoted Bodmer’s version of the passage:

τῇ μὲν τ’ οὐδὲ ποτητὰ παρέρχεται οὐδὲ πέλειαι
 τρήρωνες, ταί τ’ ἀμβροσίην Διὶ πατρὶ φέρουσιν,
 ἀλλὰ τε καὶ τῶν αἰὲν ἀφαιρεῖται λῖς πέτρῃ
 ἀλλ’ ἄλλην ἐνήσι πατὴρ ἐναρίθμιον εἶναι. (*Od.*12.62-5)

There, no winged creatures pass, not the shy
 doves, who bring ambrosia to father Zeus,
 but the smooth rock snatches even those,
 and the father sends another to make up the count.

*...Unverletzt die Flügel streicht kein Vogel vorbey,
auch die schnelle Taube nicht die dem Jovi Ambrosia bringt,
er muss sich für jedesmal andrer bedienen.*¹⁹⁸

No bird wings across unwounded,
even the swift doves, those that bring Jove his ambrosia,
each time, he must provide himself new ones.

Goethe was half quoting Bodmer's version, half paraphrasing it. The original reads as follows.

*Hier ist kein flügel vorbey geflogen, die schnellste daube
Nicht, die mit eile dem vater Jovi Ambrosia bringet,
welcher der schlüpfrige fels nicht die schwingen beschädiget habe
Jupiter muß für jedes mahl sich andrer bedienen.*¹⁹⁹

here, no bird has flown by, not even the swiftest dove
that rapidly brings father Jove his ambrosia
that the slippery rock has not injured on its pinions.
Jupiter has to provide himself with new ones each meal.

His memory for the scene in the epic was also less than exact. This passage does not refer to the great mountain of Skylla's cave, but rather to the Πλαγκταί, or Wandering Rocks, which crush passing ships, and although the speaker is Odysseus, Goethe did not make it clear that the hero is reporting Kirke's farewell speech. Since Goethe's quotations from Homeric epic were seldom so imprecise, the mental slip in this letter might be evidence that he was writing in a state of some agitation, or was not looking at the text.²⁰⁰

In November of the same year, Bodmer himself received a visit from Goethe, Carl August, and "another nobleman."²⁰¹ He reported in a letter to his friend Johann Rudolf Schinze (1745-1790) that Carl August had immediately said that had he had come to salute his well-beloved Homer, while Goethe, kissing him, had asked if he still recognized him. After both had complimented him extravagantly on his Homer translation, Goethe told him that he had made the book his travelling companion, that he had read it on Lac Léman, and used it to fortify himself while climbing the Alps.²⁰² He had read it aloud to the local

people. Now for the first time, one understood what Homer was; people of all ages and ranks could understand Bodmer's version. Stolberg's translation, however, was only comprehensible to those who knew Greek. Bodmer assured Goethe that he had studied Stolberg's *Iliad*, but that he could only read it "*per intervalla*;" it repelled him.²⁰³

Between this 1779 period of delight in Bodmer's work and 1786, when he had arrived in Italy, Goethe hardly wrote about Homer at all. His play *Elpenor*, begun on 11 August, 1781²⁰⁴ is merely an invented story in Greek costume, and has nothing to do with the luckless sailor of *Od.* 10 552-560, who dies by falling off Kirke's roof and is the first ghost to greet Odysseus in the world of the dead (*Od.* 11.51-80).²⁰⁵ *Elpenor*, heavily influenced by Goethe's recent readings of verse translations of Greek tragedy by George Christoph Tobler (1757-1812), proved impossible to finish.²⁰⁶ The first act, possibly complete, was abandoned about a month after Goethe had begun it. Two years later, in February of 1783, Goethe revised his original plan for the play and began again, managing to complete two acts of the tragedy before ceasing to work on it in September of 1784.²⁰⁷ The play had proven to be intractable. The circumstances of his life were not conducive to writing.²⁰⁸ In a letter written on 28 June, 1786 to his Leipzig publisher Georg Joachim Göschen (1750-1828), he outlined the contents of a projected eight-volume edition of his complete works, including "*Egmont, unvollendet*" ("*Egmont, unfinished*") and "*Elpenor, zwey Akte*" ("*Elpenor, two acts,*") to be placed in the sixth volume. In his letter, he complained that his situation had made it impossible for him to finish off the incomplete works and give the finished ones a final editing.²⁰⁹ Court duties were taking up time he could have used for his own creative and scholarly work.²¹⁰

What little time he had for study was increasingly devoted to scientific investigations, especially of anatomy and geology. Geological investigations seemed especially important to him in his role as superintendant of the Duchy's mines. Osteology

was also a continuing preoccupation for him in these years; his studies culminated with his discovery of the human intermaxillary bone in 1784. In 1785, records of his borrowings from the Weimar court show that he was also reading about astronomy.²¹¹

As 1785 and 1786 passed, Goethe felt more and more overburdened. One ongoing project of his was the repaving of the roads to Naumberg and Erfurt. In February of 1785, he withdrew almost completely from the affairs of the Privy Council, but he remained busy. The financial arrangements and engineering problems connected with for the sinking of a new shaft at the silver mine at Ilmenau took up as great deal of time, as did his ongoing relationship with Charlotte von Stein. Much of the summer of 1786 was taken up with writing a revised version of *Werther* for inclusion in the publisher Göschen's eight-volume set of his complete works, the first authorised edition, and one which would bring him in funds that would help to finance his Italian journey.

⁴ Thomas P. Saine, Introduction to Goethe's *From My Life: Poetry and Truth, Parts One to Three*, (Princeton 1987) 7.

⁵ "Allein das Geschäft ward bald schwerlicher, weil ausführliche Anzeigen und Erklärungen nötig wurden, um die Lücken zwischen dem bereits Bekanntgemachten auszufüllen. Denn zuvörderst fehlt alles woran ich mich zuerst geübt." DKV 14.10.

⁶ "Wenn man sich erinnern will, was uns in der frühesten Zeit der Jugend begegnet ist, so kommt man oft in den Fall, dasjenige was wir von andern gehört, mit dem zu verwechseln, was wir wirklich aus eigener anschauer Erfahrung besitzen." DKV 14 16.13.

⁷ DKV 14.11-12.

⁸ Joachim Golz, "Geschichtliche Welt und gedeutetes Ich in Goethes Autobiographik," *Goethe Jahrbuch* 111 (1997) 89.

⁹ *Frankfurter Stadtmuseum* MM1, published in facsimile in Stuttgart in 1964.

¹⁰ Thym had been hired in October of 1756. Elizabeth Schippel Mentzel, *Wolfgang und Cornelia Goethes Lehrer : Ein Beitrag zu Goethe's Entwicklungsgeschichte nach archivalischen Quellen*. (Leipzig 1909) 98. A list of important secondary sources for this period in Goethe's life should begin with Mentzel's book, which is based mainly on primary documents, including municipal, religious, family, and academic archives in the city of Frankfurt. She also made extensive use of Johann Caspar Goethe's meticulously detailed household account book, which provided valuable information on the salaries of the children's tutors and the dates of their employment. Although the material in her book is sometimes erratically ordered, Mentzel's work remains the best and most complete collection of factual information on Goethe's early education. Humphrey Trevelyan's *Goethe and the Greeks* was published in 1941 and later reissued in 1981 with an extensive introduction by Hugh Lloyd-Jones, valuable in itself for Lloyd-Jones' insights and for the more recent bibliography he included. *Goethe and the Greeks* contains a short but useful summary of what we know about Goethe's first contacts with classical languages, and also a critical assessment of what he might have read of the books he mentioned in *Dichtung und Wahrheit*. and when he might have read it.

¹¹ *ibid.* 126.

¹² *ibid.* 98-99.

¹³ Norman Itzkowitz, *Ottoman Empire and Islamic Tradition* (Princeton 1972) 83-4.

¹⁴ The story of his capture and sale was entered in the baptismal record. Mentzel 118.

¹⁵ *ibid.* 123-4.

¹⁶ *ibid.* 125. It is hard to think that Scherbius would have sounded offensively exotic to local congregations: he was a native of Frankfurt and a native speaker of German. Even his father, captured at the age of three, would not have had a foreign accent. Scherbius was only half Turkish, in any case.

¹⁷ Ron Huber, Columbus Lutheran Seminary. Personal communication, 18 June, 1999.

¹⁸ *ibid.* 126.

¹⁹ There were 60 kreuzer in a gulden. A gulden was worth about three days' wages for a builder's helper. Goethe's university allowance from his father was a princely 100 gulden per month, about twice what the average student received. Nicholas Boyle, *Goethe: The Poet and the Age, Volume I: The Poetry of Desire*. (Oxford 1997) 50,66.

²⁰ DKV 14.39

²¹ DKV 14.928. Mentzel (p.360), however, identified it as Christoph Cellarius' *Latinitatis probatae et exercitiae liber memorialis naturali ordine dispositus*. This is not possible, since the Cellarius book is simply a short elementary Latin dictionary.

²² DKV 14.35.

²³ Goethe, *Labores Juveniles*, Frankfurter Stadtsbibliothek MM.1. Facsimile, Stuttgart 1964.

²⁴ In fact, he only used the iota subscript once in the Greek section of the notebook. Generally, he did not unscript it, but left it out entirely. Goethe, *Labores Juveniles* 150-173. The French he wrote as an adult was almost without accents as well.

²⁵ Trevelyan quoted an example of a wrongly used genitive absolute, and surmised that it might be evidence that Goethe learned his Greek more by ear than by systematic study. Humphrey Trevelyan, *Goethe and the Greeks* 1941 (Oxford: 1981) 19.

²⁶ Goethe, *Labores Juveniles* 65, 67.

²⁷ DKV 70.

²⁸ This seems to be the comic Damasippos of Horace's *Serm.* 2.3, rather than the Damasippos who was Penelope's father. Damasippos was a Augustan collector of art and antiquities. (Cicero *Fam.*7.23, *Att.* 12.29 and 12.33).

²⁹ Goethe, *Labores Juveniles* 73.

³⁰ *Ceroplastes* seems to be a Latinization of the Greek term κηροπλάστης, probably suggested by Scherbius rather than invented by Goethe. In Plato's *Timaios* 74C, the creator is said to have formed out bodies like a wax-sculptor (τὰυτα ἡμῶν διανοηθῆεις ὁ κηροπλάστης) but Goethe, who was not yet reading Plato either in Greek or in a Latin translation, would not been unlikely to know the Greek term.

³¹ Goethe, *Labores Juveniles* 81.

³² Mentzel 198.

³³ Nicholas Boyle, *Goethe: the Poet and the Age, Volume I: The Poetry of Desire* (Oxford 1997) 49.

³⁴ Mentzel 210.

³⁵ *ibid.* 91.

³⁶ Boyle 54.

³⁷ Mentzel 198 ff. Mentzel identified Christamicus with a Sergeant Christfreund.

³⁸ Boyle 44-5.

³⁹ Ernst M. Oppenheimer, *Goethe's Poetry for Occasions* (Toronto 1974) 12.

⁴⁰ DKV 14.166.

⁴¹ DKV 14.138. "...indem ich mir das barocke Judendeutsch zuzueignen und es eben so gut zu schreiben suchte, als ich lesen konnte."

⁴² DKV 14.165.

⁴³ DKV 14.142-3.

⁴⁴ DKV 14.156-8.

⁴⁵ DKV 14.114-15.

⁴⁶ Trevelyan 27. Heyne, one of the leading classical philologists of his day, was an astonishingly prolific scholar. His editions and commentaries include, among others, texts of Virgil, Pindar, Epiktetos, Tibullus and the *Corpus Tibullianum*, Euripides' *Orestes*, Hesiod, Eratosthenes, Parthenios, Herakeitos, Diodoros, Zosimos, Apollodoros, and Quintus of Smyrna.

⁴⁷ *ibid.* 27. Michaelis wrote mainly on theological subjects, especially Mosaic law. He also made a German translation of the Old Testament and wrote grammars of Arabic, Hebrew, Aramaic, and Syriac.

⁴⁸ DKV 14.265.

⁴⁹ Johann Gotlob Böhme, *Ioh. Gotlob Boemii in Acad. Lipsic. P.P. inter arcades Crisenii Beroensis Poemata* (Brunswick 1757).

⁵⁰ DKV 14.271.

⁵¹ Trevelyan 29.

⁵² Trevelyan 30.

⁵³ *ibid.* 51.

⁵⁴ Werther owns Ernesti's quarto edition of Homer. This edition, published in Leipzig in 1759 to 1764, includes Latin translations below the Greek texts, maps, an *apparatus criticus*, and notes. Two volumes each are devoted to the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, while the fifth includes the *Homeric Hymns* and *Epigrams* as well as the Life of Homer attributed to Plutarch. Goethe owned both the Wetstein and the Ernesti editions. DKV 8.111.

⁵⁵ Trevelyan 28, note.

⁵⁶ Trevelyan 34.

⁵⁷ “...wie ein Donnerschlag bei klarem Himmel fiel die Nachricht von Winckelmanns Tode.” DKV 359.

⁵⁸ John R. Williams, *The Life of Goethe: A Critical Biography* (Oxford 1998) 7.

⁵⁹ DKV 14.545.

⁶⁰ DKV 14.356.

⁶¹ Boyle 71-2.

⁶² *ibid.* 33.

⁶³ *ibid.* 77.

⁶⁴ Trevelyan (p.30) surmised that Goethe might have had a cursory knowledge of the *Phaidon* as early as 1767.

⁶⁵ Ernst Traumann, *Goethe, der Straßburger Student* (Leipzig 1923) 77-8.

⁶⁶ Boyle 92-4.

⁶⁷ *ibid.* 94.

⁶⁸ Robert Clarke, *Herder: His Life and Thought* (Berkeley 1955) 378.

⁶⁹ Fiona J. Stafford, *The Sublime Savage: A Study of James Macpherson and the Poems of Ossian* (Edinburgh 1988) 163-7.

⁷⁰ Stafford 4.

⁷¹ Roland Krebs, “Herder, Goethe und die ästhetische Diskussion um 1770: zu den Begriffen “*énergie*” und “*Kraft*” in der französischen und deutschen Poetik,” *Goethe Jahrbuch* 112 (1995) 89.

⁷² This was a source of some amusement to Goethe, as he related to Eckermann: “Aber, führ Goethe sehr heiter scherzend fort, habt Respekt! Napoleon hatte in seiner Feldbibliothek was für ein Buch? Meinen *Werther!*” (“‘but,’ Goethe continued with a delighted chuckle, ‘forgive me! What sort of a book did Napoleon have in his campaign library? My *Werther!*’”) *MA* 19.314.

⁷³ Stafford 177-8.

⁷⁴ Clarke 378.

⁷⁵ Wulf Koepke, *Johann Gottfried Herder* (Boston 1987) 38.

⁷⁶ *ibid.* 10.

⁷⁷ Johann Gottfried Herder, *Werke. Band 1, Frühe Schriften*, Ernst Geier, ed. (Frankfurt 1985) 25.

⁷⁸ Herder 99.

⁷⁹ Trevelyan 51.

⁸⁰ DKV 28.403-4.

⁸¹ "...ich habe in der Zeit dass ich Hier binn meine griechische Weisheit so vermehrt dass ich fast den Homer ohne Übersetzung lese." DKV 28.230.

⁸² DKV 14.470-545.

⁸³ Richard Friedenthal, *Goethe: His Life and Times* (Cleveland 1965) 95-6.

⁸⁴ DKV 14.549.

⁸⁵ *Rede zum Shakespears Tag*; *ibid.* 18.10.

⁸⁶ Boyle 125-6.

⁸⁷ "von ungemeiner Kühnheit, Derbheit, and Swiftischer Galle..." DKV 14.551.

⁸⁸ This was the first time that reviews of engravings had appeared in a German-language periodical. Goethe may have had as his model for such reviews those of Denis Diderot (1713-1784), which were included in his as-yet-unpublished *Salon*, which Landgräfin Caroline von Hesse-Darmstadt possessed in manuscript form, and to which Merck might have drawn his attention. *Frankfurter gelehrte Anzeigen vom Jahr 1772*, Hermann Bräuning, ed., 1883. Reprint, Bern 1970. 13.

⁸⁹ Hermann Bräuning-Oktavio, *Herausgeber und Mitarbeiter der Frankfurter gelehrten Anzeigen* (Tübingen 1966) 246.

⁹⁰ Edith Potter and Max L. Baeumer, "Reader-Response and Inward Form in Goethe's Early Criticism." in *Goethe as Critic of Literature*, Karl J. Fink and Max Baeumer, eds. (Langham, MD 1984) 76.

⁹¹ DKV 18.44.

⁹² DKV 18.49-52.

⁹³ DKV 18.106.

⁹⁴ MA 19.36,7.

⁹⁵ *Frankfurter gelehrte Anzeigen vom Jahr 1772* 37; Ernst Grumach. *Goethe und die Antike: Eine Sammlung* (Berlin 1949) 1.118-20; DKV 18.53-6.

⁹⁶ Review of David Christoph Seybold *Schreiben über den Homer, an die Freunde der griechischen Literatur* (Eisenach 1772). *Frankfurter gelehrte Anzeigen*: 578.

⁹⁷ *ibid.* 578.

⁹⁸ *ibid.* 580.

⁹⁹ *ibid.* 590.

¹⁰⁰ *ibid.* 131.

¹⁰¹ *DKV* 14.581.

¹⁰² Charlotte Buff married Kestner in 1773.

¹⁰³ Jerusalem was a fellow lodger at the inn *Zum Kronprinzen*.

¹⁰⁴ *DKV* 14.585-6. Goethe refers to Pierre Augustin Guys, *Voyage littéraire de la Grèce ou lettres sur les Grecs anciens et modernes* (Paris 1771) and Robert Wood, *An essay on the original genius and writings of Homer: with a comparative view of the ancient and present state of the Troade* (London 1775).

¹⁰⁵ In addition to his *Iliad*, Stolberg also made translations of Aischylos' *Prometheus Bound*, *Seven Against Thebes*, *Persians*, and *Eumenides*. He published a translation of selections from Plato in 1796-7. He also was one of the first to translate Macpherson's Ossian poems into German.

¹⁰⁶ Wood prudently drew back from making a direct comparison to the culture of American tribes. "American manners might also have a place here, and bear testimony to the truth of Homer's picture of human nature; but though, in some respects, savage manners have full as much dignity, as those of the Heroic, or any other age, (for even the Spartans education never carried a sense of Honour, contempt of danger, patience of pain, further than some of the Indian tribes); yet in general their stage of civilization is too far short of that, which the Poet describes, to come under our present consideration." Robert Wood, *An Essay on the Original Genius and Writings of Homer* (London 1775; New York 1971) 155-6.

¹⁰⁷ Letter to Herder, 10 July, 1772. *DKV* 28.255.

¹⁰⁸ Williams 61.

¹⁰⁹ Ulrich von Willamowitz-Moellendorff, *Pindaros* (Berlin 1922) 5.

¹¹⁰ *DKV* 1.145.

¹¹¹ Dieter Lohmeier, "Griechische Muster in Goethes Lyrik," *Goethe Jahrbuch* 108 (1991) 54.

¹¹² *DKV* 1.866.

¹¹³ *DKV* 28.268,9. "Der unglückliche Jerusalem. Die Nachricht war mir schrecklich und unerwartet..." Accounts of the circumstances of Jerusalem's death provided Goethe with some of the raw material for the final section of *Werthers Leiden*.

¹¹⁴ The authenticity of Olympian 5 was later called into question. Opinions remain divided on the subject. Gilbert Norwood considered it the work of "some local poetaster," while Maurice Bowra rejected it. Gilbert Norwood, *Pindar* (Berkeley 1945) 171; C.M. Bowra, *Pindar* (Oxford 1964) 414-420. Walter Mader made telling arguments for the authenticity of both Olympian 4 and Olympian 5 on both linguistic and metrical grounds. Walter Mader, *Die Psaumis-Oden Pindars (O.4 und O.5): Ein Kommentar*, (Innsbruck 1990) 109-113.

¹¹⁵Bockh had previously published a work on the metrics of Pindar. *Über die Vermasse des Pindaros* (Berlin 1809).

¹¹⁶ Hugh Lloyd-Jones, *Blood for the Ghosts* (London 1982) 37.

¹¹⁷ William Race's 1997 translation of this passage offers: "Always do toil and expense strive for achievements toward an accomplishment hidden in danger." William Race, *Pindar* (Cambridge 1997) 97. Roy Swanson's 1974 translation is even more vague: "Excellence involves continued pain and cost and danger-shrouded goals." Roy Swanson, *Pindar's Odes* (Indianapolis 1974) 21.

¹¹⁸ DKV 12.142.

¹¹⁹ There is very little ancient testimony on the event schedule at the Olympic Games. In Sophokles' *Elektra* 698-9, the foot-race is mentioned as the first competition at the Pythian Games, while the chariot race occurs toward sunrise on a different day of the games (κεῖνος γὰρ ἄλλης ἡμέρας, ὅθ' ἵππικῶν/ ἤν ἡλίου τέλλοντος ὠκύπους ἀγών. The ordering of the events may have been subject, however, to last minute changes. Stephen G. Miller, *Arete: Greek Sports from Ancient Sources*. (Berkeley 1991) 69. πεμπτάμεροις was the reading preferred by Farnell, who noted that logically, Psaumis could not have continuously honored the gods for five days, and that since chariot racing was the most exciting event, it would have made dramatic sense to hold it late in the schedule. Lewis Richard Farnell, *The Works of Pindar* (London 1932) 38.

¹²⁰ Christian Gottlob Heyne. *Pindari Carmina ex Interpretatione Latina Emendatiore cum Scholiis in Pindari Carmina* (Göttingen 1798) 14-15.

¹²¹ DKV 12.141.

¹²² Trevelyan 51.

¹²³ Stefan Blessin. *Johann Wolfgang Goethe: Die Leiden des jungen Werther* (Frankfurt 1985) 5,6. *Die Leiden des jungen Werther* was published in two editions, the first in 1774, the second, substantially revised, in 1787. Since the changes made do not affect the Homeric material in the story, all quotations will be from the second edition.

¹²⁴ Boyle 169.

¹²⁵ Surprisingly, the German translator of *Clarissa* was the Göttingen theologian and scholar of Oriental languages, Johann David Michaelis, who was neither an experienced translator nor confident of his chances of success with such a project. Thomas O. Beebee, *Clarissa on the Continent: Translation and Seduction*, (University Park, PA 1990)17-22.

¹²⁶ DKV 28.145.

¹²⁷ Thomas O. Beebee, *Epistolary Fiction in Europe 1500-1850* (Cambridge 1999) 23-24.

¹²⁸ DKV 14.464 ff. Herder read the book aloud to Goethe and friends in Johann Gottlieb Gellius' 1767 German translation.

¹²⁹ DKV 8.964.

¹³⁰ Richard Alewyn, "Klopstock!" *Euphorion* 73 (1979) 358-9.

¹³¹ Douglas J. Stewart, *The Disguised Guest: Rank, Role and Identity in the Odyssey* (Lewisberg, PA 1976) 34.

¹³² DKV 8.113 ("und Lotte mir der elenden Trost erlaubt, auf ihrer Hand meine Beklemmung auszuweinen"), 121 ("ihre Hand nahm und mit tausend Thränen netzte..."), 193 ("meine Thränen flossen"), 215 ("...meine Augen sind voll Thränen..."), 225 ("...o Gott! de gewährtest mir das letzte Labsal der bittersten Thränen!... nun ich weine wie ein Kind..."). During his final interview with Lotte, he cries no fewer than five times, she once. The characters in the Ossian song he reads to her weep as well.

¹³³ DKV 8.217.

¹³⁴ Martin Swales, *Goethe: the Sorrows of Young Werther* (Cambridge 1987) 28.

¹³⁵ Nausikaa, for instance, breaks off her speech in *Od.* 6.262 when she is telling Odysseus to be discreet when he follows her into the city. Werther's letter of 18 August (DKV 8.105,107) includes a sentence with eighteen clauses in it, the only real logical resolution of which comes several sentences later.

¹³⁶ DKV 8.103.

¹³⁷ This may be an unconscious echo on Werther's part of the magical automata that serve Alkinoos on Scheria (*Od.* 7.91-4).

¹³⁸ "Durch solche Darstellungen, die mich gar nichts kosteten, machte ich mich bei Kindern beliebt, erregte und ergetzte die Jugend und zog die Aufmerksamkeit älterer Personen auf mich." DKV 14.486.

¹³⁹ DKV 8.123.

¹⁴⁰ DKV 8.109.

¹⁴¹ DKV 8.159,161.

¹⁴² DKV 8.167.

¹⁴³ DKV 8.183.

¹⁴⁴ DKV 8.185.

¹⁴⁵ DKV 8.191.

¹⁴⁶ DKV 8.111.

¹⁴⁷ "...ich brauche Wiegengesang and den habe ich in seiner Fülle gefunden in meinem Homer..." DKV 8.17.

¹⁴⁸ "...trinke meinen Caffee da, und lese meinen Homer..." The parallel construction of this sentence suggests that to Werther, the Homer and the coffee, both his, are proprietary and consumable pleasures on the same level. DKV 8.27.

¹⁴⁹ "...da fühl ich so lebhaft, wie die übermüthigen Freyer der Penelope Ochsen und Schweine schlachten, zerlegen und braten. Es ist nicht... als die Züge patriarchalischen Lebens..." DKV 8.59.

¹⁵⁰ Horst Flashka, *Goethes "Werther:" Werkkontextuelle Deskription und Analyse* (Munich 1987) 199.

¹⁵¹ "Ossian hat in meinem Herzen den Homer verdrängt." Further on in the same letter he quotes a few lines from various Ossian poems, including "Berathon," which he will later read to Lotte during their last meeting. DKV 8.171,2.

¹⁵² "An der Stelle der lichterfüllten Dichtung Homers tritt nun mit zunehmenden Todes gegen Ende des Romans der dunkle schwermütige Gesang des -- wie Homer -- blinden Barden aus den nördlichen Nebelland." Flashka 199.

¹⁵³ "So lange er den Homer -- "seinen Homer" -- las, zog es ihm in die freie Natur hinaus." Stefan Blessin, *Johann Wolfgang Goethe: Die Leiden des jungen Werther* (Frankfurt 1985) 9.

¹⁵⁴ "Homer verkörpert für Werther eine frühe und wiederherbeigesehnte Naturverbundenheit -- wie das einfache Leben in Alten Testament." *ibid.* 63.

¹⁵⁵ DKV 8.231. "...sie trat an's Clavier und fing einen Menuet an, er wollte nicht fließen."

¹⁵⁶ DKV 8.971. The translation Werther reads is Goethe's own, which he had made at Herder's instigation in Strasbourg in 1770. Some metrical revisions were made for its inclusion in the novel. The Goethe text is so far from MacPherson's original that it might more properly be called an adaptation. DKV 8.171-3.

¹⁵⁷ "Mein Leben schwindet wie ein Traum, wie sollt' ich zurück bleiben." DKV 8.237.

¹⁵⁸ "Beladen mit Jammer starb sie und ließ Armin allein!" DKV 8.245.

¹⁵⁹ DKV 8.267.

¹⁶⁰ DKV 8.972.

¹⁶¹ DKV 8.245.

¹⁶² James Macpherson, *The Works of Ossian, the son of Fingal; translated from the Galic language by James Macpherson* (London 1765) 1.357. The question mark at the end of the passage is printed in this, the original English edition.

¹⁶³ Blessin 10.

¹⁶⁴ Stafford 107.

¹⁶⁵ James Macpherson, trans. *The Iliad of Homer* (London 1773).

¹⁶⁶ Robinson was well known to his contemporaries as a scholar of German and English literature. He was a friend of the Wordsworth family, Charles and Mary Lamb, William Blake, and Johann Ludwig Tieck (1773-1853), among others. He maintained a sporadic correspondence with Goethe, and visited him in Weimar several times.

¹⁶⁷ Henry Crabb Robinson, *Diary, Reminiscences, and Correspondence*. Thomas Sadler, ed. (London 1872) 76.

¹⁶⁸ "...when actors stepped upon the scene in the Theatre of Dionysos the spectators knew from their masks what to expect from them, i.e., what their names were, what romantic inclinations they had (harp-girls or free girls), moral shortcomings, if any (miserliness, weakness), and whether or not they would play a leading role in the play." W. Thomas MacCary, "Menander's Characters: Their Names, Roles, and Masks." *TAPA* 101 (1970) 290.

¹⁶⁹ Carl Wenel, "Iulius (Pollux)" *Paulys Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft* (Munich 1971) 21.2.1423.

¹⁷⁰ Williams 15.

¹⁷¹ *DKV* 18.1121.

¹⁷² *Il.* 18.26-7.

¹⁷³ Georg Christoph Lichtenberg (1742-1799) wrote a devastating argument against Lavater's *Physiognomische Fragmente*, entitled *Über Physiognomik wider die Physiognomen* (Dresden 1778). Appended to this work and printed in 1783 was *Fragmente von Schwänzen*, a satiric essay devoted to the analysis of the pigs' characters as read in the curls of their tails. The second section of this work examines various styles of men's queues and includes some questions for discussion, which might indicate that Lichtenberg had read Goethe's Homer analysis. These questions are printed under a set of illustrations: "Welcher könnte Goethe getragen haben? Welcher würde Homer wählen, wenn er wiederkäme?" ("Which would Goethe have worn? Which would Homer choose if he came back to life?") Georg Christoph Lichtenberg, *Über Physiognomik wider die Physiognomen*, Fritz Acerni, ed. (Waldshut-Tieggen 1996) 57.

¹⁷⁴ Williams 14-16.

¹⁷⁵ *DKV* 14.811.

¹⁷⁶ *DKV* 14.1278.

¹⁷⁷ Williams 18.

¹⁷⁸ Boyle 234.

¹⁷⁹ Boyle 243-4.

¹⁸⁰ *DKV* 39.17.

¹⁸¹ *DKV* 39.17.

¹⁸² *DKV* 29.13.

¹⁸³ Williams 21.

¹⁸⁴ Among the major works begun in this decade but not completed until years later are *Egmont* (begun 1775, completed 1787), *Wilhelm Meisters theatralische Sendung* (begun and abandoned in 1775, resumed

1782, finished 1785) , the prose version of *Iphigenie auf Tauris* (begun 1778, completed in verse in 1786), and *Torquato Tasso* (begun 1780, completed 1788).

¹⁸⁵ DKV 18.184.

¹⁸⁶ Stolberg and Voß had both chosen to use German hexameters for their Homer renderings. DKV 18.1129. When Goethe came to translate sections from Books 7 and 8 of the *Odyssey* in 1795, he would also choose hexameters. Perhaps practical considerations before all influenced this choice; to compress Greek hexameters into German pentameters could have been no easy task.

¹⁸⁷ *ibid* 29.37.

¹⁸⁸ The author of the *Nibelungenleid* used a six-beat iambic line. Wolfram von Eschenbach preferred a loose four-beat iambic line for his epics *Parzival* and *Willehalm*, as did Hartmann von Aue for his *Eric* and *Iwein*, and Gottfried von Strasbourg for his *Tristan*.

¹⁸⁹ Trevelyan 84-5.

¹⁹⁰ The *Noachide*, in particular, had some international currency; it was translated into English and published in Dublin in 1767.

¹⁹¹ DKV 14.797.

¹⁹² DKV 14.797.

¹⁹³ Johann Jakob Bodmer, *Homers Werke Aus dem Griechischen übersetzt von dem Dichter der Noachide* (Zürich 1778).

¹⁹⁴ DKV 29.137.

¹⁹⁵ In a letter to Charlotte von Stein, he wrote “Den ganzen Tag brüt ich über Iphigenien dass mir der Kopf ganz wüst ist, ob ich gleich zur schönen Vorbereitung letzte Nacht zehn Stunden geschlafen habe.” DKV 29.157.

¹⁹⁶ Trevelyan 95-103.

¹⁹⁷ DKV 29.200.

¹⁹⁸ DKV 29.208.

¹⁹⁹ Bodmer 2.256.

²⁰⁰ Goethe had extremely ambivalent feelings about the Marchioness. In July of 1775, before he had even met her, his first impression of her silhouette had prompted him to write a physiognomic analyses of her profile for Lavater, comparing the Marchioness’ personality as read from her to that of Charlotte von Stein. His response to the Marchioness’ profile was mixed. Among the characteristics he felt he could discern were “Scharf nicht tief Sinn,” “Reine Eitelkeit,” “Feine verlangende Gefälligkeit,” and “Wiz.” His final comment was “Siegt mit Pfeilen.” DKV 28.461. In the same letter to Charlotte von Stein written on 23 October, 1779 in which he likened her to the dangerous cliffs in the *Odyssey*, he praised the Marchioness’ beauty in extravagant terms DKV 29.207, but in a letter to Lavater later that week, he

called her a Siren. *DKV* 29.214. He wrote her a warmly affectionate and flattering letter on 28 August, 1780, but on 20 September, when taxed by Lavater with being attracted to the Marchioness, who had made a recent visit to Weimar, Goethe recoiled from the thought of marriage to her, writing “*Gott bewahre uns für einem ernstlichen Band, an dem sie mir die Seele aus den Gliedern winden würde.*” *DKV* 29.284,299.

²⁰¹ This was Otto Joachim Moritz von Wedel (1752-1794), Chamberlain and Chief Forrester at Weimar, and a close friend of Carl August. *DKV* 29.865.

²⁰² Either he had read Homer both on the Thunner See and on Lac Léman, or he had forgotten which lake had been the setting for his reading.

²⁰³ *DKV* 29.221.

²⁰⁴ *DKV* 29.369.

²⁰⁵ Interestingly, Goethe chose to call the servant/messenger character in Elpenor by one of Odysseus’ epithets, Polymetis (πολύμητις). The servant displays none of the hero’s guile and mental ability, however.

²⁰⁶ Tobler, one of the first to translate Greek tragedy into German verse, had already published his versions of all of Sophokles’ plays by the time Goethe met him in 1781. During the next three years, at Goethe’s urging, he translated all of Aischylos and a selection of works by Euripides, but these works were not published. *DKV* 29.938. Trevelyan speculated that this period was when Goethe first came to know Sophokles’ works well. Trevelyan 106.

²⁰⁷ Trevelyan 108.

²⁰⁸ In a letter to Frankfurt pianist and composer Philipp Christoph Kayser (1755-1822), hoping they might collaborate on an unspecified future musical project, perhaps a *Singspiel*, he wrote: “*Es wird sich davon reden lassen und wenn ich gleich jetzt in unpoetischen Umständen bin so wird doch dieser schlafende Genius wieder zu wecken seyn.*” *DKV* 29.522.

²⁰⁹ *DKV* 29.634-5.

²¹⁰ Already by March of 1776, Goethe had noticed that he had less and less time for literary work. During that month he visited the playwright Christian Felix Weisse (1726-1804), who noted in a letter to his friend Johann Peter Uz (1720-1796), that Goethe had announced to him his decision to give up on his literary career and his hope that Lenz would take up the torch. Boyle 287.

²¹¹ On 16 January, 1785, he borrowed Johann Ernst Basil’s *Einleitung in die physisch-mathematische Kosmologie* (Gotha 1776); on 8 December of the same year, he took out Christian Friedrich Rüdiger’s *Anleitung zur Kenntnis des gestirnten Himmels* (Leipzig 1786). Elise von Keudell, *Goethe als Benutzer der Weimarer Bibliothek: Ein Verzeichnis der von ihm entliehenen Werke* (Weimar 1931) 2-3.

CHAPTER 3

“AUCH ICH IN ARCADIEN!”

The idea of an trip to Italy was by no means a new one for Goethe. Raised in a household full of Johann Caspar Goethe’s souvenirs and overshadowed by reminiscences of the elder Goethe’s own Grand Tour in 1740, he had known for years that he would eventually make such a journey. In the period before his move to Weimar, his parents had been very much in favor of the idea.²¹² As noted above, when Carl August’s promised carriage did not arrive to take him to Weimar, Goethe, urged by his father, had made his way to Heidelberg on 30 October 1775, intending to continue the journey over the Alps and into Italy.²¹³ At Eberstadt, he began a travel-journal, the text of which is full of excitement at beginning such a great journey, but also colored with a certain melancholy. Earlier that year, he had had a brief but unhappy affair and a short engagement to Lili (Anna Elizabeth Schönemann (1758-1857), daughter of a wealthy Frankfurt banker. His renunciation of her was still occupying his thoughts. His excitement at this time, however, is attested to by the many short exclamatory sentences and informally rapturous writing in the travel-journal. “*Wir fahren um eine Ecke! Ein mahlerischer Blick!*”²¹⁴ (“We came around a corner! A picturesque prospect!”) This early travel journal seems an entirely private piece of writing, probably intended only for Goethe’s own pleasure. “*Heut Abend bin ich kommunikativ, mir ist als redet ich mit Leuten da ich das schreibe.*” (“I’m communicative tonight. I feel as though I’m talking to people, just writing this.”)

When he came to Weimar, Goethe did not give up dreaming of an Italian trip. Among his borrowings from the Court Library during his first Weimar period were at least two travel books: *Reisen der Engländer um die Welt* (Leipzig 1775), which he took out on 22 March 1784, and a translation into German of *A tour through Sicily and Malta: in a series of letters to William Beckford, Esq. of Somerly in Suffolk by Patrick Brydone* (London 1773, German translation, Leipzig 1774).²¹⁵ The latter may have influenced Goethe in his eventual decision to go to Sicily, at that time a part of Italy that was not on the usual Grand Tour itinerary.²¹⁶ He was well-read by the time he came to make his decision to leave for the South. Travel books were easily come by, and thus Goethe was well-read by the time he came to make his decision to go south. The Court Library was not Goethe's only source for information on travel. Indeed, as Arthur Schultz noted, "The practical *Reisebeschreibung* of the age of Goethe was one of the commonest types of printed matter, inescapable and ubiquitous, read perhaps by as many in that society as read the press today."²¹⁷ Goethe's friends would have lent him travel books, and he owned a selection of volumes himself. His continuing interest in Italy at this time is suggested by the fact that his library contained several guides to that country. Perhaps inspired by his readings of Brydone, he purchased *Lettres sur la Sicile* (Turin 1782) intended by its author, Duke Michael Johann Borch (1753-1810), as a supplement to Brydone's work.²¹⁸ In 1783, he bought Johann Jacob Ferber's *Briefe aus Wälschland* (Turin 1773), the third volume of which includes an account of the author's trip to Italy. This book would have had a special appeal for Goethe because of its observations on Alpine geology.²¹⁹ Although by this point the field of geology was changing so rapidly that *Briefe aus Wälschland* was already a little out of date, he quoted from Ferber at the beginning of his journal of the Italian journey. Discussing the rock formations between Brandsol and Neumarck, he wrote "*Färber hielt sie für Vulkanische Producte, das war aber vor 14 Jahren, wo die ganze*

Wissenschaft viel neuer war."²²⁰ ("Färber took them for volcanic, but that was fourteen years ago, when the whole science was much younger.") Another book in his own library, purchased in 1781, was a 1777 German translation of Richard Chandler's *Travels in Greece: or an Account of a Tour made at the Expense of the Society of Dilettanti*, which was originally published in English at Oxford in 1776.²²¹ His father's library contained many *Reisebeschreibungen*, including Johann Georg Keyssler's *Neueste Reisen durch Teutschland, Böhmen, Ungarn* (1729) and Joachim Christoph Nemeiz' *Nachlese besonderer Nachrichten aus Italien* (1726).²²² Other books in his father's collection that Goethe would have known from childhood were Andreas Schott's *Andreae Schotti Itinerarium Italiae* (undated) and an anonymous book entitled *Roma antica e moderna nella quale si contengono chiese, monasterij, hospedali* (1660).²²³ Both were among the books he had cared enough for as a child to have sent to him in 1794 when his widowed mother sold the house on the Grosser Hirschgraben.

In addition to his own library, Goethe would also have had recourse to Herder's books. In his Weimar years Herder had assembled an unusually fine collection of *Reisebeschreibungen*, at least 75 of which he consulted while working on his *Ideen*.²²⁴ Most of the individual works and anthologies in Herder's extensive collection are concerned with countries more exotic and distant than Italy, among them Patagonia and Africa, but he may have drawn Goethe's attention to Johann Hermann Riedesel's *Bemerkungen auf einer Reise in die Levante*, a book both men owned. This volume was Goethe's most valued guide to Sicily. "*Aus frommer Scheu habe ich bisher nicht genannt des Mentors, auf den ich von Zeit zu Zeit hinblicke und hinhorche; es ist der trefliche von Riedesel, dessen Büchlein ich wie ein Brevier oder Talisman am Busen trage.*"²²⁵ ("Pious modesty has led me not to mention up until now the name of my mentor, to whom I look and answer from time to time. It is the estimable von Riedesel, whose little book I carry in

my bosom like a breviary or an amulet.”) Besides “*der treffliche von Riedesel*,” Goethe’s primary guidebook while in Italy was the three-volume *Historisch-kritische Nachrichten von Italien* (Leipzig, 1770) by Johann Jacob Volkmann (1732-1809), of which Goethe possessed the first edition.²²⁶

Familiar with so many exempla of the *Reisebeschreibung* genre, it was only natural that Goethe regarded his own trip to Italy as a chance to try his hand at a form he knew well. If only in fictionalized forms, Goethe had already written more than one *Reisebeschreibung*. The lost childhood work, *Roman im mehreren Sprache*, is a series of letters from traveling members of the same family. Werther devotes much of his journal to descriptions of the places to which he travels and the adventures he has in these new places; he describes himself as a wanderer on the earth.²²⁷

In August, 1786, Goethe went to Carlsbad (modern Karlovy Vary), ostensibly to take the waters. Also present on the trip were Herder and his wife, Duke Carl August, and Charlotte von Stein. Goethe had been having difficulties in his relationship with Charlotte, which may explain why he did not choose to confide his intentions to her until the very last minute. He had had firm plans to go to Italy for some time, but as late as 23 August, he found it necessary to write to Charlotte, who had not yet arrived, as though he had no special plans for the autumn, noting in passing that he was reading aloud in the evenings. His choice of reading material on the brink of departure seems significant, since he chose out of all of his works two pieces that had been inspired by Greek originals. “*Gestern haben die Vögel ein unsägliches Glück gemacht. Heute les’ ich Iphigenien wieder...*” (“Yesterday, *The Birds* gave me great pleasure. Today, I read *Iphigenia* again.”)²²⁸

On 2 September, Goethe busied himself with writing farewell letters to Carl August, to the Herders, and to Charlotte. He left for Italy via the Brenner Pass route early in the morning of the next day.²²⁹ The journey included overnight stops at Weiden,

Regensburg, Munich, Mittenwald, Innsbrück and Trento. The trip was hurried and eventful, including a precipitous descent from the Brenner Pass by night on a runaway coach; the postillion had fallen asleep.²³⁰ Goethe made excellent time on his journey and crossed the border at Torbole on 12 September. Partially to avoid being lionized as the author of *Werther*, he initially chose to travel incognito.

During his journey, Goethe continued his voluminous correspondence with Charlotte von Stein. His letters from Italy are in the form of a journal; he posted them to her in parts, like a serialized story. The first part of the *Italienische Reise*, written years later between 1813 and 1816, was pulled together from this journal for Charlotte and letters to other friends. Even at the outset of his trip, he was considering the journal something more than a set of private letters. As early as 9 September, he promised Charlotte that if his jottings turned out to be a book, he would dedicate it to her.²³¹ On the 18th, however, he insisted, probably for the sake of preserving his incognito and concealing his doings from the court, that for the present his journal be considered secret. “*Sag aber niemanden etwas von dem was du erhältst. Es ist vorerst ganz allein für dich.*”²³² (“But don’t tell anyone anything about what you are receiving. For the time being, it is just for you.”) In addition to the influence of the travel-literature he had read from childhood on, one factor that might have drawn him to decide to turn his travel-diaries into a book might have been a desire to imitate or to out-do his father, who had spent the last years of his life compiling a memoir in Italian of his own journey to Italy in 1739-40.²³³ The elder Goethe’s memoirs, like Goethe’s *Italienische Reise*, were only begun a long time after his trip. They occupied him for the rest of his life. The manuscript that Goethe had sent to Weimar in 1794 after his father’s death in 1782 eventually amounted to more than 1100 pages.²³⁴

The proem Goethe chose for the final version of his *Italienische Reise* was “*Auch ich in Arcadien!*,” a German translation of the Latin tag “*Et in Arcadia ego.*”²³⁵ The

idealized pastoral world of Arcadia had been identified with Italy since Virgil had placed the shepherds of his *Eclogues* in that country, imitating his predecessor Theokritos, who had transferred Arcadia to Sicily.²³⁶ In the first eclogue, Virgil set the scene by having Tityrus tell Meliboeus of his visit to Rome (*Ec.* 1.19-26); other shepherds in the same countryside, Corydon and Thyrsis, were described as *arcades ambo* (*Ec.* 7.4). Shepherds, too, had been cast as singers since Hesiod's day (*Theog.* 23-35); the role of Arcadian shepherd was peculiarly fitting for Goethe, late of the *Göttinger Hain*.

Arcadia was clearly Italy to Goethe, and had been so since he was very young. In 1762, happy Italian memories, combined with the prevailing fashion, had led Johann Caspar to commission a portrait of his family in Arcadian costume from the Darmstadt court painter Johann Conrad Seekatz (1719-1768). Seekatz seems to have been something of a specialist in rustic scenes; Goethe wrote that the painter had been commissioned to execute several such works for the French officer François de Théas de Thoranc (1719-1794), who was billeted in the Goethe house during the occupation of Frankfurt in 1759. That year, Seekatz and various other painters also lived with the Goethe family. In later years, looking back, Goethe praised Seekatz' technical skill in painting trees, old men, and children, but noted that his youthful figures were too thin and the female figures unpleasing, owing to the fact that the artist's unattractive wife insisted on being his only model.²³⁷ Goethe also reported, perhaps flattering himself, that Seekatz, whom he referred to familiarly as "*Gevatter*" (cousin) had told Johann Kaspar more than once that it was a pity his son was not going to be a painter.²³⁸

The Seekatz picture does survive, but an 1894 copy gives some idea of what the picture must have looked like. Entitled *Die Familie Goethe in Schäfertracht* (Fig. 3.1), it is set in a summery landscape with a river flowing under a bridge to a church with a square tower in the background. In the far distance are gently-sloping mountains. Forming a

backdrop to the family are a set of stone steps and three upright Ionic columns. A curious ungainly urn stands between the columns. Four pudgy putti, symbols of the siblings who had died in infancy, frolic behind the columns on the far right.²³⁹ The Goethes are shown playing with a tiny lap-dog, while Wolfgang, thirteen years old at time, pets a lamb as his sister looks on. Two sheep slumber in the foreground of the picture. True to Goethe's later assessment, both Wolfgang and Cornelia look very thin, and their mother decidedly plain.

Posing for this picture, a courtly rococo manifestation of the sentimentalized view of Arcadia that had flourished since the days of Jacopo Sannazaro (1458-1530), may well have been formative for Goethe's adult attitude towards Italy.²⁴⁰ Goethe's first accounts of the country are full of boyish enthusiasm, as he himself acknowledged in his journal for Charlotte after a set of rapturous descriptions of the beautiful landscape between Bolzano and Trento: "*Wenn das alles jemand läse der im Mittag wohnte, vom Mittag käme <er> würde mich <für> sehr kindisch halten.*"²⁴¹ ("If somebody who lived in the South or came from the South were to read this, he would think me very childish.") His pilgrimage to Italy indeed turned out to be a rejuvenating experience; memories of his childhood were to come back to him intermittently throughout the trip at unexpected moments.²⁴²

The significance of the motto *Auch ich in Arcadien* for Goethe has been much debated. As a proem for the *Italienische Reise*, it must have a programmatic function, and yet the phrase remains ambiguous. Klaus Kiefer read it as a signal to the reader of a theme that permeates the book: joyous rebirth and the recapturing of lost youth.²⁴³

It was not by accident that even at the beginning of his journey, Goethe was already conscious that his ebullient delight in the new land he was entering was a boyish one. Yet the more melancholy interpretations of this expression were to be well known by 1817, when the poet was beginning to put together his notes for the *Italienische Reise*, and indeed

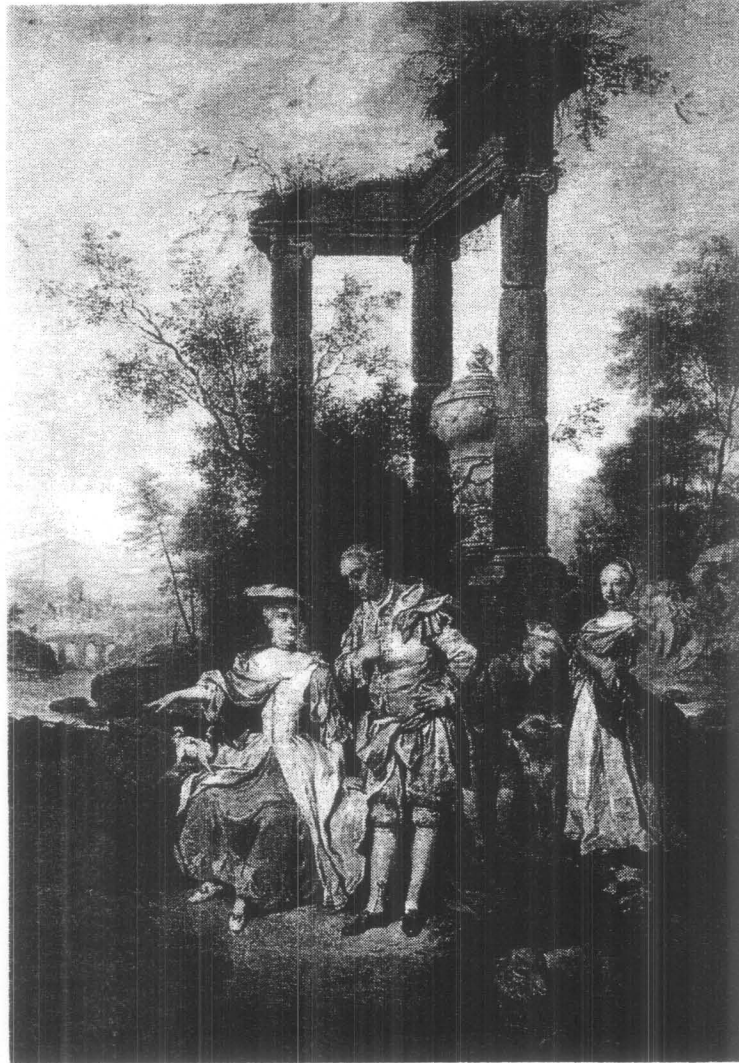


Fig. 3.1: H.P.L.F. Junker after Johann Conrad Seekatz: *Die Familie Goethe in Schäfertracht* (1762). Goethe-Nationalmuseum, Weimar.

the urn in the Seeketz painting does seem too large merely to be a decorative element.²⁴⁴ Virgil, whose works he had known since boyhood, presented his Italian Arcadia as a place not exempt from sorrow. Meliboeus is dispossessed and forced to leave his land in the First Eclogue, while Moeris suffers a similar fate in the Ninth. In the Fifth Eclogue, Mopsus sings a lament depicting the mourning of the nymphs and shepherds for Daphnis, struck by an untimely death. The Tenth Eclogue, the closing piece of the book, mourns Gallus, who died of love. The stirring lines of this poem's closing must have been the inspiration for the many painters who chose to give their depictions of Arcadia an twilight, melancholy tone.

*surgamus: solet esse gravis cantantibus umbra,
iuniperi gravis umbra; nocent et frugibus umbrae.
ite domum saturae, venit Hesperus, ite capellae.* (Ec. 10.75-7)

Let us rise, for the shade is oppressive for singers.
The juniper's shade is oppressive; shadows are bad for the harvest.
You are well-fed, and the Evening Star comes; go home, my goats.

Early paintings of Arcadian landscape show an autumnal, twilight countryside, a fit home for the shepherds like those of the Virgil *Eclogues*. Both poetry and art would have formed Goethe's conception of Italy-as-Arcadia.

Giovanni Francesco Barbieri (Il Guercino) (1591-1666), a painter Goethe held in high esteem,²⁴⁵ had painted *Et in Arcadia Ego* (Fig. 3.2) between 1621 and 1623. It cannot be proven that this picture contains the first use of the slogan, but the painting is demonstrably seminal for the genre of Arcadian landscape and served as the inspiration for a host of later versions of the same theme, using the same inscription.²⁴⁶ In *Et in Arcadia Ego*, Guercino painted two muscular rustics, not in ancient dress, pensively regarding a disproportionately large human skull that rests on a rough brick column. A mouse rests its forepaws on the jawbone; an enormous fly crawls on its rounded top. In the background

of the painting is a leafy landscape. Significantly, the inscription is placed on the side of the column that faces the viewer, so the shepherds, even if they were literate, cannot read the words.

The skull, a symbol of mortality in Christian iconography, is disproportionately large; the fly and the mouse only serve to emphasize the significance of the image.²⁴⁷ There are at least two possible readings for the phrase inscribed on the pillar. The speaker of the words “*Et in Arcadia Ego*” could be Death, which would mean that even in the idyllic world of Arcadia, human mortality remains.²⁴⁸ Another, less grammatically tenable reading, but still one with a long history, especially on the Continent, would have it that the speaker, the former owner of the skull, is saying “I, too, have lived in Arcadia.”²⁴⁹ The atmosphere of the painting prescribes a melancholy reading for the motto, and the inclusion of the skull points strongly in the direction of the first reading.

Nicholas Poussin (1594-1665), whom Goethe seems chiefly to have esteemed as a landscape painter,²⁵⁰ also included a skull in his 1630 *Et in Arcadia Ego* (Fig. 3.3), which shows shepherds, now depicted in classical dress, reading the inscription on the side of a sarcophagus. The skull, now normally sized, is no longer in the foreground, but rather shadowed and hard to see. Interestingly, the skull is placed directly above the word “*Arcadia*.” The principal figures are the shepherds, two men and a woman, who seem to be pointing at the inscription rather than the skull that surmounts it, and an allegorical figure of the garlanded male river god Alpheios, who pours water out of an urn. The stark horror of the skull in Il Guercino’s painting is gone; the reading this image prescribes seems less bleak than that suggested by its predecessor. The presence of the river god reassures the

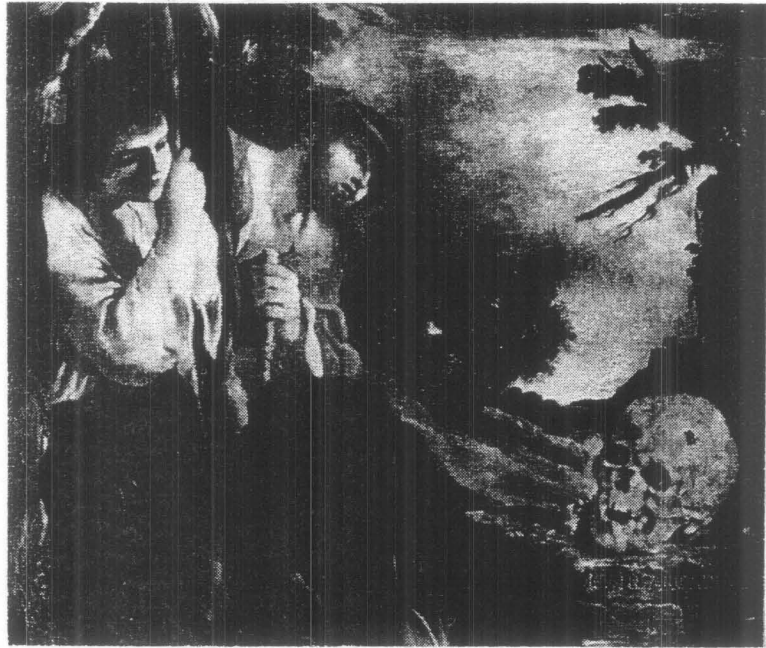


Fig. 3.2: Giovanni Francesco Barbieri: *Et in Arcadia Ego* (1621 -1623) Rome, Galleria Corsini.

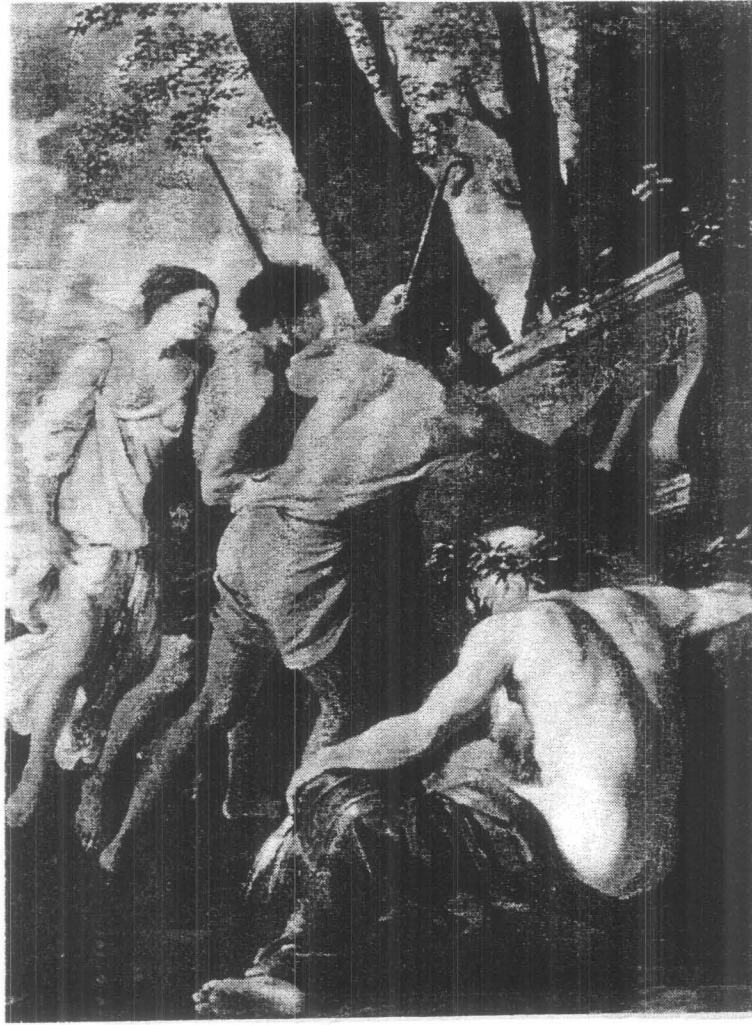


Fig. 3.3: Nicholas Poussin: *Et in Arcadia Ego*(1630) Chatsworth, Devonshire Collection

viewer that the scene is taking place in a mythological landscape, while the two younger figures, a man and a woman, seem not to understand the inscription to which the older of the shepherds points.

Poussin treated the subject once more, fifteen years later, in 1645. His second *Et in Arcadia Ego* (Fig. 3.4) includes three shepherds, again in classical costume, and a noble, godlike female figure, who watches as they look at the inscription. No skull is shown in this painting, and the inscription is placed on a square stone tomb, rather than an individual sarcophagus. Petra Maisak interpreted the figures as follows: the shepherd on the far left represents innocent ignorance, the shepherd who kneels to read the inscription, learning, and the shepherd who points to the inscription and responds to it symbolizes understanding. The female figure, who represents the wisdom that can accept grief and place it in a wider perspective, significantly, has placed an encouraging hand on the shoulder of the third shepherd.²⁵¹ In the twenty-two years that had elapsed since Il Guercino had painted the first *Et in Arcadia Ego*, the topos had undergone a considerable change, as Arcadian shepherds moved from blissful ignorance to the possession of a more philosophical understanding. Arcadia by this point had been transformed into a landscape of aestheticized and delightful sorrow.

It is not likely that Goethe would have known these three seminal paintings, but the art and writing about Arcadia that he did know well was very much influenced by them. Even Oeser, his art teacher in Leipzig, had painted a picture entitled *Grab in Arkadien* sometime between 1767 and 1777, and had drawn a landscape with a group of shepherds clustered around a garlanded urn.²⁵² In his *Winterreise* (1769), Goethe's friend Johann Georg Jacobi (1740-1814) had expressed what the phrase meant for his circle, writing that when he came across a tombstone in a beautiful countryside with the inscription "*Auch ich*

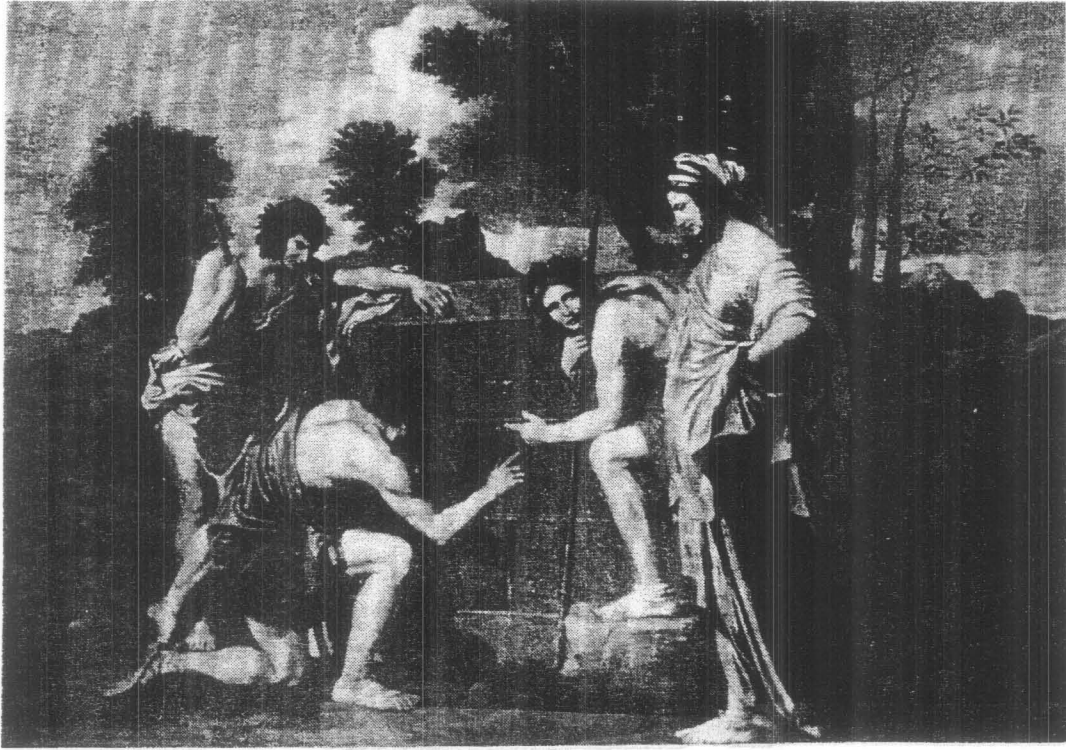


Fig. 3.4: Nicholas Poussin: *Et in Arcadia Ego* (1645) Paris, Musée de Louvre.

war in Arkadien,” he showed it to his friends, and they stood still, clasping one another’s hands, and went on.²⁵³ At this point, the sentiment had passed from baroque *memento mori* to a poetical touchstone for the sentimental reader.

In 1817, when he was making notes on the proposed structure for the *Italienische Reise*, Goethe mentioned the motto *Et in Arcadia Ego*, placing it in an explicitly sorrowful context. Among the topics he was planning to cover were his unhappiness at leaving Rome without hope of return, Ovid’s elegy (*Tristia* 1.3.1-4, 27-30, which he would quote in full), a Latin beginning (*Et in Arcadia Ego*, which ended up being turned into German), and his fear that writing down his feelings would destroy the sweet sorrow of his mood.²⁵⁴ All of these, except for the Latin beginning, are present in the closing section of the work. The background for the Ovid elegy is helpful for understanding the mood Goethe wished to portray: Ovid was lamenting his exile from Rome, and remembering his last night there. Goethe, too, felt that he was being banished from the city, and described the feeling in the *Italienische Reise*. “*Und wie sollte mir gerade in solchen Augenblicken Ovids Elegie nicht ins Gedächtnis zurückkehren, der, auch verbannt, in einer Mondennacht Rom verlassen sollte.*”²⁵⁵ (“In such moments, how could I fail to be reminded of Ovid’s elegy, of a man who was also exiled, and left Rome on a moonlit night.”) Goethe’s equation of Ovid’s expulsion to Tomis with his own departure for Weimar was not quite the supreme feat of sentimental egotism it seems, however. On the contrary; by comparing himself with Ovid and by following his example of composing poetry to express his sorrow at leaving the city, he asserted his own spiritual citizenship of Rome. He tried, he wrote, to compose an elegiac poem of his own on that final night, but the words of Ovid distracted him from his plan; instead he translated the parts of *Trist.* 1.3 that he could remember at the time.

*Wandelt von jener Nacht mir das Traurige Bild vor der Seele,
 Welche die letzte für mich ward in der Römischen Stadt,
 Wiederhol' ich die Nacht, wo des Teuren soviel mir zurückblieb<,>
 [Gleitet vom Auge mir noch jetzt eine Träne herab.
 Und schon ruhten bereits die Stimmen der Menschen und Hunde]
 Luna sie lenkt in der Höh nächtliches Rossegespann.
 Zu ihr schaut' ich hinan, sah dann capitolische Tempel,
 Welchen umsonst so nah' unsere Laren begrenzt. ²⁵⁶*

*Cum subit illius tristissima noctis imago,
 Quae mihi supremum tempus in Urbe fuit;
 cum repeto noctem, qua tot mihi cara reliqui;
 Labitur ex oculis nunc quoque gutta meis. (Trist. 1.3.1-4)
 Iamque quiescebant voces hominumque canumque:
 Lunaque nocturnos alta regebat equos.
 Hanc ego suspiciens, et ab Capitolia cernens,
 Quae nostro frustra juncta fuere Lari. (Trist. 1.3.27-30)*

When the image of that tragic night returns to me,
 the night that was my final night in Rome
 when I recall the night, when I left so many things I loved
 even now, tears trickle from my eyes.
 Now the cries of men and dogs were hushed,
 Luna, on high, drove the steeds of the night.
 I looked up at her, and looked at the Capitoline temple
 that was so close to my household, but in vain. ²⁵⁷

On 27 December 1788, soon after his return from Rome, in a letter to Herder, he quoted *Trist.* 1.3 once again. He continued: “*Ich fühle nur zu sehr, was ich verloren habe, seit ich mich aus jenem Elemente wieder hieher versetzt habe.*”²⁵⁸ (“I know all too well what I have lost, since I transferred myself back here out of my element.”) In the light of this later letter and of the list of topics for the *Italienische Reise*, it seems most likely that Goethe’s interpretation of the phrase *Et in Arcadia Ego* was the conventional Continental one; the phrase in this context meant something like the melancholy complaint of one who remembers a lost paradise: “I, too, have lived in Arcadia.”

Italy was indeed Goethe’s ideal element for growth and reinvigoration, especially with respect to classical studies. In his journal for Charlotte, on 6 October 1786, he

indirectly compared himself to Telemachos, noting that his new *cicerone* functioned for him as a Minerva wearing the form of an old servant.²⁵⁹ That Goethe chose to compare himself to the boy Telemachos is another indication of how young Italy made him feel. Both Telemachos and Goethe were on their first great formative journeys, following the examples of fathers who were notable travelers. It is true that in *Od.* 22.205-240 and 24.502-548, Athena appears to Odysseus, Laertes, and Telemachos in the guise of Mentor, fighting alongside the heroes, but it seems more than likely that Goethe was thinking more of her memorable appearance in the role of chaperone to Telemachos (*Od.* 2.267-295 and 399-434, 3.1-370) than he was of the war-comrade goddess whom Odysseus recognizes through her disguise at *Od.* 22.210-211.²⁶⁰ On 10 October 1786, also in his journal, he rejoiced at his newly recaptured delight in classical studies and complained of his sufferings during the final fallow years in Weimar.

*Gott sey Dank wie mir alles wieder lieb wird was mir von Jugend auf werth. Wie glücklich bin ich daß ich mich der römische Geschichte, den alten Schriftstellern weider nahen darf! und mit welcher Andacht les ich den Vitruv! Jetzt darf ich's sagen, darf meine Krankheit und Thorheit gestehen. Schon einige Jahre hab ich keinen lateinischen Schriftsteller ansehen, nichts was nur ein Bild von Italien erneuerte berühren dürfen ohne die entsetzlichsten Schmerzen zu leiden.*²⁶¹

Thank God for how everything that was precious to me from childhood on is becoming dear to me again. How happy I am that I can approach Roman history and the old writers once more! And with what rapt interest do I read Vitruvius! Now I dare say it, dare confess my sickness and my foolishness. For several years now, I haven't been able to look at any Latin writer, or at anything that had a picture of Italy in it, without feeling the most wretched agonies.

That autumn must have been a turning point for Goethe. Four days later, on 14 October, he wrote to Herder, beginning his letter with a quotation from the edition of Sophokles' *Ajax* he had brought along with him on his trip to consult while writing *Iphigenia*:

ἢ πολλὰ βροτοῖς ἔστιν ἰδοῦσιν
γνῶναι πρὶν ἰδεῖν δ', οὐδεὶς μάντις
τῶν μελλόντων ὅ τι πράξει²⁶²

There is much that mortals can understand
as they behold it. But before seeing it, no seer
can know what will happen in the future.

This was a gleeful dig at Herder, who had apparently been teasing Goethe over his neglect of classical authors, saying that he knew all his Latin from Spinoza; Herder had noticed that Spinoza was the only Latin book Goethe had been reading.²⁶³

Between Ferrara and Rome, Goethe halted at Foligno. Here he realized that the unfamiliarly primitive life in the Italian countryside reminded him of antiquity. The household in which he found himself seemed more like a Bronze Age οἶκος as depicted in Homeric epic than anything he had even yet experienced. On 26 October he wrote “*Ich bin in Fuligno völlig in einer Homerischen Haushaltung, wo alles um ein Feuer in einer grossen Halle versammelt ist und schreyt, lärmt, an langen Tisch speist, wie die Hochzeit von Cana gemahlt wird.*”²⁶⁴ (“Here in Foligno, I am in a wholly Homeric household, where everyone gathers around a fire in a great hall and yells, makes noise, dines at a long table, the way the wedding at Cana is portrayed.”) In the *Italienische Reise*, he expanded his description: the fire became an “*auf der Erde brennendes Feuer*” (a fire burning on the ground). Noteworthy in this passage is not only that Goethe was coming fully to appreciate that he was now in the land of antiquity, but that once again, he directly compared the world of Homer to the world of the Bible. It seems to have been a moment he considered significant, since his rewriting of the account includes the dramatic touch of the hearth.

As Goethe’s travels progressed, Homeric epic remained on his mind. During this period, Homer’s name alone functioned for Goethe as a symbol for the sublime. He had also had some new thoughts about ancient tragedy. In the entry in the *Italienische Reise* for

6 September 1786, he noted that attending a local performance in Venice of a tragedy had opened his eyes to the effects of conventional structure in Greek theater. When performed in the Italian manner, long monologues and digressions at intervals seemed dramatically effective. With an insight remarkable for the period, Goethe wryly surmised that such elements would have been even better received in Athens, where spectators would have been trained by long hours of attendance at the law courts.²⁶⁵ Greek literature continued to occupy his thoughts that autumn and winter. In Rome, on 7 November 1786, when he first saw Raphael's *School of Athens* and loggia-frescos, he lamented their state of preservation, comparing the experience of viewing them to that of reading a partially destroyed and flawed copy of Homer.²⁶⁶

On 4 January 1787, Goethe was inducted as a notable shepherd (*als namhafter Schäfer*), into a Roman society of local and foreign literati called the *Accademia degli Arcadi*.²⁶⁷ His incognito, never very convincing, had broken down completely by this point. The Arcadians, who made a practice of enrolling as many distinguished foreign visitors as they could, presented Goethe with an official document as a record of his induction, containing the text of the speech that was made that night.²⁶⁸ Like all members of the Arcadian Society, Goethe was given an Arcadian name, and endowed with his own imaginary Arcadian estate.

“...che gli Arcadi in gran numero convocati so’ segni del più sincero guibilo ed applauso vollero distinguerlo come Autore di tante celebrate opere, con annoverarlo a viva voce tra il più illustri membri della loro Pastoral Società sotto il Nome di Megalio, e vollero altresì assegnare al Medesimo il possesso delle Campagne Melpomene sacre alla Tragica Musa dichiarandolo con ciò Pastor Arcade di Numero.”²⁶⁹

“...and the Arcadians, gathered together in great numbers, with signs of the most sincere joy and approval, wish to distinguish [him] as the author of so many famous works, enrolling him by acclaim, as one of the very distinguished members of their pastoral society under the name of Megalio, and assigning to him in addition the possession of the Fields of Melpomene, sacred to the Tragic Muse, declaring him of the number of Arcadian Shepherds.”

The reason the Arcadians decided to assign Goethe the *Campagne Melpomene* is not difficult to discern. At this point, the poet had already finished *Iphigenie auf Tauris*. *Werther*, for which he was still famous all over Europe, is also a tragic work. He was in the process of finishing *Egmont* that winter, as well. It is also possible that he discussed with them his projected tragedy *Ulysses auf Phaä*. Surrounded by the landscape of the ancient world, he was naturally alert for its traces. He wrote to Charlotte on 6 January 1787 that he had had a colossal cast of a head of Juno, his “first love in Rome,” placed in his bedroom. “*Keine Worte geben Ahndung davon, er ist wie ein Gesang Homers.*”²⁷⁰ (“Words cannot describe it; it is like a canto of Homer.”) Visiting the Propaganda in Rome on the same day, he happened to hear seminarians from all over the world reading short poems in some thirty different languages, include such unlikely tongues as Malayan and Berber.²⁷¹ He wrote: “*Die Gedichtchen schienen meist in Nationsylbenmaße verfaßt, mit der Nationaldeklamationen vorgetragen zu werden, denn es kamen barbarische Rhythme und Töne hervor. Das Griechische klang, wie ein Stern in der Nacht erscheint.*”²⁷² (“The poems seemed to have been written in their native meters and performed according to the local style of declamation, for barbaric rhythms and sounds emerged. The Greek rang like a star appearing at night.”)

Shortly before he decided to go to Sicily, Goethe had the opportunity to go to Greece and Dalmatia with Prince Christian August Waldeck (1744-1798), an Austrian officer and amateur antiquary. Surprisingly, Goethe declined, fearing that the experience

might be too much for him. The voyage would not have been a comfortable one, perhaps, but he seems more to have feared the mental and aesthetic impacts of such a trip.

He wrote of his decision not to accept the Prince's offer in the *Italienische Reise*, adding "*Wenn man sich einmal in die Welt macht und sich mit der Welt einläßt, so mag man sich ja hüten daß man nicht entrückt oder wohl gar verrückt word.*"²⁷³ ("Once you have entered in upon the world and gotten involved with it, you ought to be careful that you don't get entranced, or even driven mad.") Sicily seemed far enough for Goethe at that point, and even there he would become, if not mad, at the very least, entranced.

The Sicilian trip would bring Homer to Goethe's mind more and more often. It was the first time he had ever been to sea, and he, like Odysseus, endured a storm at sea that blew the vessel off its course. Also like Odysseus, Goethe had often traveled under a false name. The lush Southern flora overwhelmed him. In Palermo, on 7 April 1787, Goethe visited the public gardens, and was astonished by their fruitfulness and the variety of plants and fruits growing there. He described the experience in the *Italienische Reise*.

*...Das alles rief mir die Insel der seligen Phäaken in die Sinne so wie ins Gedächtnis. Ich eilte sogleich einen Homer zu kaufen, jenen Gesang mit großer Erbauung zu lesen und eine Übersetzung aus dem Stegreif Kneipen vorzutragen, der wohl verdient, bei einem guten Glase Wein, von seinen strengen heutigen Bemühungen behaglich auszuruhen.*²⁷⁴

All of this recalled to my mind and senses the islands of the blessed Phaiakians. I rushed out to buy myself a Homer right away, to read that book to my great edification, and to perform a extemporaneous translation for Kneipe, who had certainly earned the right to a good glass of wine while he rested comfortably from his day of heavy labor.

The edition of Homer Goethe purchased in Palermo was Stephan Bergler's edition of Padua 1777, which contains a facing translation into elegant and meticulously accurate Latin hexameters.²⁷⁵ Later on, in 1793, when he was selecting a few passages from Homer to translate, he may have remembered this moment in the garden of Palermo, for he

chose, among several other passages, *Od.* 7.78-131, a description of the palace and the gardens of Alkinoos. It seems more than likely that this was the passage he translated for his traveling companion, the landscape painter Christoph Heinrich Kneipe (1748-1825). Another element of the Sicilian trip that may have reminded him of Alkinoos' gardens was his visit on 9 April to the villa of the notable eccentric Ferdinandino Francisco II Gravina, Cruylas, ed Agliata, Principe di Palagonia (1722-1788). Prince Palagonia's villa, as Goethe described it, was a fantastic structure, full of statues of all descriptions, colossal Atlantes, various kinds of pottery, eccentric architecture, and practical jokes such as unusable chairs that had spikes in their cushions, or whose legs were sawn off at odd angles.²⁷⁶ This bizarre villa may have reminded Goethe of Alkinoos' estate, which contains some extremely disquieting unnatural elements beyond the preternatural fertility of the garden (*Od.* 7.117-125): the building itself is made of precious metals, and it is guarded by a pair of immortal mechanical dogs made of gold and silver, the work of Hephaistos (*Od.* 7.90-94). Golden statues of young men serve as lighting fixtures (*Od.* 7.100-101).

Every now and then, Goethe was reminded of Arcadia. The *Italienische Reise* journal entry for 13 April reads in part: "*Vom Klima kann man nicht Gutes genug sagen...Der Lein hat schon zum Teil Knoten gewonnen, der andere Teil blüht...die Gartenfrüchte sind herrlich, besonders der Salat mit Zartheit und Geschmack wie Milch, man begreift warum ihn die Alten Lactuca genannt haben.*"²⁷⁷ ("The climate cannot be too highly praised.. Some of the flax has already developed nodes, the rest is in bloom... the vegetables are magnificent, especially the tender lettuce that tastes like milk. One can see why the ancients called it *lactuca*.") Eating vegetables in lovely pastoral surroundings, Goethe felt himself, like his character Werther, back in antiquity. The flax that simultaneously ripened and bloomed might have reminded him, too, of Alkinoos' magically fruitful gardens. On the same day, he happened to see a criminal, all dressed in

his best white clothes, being publicly pardoned for his sins, a local custom at Easter. In a flight of whimsy, Goethe wrote: “*Er trug den Hut in der Hand, und man hätte ihm hie und da nur bunte Bänder anheften dürfen, so konnte er als Schäfer auf jede Redoute gehen.*”²⁷⁸ (“He carried his hat in his hand, and if one could only have decorated him here and there with bright ribbons, he could have gone to any masquerade-ball as a shepherd.”)

The time in Sicily went by too fast for Goethe, who found the place paradisiacal. He returned to the public gardens in Palermo on 16 April, hoping to derive some comfort in the face of his imminent departure by reading Homer, as had become his daily practice, and thinking over the plan for a new play, *Nausikaa*. In his journal, he recorded having written out a basic plan and several scenes in the garden that day.²⁷⁹ The next day, however, when he revisited the garden, he reported that his attention had been drawn by the wealth of tropical plants there, most which he had previously known only as exotics in glasshouses. Here they grew freely outdoors. He wondered if perhaps he might be able to discover among them the *Urpflanze*, a primordial plant from which all others could be demonstrated to be descendants. He searched through the garden for some trace of such a plant, but his efforts were fruitless. Worse than that, the search had entirely distracted him from making any further progress on his planned tragedy, *Nausikaa*. The play was temporarily abandoned. What fragments of it remain, however, are in places of extremely high quality. These fragments are valuable for the insights they provide into Goethe’s view of the Homeric world at a time when he first found himself face to face with the sort of physical landscape he considered a part of it.

These fragments of *Nausikaa* are Goethe’s first work explicitly and directly inspired by Homeric epic. Despite his account in the *Italienische Reise*, the idea had actually come to him before he had reached Sicily. The first mention of his plan to write a tragedy based on the Phaiakian material from the *Odyssey* is from the journal for Charlotte

von Stein in a letter dated 22 October 1786. He asked whether he had already written her that he had made a plan for a tragedy called *Ulysses auf Phaä*? “*Ein sonderbarer Gedancke, der vielleicht glücken könnte.*”²⁸⁰ (“A strange notion that might come out well.”) As Stuart Atkins noted, in the *Italienische Reise*, Goethe did not mention his earlier plans for a play based on the *Odyssey*. Instead, Goethe told the story of the *Urpflanze*, giving the impression that the idea had first come to him in Sicily.²⁸¹ In the *Italienische Reise*, the play is referred to as *Nausikaa*, whereas in the early letter, it is called by its original title, *Ulysses auf Phaä*.

There are a total of four manuscripts for the play. H² contains three short scenes, while H³ contains both an outline, very brief, of the projected action of the play, and a few short speeches that were to be included, labeled according to the scene in which they were to be inserted. H⁴ is only a solitary leaf. H¹ must have been written in Palermo, and the first scene before Goethe had bought his copy of Homer, though possibly based on the earlier plans for *Ulysses auf Phaä*.²⁸² This is strongly suggested by the fact that in this text, Alkinoos’ daughter is given the name of her mother, Arete, and Eurymedousa was originally called Xantha or Xanthe, or in one scene, Tyche. Nausikaa is given only one brother in this play, Neoros. This may not stem from a faulty recollection of Homer, however, but rather from a wish to limit strictly the number of speaking characters in the play, following the style of *Iphigenie auf Tauris*, which Goethe had completed in 1786. In the *Odyssey*, Nausikaa has three brothers still at home; their names are Laodamas (people-taming), Halios (of the sea), and Klytoneos (renowned) (*Od.* 8.119). The name Neoros does not appear elsewhere in ancient literature, so Goethe must have coined it. He may have had in mind νέος (youthful), or νέορτος (newly arisen, new). Alternatively, he may have been thinking of νέωρος, or its equivalent νέωρης (new, fresh).²⁸³ Since most of

the Phaiakians have significant names, this might imply that the brother was meant to be quite young, perhaps younger than Nausikaa, who in this first draft, is still called Arete.²⁸⁴

Did Goethe simply not remember the name of Alkinoos' daughter? It seems more easy to believe that he had forgotten his heroine's name than to think that he was confusing Nausikaa with her mother Arete. Yet Stuart Atkins provided a compelling argument that Goethe had actually forgotten Nausikaa's name, rather than having actually believed that Arete was Alkinoos' daughter, in his essay, "Goethe's Nausicaa: a Figure in Fresco." Atkins believed that Goethe's mind was playing tricks with him, because of the impact of a series of frescos in the towns of Cento and Bologna. The Cento Odyssey frescos, which Goethe probably did not see, but might have known about, are by Il Guercino, and contain a depiction of Odysseus before Arete. The Bologna frescos, which Goethe did see, are by Pellegrino Tibaldi (1527-1596). They contain an arresting image of Nausikaa approaching her father, pointing to Odysseus, who kneels behind her. Atkins wrote "The picture...is also the only one to represent a room, the pillared and pilastered hall of Alcinous' palace, in stage-design perspective."²⁸⁵ Such an image might have served as an inspiration for Goethe. Interestingly, in the most authoritative contemporary guide to the works of Tibaldi, the picture itself was mislabeled as *Arete and Alcinoos*.²⁸⁶ Perhaps this was the reason that Goethe was momentarily at a loss to remember Nausikaa's name and used the name of her mother as a temporary stop-gap.

As Werner Kohlschmidt pointed out, the idea for a play based on the Phaiakian section of the *Odyssey* came to Goethe at a time when he had not read or studied Homer seriously in years. "*Die erste Festlegung Goethes auf das Nausikaa-Thema ist also keine Folge eines erneuerten Homer-Studiums, sondern ein äußerst vage Anknüpfung an Homer-Erinnerungen aus seiner Frühzeit.*"²⁸⁷ ("Goethe's first commitment to the Nausikaa theme is [therefore] not the result of a renewed study of Homer, but rather an extremely vague

connection to memories of Homer from his early years.”) Only when Goethe had purchased his copy of the *Odyssey* in Palermo was he able to work seriously with the Homeric text. The first scene was written before he had his Homer, the remaining fragments with the text close at hand.²⁸⁸ The meter Goethe chose was iambic pentameter, the same meter he had commended Bürger for using in his *Odyssey* translation.

In the opening scene, three unnamed serving-girls of “Arete” frolic in an unspecified outdoor setting, playing with a ball. Nausikaa herself does not appear on stage. No mention is made of their reason for being there, and the time of day is explicitly specified as being evening (*diesem heiteren Frühlingsabend*).²⁸⁹ This is in contrast to the early dawn opening scene of *Od.* 6, in which Nausikaa is visited by Athena. Shortly after the sun comes up (*Od.* 6.48), she goes to see her father and ask him for the mule cart to carry the laundry down to the river for washing. Alkinoos promptly responds, and Nausikaa sets off for the washing place in a great hurry: ἡ δ' ἔλαβεν μάστιγα καὶ ἠνίασιγαλόεντα / μάστιξεν δ' ἐλάαν. καναχὴ δ' ἦν ἡμίονοιιν. / αἱ δ' ἄμοτον τανύοντο (*Od.* 6.81-3). (“She took the whip and shining reins/ she whipped the mules, and the pair of them clattered along. They lengthened their strides without ceasing.”) When the girls arrive at the riverside, they launder the clothes as quickly as they can: στεῖβον δ' ἐν βόθροισι θοῶς, ἔριδα προφέρουσαι (*Od.* 6.92). (“They trampled them swiftly under their feet in the hollows and made it a competition.”) After briskly spreading the clothes out to dry on the beach, a quick swim, and an anointing with oil, the girls have lunch, then dance and play ball. At this point in the Homeric narrative, at the very latest, shortly after noon, probably earlier, Odysseus appears on the shore, surprising the girls, whose fear is soothed by Nausikaa. In Goethe’s scene, however, the hero, whom he called Ulysses, does not meet Nausikaa by the river. Instead, the girls remark that they are afraid that the princess (*Fürstin*) will soon hurry back to the city. She has been strangely

thoughtful this evening, and does not want to laugh and play ball as usual: “*Komm, sie rufen schon!*” (“Come! They are already calling!”) In *Od.* 6, however, Nausikaa does not merely play along with her comrades, but actually takes the lead in their dance: τῆσι δὲ Ναυσικάα λευκώλενος ἄρχετο μολπῆς (*Od.* 6.101). (“Among them, white-armed Nausikaa led the dance.”)

It is hard to see, even in the absence of a Homer text and after long years of reading little of the *Odyssey*, why Goethe decided to forego including the first meeting of Ulysses and Nausikaa, one of the more memorable and charming scenes in the epic, and the lovely sight of the heroine dancing and playing with her friends, an image made even more memorable in the *Odyssey* by a long simile in which Nausikaa is compared to Artemis (*Od.* 6.102-9). Odysseus’ opening address to the princess (*Od.* 6.149-185) alone would have made strong theatrical, almost operatic sense. If the initial plans had called for the observance of classical unities, at least the scene could have been narrated in retrospect at Alkinoos’ palace. The opening scene, however, is placed away from the city: “*Bald eilt die Fürstin nach der Stadt zurück,*” says one of the maids. Even if Goethe had decided to observe the unity of space in this play, Scheria might be considered a small enough place to count as a single setting.²⁹⁰ The meeting of Nausikaa and Ulysses by the riverside might not have made a good opening scene, however, since it would have gained materially by the heightened tension a delay would have effected.

Perhaps a key to understanding Goethe’s decision not to include this scene lies in the text of the *Odyssey* itself, which the playwright had at hand when he wrote the second scene of *Nausikaa*. However effective the first encounter is as epic poetry, it probably would not have worked well on stage without a major change. Goethe understood the importance of concentrating on the difference between epic and drama. “*Ich halte sie nicht für unmöglich, nur mußte man den Grundunterschied zwischen dem Drama und der*

Epoee recht in's Auge fassen."²⁹¹ ("I don't think it's impossible; one just has to focus on the basic difference between drama and epic.") In the Homeric text, when Odysseus meets Nausikaa, he is naked, encrusted with salt (κεκακωμένος), and embarrassed.²⁹² He holds a leafy branch in front of his genitals (*Od.* 6-117-29). Although he is ravenously hungry, his only material request of the girls is for clothing rather than food.²⁹³ Since it would have been impossible to present a naked Ulysses on the stage without fear that such an appearance would result in unintentional comedy, in order to present the hero's first meeting with Nausikaa as Homer had done, Goethe would have had to clothe his Ulysses for this meeting and find some logical solution to the problem of where he had gotten his clothes. In the *Odyssey*, clothing is quickly supplied from the piles of clean laundry. After Odysseus bathes and dresses, Athena magically beautifies him, making him seem taller and more handsome. She also curls his hair (*Od.* 6.227-237). This kind of transformation-scene would have been perfectly possible to effect with the stage-devices of the eighteenth century, probably even with some dignity, but in the *Odyssey*, when the hero reaches the palace of Alkinoos the borrowed garments are immediately recognized by Queen Arete. "Who gave you those clothes?" (τίς τοι τάδε εἴματ' ἔδοκεν;) (*Od.* 7.238) is an unlikely line for the kind of serious and elevated tragedy Goethe was planning to write. He thus had to leave it out. Dressing Ulysses in rags would not have been a solution, unless Goethe had changed the hero's line in the second scene "*Wo will ich Speise finden? Wo Kleid und Waffen?*" (Where will I find food, clothing, weapons?), Goethe either decided to dispense with the scene and its attendant problems or gave up in the face of the awkward challenge it presented.²⁹⁴

Ulysses' first appearance is in the second scene of the tragedy. Alone on the stage, he rises from the hollow in which he has spent the night after his shipwreck. His opening line is "*Was rufen mich für Stimmen aus dem Schlaf?*"²⁹⁵ ("What sort of voices wake me

from my sleep?") This imitates closely the first thoughts upon awakening of Homer's Odysseus: according to Homer's narrative, at this point Odysseus is still completely nude, soaked in sea-water, and looking particularly dreadful, like a storm-torn lion with fiery eyes (*Od.* 6.130-136). Perhaps on the stage, however, his appearance might have been obscured by scenery or dim lighting. Neither would have had the potential for comedy that the Nausikaa-meeting scene might have had.

Although Goethe was willing to dispense with or delay Ulysses' first encounter with Nausikaa, he did include some of the lines from the hero's first words on waking in Odysseus' opening monologue. He never did write the scene of their first meeting.

*Wie ein Geschrei ein laut Gespräch der Frauen
Erklang mir durch die Dämmerung des Erwachens?
Hier seh ich niemand! Scherzen durch's Gebüsch
die Nymphen? oder ahmt der frische Wind
durchs hohe Rohr des Flusses sich bewegend
Zu meiner Qual die Menschenstimmen nach?"*

Like a cry, loud women's voices speaking
rang out to me through the fog of my awakening.
I see no one here! Do Nymphs play in the bushes?
Or does the quickening wind that moves in the tall reeds
ape the speech of humans, to my grief?

Homer's Odysseus says substantially the same thing upon waking.

ὥς τέ με κουράων ἀμφήλυθε θῆλυς αὐτή
νυμφάων, αἱ ἔχουσ' ὀπέων αἰπεινά κάρενα
καὶ πηγὰς ποταμῶν καὶ πῖα ποιήεντα. (*Od.* 6.122-4)

a feminine call of girls came to me, just like [the calls]
of Nymphs, who haunt the craggy peaks of mountains.
the fountainheads of rivers and the grassy meadows.

Goethe's translation of θῆλυς is either faulty or a deliberate variation on the text. The word is an adjective of two terminations, agreeing with αὐτή.²⁹⁶ Without a lexicon at hand, he would not have been able to check. Perhaps he confused θῆλυς with θαλερός.

It can hardly have been that Goethe was remembering a different text here, since no alternative readings are preserved for this word. One alternative reading for this line may have inspired Goethe to add the lines about the wind: mss. g, C, and H read ἄυτμή for ἄυτή. The Bergler text with which he was working reads θῆλυς ἄυτή, however, and Bergler, in his Latin translation, rendered the line tightly as *ut me puellarum circumvenit fæminea vox*.²⁹⁷

Like Homer's Odysseus, Goethe's hero wonders what the people are like on this as-yet unknown island. "*Ist es bewohnt von rohen, ungezähmten?*"²⁹⁸ "Is it inhabited by uncivilized and untamed people?" Homer's Odysseus asks "Ὁ μοι ἐγώ, τέων αὔτε βροτῶν ἐς γαῖαν ἰκάνο; ἦ ῥ' οἱ ὑβρισται τε καὶ ἄγριοι οὐδὲ δίκαιοι...;" (*Od.* 6.119-20) ("Alas for me! To what men's land have I come? Are they arrogant and barbarous, without fairness?") Both heroes understand that their fates hang in the balance: Phaiakian clemency is their only chance for survival.

Goethe's Ulysses refers to himself as "*Der Städtebändiger, der Sinnbezwinger*" ("Tamer or Subduer of cities", "Wit-beguiler"). πτολίπορθος ("sacker of cities") is a conventional epithet for Odysseus throughout the Homeric narrative. Goethe chose to tone down the meaning of this term slightly, perhaps in order to present his hero in a more favorable light. This must have been deliberate, for he cannot have missed the term's original significance: Bergler, in his Latin translation, had most commonly rendered the term as *urbium eversor*, retaining its original brutality.²⁹⁹ Other renderings Bergler chose for the same epithet share the violence implicit in the Greek: *urbium destructor* (*Od.* 14.447, and *urbium populator* (*Od.* 8.3).³⁰⁰

Sinnbezwinger seems to be Goethe's rendering of πολύμητις or πολύτροπος ("man of many councils" or "man of many turnings [wiles, resources]"). Like the author of the *Odyssey*, Goethe did not make use of these standard epithets in a random way. That

Goethe's Ulysses, now a naked helpless beggar without even a weapon, calls himself a *Städtebändiger* is ironic. In *Od.* 9.3, the term *πολίπορθος* is used to describe Odysseus not at the time of his arrival in Scheria, but rather the following morning, when he has wakened up in the palace of Arete and Alkinoos, and is about to undergo the trial of athletic competitions with the young Phaiakian men. It signals his hidden strength. Goethe's Ulysses, however, uses the term in bitter self-mockery.

Goethe's choice of the designation *Sinnbezwinger* represents another deliberate alteration of a conventional epithet for the purposes of drama. The words *πολύμητις* and *πολύτροπος* both imply cunning and resourcefulness, but not necessarily the possession of a dangerous gift of eloquence that enchants hearers. Bergler regularly translated both terms as *versutus*. In context, Goethe's choice of diction is somewhat jarring, since the hero is about to beguile the wits of Nausikaa with his well-chosen words. The non-Homeric line that follows these epithets points in the same fatal direction: "*Der Bettgenoß unsterblich schöner Frauen.*"³⁰¹ ("The sexual partner of immortal lovely women") Goethe's Ulysses goes on to lament his lost crew in words that recall without repeating *Od.* 9.60-1 and 565-6, in which the hero grieves for the friends who were lost to the ravages of the Kikones and Polyphemos the Kyklops, respectively. Then he hears the voices of the young women once more, and hopes that they will receive him kindly:

*O daß sie freundlich mir und zarten Herzens
Dem Vielgeplagten doch begegnen möchten
Wie sie mich einst den Glücklichen empfangen!*

Let them be friendly, and with kindly hearts,
greet me, who have suffered very much,
the way they welcomed me in happier days!

This epigrammatic passage echoes Odysseus' prayer to Athena at the closing of *Od.* 6, as he watches Nausikaa drive her team away and prepares to go into the city, where he will face Arete and Alkinoos: *δός μ' ἔς Φαίηκας φίλον ἔλθεῖν ἠδ' ἔλεινόν* (*Od.* 6.327) ("Let

me reach the Phaiakians both beloved and pitied.”) The name *Vielgeplagter* is appropriately placed, and echoes the Homeric πολύτλας. The scene closes with Ulysses announcing, in accord with the conventions of drama, that he sees the daughter of a hero approaching, accompanied by an elderly lady. He will hide until the time is propitious.

In the third scene, Nausikaa makes her first appearance. The content of this fragmentary scene, which breaks off after only 94 lines with a line half-written, shows a very close reading of *Od.* 6, and a concern to imitate typical Homeric diction. The heroine walks by the shore, talking with her old nurse Eurymedousa. The name for the nurse is authentic (Εὐρυμέδουσα), but the setting is not, since Eurymedousa’s sole appearance in the *Odyssey* is at the beginning of the seventh book, where the nurse makes a fire and cooks supper for Nausikaa (*Od.* 7.7-13). In the Homeric text, no mention is made of the nurse in the role of a confidante, but in Goethe’s script, again in the accord with the conventions of tragedy, the nurse becomes the heroine’s advisor, analyst, and audience.³⁰² Nausikaa tells Eurymedousa to let the serving-girls go on playing, since they have finished their business of laundering the lovely clothes (*schöne Kleider*) so quickly. The garments mentioned in Homeric epic are often described as beautiful.³⁰³ In *Od.* 6.58, the clothes are called κλυτὰ ἔματ’, whereas at line 111, the more usual expression is used; ἔματὰ καλά. The garments are drying in the sun, says Nausikaa. (“*Die hohe Sonne/ Die allen hilft vollendet gar leicht/ das Tagewerk.*”) At *Od.* 6.98, the girls leave their clothing to air on the pebbly beach: ἔματὰ δ’ ἠελίοιο μένον τερσήμεναι αὐγῇ. (The clothes remained to dry in the sunlight.) Nausikaa continues:

*...Gefalten sind die Schleier
Die langen Röcke deren Weib und Mann
Sich immer, reinlich wechselnd, gern erfreut.
Die Körbe sind geschlossen leicht und sanft
Bringt der bepackte Wagen uns zur Stadt.*

...The veils are folded,
the long tunics that delight a man and a woman
when they are tidily changed.
The baskets are closed. The laden cart,
light and smooth, will bring us back to the city.

The clothes are folded (πτύξασα) at *Od.* 6.252. The delight of a man and a woman in clean clothing is expressed early in the book, directly in the context of marriage. Nausikaa, when she requests the mule cart for the day, is too modest to say openly that she is thinking about her own marriage. Instead, she argues that the three of her five brothers who are still unmarried require clean garments for when they go dancing: οἱ δ' αἰεὶ ἐθέλουσι νεόπλυτα εἴματ' ἔχοντες/ ἐς χορὸν ἔρχεσθαι (*Od.* 6.64-5). Goethe made it clear that he understood Nausikaa as well as the Homeric Alkinoos does (ὁ δὲ πάντα νόει), by choosing the phrase *Weib und Mann*, which at that time meant both “man and woman” and “man and wife.”³⁰⁴ The mule-wagon the Homeric Nausikaa uses is twice described as being εὐκυκλον (*Od.* 6.58,70), an epithet applied to a cart only here in Homeric epic. The term might mean either “light-rolling” or “with good (or beautiful) wheels.” Goethe, like many readers after him, chose the former, departing from Bergler’s rendering: “*agilem rotis.*”³⁰⁵

Eurymedousa responds agreeably, and then observes that Nausikaa has been in an unusually earnest and dutiful mood today. This seems strange to her: “*Dies’ schien mir ein Wunder,*” she says.³⁰⁶ In the *Odyssey* as whole, a major symbol of adult status for women is a devotion to the conventionally feminine tasks of producing and caring for textiles. Nausikaa’s mother Arete, despite the fact that she is the real power behind the throne (*Od.* 6.313-14), and arbitrates disputes for her people, (*Od.* 7.74), seems to spend most of her time spinning (*Od.* 6.52-3, 305-6). Most adult women in the *Odyssey* weave.³⁰⁷ Goethe’s Nausikaa, like Homer’s still a child, has as yet shown little interest in the work of full-grown women. The Homeric narrative makes this very plain. When

Athena appears to Nausikaa in the form of her playmate, the sea-captain Dymas' daughter, she scolds the princess for neglecting her wardrobe, and does so in terms that make it clear that Nausikaa can no longer delay thoughts of marriage, and by implication, adulthood: “σοὶ δὲ γάμος σχεδὸν ἔστιν” (“Your marriage is near”), says the goddess (*Od.* 6.27). Putting it more baldly, she adds “οὐ τοι ἔτι δὴν παρθένος ἔσσεαι” (“You will not be a virgin for long”) (*Od.* 6.33). Before Nausikaa can marry, she must first put her linen in order. Nausikaa's youthfulness is emphasized by her delight in driving the mule-cart and using the shining reins and the whip to go as fast as possible. No other female character is depicted driving a cart in the *Odyssey*.³⁰⁸ Significantly, once she has met Odysseus, she drives in a more restrained manner, pulling the mules back (*Od.* 6.319).

In Goethe's play, when taxed by Eurymedousa with her unusual behavior, Nausikaa immediately tells the nurse everything. She explains why she came into the nurse's room early that morning, why that she is finding womanly duties (“*weibliches Geschäft*”) unaccustomedly pleasant, and why she wanted so urgently to come out to the washing-place with her linens:

*So wirst du lächeln denn mich hat ein Traum
Ein Traum verführt der einem Wunsche gleich.*

Indeed, you will smile, for a dream,
a dream like a wish seduced me.

Verführt is a word advisedly chosen. In the *Odyssey*, Athena has manipulated Nausikaa into admiring Odysseus and yearning for him. When Nausikaa wakes from her dream, she is bemused: ἄφαρ δ' ἀπεθαυμασ' ὄνειρον (*Od.* 6.49) (“Forthwith, she wondered at her dream”). When Nausikaa beholds Odysseus fresh from his bath, magically beautified, she privately remarks to her maids that he looks like a god and that she would like to marry someone like him: ἄι γὰρ ἐμοὶ τοιόοσδε πόσις κεκλυμένος εἴη! (*Od.* 6.244).

Goethe's Eurymedousa immediately urges Nausikaa to tell her the dream, and remarks that

not all dreams are idle and meaningless. In her experience, dreams that come in the morning are significant ones.³⁰⁹ The idea that morning dreams are especially portentous has a long history. Horace wrote in *Sat.* 1.10.33 that Romulus had appeared to him “*post mediam noctem visus cum somnia vera,*” and told him not to mix Greek with Latin. Goethe had been reading German translations of the *Satires* in September and October 1786, at first with violent disgust, but then later with great pleasure, or at least so he kindly wrote to the translator Wieland.³¹⁰ In Ovid’s *Her.* 19, Hero’s letter to Leander, Hero has a nightmare just before dawn -- a time when dreams are most often true (*namque sub aurora, iam dormitante lucerna/ somnia quo cerni tempora vera solent*) -- that her lover will be drowned. Goethe had quoted *Her.* 17.168 in an epigram he wrote to Charlotte von Stein in 1782,³¹¹ which demonstrates that whatever edition he had been reading contained the double letters that have not always been considered authentic, and so he might also have read *Her.* 19.³¹² While either Ovid’s epistolary elegy or Horace’s satire might have been the poet’s source for this detail, it is also possible that the idea came from Moschos’ *Europa* Idyll, then ascribed falsely to Theokritos, in which the same superstition is mentioned: εὔτε καὶ ἀτρεκέων ποιμαίνεται ἔθνος ὄνειρον (*Id.* 2.5.3). Goethe had read the poet for the first time in 1771 and cared enough for his work to have praised him in the highest possible terms in the 1772 lyric *Wandrer’s Sturmlied.* (*...den Blumen-singenden/ Honig-lallenden/ Freundlich winkenden / Theokrit*)³¹³ (“the flower-singing, honey-babbling, kindly winking Theokritos”) Theokritos, according to a letter to Herder, was the one of the first Greek authors Goethe studied seriously after he had become comfortable reading Homer, Xenophon and Plato.³¹⁴ In the 1771 *Rede zum Shäkespears Tag*, Theokritos is mentioned alongside Homer and Sophokles as one of the ancient Greek mentors who had taught the young Goethe to feel the value of Greek literature.³¹⁵

When Eurymedousa tells her that morning dreams are important ones, Nausikaa responds that hers *was* a morning dream, since the terrible storm the night before had kept her awake until late. Here the text breaks off. Although the scene is unfinished, this closing image is a strong one. Goethe imagined his Nausikaa sitting up at night, keeping an unknowing vigil for Ulysses, who is shipwrecked in the storm and struggling to reach the land. She is dramatically linked to the hero, even before they meet. Ironically, and the educated audience would have known this, since the *Odyssey* narrative makes it clear, Nausikaa's dream was no true dream, but a magical apparition of Athena standing at the head of her bed. In the Homeric text, the only woman who truly dreams about Odysseus (or at least claims to have done so) is his wife, Penelope (*Od.* 19.535-569).

Later on, in the *Italienische Reise*, Goethe wrote down "from memory," a few notes on the planned structure of the unfinished play. This schema does not represent his original intentions,³¹⁶ but it is interesting to see how the older Goethe felt the plot of such a play might have worked out. He admitted, himself, that he was not quite sure what he had done with it back in 1787.³¹⁷ He claimed, however, that although he had written down little or nothing of the play, nevertheless, he had thought it out down to the last detail in his mind. At the time of writing, he could hardly remember it.³¹⁸ What vague recollections or reconstructions he was able to piece together, he recorded as part of the entry for 7 May 1787. The section is prominently supertitled "*Aus der Erinnerung.*"

The three brief scenes that survive were to have been placed at the beginning of the play. Nausikaa was to have met Ulysses (no mention is made of his nudity), and her refusal to allow him to be seen with her in the city would foreshadow her attraction to him. ("*die Bedenklichkeit den Fremden, nicht selbst in die Stadt zu führen, wird schon ein Vorbote der Neigung.*") Again, this is a characteristically close reading on Goethe's part.

He probably intended for the play to mimic the action in *Od.* 6 as closely as possible, exploiting all of the ambiguities and blunders that mark Nausikaa's speech at 255-315.

At *Od.* 6.255, Nausikaa commands Odysseus to follow her behind the mule-cart, and to walk with her maids as long as they are out in the countryside. Once they reach the port, however, they are to separate, for fear of causing a scandal, as the sea-faring Phaiakians are inclined to malicious gossip. Up to this point in the speech, Nausikaa has been ingenuous. She is never able to bring herself to command Odysseus directly to enter the town separately from her. Her syntax is disordered; she piles up clause after clause, until at last she describes the men working in the port and breaks off, saying she will avoid their crude words: τῶν ἀλεείνω φῆμιν ἀδευκέα (*Od.* 6.273.)³¹⁹ After this aposiopesis, her speech becomes less well-considered, and she places words in the mouths of the people who might gossip about her if they saw her walking with a strange man. "Who is that tall handsome stranger with Nausikaa?" they might ask: τίς δ' ὄδ' Ναυσικάα ἔπεται καλός τς μέγας τε / ξεῖνος; (*Od.* 6.276) Inadvertently, she slips and reveals what she thinks of his looks. "Perhaps he will be her husband!" the rumour-mongers might guess: πόσις νύ οἱ ἔσσεται αὐτῇ (*Od.* 6.277). This is a far more serious slip, for now Nausikaa has revealed her strong attraction to Odysseus and her fantasy of marrying him, which she has already divulged to her maids at *Od.* 6.244. Nausikaa, who is too young to know the conventions of courtly speech, proceeds from this bad blunder to a far worse mistake: she has her imaginary speaker guess that Odysseus is a god for whom she has prayed, and who has now arrived from the sky to make her his bride forever: ἢ τίς εὐξαμένη πολυάρτητος θεὸς ἦλθεν / οὐρανόθεν καταβάς, ἔξει δέ ἡματα πάντα. (*Od.* 6.281). It is true that Odysseus' first words to Nausikaa had been an inquiry whether she herself was a goddess or a mortal woman (*Od.* 6.149-152 ff), but Odysseus' motives were well thought out and canny: he knew his survival depended on capturing her good will.

He had deliberately addressed her with honeyed words (ἐπέεσσιν ... μειλιχίοισι), to charm her, rather than risk frightening or offending her by clasping her knees in the traditional gesture of a suppliant (*Od.* 6.141-9). When Nausikaa likens Odysseus to a god, she has completely betrayed her feelings. As if understanding the extent of her mistake, she resorts, like a child, to artless boasts about her suitors. The gossips might consider it a good thing for her to marry at last, since she has spurned all of the native-born suitors on the island: ἦ γὰρ τούσδε γ' ἀτιμάζει κατα δῆμον / Φαίηκας, τοί μιν μνῶνται πολεές τε καὶ ἐστηλοί (*Od.* 6.283-4). The clever Odysseus must understand exactly what is happening to the young girl. Nausikaa gives Odysseus a last set of orders: he is to remain in the grove of Athena until she has had time to go home, then ask any passer-by how to find the house. Anyone, even a child, will be able to direct him. She indulges in one final boast: Alkinoos' house is not like any other: οὐ μὲν γὰρ τι ἐοικότα τοῖσι τέτυκται / δώματα Φαιήκων, οἷος δόμος Ἀλκινόοιο / ἤρωσ (*Od.* 6.301-3). This speech must have been at least a good part of the closing that Goethe had had in mind for the first act of the play.

The second act of the play, Goethe wrote in the *Italienische Reise*, was to have introduced the characters at Alkinoos' court, including Nausikaa's suitors, and to have ended with Ulysses' entrance. The third act, he recalled, would have consisted of Ulysses' account of his adventures, which would have still further strengthened Nausikaa's passion for him. In the fourth act, Ulysses would have distinguished himself, off stage, by the feats of strength that are described in the *Od.* 8.186-201. Nausikaa, impressed, would have betrayed her passion, and Ulysses would have had to reveal that he was not going to stay on Phaiakia. Nausikaa would have committed suicide in the fifth act.³²⁰ The schema, written from what Goethe himself admitted was a faulty memory, bears some relationship to the first three scenes from the manuscript H.³ H², however, preserves still more of

Goethe's original intentions for the play. This manuscript contains a very bare outline of the structure of the play in which most scenes are described only by the names of the characters on stage and a few words that hint at the projected action. There are also several lines jotted down for later inclusion.³²¹

The speech of Ulysses upon awakening is included in this manuscript, with one or two alterations. Most notable among these is the inclusion of two attempts to insert references to the strikingly dramatic simile that ends *Od. 5*. When Odysseus reaches the island, he is half-frozen, and it is night. He finds two olive trees growing close together and discovers a hollow full of dried leaves beneath them. To keep warm until morning, he burrows down into the pile and covers himself with leaves.

ὡς δ' ὅτε τις δαλὸν σποδιῇ ἐνέκρυψε μελαίνῃ
ἀγροῦ ἐπ' ἔσχατιῆς, ᾧ μὴ πάρα γείτονες ἄλλοι,
σπέρμα πυρὸς σώζων, ἵνα μὴ ποθεν ἄλλοξεν αὖτις,
ὡς Ὀδυσσεὺς φύλλοισι καλύψατο. (*Od. 5* 488-491)

Just as when a man hides a brand in smoldering cinders
far off in the fields, someone without neighbors,
saving the seeds of the fire, to avoid going far off to get a light,
thus did Odysseus cover himself with the leaves.

Ulysses' first speech contains two references to this simile. The first comes in after the lines "...*Zu meiner Qual die Menschenstimmen nach?/ Wo bin ich? Wohl begabt sieht dieses Land.*" He continues:

*hier unter diesen Blättern lag der Mann
Der viel ,<> Gleich einem Funken pp
lag der Bettgenoß unsterblich schöner Frauen.*³²²

here under these leaves lay the man
the much ... Like a spark *etc.*
lay the sexual partner of beautiful immortal women.

This line could have worked well where it is placed, although in a final draft, Goethe probably would have wanted to remove one or the other of these references to the same simile to avoid repetition. As it stands, the passage gains materially from the ironic juxtaposition of images: a leafy hollow could not be more different than the elegant beds of Kirke and Kalypso. The second insertion of text derived from the Book 5 simile comes toward the closing of the scene, after Ulysses has mourned his fallen companions (*die Geliebten*).

*Und wie der arme <Funken> letzt Brand
 Von großer Herdes Glut mit Asche
 Des Abends überdeckt wird daß er Morgens
 Dem Haus Feuer gebe, lag
 In Blätter eingescharrt <...>³²³*

And as the poor <sparks'> final blaze
 from the great hearth's glow
 is nightly covered with ash so as to give
 the house fire in the morning, he lay
 buried in with leaves.

This passage has a few interesting features. The lonely fire of the isolated man in the *Odyssey* is not described as a “great hearth;” perhaps Goethe was remembering the central fireplace that was the center of his “Homeric” household at Foligno, and realized that an image of the huge central fixed hearth of a Bronze Age palace made for an effective contrast with the solitary wanderer’s loneliness and fear. The choice of *ingescharrt* for *καλύψατο* points to a close reading of the Homeric text, since *einscharren* is regularly used in the context of the burial of the dead. When Odysseus lies down to sleep beneath the olive trees, he is half-dead with exhaustion and cold. The hero’s arising the next morning, both in the *Odyssey* and in Goethe’s play, is a figure of rebirth. Bergler had read *absconditus erat* (he was hidden), but Goethe once more departed from Bergler’s reading to the play’s advantage.³²⁴ Two lines remain of the third scene of the second act.

*Geliebte schilt die stille Träne nicht
die mir vom Auge fließt.
(dann schweigen sie und sehn einander an.)*³²⁵

My beloved, do not scold me for silent tear
that flows from my eye.
(then they are silent, and gaze at one another.)

Nausikaa, (here named Arete, as elsewhere in H²) must be speaking to the nurse Eurymedousa. From the notes that remain for this scene, however, Max Morris speculated that she is discussing her parents' accounts of their own courting days, rather than her own feelings. He also read the last line not as a stage direction, but as a piece of narrative, which makes sense. Stage directions are rare in this manuscript. If so, perhaps she is describing the behavior of a happy couple, perhaps her parents. Her sentimentality shows her ready to fall in love with Odysseus, whom she has not yet met.³²⁶

A speech that was to have been included in the fourth scene of the first act, Nausikaa's description of her father's garden, has some strong parallels with sections of the *Odyssey*. Goethe did not have a text at hand when he was composing the scenes in this manuscript, so the correspondences in this section show that the garden of Alkinoos scene at *Od.* 7.81-132 was one with which he was particularly familiar.

*In meines Vaters garten soll die Erde
Dich umgetriebnen vielgeplagten Mann
Zum freundlichsten empfangen <...>*

*...Dort dringen neben Früchten wied<er> Blüten
Und Frucht auf Früchte wechseln durch das Jahr
Die Pomeranze die Zitrone steht
Im dunkeln Laube und die Feige folgt
Der Feige. Rings beschützt ist rings unher
Mit Aloe und Stachel Feigen...
...Es rieselt neben dir der Bach geleitet <?>
Von Stamm zu Stamm der Gärtner träncket sie
Nach seinem Willen.*³²⁷

Oh, man of much wandering, man of much sorrow
In my father's garden, the earth
will receive you most graciously.

There ripe fruits are crowded out by blossoms again
and harvest after harvest, changing through the year.
The pomegranate and the lemon adorn
the dark foliage, and figs takes the places of
figs. All around, on every side protected
by aloe and by prickly pears.

Next to you, the stream trickles, directed to flow
from trunk to trunk. The gardener waters them
at will.

Umgetriebnen and *vielgeplagten* are both echoes of common Homeric epithets for Odysseus; the first is a rendering of πολύτροπος, since turnings can be either intellectual twistings or the turnings of a journey, although Goethe read the term as *umgetrieben* (man of much wandering) the epithet retains its richness and allusiveness.³²⁸ *Vielgeplagt* would be a rough equivalent of πολύτλας (much-enduring). The adumbration of various species in this garden is both Homeric and peculiarly Goethean. Alkinoos' garden contains mainly table-fruits, olives, and grapes. The aloes and prickly pears (*cactus opuntia*) reflect Goethe's interest in botany and must have been examples of the exotic species he was so delighted to observe in the public gardens in Palermo.³²⁹ The lemons in the dark foliage later found their way into *Mignon's Lied* in the novel *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*: "*Kennst du das Land, wo die Zitronen blühn/ im grünen Laub die Gold Orangen glühn?*"³³⁰ ("Do you know the country where the lemons bloom/ in the green shade; the gold oranges glow?") The Homeric narrative devotes a great deal more space to the description of Alkinoos' gardens than does the play, but the sections of *Od. 7* that Nausikaa's speech reflects show close verbal correspondences:

ἔνθα δὲ δένδρεα μακρὰ πεφύκται τηλεθόωντα
ὄγχυαι καὶ ῥοιαὶ καὶ μηλέαι ἀγλαόκαρποι
συκέαι τε γλυκεραὶ καὶ ἐλαῖαι τηλεθόωσαι
τάων οὐ ποτε καρπὸς ἀπόλλυται οὐδ' ἀπολείπει
χείματος οὐδὲ θέρευς, ἐπετήσιος. ἀλλὰ μάλ' αἰεὶ
Ζεφυρίη πνείουσα τὰ μὲν φύει, ἄλλα δὲ πέσσαι.
ὄγχνη ἐπ' ὄγχνη γηράσκει, μῆλον δ' ἐπὶ μῆλῳ
αὐτὰρ ἐπὶ σταφυλῇ σταφυλή, σῦκον δ' ἐπὶ σῦκῳ (*Od. 7.114-121*)

There, great flourishing trees grow:
 pear trees and pomegranates, apples bearing bright fruit,
 sweet figs and olive trees flourish
 whose harvest never goes bad, never fails,
 winter or summer, year to year. But forever and ever
 Zephyros with his breathing make some spring forth, others ripen.
 Pear on pear ripens, apple on apple,
 bunches on bunches of grapes, fig upon fig.

The Nausikaa speech is considerably condensed, but presents a very similar image to these lines from *Od. 7*. *Frucht auf Früchte wechseln durch das Jahr* is a tight rendering, especially from memory, of τάων οὐ ποτε καρπὸς ἀπόλλυται οὐδ' ἀπολείπει / χεῖματος οὐδὲ θέρεως, ἐπετήσιος (*Od. 7.117-18*), though it misses out the idea that in Alkinoos' garden harvests do not change *per se*, but simply replace themselves. This is, in the Homeric account, a garden without Northern-style seasonal changes, although the Phaiakians certainly understand that winter and summer exist: χεῖματος... θέρεως (*Od. 7.118*). For Goethe, ἐπετήσιος may have been hard to understand; the word is only used here. *Die Feige folgt die Feige* is a direct translation of ὄγχνη ἐπ' ὄγχνη γηράσκει (*Od. 7-120*). Perhaps Goethe's decision to include only the figs, out of all of the Homeric fruits mentioned was also conditioned not only by a concern for brevity, but also by his interest in tropical plants around him in the public gardens as he wrote. For a North German, the grapes, apples, and pears mentioned in *Od. 7* would have seemed too commonplace to add any specially foreign, exotic character to the scene. In addition, on his trip Goethe learned that the fig, unlike the fruits in Alkinoos' garden that would have been familiar to a Northern audience, bears more than one crop per summer.³³¹ That he had wanted the play to have a special local color is indicated in the “*Aus der Erinnerung*” section of *the Italienische Reise*: “*Diese einfache Fabel sollte ...besonders durch das Meer- und Inselhafte der eigentliche Ausführung und des besonderen Ton's erfreulich werden.*”³³² (“This simple fable was to have obtained its appeal ...especially from the sea-

and island atmosphere in the finished work.”) The irrigation of the garden Nausikaa describes is well in line with the technological competence of Homeric Phaiakians: in the *Odyssey*, Alkinoos’ garden has two well-directed water-sources:

ἐν δὲ δύω κρήναι ἡ μὲν τ’ ἀνὰ κῆπον ἅπαντα
σκίδναται, ἡ δ’ ἐτέρωθεν ὑπ’ αὐλῆς οὐδὸν ἴησι
πρὸς δόμον ὑψηλόν, ὅθεν ὑδρεύοντο πολῖται. (*Od.* 7.129-131)

There are two springs there, one which runs through the whole garden, and another, on the other side, flows under the court threshold, toward the high-roofed hall. The people get their water from this one.

Goethe might have been remembering the curious waterworks in the Palermo gardens when he wrote these lines. There were a series of basins there, flowing into one another, full of gold and silver fish.³³³ Although these basins originally made a pleasant impression on Goethe, he did consider the atmosphere in the gardens “*feenhaft*” (“fairy-like”), even on first sight, and he may not have been using this word in its most positive sense. As part of his introduction to the account of his visit to the villa of the eccentric Prince Palagonia, he noted that the Palermo fountain, though excellent, was one of the ancestors of the “*pallagonischen Raserei*” (Palagonian lunacy).³³⁴

Nausikaa’s speech describing her father’s garden is not a close translation, but something more. Wolfgang Schadewalt considered the final lines something of a turning point for Goethe’s whole relationship with antiquity, “*In ihnen steigt, damals zum erstenmal, ein neuer Klang, ein Rhythmus, eine neue Art...*”³³⁵ “In them [these lines], then for the first time, a new sound, and rhythm, a new style arise.” Certainly, this image of a magical garden haunted Goethe for years to come, as is evidenced by the fact that he chose to translate the same passage again in 1795. The fruitful vineyards and fields in *Hermann und Dorothea* owe something to the garden of Alkinoos.

A few lines remain from the earliest version of this scene, preserved in the fragmentary H¹ manuscript. Nausikaa, here called Arete, says “*Kein Fremder kommt der...*”³³⁶ (“No foreigner comes who...”) This is perhaps in imitation of the Homeric Nausikaa’s speech in which she reassures her maidens and tells them not to be afraid to approach Odysseus. “οὐκ ἔσθ’ οὗτος ἀνὴρ διερός βροτὸς οὐδὲ γένηται, / ὅς κεν Φαιήκων ἀνδρῶν ἐς γαῖαν ἴκηται / δηιοτῆτα φέρον. μάλα γὰρ φίλοι ἀθανάτοισιν. (*Od.* 6.201-3) “There is no living man, nor will there be/ who will come to the land of the Phaiakian men / bringing warfare. For we are very dear to the immortals.” The scene closes with a stage direction: *Angesehn* (glance). Max Morris read this as a direction to the actress playing Nausikaa.³³⁷ This glance, probably a warm, affectionate one, delivered as Nausikaa exits, might have served as the motivation for the following monologue.

Only a small fragment remains from this monologue, which would have formed the fifth and last scene of the first act.

*Zuerst verberg ich mein<en> Nam<en>. Denn <?>
 Vielleicht ist noch an Nam<en> nicht so <?>
 so jeden
 Und dann kla<ng> der Na<me>
 Ulysses wie der Name jedes Knechts³³⁸*

At first, I hide my name. For
 perhaps, still, it is not <?> with respect to a name
 like every
 and then, the name Ulysses would sound
 like the name of any man

In this somewhat garbled passage, Ulysses seems to be mulling over the fact that he has neglected, perhaps deliberately, to tell Nausikaa his name. By this point in the play’s action, Nausikaa’s feelings for him have been made abundantly clear. Perhaps he fears that the Phaiakians will have heard of him, and thus know that he is a married man. If so, he will seem an unworthy guest. In both versions of the story, since his eventual homecoming is for the present dependent upon Nausikaa’s good-will, it would have been

both undiplomatic foolhardy to begin their relationship by revealing the fact he was not, in fact, a potential suitor for her, especially in the face of her obvious romantic interest in him.

In the *Odyssey*, Odysseus initially conceals his identity from the Phaiakians. Even when Arete confronts him point-blank and asks his name (*Od.* 7.237-9), he responds by telling the story of his escape from Kalypso, rather than what she really wants to know. When he hears the bard Demodokos singing about the Trojan War, Odysseus is profoundly moved, and Alkinoos notices it (*Od.* 8.83-95, 521-534), but can only guess that his anonymous guest is grieving for friends lost at Troy. When Nausikaa says her final words to Odysseus (*Od.* 8.461-2), she still does not know who he is. The second time Odysseus grieves while listening to the bard sing, Alkinoos questions him, and Odysseus finally tells the truth εἶμ' Ὀδυσσεὺς Λαερτιάδης, ὃς πᾶσι δόλοισιν/ ἀνθρώποισι μέλω, καί μευ κλέος οὐρανὸν ἵκει (*Od.* 9.19-20). (“I am Odysseus, son of Laertes, well known among men for my many tricks, and my glory reaches the heavens.”) In Goethe’s outline for his play, there is no mention of Ulysses revealing his name. Indeed, this is no indication that he planned for Ulysses to reveal his identity to the Phaiakians at all. This is well in line with the character of the Homeric Odysseus.

Ulysses’ Act One, Scene 5 meditations on the ramifications of continued anonymity echo the famous scene in the *Odyssey* in which Odysseus tells the Kyklops Polyphemos Οὐτις ἐμοί γ’ ὄνομα. Οὐτιν δέ με κικλήκουσι/ μήτερ ἠδὲ πατήρ ἠδ’ ἄλλοι πάντες ἐταῖροι (*Od.* 9.366-7). (“Nobody is my name. Nobody, they call me, my mother and my father and all my friends, too.) Goethe’s Ulysses, like Odysseus, is perfectly willing to rob himself of his name and identity when survival is the primary consideration. Goethe’s plan for the play indicates that the hero goes so far as to lie and say that he is a comrade of Ulysses. The notation for the fourth scene of Act Two is: “*Ulyss als Gefährte der Ulyss.*”³³⁹ (“Ulysses as Ulysses’ companion”) Odysseus, too,

uses this stratagem, but at a very different place in his story. When he is finally home with Penelope, she at first does not recognize him, since Athena has disguised him as an old beggar. The story he tells her is that he is a Cretan who once was a guest-friend of Odysseus, and knew him well (*Od.* 19.165-202).

In the fourth scene of Act Three, Ulysses is alone with Nausikaa, here called Arete. It is hard to reconstruct the planned action from the text. "*Frage unverheuratet. Die Schöne Gefangne<?> Er lobt ihr Land und schilt seines. sie gibt ihm zu verstehen daß er bleiben könn<e>*"³⁴⁰ ("Question unmarried. The Beautiful Prisoner<?> He praises her country and criticizes his own. she gives him to understand that he might stay") The following lines of Ulysses from that scene must be part of his praise for Phaiakia:

*Ein weißer Glanz ruht über Land und Meer
Und duftend schwebt der Äther ohne Wolken.*

*Und nur die höchste Nymphe des Gebürgs
Erfreuen sich des leichtgefallenen Schnees
Auf kurze Zeit.*

*Und senden ewig frische Quell<en>*³⁴¹

A white radiance rests on the land and the sea
and the aether floats misty without clouds.

And only noblest nymphs of the mountains
delight in the gently fallen snow
for a short time
and send eternally fresh springs

These images must have been inspired by *Od.* 6.41-6, a description of Athena swiftly setting off for the home of the gods after she has appeared to Nausikaa at the break of day.

Ἡ μὲν ἄρ' ὡς εἶπουσ' ἀπέβη γλαυκῶπις Ἀθήνη
Οὐλθμπόνδ', ὅθυ φασὶ θεῶν ἔδος ἀσφαλὲς αἰεὶ
ἔμμεναι οὔτ' ἀνέμοισι τινάσσεται οὔτε ποτ' ὄμβρω
πέπταται ἀνεελος, λευκὴ δ' ἐπιδέδρομεν αἴγλη
τῶ ἓνι τέρπονται μάκαρες θεοὶ ἤματα πάντα

Having spoken, the bright-eyed goddess Athene left
for Olympus, where they say the eternal seat of gods

is placed. Winds do not shake it, nor is it ever wet
with rain or snow, for it is covered with a bright radiance.
There the blessed gods amuse themselves forever.

As these lines reveal, Goethe's conception of Olympos is closer to the human world than the Olympos of the *Odyssey*. His gods, although their dwelling place is enveloped in a shimmering magical radiance, send forth fresh springs for mortal men from the mountain. Goethe's first view of Sicily had reminded him of this passage from the *Odyssey*. His letters from April 1787 are few and far between, but some scattered notes exist that attest to the profound impact the landscape and the light of the island had upon him during this time.³⁴² He was enchanted by the bright colors of the sky and sea. Some time that month he wrote: "*Wenn der Himmel mit weislichem Dunste überzogen ist, so daß die Sonne durchscheint, sieht das Meer...so himmelblau aus wie als der höchste Ultramarin...*"³⁴³ ("When the sky is covered with a pale haze, so that the sun shines through it, the sea seems as sky-blue as the best ultramarine.") The second of Goethe's three *Italienische Reise* entries for 3 April 1787 also shows his delighted his response to the quality of light he found in Sicily.

*Mit keinem Worten ist die dunstige Klarheit auszudrücken die um die Küsten schwebte als wir am schönsten Nachmittag gegen Palermo anfahren. Die Reinheit der Konture, die Weichheit des Ganzen, das Auseinanderweichen der Töne, die Harmonie von Himmel, Meer, und Erde. Wer es gesehen hat der hat es auf sein ganzes Leben. Nun versteh' ich erst Claude Lorrain und habe Hoffnung auch dereinst in Norden aus meiner Seele Schattenbilder dieser glücklichen Wohnung hervor zu bringen.*³⁴⁴

There are no words to express the misty clarity that hovered around the coast as we entered Palermo on the loveliest afternoon. The sharpness of the contours, the softness of the whole, the differentiation between the colors, the harmony of sky, sea, and earth. Whoever has seen it once will remember it for the rest of his life. Now for the first time I understand Claude Lorraine, and I have a hope that someday, back up North, I might draw forth from my soul the contours of this happy abode.

This contrast between North and South that Goethe felt so vividly may lie at the root of this speech, in which Ulysses, a traveler like Goethe, praises a foreign country, and criticizes his own (*Er lobt ihr Land und schilt seines*). Somewhere in this same scene comes a speech written on a single sheet of paper, possibly a separated sheet from H². The plan includes the words: “*sie gibt ihm zu verstehen, daß er bleiben könn<e>*” (“She indicates that he might stay;” this may be part of the speech in which Nausikaa reassures Ulysses that he may have a permanent home in Skheria, should he want one.³⁴⁵

*Du bist nicht einer von den trüglichen
Wie viele fremde kommen die sich rühmen
Und glatte Worte sprechen wo der Hörer
Nichts falsches ahndet u<nd> zuletzt betrogen
Sie unvermutet wieder scheiden sieht
Du bist ein Mann ein zuverlässiger Mann
Sinn und Zusammenhang hat deine Rede. schön
Wie eines Dichters Lied tönt sie dem Ohr
Und füllt das Herz und reißt es mit sich fort.³⁴⁶*

You are not one of the treacherous ones,
like many strangers who come and boast about themselves
and speak slick words, so the hearer
perceives nothing false and finally, betrayed,
sees him going away again unexpectedly.
You are a man, a dependable man.
Your speech has meaning and consistency. Beautiful
as a poet’s song, it sounds in the ear,
and fills the heart, and carries it away.

Goethe’s adaptation of material from the *Odyssey* is masterful here. Alkinoos is the original speaker of lines very like these, but placed in the mouth of Nausikaa, such words take on a fatally ironic significance. An initial awkward detail probably would have been ironed out in a later version: the Phaiakians do not receive many strangers, cut off as they are from the rest of the civilized world. In the original of this speech, Alkinoos makes it clear that he is generalizing about humankind, rather than complaining about the class of guest that usually visits his court.

τὸν δ’ αὖτ’ Ἀλκίνοος ἀπαμείβετο φώνησέν τε
ἽΟ Ὀδυσσευ, τὸ μὲν οὖ τί σ’ εἴσκομεν εἰσορώντες,

ἡπεροπῆά τ' ἔμεν καὶ ἐπικλοπὸν οἷά τε πολλοὺς
βόσκει γαῖα μέλαινα πολυστερέας ἀνθρώπους,
ψεύδεά ἀρτυνοντας ὅθεν κέ τις οὐδέ ἴδοιτο
σοὶ δ' ἔπι μὲν μορφῇ ἐπέων ἔνι δὲ φρένες ἐσθλαί
μῦθον δ' ὡς ὄτ' ἀοιδὸς ἐπισταμένως κατάλεξον (*Od.* 11.361-8)

Alkinoos responded to him, and said
“Oh, Odysseus, we certainly do not look on you and fancy
that you are a deceiver or a swindler, like many men
whom the dark earth nourishes, scattered all over,
shaping lies from who knows what.
No, you have grace of speech and admirable discernment;
you have told your story skillfully, like a bard...”

To all outward appearances, Goethe’s Ulysses is no liar, but Nausikaa is in no position to read his character accurately. He does not exactly lie, but he does not tell the whole truth, and he is fated to depart. As far as concerns the princess, he will hardly prove to be a “*zuverlässiger Mann.*” His eloquence, which merely serves to inflame Nausikaa’s passion for him, far from being in any way a guarantee of his *bona fides*, actually insures her doom. In their original setting, the last two lines of Alkinoos’ speech are merely a heartfelt compliment. When Nausikaa tells Ulysses, however, that his speech “*füllt das Herz/ und reißt es mit sich fort,*” she is telling the literal truth, ignorant of its terrible significance. This line also contains a telling and painfully appropriate piece of paronomasia, well-suited for the stage. In the context of a compliment for elegance of speech, the verb one might expect to hear Nausikaa say might well be *reizen* (to charm, or allure). *Reißen* (to tear or snatch) is a much stronger and more shocking word, and its impact here is considerable.

When Goethe left Sicily on 13 May, 1787, he abandoned the play, and did not write about it again for many years.³⁴⁷ Although the scenario is fully worked out, and sections of the surviving lines are exceptionally effective, for some reason, it seemed no longer necessary for Goethe to bring the play to completion.³⁴⁸ Perhaps his desultory work on the project had been an end in itself for him. Or it could be, as Friedrich Nietzsche suspected, that he did not think the ending could have been made to be convincing.³⁴⁹ It

does seem hard to imagine that the simple and monumental Homeric Nausikaa could be displaced by Goethe's broken-hearted female incarnation of Werther, who has no recourse but death in the face of shame, regret, and sorrow. The suicide itself is a workable concept in tragedy; parallels for it exists in Greek and Roman literature. Dido, Sappho, and Phaidra all killed themselves.³⁵⁰ Even placing the suicide off-stage, however, as Goethe intended to do, might not have helped to make the ending of the play fully satisfactory, since several questions would have remained unanswered. Why would the Phaiakians have given Ulysses passage home after he had been the cause of Nausikaa's death? Even if Ulysses had denied all guilt in the matter, he would have been implicated by the nurse Eurymedousa, or Tyche, to whom Nausikaa had confided her passion.

Another explanation for Goethe's decision not to finish the play he may have hinted at himself many years later in the *Italienische Reise*. It may have been that he was simply too close to the events depicted in the play, and found it painful to be confronted with the play's close parallelism to some of the events of his own life. The similarity of his own situation to that of Ulysses he picked up on, but he hesitated to follow his train of thought to its logical conclusion. Even in autobiography, it is sometimes impossible to come face to face with unpleasant truths.

Es war in dieser Komposition nichts was ich nicht aus eignen Erfahrungen nach der Natur hätte ausmalen können. Selbst auf der Reise, selbst in Gefahr Neigungen zu erregen, die, wenn sie auch kein tragisches Ende nehmen, doch schmerzlich genug, gefährlich und schädlich werden können; selbst in dem Falle in einer so großen Entfernung von der Heimat abgelegne Gegenstände, Reiseabenteuer, Lebensvorfälle zu Unterhaltung der Gesellschaft mit lebhaften Farben auszumalen, von der Jugend für ein Halbgott, von gesetztern Personen für einen Aufschneider gehalten zu werden, manche unverdiente Gunst, manches unerwartete Hindernis zu erfahren; das alles gab mir ein solches Attachement an diesen Plan, an diesen Vorsatz, daß ich darüber meinen Aufenthalt zu Palermo, ja den größten Teil meiner übrigen sicilianischen Reise verträumte.³⁵¹

There was nothing in this piece that I could not have painted from life from my own experiences. I was on a trip myself, myself in danger of arousing partialities that, even if they came to no tragic end, could have been were sufficiently painful, dangerous, and harmful. I myself, so far away from home, was in a position to depict distant circumstances, the adventures of travel, and daily events in the liveliest colors for the amusement of society; I was taken by the young for a demigod, by older people for a boaster. [I was in a position] to encounter many unearned kindnesses, many unforeseen obstacles. All of this gave me such an interest in this plan that I dreamt away my stay in Palermo, indeed the larger part of the rest of my Sicilian trip.

Goethe may have been remembering his experiences in Rome with a girl called Ulrike von Levertow, who had loved him desperately, but not been loved in return. Like his Ulysses, he had been much too old for the young woman who loved him. There is some indication in the closing lines of *Nausikaa* that Ulysses, not foreseeing Nausikaa's suicide, is planning to arrange her marriage to Telemachos. Similarly, von Levertow reported that Goethe had joked repeatedly that if he had had a son, he would have made sure the boy married her.³⁵² Like Ulysses, Goethe had responsibilities elsewhere. However ambivalent he had been about their relationship before departing for Italy, his faithful Penelope waited for him back in Weimar in the form of Charlotte von Stein.³⁵³ Trevelyan downplayed the recent flirtations in Rome and identified Charlotte as Nausikaa, rather than as Penelope, but Goethe's own words ("*...selbst in Gefahr Neigungen zu erregen, die, wenn sie auch kein tragisches Ende nehmen, doch schmerzlich genug, gefährlich und schädlich werden können...*") ("in danger of arousing partialities that, even if they came to no tragic end, could have been were sufficiently painful, dangerous, and harmful") would suggest otherwise. It is true that some of his most bitterly miserable letters to Charlotte stem from the late winter in Rome of 1787, the period when he was making up his mind whether or not to visit Sicily.³⁵⁴ By the time he was on the point of leaving for Palermo,

however, he was able to write in a much calmer vein: "*Leb wohl Geliebteste mein Herz ist bey dir und jetzt da die weite Ferne, die Abwesenheit alles gleichsam weggeläutert hat was die letzte Zeit über zwischen uns stockte so brennt und leuchtet die schöne Flamme der Liebe der Treue, des Andenkens wieder fröhlich in meinem Herzen.*"³⁵⁵ ("Farewell, my dearest. My heart is with you, and now that the great distance and separation cleared up everything that has been stagnating between us recently, the beautiful flame of love, of faithfulness, of memory burns and shines happily again in my heart.") Perhaps this change of attitude toward Charlotte is a reflection of the cathartic effect writing the plans and sketches for *Nausikaa* had had for Goethe. The play did not need to be completed, for it had fulfilled its purpose.

The story of a young woman who suffers for the love of an older man had already become a recurring theme in Goethe's works, and in the future, would be treated again and again. He had explored this theme in the *Urfaust* (1774), in which Gretchen is ruined by Faust, *Clavigo* (1774), in which Marie dies for love of Clavigo, and most recently, the lost earliest version of *Torquato Tasso* (1780-81, not to be completed in final form until 1790), in which the Princess suffers for love of Tasso. Goethe had worked on *Tasso* below decks on the way to Sicily. *Nausikaa* was only his latest treatment of this theme.

Whether or not it reflected Goethe's most recent romantic entanglement, his work on *Nausikaa* marked a new departure in his attitude toward the Homeric world. In the *Italienische Reise* entry for 17 May 1777, two days after his return to the mainland, he transcribed a letter written to Herder: "*Was den Homer betrifft, ist mir wie eine Decke von den Augen gefallen.*"³⁵⁶ ("As far as Homer goes, it is as though a blindfold had fallen off of my eyes.") Now, for the first time, he perceived the descriptions of events and similes in Homeric epic not merely as poetic, but as "*unsäglich natürlich*" ("inexpressibly natural"). The impact of the clarity of texture and humane simplicity of the *Odyssey* was

considerable; Goethe described these features as “*Reinheit und Innerlichkeit...vor der man erschrickt.*” (“which are terrifying”). The expression *man erschrickt* is such a strong one that it might suggest that a further factor contributing to Goethe’s reluctance to finish off *Nausikaa* was mere anxiety of influence. The simplicity of Homeric narrative, once confronted on what Goethe perceived as its home ground, seemed to have an authenticity missing in the works of modern writers.

Laß mich meinen Gedanken kurz so ausdrücken: Sie stellten die Existence dar, wir gewöhnlich den Effekt; sie schilderten das Fürchterliche, wir schildern fürchterlich; sie das Angenehme, wir angenehm, u.s.w. Daher kommt alles Übertriebene, alles Manierierte, alle falsche Grazie, aller Schwulst. Denn wenn man + den Effekt und auf dem Effekt + arbeitet, so glaubt man ihn nicht fühlbar genug machen zu können. Wenn was ich sage nicht neu ist, so hab’ ich es doch bei neuen Anlaß recht lebhaft gefühlt....nun ist mir erst die Odyssee ein lebendiges Wort.

Let me explain my feelings briefly thus: They [the ancients] presented existence, we generally present the effects; they depicted the frightful, we depict in a frightful manner; they [depicted] the attractive, we in an attractive way, and so forth. From this comes everything overdone, everything mannered, all false graces, all pomposity. For if you are working (for?) the effect and on the effect, you consider it impossible to make it marked enough. If what I am saying is nothing new, at any rate, I have felt it quite vividly in [these] new circumstances... now, for the first time, the *Odyssey* is a living word to me.

The new perceptions expressed in this letter must have pleased Herder, for they were fully in line with his own conception of the value of poetry-of-the-people as cultural artifact as opposed to the artificial constructions of fashionable writers. Goethe may have been exaggerating his own reactions slightly for Herder’s benefit, but it is evident from the style of the letter that it was written in an exuberant mood; he was relaxed and happy. “*Das Meer und die Inseln haben mir Genuß und Leiden gegeben und ich kehre befriedigt zurück,*” he wrote in the same letter.³⁵⁷ (“The sea and the islands have given me pleasure and sorrow and I am returning happy.”)

Goethe returned from Sicily to Naples, where he stayed from 15 May to 4 June 1787. A highlight of his second stay in Naples was a visit on 27 May to the house of the English Ambassador Sir William Hamilton (1730-1803), who permitted him to view his collection of antiquities and other treasures. Among other treasures, Goethe was much struck by a pair of bronze candelabra that had probably been taken illicitly from the excavations at Pompeii, but he was hardly impressed by the singing and *poses plastiques* in ancient style of Hamilton's mistress Emma Lyon (c.1764-1815), whom he found insipid (*ein geistloses Wesen*).³⁵⁸

The city itself, he beheld with new eyes. In the *Italienische Reise*, he described the vendors on the streets and the infamous Neapolitan *lazzaroni* (beggars) in minutest detail. He compared these *lazzaroni* to the Cynics as described in *Recherches philosophiques sur les Anciens Grecs* published that year by Cornelius de Pauw (1739-1799), and observed that although their lives would have been insupportable in the north, the climate of Naples made it possible for them to live very pleasantly despite their straightened circumstances.³⁵⁹ This passage is one more indication that Goethe now felt that he really was in the land of the ancient world, and that the city and people he observed around him were living a life that had not changed much from that of their distant ancestors. Another highlight of his stay was the chance to observe the most recent major eruption of Mount Vesuvius. He delayed his departure for Rome by a day and interrupted his packing in order to go and see this fascinating sight.³⁶⁰ Goethe was ready to return to Rome; after his long quiet stay in Sicily the lively Neapolitan social life did not seem appealing to him. On 1 June 1787, he wrote to Charlotte von Stein "*Übrigens geh' ich gern aus Neapel, denn im Grunde habe ich nichts hier zu tun und das bunte Leben ist meine Sache nicht.*" ("After all, I am glad to be leaving Naples, for I have basically nothing to do here, and a gay life is not for me.") Goethe left Naples for Rome on 6 June and stayed there until 23 March 1788.

²¹² DKV 14.722.

²¹³ DKV 28.488-90.

²¹⁴ DKV 28.490.

²¹⁵ von Keudell 2-3.

²¹⁶ Christopher Hibbert, *The Grand Tour* (New York 1969) 162.

²¹⁷ Arthur Schultz, "Goethe and the Literature of Travel" *Journal of English and German Philology* 48 (1949) 445.

²¹⁸ The book's full title is *Lettres sur la Sicile et sur l'île de Malthe de Monsieur le Comte Borch à M. le C. de N., écrites en 1777 pour servir de supplément au Voyage en Sicile et à Malthe de Monsieur Byrdone*. Hans Ruppert, *Goethes Bibliothek: Katalog* (Weimar 1958) 580.

²¹⁹ Ruppert 580.

²²⁰ DKV 15.636.

²²¹ Ruppert 583.

²²² DKV 14.34.

²²³ Ruppert 583.

²²⁴ Hans-Wolf Jäger, "Herder als Leser von Reiseliteratur" *Reisen im 18. Jahrhundert: Neue Untersuchungen*. (Heidelberg 1986) 181-199.

²²⁵ DKV 15.297.

²²⁶ Stuart Atkins, "Goethe's Nausikaa: A figure in Fresco" *Essays on Goethe*. Jane K. Brown and Thomas P. Saine, eds. (Columbia, SC 1995) 125.

²²⁷ "Ja wohl bin ich nur ein Wanderer, ein Waller auf der Erde! Seyd ihr denn mehr?" DKV 8.157. "Yes indeed, I am only a wanderer, a pilgrim on the earth. Are you anything more?" Interestingly, this line only comes up in the second version of *Werthers Leiden*, which Goethe had recently revised for inclusion in his complete works.

²²⁸ DKV 29.648-651.

²²⁹ DKV 30.10.

²³⁰ Coaching remained difficult and potentially dangerous for years to come. As late as 1896, a popular phrase-book for tourists still included such useful phrases as “Are the postillions insolent?” “No, never when they are well paid.” “Postillion, mind you go slowly when the road is bad, and when you make a turn; we do not wish either to be jolted or overturned.” “Do not drive so near to that precipice, -- to the river.” *Baedeker’s Traveler’s Manual of Conversation* (Leipzig 1896) 210, 214, 178.

²³¹ *DKV* 30.20. Goethe broke this promise.

²³² *DKV* 30.43. Goethe had obtained a indefinite leave of absence from Carl August, but had been reluctant to confess how long he would actually be away from Weimar. All of the plans for his trip had been made in the greatest secrecy, and he traveled incognito, posing as a German painter called Filippo Miller. In his correspondence, the false name also appears as Johann Philipp, Jean-Philippe, and Giovanni Filippo, also Möller, Müller, and Miller. *DKV* 30.1098.

²³³ Johann Caspar’s itinerary took him through Vienna, Gorizia, Venice, Padua, Bologna, Rimini, Ancona, Loreto, Rome, Naples, Rome again, Florence, Venice, Milan, Turin, and Genoa. Goethe visited most of the major cities his father had seen. Like Goethe’s own travel-journals and the *Italienische Reise*, Goethe’s father’s book is in quasi-epistolary form. One notable facet of the book is the wealth of Latin inscriptions the elder Goethe included in his text; he was something of an amateur epigrapher. Johann Caspar Goethe, *Reise durch Italien im Jahre 1740 (Viaggio per L’Italia)* ed. Albert Meier. (Munich 1988) passim. Although the book was originally written in Italian, no recent edition exists of the complete text in that language.

²³⁴ Victor Lange, “Goethe’s Journey in Italy: The School of Seeing,” *Goethe in Italy 1786-1986*, ed. Gerhart Hoffmeister (Amsterdam 1988) 148. Johann Caspar Goethe’s book was not published until 1932.

²³⁵ The origin of this motto is not from antiquity. No definite authorship has been or can be assigned to the phrase, but there may have been some connection to Guilio Rospigliosi (later Pope Clement IX). For a thorough discussion of the issue, see Erwin Panofsky, “Et in Arcadia Ego: Poussin and the Elegiac Tradition” in *Meaning in the Visual Arts: Papers in and on Art History* (Garden City 1985) 305-6.

²³⁶ Goethe had first read Theokritos in 1772. *DKV* 28.256.

²³⁷ *DKV* 14.99.

²³⁸ *DKV* 14.248.

²³⁹ Petra Maisak, “Et in Arcadia Ego: zum Motto der Italienischen Reise” *Goethe in Italien: Eine Ausstellung des Goethe Museums Düsseldorf* (Mainz 1986) 139.

²⁴⁰ *ibid.* 335. Goethe knew Sannazaro’s work as early as 1773, but only the book *De Partu Virginis*. *DKV* 14.667. His knowledge of Arcadia came from sources other than Sannazaro. Sannazaro’s *Arcadia* (written sometime in the 1480’s and first published in 1504), an immensely influential book, was a forerunner of *The Countess of Pembroke’s Arcadia* (1593) by Sir Philip Sidney and his sister the Countess of Pembroke. Carole Kidwell, *Sannazaro and Arcadia* (London 1993) 9.

²⁴¹ *DKV* 30.32.

²⁴² In Venice on 28 September, he wrote “*Wie die erste Gondel an das Schiff anfuhr, fiel mir mein erstes Kinderspiel ein, an das ich vielleicht in zwanzig Jahren nicht mehr gedacht hatte. Mein Vater hatte ein schönes Gondelmodell von Venedig mitgebracht, er hielt es sehr werth und es ward mir hoch angerechnet wenn ich damit spielen dürfte.*” DKV 30.82. “As the first gondola approached the boat, I remembered my first childhood game, which I hadn’t thought of in perhaps twenty years. My father had brought a beautiful model of a gondola back with him from Venice. He prized it greatly, and I was very greatly trusted whenever I was allowed to play with it.” Visiting the Lido in Venice on 8 October, he wrote he wished that the children (perhaps Fritz von Stein and his friends) were with him to gather the shells, but that he, *selbst kindisch* (childlike himself), had picked up enough on his own. DKV 15.96.

²⁴³ Klaus Kiefer, *Wiedergeburt und Neues Leben: Aspekte des Strukturwandels in Goethes Italienische Reise*. (Bonn 1978) 377. Kiefer drew attention to the fact that Herder, at the beginning of the seventh book of his *Ideen*, had translated *Et in Arcadia ego* as “*Grabschrift aller Lebendigen in der sich immer wandelnden, wiedergebärenden Schöpfung.*” “The epitaph of all living beings in this ever-changing, constantly self-renewing creation.”

²⁴⁴ Maisak theorized that it stood for both Johann Caspar’s happy memories of his Italian journey and also for the still-born children. Maisak, *Et in Arcadia* 139.

²⁴⁵ “*Guercin ist ein innerlich braver, männlich gesunder Maler, ohne Rohheit.*” DKV 15.109. “Il Guercino is a sincere, worthy, humanly wholesome painter, without clumsiness.”

²⁴⁶ Petra Maisak, *Arkadien, Genese und Typologie einer idyllischen Wunschwelt* (Frankfurt 1981) 173.

²⁴⁷ *ibid.* 173.

²⁴⁸ Panofsky included in his article an amusing anecdote that points to contemporary interpretation of the phrase in England. Samuel Johnson, on viewing the painter’s recently completed portrait of Mrs. Bouverie and Mrs. Crewe, in which the two ladies are portrayed in an idyllic landscape, sitting by a tombstone with the inscription *Et in Arcadia Ego*. Johnson was confused by the motto, and said that it seemed like complete nonsense: “I am in Arcadia?” Reynolds is said to have responded that the King (George III) could have explained it to the lexicographer, since he had seen it only the other day, and had immediately said “Oh, there is a tombstone in the background. Ay, ay, death is even in Arcadia.” Panofsky 295-6.

²⁴⁹ Panofsky 306. From a strictly grammatical standpoint, the only possible speaker is Death. *Et* must mark the word that follows it, and thus, *Et in Arcadia Ego* must literally mean “even in Arcady I [am]” It would be completely contrary to the norms of short Latin inscriptions to imagine that missing verb that must be supplied would be in the past tense. Those who initially interpreted the inscription by adding a mental *vixi* or *fui* were plainly wrong, however influential this misreading was to prove.

²⁵⁰ DKV 15.419.

²⁵¹ Maisak, *Et in Arcadia*, 134-5.

²⁵² Maisak, *Arkadien*, 225.

²⁵³ Jacobi’s *Winterreise* may mark the motto’s first appearance in German translation. Maisak, *Et in Arcadia*, 139.

²⁵⁴ *ibid.* 133.

²⁵⁵ DKV 15.596-7.

²⁵⁶ *DKV* 15.597. The translation, a very close line-for-line imitation of the Latin text, is in German elegiacs. Goethe substituted spondees for dactyls less frequently than Ovid did, but he preserved both Ovid's caesuras and the sense of the text on either side of them, a very considerable technical feat.

²⁵⁷ The temple, most likely the shrine of Iuppiter Optimus Maximus Capitolinus, had failed to protect Ovid, who lived in a house that was close to it, probably at the bottom of the hill, where there had been settlement from early times. Samuel Ball Platner, *A Topographical Dictionary of Ancient Rome, completed and revised by Thomas Ashby*. (London 1929) 297-302. Additional irony in this line comes from that fact that the Pontifex Maximus, Augustus, far from saving Ovid, had actually ruined him.

²⁵⁸ *DKV* 30.452.

²⁵⁹ *DKV* 30.106. Minerva appears in the likeness of the old servant Mentor in *Od.* 2.267-295 and 399-434, 3.1-370.

²⁶⁰ Helmut Mainzer interpreted this passage differently: "*Die Eintragung im gleichen Tagebuch vom 6. Oktober zeigt nochmals, wie die Erlebnisse den Dichter an die "Odyssee" erinnerten; er fühlte sich wie ein Odysseus...*" Helmut Mainzer, "*Zu Goethes Fragmenten "Ulyß auf Phaä und "Nausikaa" Goethe Jahrbuch 80 (1963) 167. "The 6 October entry in the same journal shows once again how these experiences reminded the poet of the *Odyssey*; he felt like an Odysseus."*

²⁶¹ *DKV* 30.116.

²⁶² *DKV* 30.122.

²⁶³ *DKV* 30.116.

²⁶⁴ *DKV* 30.143.

²⁶⁵ *DKV* 15.87. In Goethe's Wetzlar days, he had his own experience of lengthy legal proceedings.

²⁶⁶ *DKV* 30.142.

²⁶⁷ *DKV* 15.513.

²⁶⁸ Other illustrious foreign Arcadians included Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717-1768), the painters Anton Raphael Mengs (1728-1779) and Angelika Kauffmann (1741-1807), and later, Duchess Anna Amalia (1739-1807), Carl August's mother, who was given the name Palmirena Atticense. *DKV* 15.1423-4.

²⁶⁹ *DKV* 15.517.

²⁷⁰ *DKV* 30.213. This bust is still in Goethe's house on the Frauenplan in Weimar.

²⁷¹ This exhibition was given as part of the Epiphany celebrations.

²⁷² *DKV* 15.170.

²⁷³ *DKV* 15.241.

²⁷⁴ *DKV* 15.259. Odysseus visits the Phaiakians in *Od.* 5-12.

²⁷⁵ DKV 15.1323. This edition is still in Goethe's library. It contains numerous pencil markings in his own hand. Ruppert 177.

²⁷⁶ Goethe found the place in the worst possible taste, but fascinating all the same. Kneipe, whose artistic sensibilities were offended, lost patience with Goethe and insisted they leave. DKV 15.261.

²⁷⁷ DKV 15.271.

²⁷⁸ DKV 15.271.

²⁷⁹ DKV 15.285.

²⁸⁰ DKV 30.138.

²⁸¹ Atkins 118-19.

²⁸² Mainzer 168.

²⁸³ νέωρος appears only in the works of post-classical grammarians Goethe was unlikely to have read: Herodianus (second century AC), Hesychius (fifth century AD), and Photius (ninth century AC). νέωρης, however, appears in Sophokles' *Elektra* (901) and *Oidipous Kolonos* (730). Both were plays Goethe had read, the *Elektra* recently as part of his research for *Iphigenie auf Tauris*. DKV 30.778. Several passages in this work are close imitations of Sophokles' play. Trevelyan 96-7.

²⁸⁴ For other significant Phaiakian names, see *Od* 8.111-114. Goethe had no objection to the inclusion of children as major characters in plays; in his *Elpinor*, the main character is a young boy.

²⁸⁵ Atkins 127.

²⁸⁶ Atkins 127. The guide that misidentified the fresco was Giampetro Zanotti, *Le pitture de Pellegrino Tabaldi e di Niccolo Abbati esistenti nell' Instituto di Bologna, descritte ed illustrate da Giampietro Zanotti* (Venice 1756).

²⁸⁷ Werner Kohlschmidt, "Goethes Nausikaa und Homer," *Form und Innerlichkeit* (Munich 1955) 37.

²⁸⁸ Trevelyan 163. Trevelyan provided a list of lines from the *Odyssey* together with their corresponding places in the text of the play, but this list is neither complete nor entirely accurate.

²⁸⁹ DKV 5.624.

²⁹⁰ The Phaiakians call their country Scheria, not Phaiakia. Despite the fact that translators and commentators have routinely considered the country an island, the text of the *Odyssey* does not mention this fact. Homer, *The Odyssey of Homer*, W.B. Stanford, ed. (London 1992) 1.308.

²⁹¹ DKV 15.319.

²⁹² κεκακωμένος is not a common word, and Goethe may have missed some of the fearful freight it carries with its onomatopoeia. Odysseus is not merely soaked, but actually disfigured.

²⁹³ John Gutglueck, "A Detestable Encounter in *Odyssey VI*" *CJ* 83.2 (December-January 1988) 97.

²⁹⁴ Max Morris, "Nausikaa" *Goethe-Jahrbuch* 25 (1904) 98. "In einem aufführbar gehaltenen Drama kann Ulys nicht ganz nackt hervortreten, also hat er wohl hier von Sturm und Wellen zerfetzte Reste seiner Kleidung am Körper bewahrt." "In a sober, producible play, Odysseus could not appear entirely naked, so perhaps he had managed to preserve storm-tattered sea-soaked rags on his body."

²⁹⁵ DKV 5.624.

²⁹⁶ Homer, *The Odyssey of Homer*. W.B. Stanford, ed. (London 1992) 312, note 122.

²⁹⁷ Stephano Bergler, *Homeri Odyssea, Batrachomyomachia, Hymni & Epigrammata Graeci & Latine* (Padua 1777) 152-3.

²⁹⁸ DKV 5.624.

²⁹⁹ Bergler 183, 241. Modern translators have felt no need to tone down the epithet: Stanley Lombardo and Richmond Lattimore both rendered the term as "sacker of cities," while Robert Fagles chose "raider of cities." *The Odyssey*, trans. Stanley Lombardo (Indianapolis 2000) 106; *The Odyssey*, trans. Richmond Lattimore (New York 1967) 121; *The Odyssey*, trans. Robert Fagles (New York 1996) 191.

³⁰⁰ Bergler 377, 435.

³⁰¹ DKV 5.624.

³⁰² Cf., for instance, the roles of nurses in Aeschylus' *Choephoroi*, Sophokles' *Trachiniai*, Euripides' *Medea*, *Andromache*, and especially *Hippolytos*, arguably Goethe's nearest tragic model for his Nausikaa.

³⁰³ εἶματα καλά occurs at *Od* 6.111, 13.218, 14.154, 16.79, 17.550, and 21.339. Joseph Tebben, *Concordantia Homerica* (Hildesheim 1994) 1.1.392.

³⁰⁴ Grimm, *Deutsches Wörterbuch* (Munich 1984) 346. "Das Weib was once the normal term for woman and wife but is now mostly pejorative." Bruce Beaton, *A Practical Dictionary of German Usage* (New York 1996) 801.

³⁰⁵ Bergler 149. Modern translators are about equally divided on the term. Mandelbaum rendered the εὐκυκλον as "with sturdy wheels" and "with solid wheels." Allen Mandelbaum, *The Odyssey of Homer* (New York 1991) 117. Fitzgerald translated it as "the gig with pretty wheels." Robert Fitzgerald, *The Odyssey* (New York 1990) 101. Robert Fagels rendered it as "the wagon...with the good smooth wheels." Fagels 170.

³⁰⁶ DKV 5.625.

³⁰⁷ Even Kirke and Kalypso weave; the Phaiakian women are particularly masterful weavers. Penelope's weaving is central to her character and to the plot of the *Odyssey*. Duane W. Roller and Letitia K. Roller, "Penelope's Thick Hand (*Odyssey* 21.6)" *CJ* 90.1 (1994) 12.

³⁰⁸ Nausikaa's driving is the exception rather than the rule for women in Homeric epic, but there is evidence of women associated with horse-racing as soon as the early 4th century BC. Kyniska of Sparta, the sister of Agesilaus (Xenophon, *Ages*. 9.6), won a victory with her team of horses (*AP* 13.16). For other epigrams and inscriptions celebrating female charioteers, see Mary Lefkowitz and Maureen Fant, *Women's Life in Greece and Rome* (Baltimore 1982) 24.

³⁰⁹ DKV 5.626.

³¹⁰ DKV 30.116, 165.

³¹¹ DKV 29.417.

³¹² The text may have been Peter Burmann's edition, published by Wetstein in Amsterdam in 1713, which could have come to Goethe from his father's library after Johann Caspar's death in 1782. Ruppert 200. For a brief but thorough discussion on the authenticity of the double letters, see E.J. Kenney, *Ovid Heroides XVI-XXI* (Cambridge 1996) 21-26.

³¹³ DKV 1.145, 198. "He may have needed little help in reading the Greek, for Theokritus is not hard when once the peculiarities of the Doric dialect have been mastered." Trevelyan 53. Hugh Lloyd-Jones disagreed: "I am inclined to question Trevelyan's view that Goethe will have thought Theokritus relatively easy; at any rate, neither the praise of him in *Wandrer's Sturmlied* nor any subsequent mention of him by Goethe suggests a very close acquaintance." Hugh Lloyd-Jones, *Blood for the Ghosts: Classical Influences in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (London 1982) 37.

³¹⁴ DKV 28.256.

³¹⁵ DKV 18.10.

³¹⁶ Kohlschmidt 40.

³¹⁷ DKV 15.320.

³¹⁸ DKV 15.322.

³¹⁹ Whether Goethe intended to imitate this very expressive use of aposiopesis is uncertain.

³²⁰ DKV 15.320-321.

³²¹ For a full reconstruction of the play from this plan and a commentary on the lines included in this manuscript, see Max Morris, "Nausikaa" *Goethe-Jahrbuch* 25 (1904) 89-115.

³²² DKV 5.1338.

³²³ DKV 5.1339.

³²⁴ Bergler 145.

³²⁵ DKV 5.1339.

³²⁶ Morris 98.

³²⁷ DKV 5.1339.

³²⁸ Stanley Lombardo rendered the term as "cunning," while Richmond Lattimore preferred "Many of many ways." Robert Fagels translated it as "man of twists and turns." Lombardo 1; Lattimore 27; Fagles 77.

³²⁹ An addendum to the *Italienische Reise*, entitled "*Störende Naturbetrachtungen*," probably written in May 1787, contains the following illuminating passage about the prickly pear: "*So wendete ich meine Aufmerksamkeit auf das Keimen des während seines Wachstums unförmlichen Cactus opuntia, und sah mit*

Vergnügung daß er ganz unschuldig dikotledonisch sich in zwei zarten Blättchen enthüllte, sodann aber bei fernem Wuchse sich die künftige Uniform entwickelte." DKV 15.403. "So I turned my attention to the buds of the *cactus opuntia*, which, during its development is shapeless, and was delighted to see that it initially reveals itself as a simple dicot with two tender leaves, but then as it grows, develops into the shapelessness of its mature form."

³³⁰ DKV 9.181

³³¹ The entry for 26 April in the *Italienische Reise* contains the following observation on fig trees: "An den Feigen waren alle Blätter heraus und die Früchte hatten angesetzt. Sie werden zu Johanni reif, dann setzt der Baum noch einmal an." "All of the leaves were out on the fig trees, and the fruit has developed. It is ripe on St. John's Day, and then the tree begins again." DKV 15.299. Goethe probably meant 24 June, the feast day of St. John the Baptist. Ivor H. Evans *Brewer's Dictionary of Phrase and Fable*, 14th edition (New York 1989) 608.

³³² DKV 15.320.

³³³ DKV 15.258.

³³⁴ DKV 15.261.

³³⁵ Wolfgang Schadewaldt, *Goestudien: Natur und Altertum* (Zurich and Stuttgart 1963) 147.

³³⁶ DKV 5.1340.

³³⁷ Morris 100.

³³⁸ DKV 5.1340.

³³⁹ DKV 5.1337.

³⁴⁰ DKV 5.1337.

³⁴¹ DKV 5.1341.

³⁴² In these days of easy travel, it is difficult for a modern reader fully to apprehend what a powerful impact the first experience of tropical or semi-tropical landscape had upon Northern European travelers in the 1700's and well beyond. William Beckford (1760-1844), who traveled in Italy during 1780 and 1782, found the landscape both enchanting and overwhelming. Like Goethe, he occasionally had the sensation of having been transported back in time. In an entry from his travel-journal dated 14 September 1780, Beckford described walking in the hills of the Boboli Garden behind the Pitti Palace in Florence: "...I lingered, to mark the landscape fade, and the bright skirts of the western clouds die away gradually. Then descending alley after alley, and bank after bank, I came to the orangery in front of the palace, disposed in a grand amphitheatre, with marble niches relieved by dark foliage, out of which spring tall aerial cypresses...I expected every instant to be called to table of Lucullus hard by, in one of the porticos...but waiting in vain for a summons till the approach of night, I returned delighted with a ramble that had led my imagination so far into antiquity." William Beckford, *Dreams, Waking Thoughts, and Incidents* (London 1783) 146. From Terracina, on 2 November 1780, he wrote "Groves of oranges and citrons hang on the declivity, rough with the Indian fig, whose bright red flowers, illuminated by the sun, had a magic splendour. A palm-tree, growing on the highest crag, adds not a little to its singular appearance...I looked anxiously on a sea, where the heroes of the *Odyssey* and *Aeneid* had sailed, in search of fate and empire..." 195-7.

³⁴³ DKV 30.283.

³⁴⁴ DKV 15.249.

³⁴⁵ *Od.* 6-8 contain so many details that might lead one to suspect that Odysseus is actually going to marry Nausikaa that Gerald Vallillee argued for the existence of an earlier story about her wedding which the composer of the text subordinated to main narrative, but was unwilling to erase completely. Gerald Vallillee, "The Nausikaa Episode," *Phoenix* 9 (1955) 176-7.

³⁴⁶ DKV 5.1341.

³⁴⁷ The entry for 13 May, 1787 in the *Italienische Reise* contains a comical reference to the *Odyssey*: Field Marshall Don Michele Odea, the governor of Messina, an irascible old monster of a man, had invited Goethe to dine with him, and Goethe had conveniently forgotten about the invitation. As he was congratulating himself on having evaded "die Einladung des Cyclopen" ("the Cyclops' invitation,") in came one of the governor's servants to summon Goethe to dinner on the spot. Goethe hastily made his toilette and went to dinner, invoking his patron saint Odysseus to intercede with Pallas Athene for him. ("Odysseus, den Patron anrufend und mir seine Vorsprach bei Pallas-Athene erbittend.") DKV 15.328.

³⁴⁸ "Only 175 lines were written...; they excite the keenest disappointment at his failure to finish the work." Lloyd-Jones 45.

³⁴⁹ Nietzsche, with all of the wisdom of hindsight, claimed that the play's ending with Nausikaa's suicide could never have been convincing. "Ja, ich möchte behaupten, daß es Goethe in seiner projektierten "Nausikaa" unmöglich gewesen sein würde, den Selbstmord jene idyllischen Wesen -- der den fünften Akt ausfüllen sollte -- tragisch ergreifend zu machen." "Yes, I would assert that it would not have been possible for Goethe, in his projected *Nausikaa*, to make the suicide of that idyllic soul -- which was supposed to comprise the fifth act -- tragically effective." Friedrich Nietzsche, *Die Geburt der Tragödie* (Frankfurt 1994) 168.

³⁵⁰ No stranger to Ovid's *Heroides*, Goethe would also have known the stories of Phyllis and Laodamia.

³⁵¹ DKV 15.321.

³⁵² Morris 107.

³⁵³ Trevelyan 165.

³⁵⁴ Perhaps the nadir of his sorrow was reached in a letter to her dated 21 February, 1787, in which he wrote "Es ist entsetzlich was mich oft Erinnerungen zerreißen. Ach liebe Lotte du weißt nicht..." ("The way my memories torture me is appalling. Ah, Lotte, you don't know...") DKV 30.272.

³⁵⁵ DKV 30.283.

³⁵⁶ DKV 15.345.

³⁵⁷ Herder had undertaken the task of supervising the publication of Goethe's complete works; Goethe owed him a favor.

³⁵⁸ DKV 15.323-4. Excavations at Pompeii had started in 1748, and had begun to be undertaken systematically in 1763. Hibbert 161. Hamilton married Emma Lyon in 1791.

³⁵⁹ *DKV 15.359-360.*

³⁶⁰ *DKV 30.303.*

CHAPTER 4

“IM SINNE DER ALTEN”

Goethe returned to Rome on 6 June 1787, just in time for the great feast of Corpus Christi. He knew that his final stay in Rome would be a busy one, for he had promised his publisher that he would finish off several projects that had remained incomplete for years. These included *Egmont*, *Tasso*, and *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*, all of which were scheduled for publication in a forthcoming new edition of his complete works. In addition to his literary work, he also intended to spend as much time as possible studying art, especially Greek sculpture. In the face of such ambitious plans, his decision to devote one of the first days of his second Roman stay to writing a short philological essay on a difficult passage in the *Odyssey* bears witness to the marked effect that the Sicilian trip had had upon his attitudes toward Homer.

The essay, “*Versuch eine Homerische dunkle Stelle zu erklären*” (“An attempt to elucidate a dark passage in Homer,”) written on 8 June 1787, was the thirty-nine-year-old Goethe’s first venture into textual analysis of Greek Epic.³⁶¹ The passage he chose, *Od.* 10.81ff, has traditionally been considered a confusing one. Here Odysseus tells the story of how he and his crew first approach the land of the Laistrygones and then he describes their city. Goethe was probably not influenced in his decision to examine this passage by the fact that some ancient authors considered Sicily the home of the Laistrygones. At this point he had not yet read Strabo, Pliny, or Thucydides, all of whom had made the equation. Instead, he may have been thinking of Campania, a region he knew well. In

this case, a more likely source of information might have been Horace's *Odes*, with which he had been familiar since his school days.³⁶² *Carm.* 3.16.34-5 contains a reference to Laistrygonian wine grown in Campania: "...*nec Laistrygonia Bacchus in amphoral languescit mihi...*" ("Nor do I have Laistrygonian wine mellowing in amphora.") *Carm.* 3.17.1-6 mentions that the *gens Lamia* claimed descent from Lamos, a Laistrygonian king who was said to have founded the town of Formiae. Goethe had stayed in Naples before his second trip to Rome; the surrounding landscape might well have brought this passage from Homer to his mind.

ἔβδομάτῃ δ' ἰκόμεσθα Λάμου αἰπὺ πτολίεθρον, 81
 τηλέπυλον Λαιστρυγονίην, ὅθι ποιμένα ποιμὴν
 ἤπτυει εἰζελάων, ὁ δέ τ' ἐξαλάων ὑπακούει.
 ἔνθα κ' ἄυπνος ἀνὴρ δοιοῦς ἐξήρατο μισθούς,
 τὸν μὲν βουκολέων, τὸν δ' ἄργυφα μῆλα νομεύων. 85
 ἐγγὺ γὰρ νυκτός τε καὶ ἡματός εἰσι κέλευθοι.³⁶³

On the seventh day, we reached the hilltop city of Lamos, Fargate³⁶⁴ of the Laistrygones, where one shepherd calls to another as he goes in, and the other responds as he goes out. There a sleepless man could have earned double pay, one wage for driving cattle, the other for herding white sheep, for the paths of the night and the day are close.

There are two main problems for interpretation of this passage. The first is that shepherds are described as calling out to one another as they change shifts, so it would appear that the Laistrygones for some unknown reason graze their livestock at night as well as by day. The passage goes on to relate that a man who needed no sleep could work both day and night: ἔνθα κ' ἄυπνος ἀνὴρ δοιοῦς ἐξήρατο μισθούς (*Od.* 10.84). But why could such a man not do this anywhere? Why should this possibility be peculiar to the city of Laistrygones? Granted that livestock might conceivably be kept within city walls for the sake of security, why would it have been necessary for the Laistrygones to alternate grazing shifts?³⁶⁵ Scholiasts have suggested that during the day, cattle would have been bothered by gadflies, while sheep, protected by their wool, might graze safely

by day.³⁶⁶ The idea seems to have been a familiar one in the ancient world, for in his *Georgics*, Virgil suggested that the herdsman protect his cattle from insects by grazing them at dawn or dusk.³⁶⁷ The Homeric text, however, does not specify that it is the sheep that graze by day and the cattle by night. If some grazing took place at night, however, why could not the sheep have been driven out with the cattle at dusk?

The second puzzle is line 86, ἐγγὺ γὰρ νυκτός τε καὶ ἡματός εἰσι κέλευθοι (*Od.* 10.86), which commentators have interpreted in many different ways.³⁶⁸ Some have used this line to interpret the passage immediately preceding it. If the shepherds are truly herding by night, the paths of day and night would simply be the shepherds' accustomed tracks. Stanford saw the passage as a reflection of some garbled idea about the length of days in places in the far North.³⁶⁹ Alfred Heubeck, however, suggested that the nearness of the paths of a personified Day and Night is a detail inserted to show that the Laistrygones, who are giants and cannibals, and as such are not quite human, inhabit a mythological landscape.³⁷⁰ Readers have generally assumed that like Homer's Olympians, Laistrygones live in a place where there is no darkness. These explanations do not invalidate one another. For an Homeric audience, geography and mythology were not isolated from one another. The ends of the earth might reasonably be expected to contain prodigies and wonders. From a narratological standpoint, the Laistrygones' perpetually day-lit world would make a fine balance for the land of the Kimmerians, where it is always night.

Yet the Homeric text does not indicate specifically that there is no night in Laistrygonia, and so the country need not necessarily be mythological. Richard Hennig pointed out that since grazing by night in order to protect cattle herds from insects is quite usual in Mediterranean countries, Homer's audience would not have found anything particularly odd about this passage. Hennig also noted that as early as 1778 Johann Heinrich Voss had chosen to translate κέλευθοι as *Triften* (pastures).³⁷¹ In the revised

1814 edition of his *Odyssey* translation, he would make this interpretation even more explicit. In this second edition, Voss, who was normally punctilious about semantic equivalence in translation, changed the plural κέλευθοι to a singular *Ausgang*, and rendered line 86 as “*Denn nah ist zu des Tags und der nächtlichen Weide der Ausgang*”³⁷² (“For the exit to the day and night pastures is nearby”).

Goethe began his essay by transcribing the original text, then appending German versions of the passage by two major translators of his time. Dissatisfied with both, he offered his own explanations for the problems the passage presents. It is clear that Goethe was not copying from Bergler’s edition, since unlike Goethe Bergler had printed εἰσελάων for εἰζελάων at line 83. In the process of analyzing the passage, however, he may have had recourse to Bergler’s Latin translation.³⁷³ That Goethe had more editions than Bergler’s available to him in Rome is shown by his inclusion of the two German translations of the section, the first by the late Johann Joachim Bodmer (1698-1783), the second by Voss. Bodmer’s translation is as follows:

...so kamen
*wir am siebenten Tag nach Lamos; der Lästrügonen
 Türmende Stadt und Pforten erschienen. Allda ist es üblich
 Daß ein Hirte das Vieh in die Fluren treibet, der andre
 Sie in die Hürden sammelt; der muntre Hirte verdiente
 Zweifachen Lohn, der des Nachts die Stiere, die Schafe des Tags
 Hütete. Kurz ist der Weg von der Stadt und nahe die Triften.*³⁷⁴

...and so we came
 to Lamos on the seventh day; the Laistrygones’
 towered city and gates appeared. It is usual there
 for one shepherd to drive the cattle out to the meadows, the other
 to corral them in the pens; the wakeful shepherd might earn
 a two-fold wage, if he herded the cattle by night, the sheep
 by day. The path from the city is short, and the pastures are near.

The Voss translation of the same passage follows below the Bodmer version.

...*Landeten wir bei den Veste der Laistrygonen, bei Lamos
 Stadt Tälepulos an. Hier wechseln Hirten mit Hirten;
 Welcher heraustreibt, hört das Rufen des der hereintreibt.*

*Und ein Mann ohne Schlaf erfreute sich doppelten Lohnes
Eines als Rinderhirt, des andern als Hirte der Schafe;
Denn nicht weit sind die Triften der Nacht und des Tages entfernt.*³⁷⁵

We landed on the west side of the Laistrygones, at Lamos' city Telepylos. Here shepherds change places with shepherds; He who drives the flock out hears the call of the one who drives them back. And a man without sleep could enjoy a double wage One as a cattle-driver, the other as a shepherd; For the meadows of night and of day are not far apart.³⁷⁶

Goethe began his essay with an evaluation of these two very different renditions. He remarked that Voss had stayed quite close to the Greek in his translation and thus his version of the passage retained traces of the actual Homeric meaning. Bodmer, however, had not been so faithful: "*Bodmer dagegen hat das Original auf eine unbegreifliche Weise verlassen und völlig falsch übersetzt.*"³⁷⁷ "Bodmer, on the other hand, inexplicably departed from the original and translated it completely wrong." Harsh words for old Bodmer, who had received Goethe so graciously when he and Lavater had visited him during their 1775 Swiss journey! The translation is somewhat loose, but hardly *völlig falsch*. Goethe's negative reaction may be less the result of philological outrage than an emotional response to the relatively low level of diction that characterizes Bodmer's rendering. Vocabulary as common and informal as "*allda*," "*ist es üblich*," and "*das Vieh*" may have struck Goethe as lacking the necessary grandeur for Homeric narrative. Goethe's criticism, however unkind, does suggest that he was now examining Homeric texts with a new self-confidence. The days of uncritical hero-worship were over for him, for at this point he trusted himself to read the text correctly, and had the courage to correct even Bodmer, for whom he had once had enormous respect.

After offering this brief and unenthusiastic assessment of the two translations, Goethe proceeded to write a line-by-line commentary on the text and to follow it with a prose paraphrase of the passage as he interpreted it. Ἀγέμου he read as the city's name, comparing the word's appearance in the genitive case to the phrase "*Agamemnon's*

Kraft,” analogous to “*Agamemnon der starke*.” (“Agamemnon’s strength / Agamemnon the strong”) Since apart from the family tradition of the *gens Lamia*, as noted above, there is no trace of any record of a Laistrygonian ruler called Lamos, it is possible that Goethe had guessed correctly.³⁷⁸ In practice, however, although a noun may be followed by a genitive rather than by an adjective in agreement (not uncommon in poetry), this construction only occurs with nouns that express force or power, such as βίη, μένος, and σθένος.³⁷⁹ On the other hand, an argument might be made for Lamos as the name of the city rather than a person on different grounds than Goethe had in mind. If Λάμου were taken as an appositive genitive (genitive of explanation), the reading could be defended. A parallel construction would be Ἰλίου πόλις (“the city of Troy.”)³⁸⁰ Goethe’s reading could stand, then, but not for the reasons he thought it could. Bodmer had interpreted Lamos as the name of a city, while Voss had taken the word for a normal possessive genitive, and may well have been right.³⁸¹ In his Latin translation, Bergler had also opted for a simple possessive genitive, offering “*septima vero venimus Lami ad excelsam urbem*.”³⁸² “On the seventh [day] indeed we came to the high city of Lamos.)

Notwithstanding the fact that τηλέπυλος is only used twice in Greek literature, both times in the *Odyssey* and to describe the Laistrygonian city, and its meaning is thus purely conjectural,³⁸³ once Goethe had decided that the city’s name was Lamos, in line 82, he naturally read τηλέπυλον as an epithet (“*Beiwort*,”) and assigned it the meaning “with gates far apart.” Having in mind a city with an inner and outer wall, such as those he had seen at Agrigento in Sicily and Paestum on the mainland, he inferred that the city had two gates joined by a narrow defile, perhaps something like a doubled portcullis.³⁸⁴ Homer, conjectured Goethe, had chosen the term τηλέπυλος to emphasize the strength of the city’s fortifications (“*Homer bezeichnet uns gleich durch dieses Wort eine feste Stadt...*”).³⁸⁵ Goethe may well have been strengthened in his conviction by Bergler’s Latin version, in which τηλέπυλον was rendered as “*longe distantes portas*

habentem.”³⁸⁶ This reading might mean either “having far distant gates,” or “with gates widely separated from one another.” A good Latin translator such as Bergler, however, had he wished to express such a reciprocal separation, would probably have been at pains to make this explicit rather than admit such ambiguity. The second rendering, “with gates widely separated,” is therefore a weaker reading, but Goethe was excited enough by the idea of introducing into a philological argument evidence from material culture he had seen with his own eyes that he was willing to make the leap.³⁸⁷

Given such a picture, Goethe was able to come up with an ingenious explanation for why the herdsmen in this passage call out to one another. They are signaling to each other in order to avoid a collision of herds. If the passage between the two gates is a narrow one, two flocks cannot occupy the space simultaneously, and so the herdsmen have to take turns using the path. Goethe compared them to drivers in a cramped street signaling with their whips in order to avoid collisions. (“*Wie die Fuhrleute im Hohlweg klatschen.*”)³⁸⁸

Goethe labeled lines 84-5 “*ein Homerischer Pleonasmus.*”³⁸⁹ These lines do not fit the modern definition of pleonasm, which is now taken to mean amplification or rephrasing that is not strictly necessary, but is added to a sentence for the purpose of making a more impressive effect.³⁹⁰ Although 84-5 do not fit such a strict definition, they skate close to the margin, since while standing on their own, they add a certain fullness of expression to the passage. Whether they actually clarify the image is another matter. Goethe, in company with many more recent commentators on this passage, failed to arrive at a definitive answer to the puzzle of the calling herdsmen.³⁹¹ The Homeric passage simply does not contain enough information to make such a solution possible. How one comes to a conclusion depends very much on how one reads the mysterious line 86 (ἐγγὺ γὰρ νυκτός τε καὶ ἡματός εἰσι κέλευθοι).

Goethe's interpretation of this first line of the passage is quite literal: in his mind the day and the night were not personified. The κέλευθοι are here seen as the paths or routes taken by the herdsmen by day and by night; they are close in time rather than space, because the shepherds meet one another in passing at dawn and at dusk. There would have been only one physical path to the grazing-land from the city. It would therefore be necessary to read νυκτός τε καὶ ἡματός...κέλευθοι as day-paths and night-paths, or the trips one takes by day and by night. This is a bit difficult, grammatically, but such elliptical expressions do occur in poetry. Another possibility, discussed above, which Goethe did not consider, would be that the line is meant to be read metaphorically: Night's path (dusk) and Day's path (dawn) are unusually close to one another in this place.

Goethe finished his line-by-line commentary with a prose paraphrase of how he would read the passage:

Und am siebenten Tage erreichten wir Lamos die hohe, befestigte Stadt der Laistrygonen, welche doppelte, von einander abstehende Tore hat, die durch einen langen, engen Weg verbunden werden. Hier gibt der Hirte indem er hineintrieb ein Zeichen durch rufen oder Pfeifen und der heraustriebende hört ihn und richtet sich darnach. Dies ist eine eingeführte Ordnung, damit sich die Herden in dem langen schmalen Weg zwischen den Toren nicht verwirren. Denn sie müssen einander täglich zweimal begegnen, weil mit jedem Sonnen-Unter und Aufgang die Hirten mit den Herden auf die Gemeine Trift wechseln und zu gleicher Zeit der eine herein der andere hinauszieht, so daß ein Mann der niemals schlief doppelten Lohn verdienen könnte, indem er beständig eine Herde nach Haus brächte und die andre abholte.³⁹²

And on the seventh day, we reached Lamos, the high fortified city of the Laistrygones, which has two gates that are set apart from one another, connected by a long narrow path. Here the herdsman signals by calling or whistling as he drives the cattle out, and [the herdsman] who is bringing the cattle in hears him and responds. This is an arrangement set up so that flocks do not get confused in the long narrow path between the gates. For they must meet one another twice a day, since at every sunset and sunrise the shepherds

and their flocks switch places on the common grazing-land, and while one is bringing his flocks back in, the other is simultaneously herding flocks out. Thus, a man who never slept could earn a double wage, since he could always be bringing one flock home and driving another out.

This essay probably would have been sent to Herder when it was completed. Although Herder was not fond of the contemporary vogue for paraphrases of classical works, he presumably would have enjoyed it and been proud of his former disciple's close reading of the passage.³⁹³ Voss may have read the piece as well; his revised 1814 translation, discussed above, shows him in complete accord with Goethe's interpretation of line 86: "*Denn nah ist zu des Tags und der nächtlichen Weide der Ausgang*"³⁹⁴ ("For the exit to the day and night pastures is nearby.")

The essay itself, while both original and imaginative, depends more on Goethe's own insights gained from his visits to ancient cities than it does on a solid understanding of the text. In the absence of a firm definition for *τηλέπυλος*, Goethe's entire argument remains entirely speculative. Yet taken as the work of a Homeric autodidact without any formal training in philology, *Versuch eine Homerische dunkle Stelle zu erklären* is no disgrace to its author. Goethe's insistence on as close an adherence to the text as possible and his willingness to adduce the evidence of material culture into a literary analysis both attest to the fact that he was taking the text seriously.³⁹⁵ Both of these critical strategies are sound; if they did not suffice to provide Goethe with definitive answers to the questions raised by this very difficult passage, it is perhaps worth noting that these questions still remain unanswered.

The second visit in Rome was a time of changes for Goethe. From June 1787 until January 1788 he was principally occupied with finishing up his larger literary projects and studying art, archaeology, anatomy, and sculpture, often under the aegis of Angelika Kauffman, who had proved to be a good friend. He continued to read his Homer as well, although no essays similar to the *Versuch eine Homerische dunkle Stelle zu erklären*

surfaced. His Bergler edition of Homer bears traces of reading up to the thirteenth book of the *Odyssey*, which contains the return of Odysseus.³⁹⁶ Goethe may have been only reading for pleasure, but perhaps he had had a vague plan of both finishing *Nausikaa* and eventually writing a sequel or sequels to the work, to form a Greek-style trilogy. If so, the idea never came to fruition.³⁹⁷ Still, Homer remained an aesthetic guiding light for Goethe in this period. His next major poetic project, the *Römische Elegien*, may have been first planned, or even partially written in Rome.³⁹⁸ Although Goethe drew much material for these poems from Ovid, Propertius, and Tibullus,³⁹⁹ the cycle also shows various echoes of his Homeric readings. The style Goethe employed was heavily influenced by Voss' Homer translations; verbal correspondences point to the connection.⁴⁰⁰ The vocabulary he chose was restrained and simple, but not without dignity. Fittingly for an elegiac context, Goethe did not stud his text with formal Homeric epithets, but he did tend to choose simple and dignified words, as Voss had done. A case in point would be the couch of Ares and Aphrodite, which Voss had rendered as *Lager* (*Od.* 8.282, 295), as opposed to *Bette*, or *Hochzeitbette*, terms he reserved for beds of married couples.⁴⁰¹ Following Voss, Goethe almost always chose to call the bed the elegist shares with Faustina a *Lager*.⁴⁰²

Jost wrote: “*Wie bedeutungsreich und flexibel setzt Goethe ein vergleichsweise eingeschränktes episches Vokabular ein!*”⁴⁰³ (“How meaningfully and flexibly Goethe makes use of the comparatively limited epic diction!”) The characterization of the Roman lover in this cycle Jost saw as fully heroic: nowhere in Goethe's lyric poetry had the beloved ever been so thoroughly and minutely described. Trevelyan also considered Goethe's Sicilian readings of Homer seminal for the poetics of the *Römische Elegien*: “...on a deeper plane their inspiration lay in Homer. In them for the first time Goethe was able to practice the style of composition that he had learned in Sicily from his reading of the *Odyssey*.” Beyond the outer form, Trevelyan discerned a fundamental honesty and

clarity that reminded him of the words of Goethe's 17 May 1787 letter to Herder: "*Reinheit und Innerlichkeit...vor der man erschrickt.*"⁴⁰⁴ ("a clarity and intimacy... before which one is terrified.") Goethe had written deeply personal poetry before this point, especially as a young man, but the *Römische Elegien* represent something quite new for him, for they reflect and celebrate a kind of relationship that he had never before experienced, "...in the most frank and intimate detail Goethe had allowed himself thus far in his career."⁴⁰⁵

Around the time of the Carnival (January 1788), however, Goethe seems for the first time in his life, to have embarked upon a full-fledged love-affair. This may have been his first major sexual relationship. His partner was a young widow, possibly an artists' model called Faustina Antonini (born 1764).⁴⁰⁶ He found himself happy, relaxed, and creative. A letter to Carl August, long his principal confidante about sexual matters, documents this affair and its effects on him.⁴⁰⁷ In this letter, written on 16 February 1788, Goethe sympathized with the Duke, who had apparently caught some kind of sexually transmitted disease while traveling in Holland, and then went on to say "*Es scheint daß Ihre gute Gedanken unterm 22. Jan. unmittelbar nach Rom gewürckt haben, denn ich könnte schon von einigen anmutigen Spaziergängen erzählen. So viel ist gewiß, und haben Sie, als Doctor longe experientissimus, vollkommen recht, daß eine dergleichen mäßige Bewegung, das Gemüth erfrischt und den Körper in ein köstliches Gleichgewicht bringt.*"⁴⁰⁸ (It seems that your good thoughts of 22 January made their way straight to Rome, for I could certainly tell you about a few jolly excursions. It's true, and you, veteran professor, are absolutely right that a moderate exercise of this sort refreshes the spirits and brings the body into the most delightful equilibrium.") Goethe's revivifying romance endured through the middle of March 1788.⁴⁰⁹ The relationship provided Goethe with much of the inspiration and most of the background for the *Römische Elegien*.

Goethe left Rome for Weimar on 24 April 1788. The parting from Italy was painful for him. In a letter dated 24 May, written in Milan in the course of the journey home, he confided to Carl August “*Der Abschied aus Rom hat mich mehr gekostet als es für meine Jahre recht und billig ist...*”⁴¹⁰ (“The departure from Rome cost me more than is reasonable and fair at my age...”) Only four weeks after his return, Goethe met Christiane Vulpius (1765-1816), who was to be his life’s companion. He soon took her into his household, to the great consternation of Weimar society.⁴¹¹ Charlotte von Stein, scandalized, broke off relations with Goethe entirely for the next five years.⁴¹² Although they later resumed correspondence, the two were never again close friends.⁴¹³ Vulpius lived with Goethe for ten years before he married her; by this time she had borne him five children. The only one who survived infancy was Julius August (1789-1830).⁴¹⁴ Happiness with Christiane was another element that colored the *Römische Elegien*, in which Goethe managed successfully to integrate elements from both his Roman love affair and his present domestic situation. The book is a compendium of love for Christiane, nostalgic memories of Rome and Christiane’s Roman predecessor, and most of all, the poet’s joy in his rediscovery of classical antiquity. Goethe wrote the *Römische Elegien* between the autumn of 1788 and April 1790.⁴¹⁵

The style of the cycle owes much to Goethe’s knowledge of the love-elegies of Ovid, Tibullus, and Propertius, but is fundamentally the poet’s own. Following the example of his Augustan predecessors, he innovated both stylistically and with respect to mythology and convention, incorporating into his own work topoi and thematic material from earlier works well known to an audience assumed to be sophisticated enough to recognize them. Many of the motifs in the *Römische Elegien* are Augustan, and the Augustan models, in turn, are often Alexandrian or Homeric. Yet Goethe’s creative deployment of ancient topoi to suit his own poetic needs transformed the stock symbols and tropes he used into original and strong poetry.

The structure of the *Römische Elegien* is symmetrical, balanced, and multiply layered, according to the finest traditions of the Augustan book-roll.⁴¹⁶ Ring composition, pairing, and sectioning have all been observed. While many of the individual elegies are as short as six or eight lines, the cycle as a whole amounts to more than 600 lines, a considerable undertaking, on a par with some of the smaller books of Roman elegies.⁴¹⁷ The idea of including miniatures within a relatively short book in order to preserve the proportions of the whole is not unexampled in Augustan elegy; Tibullus' Book 2 contains poems ranging from 22 to 122 lines, while Propertius also included short poems within his first and second books. Like his Roman predecessors, Goethe arranged his book with an eye toward *variatio*: the juxtaposition of contrasting poems within the cycle makes for an interestingly varied sequence of poetic events, while the over-riding and primary linear sequence, a narrative tracing the development of a love-affair, gives the book a strong forward impetus. The inclusion of occasional poems that have little to do with the elegist's private life also has its parallels in the works of Propertius and Tibullus. Although the arrangement of the book has been interpreted in many ways, ultimately no single analysis invalidates the others. Like the poetic books of the Augustan age, Goethe's cycle of elegies was structured on multiple levels, and gained materially from this complexity. That he viewed the poems as an cycle is attested to in letters written while he was at work on the project.⁴¹⁸ Given his background in Roman elegy, it is hardly surprising that he ordered his collection meticulously, following his Augustan models.

The *Römische Elegien* represent Goethe's first extended work in German elegiacs, a meter he had attempted previously on various occasions beginning in the 1780's, but never at any great length, nor with any especial brilliance. Elegiacs are not the strictest of classical meters, but their composition nevertheless requires much discipline. In the *Römische Elegien*, Goethe did not merely achieve a fine mimesis of Roman elegiacs, but

he also managed to write them in the manner of his models, incorporating stylistic features such as the inclusion of mythological exempla, witty treatments of earlier and contemporary poets' works, and a scrupulous concern for surface elegance. Observing this, Theodore Ziolkowsky wrote: "Goethe was not merely assembling a pastiche of passages from the Latin elegists but doing something far more difficult and subtle: he was writing in their style."⁴¹⁹

Goethe's prosody had been learned as much from reading the love-poems of Ovid, Tibullus, and Propertius as from his knowledge of Klopstock's *Messias*, which had been published in two volumes in 1751 and 1756, or from his familiarity with the works of his friend and protégé Karl Phillip Moritz (1757-1793), who had written on the subject during his Roman stay in 1786.⁴²⁰ In his adaptation of the elegiac meter from Latin into German, Goethe strove with and conquered some of the same difficulties that Roman poets had faced when learning to write Latin poetry in a meter that was originally Greek. Since the hexameter line that forms the first half of an elegiac disticche derives much of its energy and movement from the controlled substitution of spondees for dactyls in the first four feet of the line (no substitution is allowed in the fifth foot; the sixth may always be scanned as long-short), Goethe had to pay particular attention to his choice of German words and their placement within each line. He would have been hampered by the fact that in German, even in poetry, word order is not nearly as flexible as it is in Latin.

The inclusion of too many spondees can weigh down and slow a Greek or Latin hexameter line. Latin and Greek poets knew and exploited this effect; a heavily spondaic line has a great potential for intensifying emotional impact in especially dramatic sections of a poem. Because the German language, however, contains more consonant clusters than either Greek or Latin, for a German writer of elegiacs, too free a substitution of spondees for dactyls could result in lines that were dangerously heavy and slow. In the *Römische Elegien*, Goethe kept tight control of his spondees.

A line that is purely dactylic, on the other hand, runs the risk of an effect even worse than mere sterile regularity: it loses its potential for the creation and release of tension within the line. A less meticulous and gifted poet than Goethe, might, if he were not careful, have fallen into the trap of writing too many purely dactylic lines, since the German language's wealth of metrically weak case endings provides a plenteous supply of unstressed syllables. This is not the case with Latin, since many ablative endings and plurals are long, while in poetry certain verb forms may be scanned either as long or as short, according to the poet's convenience. In addition to enjoying the flexibility offered by variant forms, Roman poets could transform a syllable that would otherwise be read as short into one that was long by position, since any vowel followed by two consonants becomes long. This was an advantage a poet writing in German did not have. In German, a vowel's length is as much determined by stress as natural quantity, although certain diphthongs, as in Latin, will tend to be long by nature.⁴²¹ In writing accurate and attractive German elegiacs, Goethe had to walk a narrow line between the two equally risky extremes of too much regularity and too much substitution, working, in places, against the natural tendencies of his own language. He did push the limits of word-order as far as was possible, frequently using bold inversions and tight elliptical constructions.

The constraints of the pentameter line gave him little scope for variation: while the substitution of spondees is permissible in the first half of the pentameter, after the caesura, which must occur at the same inflexible place in every pentameter line, no metrical variation is allowed. One substitution Goethe allowed himself was that of a trochee for a spondee, since the German language is poor in two-syllable words where both syllables receive equal stress.⁴²² He also occasionally allowed syllables that were long by nature to be scanned as short within dactyls, leading to what Trevelyan called "overloaded dactyls."⁴²³ Yet, whether Goethe knew it or not, the fortuitous result of this practice was a close mimesis of the interplay of ictus and accent that gives well-written

Latin hexameters and pentameters such pleasing internal tensions. Goethe regularly observed the caesura, and his pentameters reap the benefit of this. That he succeeded as he did is a significant achievement; he was one of the first German writers to exploit this meter to its fullest potential. "It was Goethe's contribution to conquer the verse form of the elegiac distiche for German literature," wrote Ziolkowsky. "The earlier isolated cases of its use had smacked of academic exercises -- an experiment to be tried once or twice and then dropped again. Here for the first time Goethe succeeded in creating a supple form in which it was possible to express everything -- from the most delicate affairs of the heart to a narrative of action and philosophical meditations."⁴²⁴ Goethe certainly had succeeded in bending the elegiac meter to his will and his skill, but it must have been a taxing process. His only other elegiac poems from this period are the *Venetian Epigrams*, *the Xenia*, and *Die Jahreszeiten*. *Reinecke Fuchs*, *Alexis und Dora*, *Hermann und Dorothea*, and most of the rest of Goethe's large scale poetical works over the next decade were written in hexameters, rather than elegiacs. *Metamorphose der Tieren*, written in 1798, was his last elegiac poem.

Since to contemporary eyes four of the original elegies seemed too obscene for publication, the publishing history of the book is a complex account of censorship, deletion, and rearrangement.⁴²⁵ Only in 1974 did Dominick Jost restore the original second and sixteenth elegies to the cycle, although he did not go so far as to print them in what are now thought to have been their rightful places. Jost also printed two other elegies that had belonged to this cycle but had been separated, hazarding a guess that they had formed a coda to the book.⁴²⁶ These two poems were not transmitted with the rest of the cycle because they are both written in the voice of the Roman garden god Priapus. Although such poems were not to the public taste of polite society in the eighteenth century, they are well in line with Roman models; what better patron god than Priapus to conclude a book Goethe originally called his *Erotica*? The anonymous first century AC

collection *Priapaea* provided much material for these poems. Goethe knew these poems well, and between 1788 and 1790 had written a Latin commentary including textual emendations on nine of the collection, which he dedicated to Carl August.⁴²⁷ In addition, Tibullus seems to have provided Goethe with an *amoris exemplum* in the shape of 1.4, which is a dialogue between the poet's elegiac persona and the statue of Priapus that stands in his garden. The poet respectfully asks the god for his advice on love (1.4.1-6), and Priapus responds with a masterful lecture on the art of managing love-affairs (1.4.8-84). Jost felt that the Priapus poems formed a coda, but other scholars have viewed the two poems as an introduction and conclusion to the cycle.⁴²⁸ This might make better sense, since the poems are similar enough so that their juxtaposition would have been completely anomalous in a book that elsewhere displays its author's scrupulous concern for *variatio*.

In addition, ring-composition in Augustan poetic books is so pervasive and so effective that it seems likely that Goethe would have wanted to use this typical elegiac structural strategy.⁴²⁹

In 1795, when Goethe submitted the *Römische Elegien* to Schiller's periodical *Horen*, he did not even venture to include the Priapus poems. He also removed Elegies 2 ("*Mehr als ich ahndete schön*") and 16 ("*Zwei gefährliche Schlangen*") since Schiller had deemed them most offensive, and edited the other original texts at Schiller's urging. He could not bring himself to re-write 2 and 16, and wrote as much to Schiller:

*"Mit den Elegien wird nicht viel zu tun sein, als daß man die 2^{te} und die 16^{te} wegläßt: denn ihr zerstückeltes Ansehn wird auffallend sein, wenn man statt der anstößigen Stellen nicht etwas kurrenteres hinein restaurierte, wozu ich mich ganz und gar ungeschicket fühle."*⁴³⁰

Little can be done with the elegies except to remove the second and the sixteenth, for their abridged appearance would be obvious, if I did not supply something smoother in place of the objectionable passages, a task of which I find myself entirely incapable.

Some of his changes to the remaining poems were minor ones of spelling, grammar, and punctuation, but many serve only to blunt some of the more explicitly erotic components of the text in order to make the book more acceptable for public consumption. Some Homeric references in the original manuscript were also toned down, perhaps in order to give readers the impression that the poems, set on an unambiguously Roman stage, were modern reflections of the conventions of Roman love-elegy, rather than an erotic autobiography. Material that evokes or echoes Augustan elegy is placed in the foreground. Material from Homeric epic, however de-emphasized, is never obscured entirely. Since mythological topoi from Homer and other Greek writers were a normal part of the Roman elegists' toolbox of conventions, Goethe felt free to use them as well, as long as Homeric material did not take center stage. Even apart from the need to distance himself from first-person poems that could easily have been seen as autobiographical, the challenge of writing erotic poetry that would not offend contemporary taste made it necessary for Goethe to work in this formalist and allusive vein. Hans Rudolf Vaget wrote: "If poetry was to speak of sexuality with the same honesty and depth as had been achieved in other realms of human experience, it had to disguise its voice.... Now Propertius and, to a lesser extent, Tibullus and Catullus were to provide an intertextual matrix that could sustain and legitimize the naturalness and frankness Goethe was aiming at."⁴³¹

By 1795, Goethe seems to have felt it prudent to make it as clear as possible that his poetic persona was not the Homer scholar he himself had become in the years between the cycle's composition and its publication. Hence the first edition of the elegies begins with a disarming disclaimer in the form of a quotation from the ingenuous programmatic opening passage of Ovid's *Ars Amatoria* (1.33-34): "*nos venerem tutam concessaque furta canemus/ inque meo nullum carmine crimen erit*"⁴³² ("We sing of safe pleasure and permissible love-affairs/ there will be no sin my song.") There is some irony in Goethe's

choice of these two lines for his proem, however; an astute reader could have been expected to guess that the text would contain precisely the opposite of what such a proem claims, since the three books of the *Ars Amatoria* are in reality sophisticated erotodidaxis, intended for readers who were urbane or at least wanted to think of themselves as such. Goethe changed the book's working title, *Erotica Romana*, to the less explicit *Elegien*, which suited the collection, now denuded of the most explicit elegies and the two Priapus pieces.

Whether or not Goethe intended the Priapus poems as end-pieces to his collection, "*Saget, Steine, mir an,*" traditionally numbered as the first of the cycle, can be read as a programmatic piece.⁴³³ It explicitly paints the elegist as a traveler in a city not yet familiar to him. An invocation to the muse or a dedication to a patron would have been conventional choices for a Roman elegist's first poem in a cycle; Goethe made the stones of Rome itself both his patron and his muse. Beneath the surface of the opening lines, the elegist has cast himself both as Odysseus and Aeneas. The stones that ought to communicate more than they do evoke two great ekphrastic passages in the *Aeneid*. The temple frieze at Carthage (*Aen.* 1.453-493) and the temple doors at Cumae (*Aen.* 6.20-33) are both essentially unreadable to an Aeneas who does not yet fully understand his fate and the world around him. Aeneas, like Goethe, newly arrived in foreign places, can only gaze at and study the material world around him. When Aeneas looks at the Carthaginian frieze, however, he is about to become enmeshed in a relationship with Dido. When Aeneas sees the Cumae temple gates, he is about to descend into the underworld, where he will learn of the future glory of Rome and the deeds that he is fated to accomplish. He will see Dido for the last time, and she will refuse to speak to him. On returning to the mortal world, Aeneas will be symbolically reborn, and go on to finish his career in Italy. When the elegist gazes at the stones of Rome, he is about to meet his

lover, Faustina. Like Aeneas, the poet will return to an active life and once more take up his worldly duties, but leave behind a unsuitable partner who would have obstructed his career.

Yet Aeneas is not the elegist's only role-model in this opening poem. Here and throughout the cycle, the speaker will play the part of an Odysseus:

*O wer flüstert mir zu an welchem Fenster erblick ich
Einst das holde Geschöpf, das mich versengen' und erquick'?'
Ahnd' ich die Wege noch nicht durch die ich immer und immer
zu ihr und von ihr zu gehn wandeln opfre die köstliche Zeit?⁴³⁴*

Oh, who will whisper to me, at what window will I finally glimpse
the darling creature who will singe me and revive me?
Do I not yet know the paths I will walk, over and over
going to her and from her, yielding my precious time?

One of Odysseus' most common epithets is πολύτροπος (man of many paths), and it is his title in the opening words of the *Odyssey*. The themes of fire and rebirth are also essential to the epic; in *Nausikaa*, Goethe himself had made much of the simile of the herdsman burying his coals in the ashes at *Od.* 5.488-491, a symbol for Odysseus' rebirth. Finally, one of the most important themes of the *Odyssey* is the gradual discovery of the path to the beloved Penelope. For Goethe's poetic persona, Faustina will prove both a Penelope and a Dido. The ending of this poem, however, reveals it as something of a *recusatio*. The speaker, although he has been playing the part of a dutiful traveler making the most of his grand tour, has found Rome and its remains to be meaningless without love; the only temple he now wishes to visit is that of Amor:

*Zwar bist du die Welt, o Rom, doch ohne Liebe
Wäre die Welt nicht die Welt, wäre denn Rom auch nicht Rom.⁴³⁵*

Indeed, you are the world, O Rome, but without love,
the world would be no world, and Rome would not be Rome.

Here the hero, be he tourist or Aeneas or Odysseus, firmly declines to play an heroic part on a larger stage. The deceptive beginning of this poem is firmly in the tradition of Tibullus.⁴³⁶ Also in the manner of Tibullus and other Roman elegists is the speaker's refusal to consider any role more respectable than that of the unproductive and irresponsible lover. Compare Tib. 1.1.57-8:

*Non ego laudari curo, mea Delia: tecum
dum modo sim, quaeso segnīs inersque vocer.*

I do not want to be praised, my Delia: as long as
I am with you, I pray to be called lazy and idle.

Elegy 2 (“*Mehr als ich ahndete schön,*”) originally deleted, picks up on the train of thought at the close of its predecessor. The speaker had wished to be a votary of Amor in the first poem: now Amor has become his *cicerone*. Amor, here functioning as a guide for the elegist as Hermes did for Odysseus, has revealed the path to the speaker's goal: the abode of love.⁴³⁷ The elegist calls Amor “*nimmer bestechlicher Gott,*” (incorruptible god), for Amor cannot be influenced by wealth or elegance. Like Hermes, in the course of a journey, Amor escorts his protégé through dangerous territory, here the portals of the palazzi of Roman aristocrats, and gives him useful advice. In the *Odyssey*, Hermes functions as a facilitator and guide on two occasions, both connected with love-affairs in foreign territory. He persuades Kalypso to release Odysseus from Ogygia (*Od.* 5.75-147), and he provides the hero with the magical herb, moly, that will protect him from Kirke's magic, warning him not to sleep with the nymph until he has extracted from her an oath that she will not harm him (*Od.* 10.277-306). The subtle Homeric echoes in this passage, however, are soon displaced by material from Roman elegy: the speaker shuns the pomp of society and the elegant costumes of nobly born ladies, much as Tibullus had made it part of his poetic program to look down on wealth and display.⁴³⁸ Goethe's elegiac persona points out, in favor of a lover from the poorer classes, that it is as easy to

lift a woolen skirt as a brocaded one, and that no one would deny that it is more convenient to embrace a woman who is not laden down with corseting, padding, and jewelry. As Eva Dessau Bernhardt pointed out, this quatrain loses some of its potential coarseness because the idea is framed as two questions; the elegist's prudent retreat from the indicative mood softens the explicitness of the lines.⁴³⁹ Even so, these four lines would not have been acceptable to the polite reading public. If this quatrain seemed overly shocking, the closing section of the elegy, must have seemed even worse. These last four lines unblushingly celebrate nudity and erotic play, and their evocative frankness must have been among the reasons that Schiller demanded revisions if he were to accept it for publication. Goethe refused to change the lines, and instead withdrew the poem from the cycle.⁴⁴⁰

*Nehme dann Jupiter mehr von seiner Juno, es lasse
 Wohler sich, wenn er es kann irgendein Sterblicher sein.
 Uns ergötzen die Freuden des echten nacketen Amors
 Und des geschaukelten Betts lieblicher knarrender Ton.*⁴⁴¹

Let Jupiter get more from his Juno! He would be happier
 If he could change himself into any mortal man.
 We delight in the pleasures of true naked love
 And the shaking bed's sweet groaning note.

This final quatrain introduces one of the cycle's most pervasive themes: the tension between concealment and revelation. Nudity is here a metaphor for the healthy discarding of social roles and their attendant costumes.⁴⁴² Roman elegists often depicted Amor as a contentedly naked god.⁴⁴³

Yet the reference to the Olympian couple contains a somewhat disquieting Homeric reference. Hera and Zeus are not a happy couple, and their most memorable love-making takes place in *Il.* 292-351, when Hera seduces Zeus not out of love, but in order to distract him from the war at Troy and give the Trojans, whom she favors, a chance to make an assault on the Greeks. Nor does Hera manage the seduction unaided by

elaborate clothing; after an elaborate toilette and after donning her most impressive jewelry, (*Il.* 14.164-186), she has borrowed Aphrodite's magical girdle with which to charm her husband:

Ἦ, καὶ ἀπὸ στήθεσφιν ἐλύσατο κεστὸν ἱμάντα
ποικίλον, ἔνθα τέ οἱ θελκτήρια πάντα τέτυκτο
ἔνθ' ἔνι μὲν φιλότης, ἐν δ' ἴμερος, ἐν δ' ὀαριστὺς
πάρφρασις, ἧ τ' ἔκλεψε νόον πύκα περ φρονεόντων. (*Il.* 14.214-217)

She spoke, and loosed from her bosom the intricate girdle
in which all enchantments are embroidered.
Among them are love and desire and flirtatious persuasion,
the sort that steals the wits of even a sage.

Aphrodite's girdle, even with its magical powers, cannot give Jupiter joys that compare with those of naked mortals, the elegist claims. His love, *nidere minne* though it be, will be more satisfying than the *hohe minne* of the nobility or even the gods.⁴⁴⁴

In Elegy 3 (“*Gräme Geliebte dich nicht,*” later “*Lass dich, Geliebte, nicht reun,*”) the elegist's Roman partner, as yet unnamed, but later to be revealed as Faustina, worries that her lover will think the less of her for having yielded too quickly to his desires. The poet reassures her: “*Glaub es, ich denke nicht frech, denke nicht niedrig von dir*” (Believe me, I don't consider you brazen or vulgar). A verbal correspondence with the preceding elegy, the repetition of *niedrig*, both evokes the domina's relatively low social status and points back to her humble doorway (*niedere zierliche Pforte*) where the lover and his guide Amor were so swiftly welcomed. The elegist proceeds to elevate the status of his partner by placing her on a mythological stage. Whether this rhetorical strategy would have flattered the simple Faustina or simply bemused her is open to question.

In the original manuscript, the speaker describes two of the many kinds of the arrows Amor has in his quiver.⁴⁴⁵ The first kind afflicts a victim with slow poison. The second sort, which presumably has wounded his partner, however, has an immediate and

incendiary effect. In the first manuscript they are described as flaming arrows, deadly piercing and accurate, that hit and penetrate specified parts of the vulnerable female body:

*O so gibt es die rechten unabgenutzten sie zünden
Über den Scheitel hinauf, nieder zur Ferse der Brand.*⁴⁴⁶

Ah, and there are the right kind, the sharp ones. They kindle
a blaze up to the crown of the head, down to the heel.

The parts of the body named in this version are not a conventional pairing analogous to English expressions such as “head to foot” or “tip to toe.” “*Vom Scheitel bis zur Sohle*” would be a more common formulation, but the phrase is iambic, and thus unusable in the poet’s chosen meter. Goethe did occasionally substitute long syllables for short and vice-versa in his versification during this period, but in the elegiac meter, iambs are never permissible.⁴⁴⁷ The choice of the heel is suggestive, however, since it leads the reader to remember the most famous vulnerable heel in ancient literature: that of Achilles, who died as a result of an arrow-wound. Goethe’s elegiac domina, however heroic, cannot be blamed for succumbing to an attack against which she is utterly helpless. The erotic undertone of this distiche must have seemed clear enough to Goethe to have motivated him to rewrite it for public consumption. If the arrow is imagined as striking the heart, seat of the emotions, the movement of its fire throughout Faustina’s body might have seemed too strong an evocation of sexual desire. The version included in the first edition was considerably toned down.

*Aber mächtig befiedert, mit frisch geschliffener Schärfe
Dringen die andern ins Mark, zünden auf einmal uns an.*⁴⁴⁸

But mightily feathered, with freshly cut points
The others strike at the target, suddenly burning us up.

In this version, the target is left unspecified, the parts of the domina’s body not described. The arrows strike not only the domina, but also the speaker (“*zünden uns an,*”) or, by inference, human beings in general. By generalizing, the poet has ceased to objectify his

partner and offer her body to the speculative gaze of the reader. Instead, his confession of shared vulnerability makes the tone of the distiche warmly tender. The beloved has gained in dignity, but has lost some of her heroic stature; the Homeric heel has disappeared. Again, the image of fire is used to evoke both sexual desire and rebirth. In both versions of the poem, this passage is followed by a series of four arguments taken from myth, intended to convince the domina that yielding so quickly to the poet's advances was no bad thing. Bernhardt read these exempla as warmly reassuring, ignoring or downplaying the dark endings of three out of the four stories, and the dark implications of the fourth.⁴⁴⁹ The inclusion of the Venus and Anchises legend is on the surface indeed comforting and flattering; far from regarding his partner as “*frech*” or “*niedrig*,” the speaker excuses her eagerness by comparing her to Venus, who did not hesitate to seduce Anchises. Goethe, however, would have known the *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite*, since his Bergler edition contained the text.⁴⁵⁰ This comparison to Aphrodite is a high compliment to Faustina, but it is not a true analogy. In the hymn, the goddess does not desire Anchises of her own free will. On the contrary, Zeus, wishing to shame her, has instilled in her the sweet desire for a mortal man: Τῇ δὲ καὶ αὐτῇ Ζεὺς γλυκὺν ἴμερον ἔμβαλλε θυμῷ (*HH Aphr.* 45). Nor does Aphrodite make any particular haste to seduce Anchises. Instead, she goes first to Cyprus, where she bathes, puts on an embroidered robe, and adorns herself with brooches, earrings, and necklaces. She also stops to disguise herself as a young girl (*HH Aphr.* 58-90). When she has slept with Anchises, she regrets it bitterly, for she is now pregnant, and she knows that the other immortals on Olympos will mock her.

...μάλα πολλὸν ἀάσθην
σχέτλιον, οὐκ ὀνοταστόν, ἀπεπλάγχθην δὲ νόοιο
παῖδα δ' ὑπὸ ζώνῃ ἐθέμεν βροτῷ εὐνηθεῖσα (*HH Aphr.* 253-55)

... I have been completely reckless
wretched, worthy of blame, I have gone out of my mind,
and now I have got a child under my girdle, having slept with a mortal.

In the second argument from mythology, the elegist commends Diana for kissing Endymion before Aurora had a chance to enter the competition for him. Yet Endymion was doomed to sleep forever. The ending of the third story is even worse: Hero's irresistible passion for Leander led to her lover's death by drowning. The last story, Rhea Sylvia's impregnation by Mars, resulted in the birth of Rome's founders, but she herself died. These disquieting mythological exempla all contain elements of coercion: Anchises is initially unwilling to sleep with Venus, Leander and Endymion are depicted, at most, as passive partners, and Rhea Sylvia, a virgin priestess, is not Mars' lover, but a rape-victim. It is hard to imagine what prompted Goethe to choose such melancholy arguments, unless he intended them as foreshadowing or false naïveté. The careful arrangement of these arguments does make for a balanced and tight closing for the poem, however. Venus and Rhea Sylvia are grandmother and granddaughter, and between them stands Aeneas, Rome's founder. By comparing Faustina to these two figures from myth, the elegist has implicitly made himself and his lover a part of Roman history.⁴⁵¹

Before Goethe was satisfied with it, Elegy 4 (*Fraget nun wen ihr auch wollt; Fraget wen ihr auch wollt; Ehret wenn ihr auch wollt!*) went through three different versions. Most of the changes involve removal of references to *Werther* and to the author's bitter unhappiness at the unwelcome notoriety the book had brought him. There seemed no escape from the novel and from the importunities of its admirers. He compared the effect of his fame to the dance tune "Malbrough," which was so popular in these years that it seemed to follow the traveler from port to port, more irritating on every hearing.⁴⁵² In the final version of the elegy, Goethe replaced *Werther's* fame with political troubles abroad, especially in France, and social gossip, which seemed to the

elegist at this time equally troublesome and annoying. This change both preserved Goethe's putative anonymity and softened the tone of the elegy, which in the first draft had bordered on scathing.

The speaker in Elegy 7 ("Kannst du, o Grausamer!") is the poet's Roman lover, here given heroic stature by implicit comparison of her situation to those of the epic heroines Penelope and somewhat less strongly, Dido. This poem was not changed at all for publication, perhaps because Goethe thought that it presented such an obvious parallel to Propertius 1.3.35-46 that the Homeric echoes in the poem would remain safely in the background. The Propertius poem is one of the few instances in Roman elegy of a domina breaking her customary silence and speaking for herself. Yet the correspondences between Goethe's Elegy 7 and Prop. 1.3 are only surface ones. In the Propertius poem, the poet's domina Cynthia has fallen asleep while waiting for him; he had arranged to visit her earlier in the evening. The speaker approaches her bed. She suddenly wakes and berates him for his thoughtlessness, but her anger eventually gives way to sorrow. The ending of Goethe's elegy takes a similar form, but the main content of his poem bears little relationship to that of Prop. 1.3.

In this poem, Faustina is upset because her reputation has suffered as result of her relationship with the poet. The neighbors suspect that she is no longer true to the memory of her dead husband. This detail suggests the predicament of Dido, although, since Faustina is perhaps more like the Ovidian Dido of the *Heroides* than Virgil's queen, Goethe seems to have been viewing the epic story through an elegiac lens.⁴⁵³

Faustina describes how the poet has visited her secretly by night, blaming him for his scandalous choice of disguise: he has been wearing a clerical hairstyle to conceal his identity. A faithless Faustina is shocking enough, but falsely to be suspected of liaisons with a priest is especially damaging. She boasts that many genuine dignitaries of the church have sued for her favors, but in vain. Her parents are worried about her future,

she says, and she herself suspects that the poet will leave her. At this point, she attacks men in general, rather than her lover in particular:

*Geh! Ihr seid der Frauen nicht wert!
...ihr Männer, ihr schüttet mit eurer Kraft und Begierde
Auch die Liebe zugleich in den Umarmung aus!*⁴⁵⁴

Go! You are not worthy of women! ...
you men! In the same embrace, you spill away your love
together with your strength and desire.

At this point, Faustina breaks off her attack and embraces her young son, weeping, but taking comfort in the boy's closeness. The poet feels ashamed and sorry for her. Soon, however, the storm is over, and the lovers' reignited passion is all the more intense for having briefly been dampened by Faustina's fears and regrets.

In this poem Faustina is less an allomorph of Cynthia than of Penelope. It is difficult to imagine the elegant Cynthia weeping great Homeric tears over an adored son ("*Tränen entquollen dem Blick,*") or having any special reason to boast about having rejected princely suitors. Penelope, however, like Faustina, prizes her reputation for faithfulness to an absent husband. Although Odysseus is not dead, by the time of his return, she has almost given up hope that he may still be alive.⁴⁵⁵ Both Penelope and Faustina are under pressure from fathers who wish them to secure their futures. In the case of Penelope, this detail is borrowed not from the *Odyssey*, in which Penelope's father Ikarios does not appear, but rather from Ovid's *Her.* 1.81-2, in which the heroine writes that her father has urged her to "abandon her widow's bed" (*Me pater Icarius viduo discedere lecto/ cogit et immensas increpat usque moras*). Goethe's lover also has a concerned father: "*Denn ihr seid am Ende doch nur betrogen so sagtel mir der Vater...*"⁴⁵⁶ ("In the end, you will just be betrayed/ my father tells me.") From a metrical standpoint, the first half of this uncharacteristically clumsy line is almost untenably heavy. This may well have been deliberate on Goethe's part: the three spondaic feet in a row that begin it help to characterize the father and the intensity of his foreboding. For the sake of

discretion, Goethe's poetic persona visits Faustina in disguise. Odysseus, too, disguises himself on his return to Ithaca in *Od.* 19. He appears in the role of a beggar, partially to avoid exciting suspicion about his identity among the suitors, but also to avoid compromising Penelope.

By allowing Faustina to speak, and by placing her in such a powerful context, Goethe in this elegy restored to his partner all of the stature she had lost in the Elegy 3 and more. Her grief and her fear, realistically portrayed, give the poem an almost frightening immediacy. This poem, too, represents innovative use of material from the Augustan elegists, whose *dominae* had their troubles as well, but which the poets tended to minimize or subtly ridicule. Ovid's Corinna seems particularly susceptible to disaster: in *Am.* 2.13, she has an abortion and nearly loses her life. Compared to the abortion, Corinna's other catastrophes are considerably less shattering, but still traumatic. She loses her hair in *Am.* 1.14, having attempted to bleach it with lye. Ovid's attempts to console her by suggesting she buy a wig are couched in terms that fall far short of genuine empathy. When Corinna's pet parrot dies in *Am.* 2.6, Ovid's memorial verses in its honor are ironic and mocking in tone from beginning to end.⁴⁵⁷ By contrast, Goethe's elegiac persona is deeply disturbed by Faustina's unhappiness:

*“Wie saß ich beschämt daß die Gespräche der Menschen
Dieses liebliche Bild mir zu flecken vermocht.”*⁴⁵⁸

How ashamed I was, sitting there, since people's gossip
had the power to sully this beautiful image for me.

This is a line of searing honesty. The speaker admits that his view of Faustina has been changed for the worse by knowing that people speak ill of her. His response to her fears and her sorrow is shameful, he knows. Although he is powerless to control his feelings, but at least he admits to them and confesses the guilt he feels over such a reaction. Harmony is regained at the end of the elegy with another reference to the rekindling of fire that recalls the simile at the end of *Od.* 5.

*Dunkel brennt das Feuer nur augenblicklich und dampfet
Wenn das Wasser die Glut stürzend und jählings verhüllt
Aber sie reinigt sich, schnell, verjagt die trüben Dämpfe
Neuer und mächtiger dringt prasselnd Flamme hinauf.*⁴⁵⁹

The fire is subdued, for only a moment, and burns more dimly
when the water damps down its glow, pouring down all of a sudden
But it clears itself quickly, and dispels the thick smoke
The crackling flame rises again, fresher and stronger.

In the second version of this elegy, *prasselnd* (crackling) is replaced by the more sedate *leuchtend* (glowing). This change alters the ending of the piece considerably: Faustina's fire, and by implication, her love, has been changed from an exhilarating blaze to a peaceful domestic comfort. The later image is less exciting, but equally attractive. The relationship, which has been on the point of being extinguished by a sudden storm of temper, has now settled down to its usual course, as love, like the fire, is reborn.

The relatively short Elegy 10 (*Herbstlich leuchtet das Feuer*) picks up on this image. Alone by the hearth, the elegist waits for Faustina, enjoying the warmth and the crackling and flashing of the flames. He knows that his partner will come before the fire burns down, and then the pair will pile logs on the fire and turn the night into a brilliant festival. Early in the morning, Faustina will creep out of bed, like the lonely farmer at *Od.* 5.487-90, and stir up the sparks from the ashes, rekindling a joy (*Freude*) that has almost gone out. This is her particular talent, a gift from Amor. The donor is a suitable one, for Amor was often depicted bearing torches.⁴⁶⁰ The choice of *Freude* here is significant: had the poet meant mere desire or affection, he would probably have made this explicit.⁴⁶¹ As he made it clear that Faustina performs this trick only once she has left the bed, the joy that Faustina rekindles can also be seen as symbolic of the elegist's reawakening and rebirth. It is worth noting that the elegist here and in other places in the cycle is seen as essentially passive in the face of fire: the arrows that burn him and Faustina in Elegy 3 belong to Amor. In this poem the speaker does not kindle his own fire, and rejoices that the fire by which he sits will not go out before Faustina has arrived.

Elegy 13 (*Hörest du, Liebchen*) is based in large part upon Ovid's *Am.* 3.10, which includes a description of the Roman Cerealia, and on *Od.* 5.125-7, in which the nymph Kalypso argues that since other goddesses have mated with mortal men, Zeus should not begrudge her Odysseus.

ὥς δ' ὀπότη' Ἰασίωνι εὐπλόκαμος Δημήτηρ
ᾧ θυμῷ εἶαξασα μίγη φιλότητι καὶ εὐνῇ
νειῶ ἔνι τριπόλῳ...

So, indeed, when Demeter with the lovely hair,
giving in to her desire, mingled in love with Iasion
and lay with him in the thrice-plowed fallow land...

Iasion, identified as a Cretan by Ovid, may have originally been a fertility god.⁴⁶² Ovid implied in his elegy that Iasion was in some way connected with the Eleusinian Demeter cult, which enjoined celibacy on its participants for nine days before the rites took place. The Roman Cerealia seems to have shared this requirement, for the poet complains that his lover Cynthia is forced to sleep apart from him (*Am.* 3.10.2).⁴⁶³ Ovid included Iasion in his elegy as an argument that since Demeter herself was not celibate, the rites that commemorate her happy reunion with her daughter Persephone should be celebrated with joyous pursuits:

*festas dies Veneremque vocat cantusque merumque:
haec decet ad dominos munera ferre deos.* (*Am.* 3.10.47-8)

This holiday calls for sex and for song and for wine:
these things are the proper gifts for the lordly gods.

Beyond these closer sources, however, in the background of the Eleusinian mysteries, is the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, which contains elements of two of the major themes of the *Römische Elegien*: a traveler's quest and a transfiguration in the fire of love. Grieving for the abducted Persephone, Demeter wanders from country to country, seeking news of her lost daughter. When she reaches Eleusis, distraught and miserable, she is kindly received and comforted at the household of Keleos and Metaneira where her

mood is lifted by a witty serving maid called Iambe, who cheers her by telling bawdy jokes.⁴⁶⁴ At Eleusis, disguised as an old mortal lady, she nurses Metaneira's infant son Demophoon. Intending to make him immortal, she feeds him ambrosia and at night, hides him in the heart of the fire: *νύκτας δὲ κρυπτεσκε πυρὸς μένει ἤυτε δαλὸν* (HH Dem. 239). Goethe, too, had traveled through foreign countries in a state of some distress, and in disguise. Like Demeter, he chose to assume a false identity for his travels, one of relatively lower social status. Finally, at the hearth of a welcoming stranger and her family, he experienced a creative and emotional rebirth, rejoicing in his sexuality and in caring for a younger person. Whether or not these parallels consciously influenced Goethe as he wrote the elegy, they enrich the text and give it a resonance it might not otherwise have had.

The elegy begins with a direct address to Faustina. The elegist draws her attention to the sound of the harvesters returning to town along the Flaminian Way, and explains to her the elements of the ancient rite, and lamenting that modern Romans no longer celebrate these mysteries. He invites her to renew them in private with him, adding that their own observance of the feast will be fully equivalent to a whole nation celebrating: *“Zwei recht Liebende sind statt des versammelten Volks.”*⁴⁶⁵ (“Two genuine lovers take the place of a whole people.”) The authenticity of the couple's love will give their actions a national significance. In the printed version of this line, Goethe made it subtler and more artificial, making it clear that the couple would be merely playing at keeping the feast: *“Ein versammelten Volk, stellen zwei Liebenden vor”*⁴⁶⁶ (“Two lovers symbolize an entire people”). This second version comes somewhat closer to what Goethe may have read about the mysteries. Since participants in the rites at Eleusis were sworn to secrecy, little is known about the details of the ceremony. One element that seems generally agreed upon is that at the climax of the greater mystery, participants were shown some kind of representation of the sexual union of Demeter and Dionysos, either

symbolically communicated by the unveiling of a wheat sheaf and grapes or acted out by the priestess and priest of the respective deities. The elegist traces the experiences of one initiate for Faustina, telling the story in a lively and colloquial way: “*und was war das Geheimnis?*”⁴⁶⁷ (“and what was the secret?”) he asks, rhetorically. He answers his own question: Demeter had slept with the Cretan king, and in so doing, neglected her duties as a fertility goddess, imperiling the earth.⁴⁶⁸ At this point in the ceremony, the initiate, says the elegist, winked at his lover. The story breaks off here with a direct address to Faustina. Does she understand the wink? If so, she is urgently requested to complete the rite herself. The last line of the elegy, “*Unsre Zufriedenheit bringt kein Gefährde der Welt*”⁴⁶⁹ (“Our pleasure presents no danger to the world,”) is ironic. The elegist, like Demeter, is neglecting his own proper work, and it will not be the lovers who imperil the world around them. Instead, the world will endanger their relationship, their reputations, and their happiness.

In Elegy 14 (*Amor bleibt ein Schalk*), the elegist returns to the theme of travel, again emphasizing his identity as a foreigner in a foreign place. The poem is in the form of a dialogue: the poet reports what the god has to say about creative rebirth and artistic inspiration. The god claims that travelers under his protection never have trouble finding excellent lodgings. Furthermore, celibacy makes a poet’s inventions grow stale. Amor recommends study, but not precisely the kind of study the prudent traveler of Elegy 2 (“*Steine, saget mir an*”) had intended. Visiting churches, palaces, ruins, and columns, the poet had found them meaningless in the absence of love (2.9). Now Amor, in the chatty tones of a man of the world, assures the elegist that the same traces of the ancient world that now appear so beguiling are only there in the first place because the god inspired their makers:

*Mehr verehrest du noch die alten Reste des Bildens
Einzigster Künstler, die ich stets in der Werkstatt besucht
Diese Gestalte, ich lehrte sie formen. Verzeih mir, ich prahle
Diesmal nicht, du gestehst was ich sage sei wahr.*⁴⁷⁰

Now you honor still more the remains of the artwork
Of various adepts, whose workshops I constantly haunted.
These forms, I taught how to shape them. Forgive me, I boast...
But not this time. You know what I tell you is true.

This elegy, placed near to the center of the cycle and the first of the collection to be published, is central for an understanding of Goethe's relationship with antiquity at this time. Paradoxically, he now began to understand that he could only attain rebirth and renewal by looking back to the ancient world and its great works of art, within which, youth is eternal. When seen through the eyes of a lover, the world is transformed, Amor claims. Amor was the giver of Faustina's gift for rekindling fire, but in his role the elegist's Hermes, he is also a crosser of boundaries and a transcender of time. Amor says:

*Denkst du Freund nun wieder zu bilden, die Attische Schule
Blieb noch offen das Tor schlossen die Jahre nicht zu.*⁴⁷¹

Friend, if you want education, the Attic school has remained open for business: the years have not closed its door.

He goes on to boast that because he, eternally youthful, is an instructor at this school, the world of classical antiquity remains forever young. Since ancient times were young (*das Antike war neu*) when the fortunate ancients were alive, the elegist must simply live happily, and the past will come alive for him as he himself comes alive. The elegist responds jokingly, in words reminiscent of Ovid's *Am.* 1.1, that Amor has given him all the inspiration and material he could have ever wanted.⁴⁷² The material, a lover, however, has proved to be so compelling that it absorbs him entirely and distracts him from responding to it in any permanent way. When Faustina is asleep, he engages in serene and serious contemplation of her beauty. Here Goethe included a telling play upon words. The elegist is addressing his sleeping partner, hoping that she will not wake and interrupt his meditations: "*O Nein!*" he exclaims, "*Laßt auf der Bildung mich ruhn!*"⁴⁷³ This line has two possible readings: the first is that it is a plea to be left in peace to further

his education (*Bildung*.) If the historical Faustina was, as seems likely, a professional artists' model, contemplation of her noble proportions would have been valuable training for the elegist, who like his creator Goethe, studies ancient art. The second possible interpretation is that the speaker is physically exhausted and wishes to rest, using his lover's body (*Bildung*) as a pillow. Both readings are possible until Faustina wakes, for when she meets the speaker's gaze, his own vision becomes occluded. Addressing her eyes, he says

.....*Bleibet geschlossen!*
Ihr macht mich verworren und trunken, ihr raubet
Mir den schönen Genuß stiller Betrachtung zu früh.
*Diese Formen wie rein! Wie edel gewendet die Glieder!*⁴⁷⁴

...Stay closed!
 You make me confused and light-headed, too soon, you steal
 the delightful enjoyment of still contemplation from me.
 These contours, how pure! How nobly formed are the limbs!

The second version of the elegy makes it clear that the poet's gaze is meant to be analytical. The pleasure has become *still* (silent), rather than *schön* (lovely, delightful), while the contemplation is now *rein* (pure), the adjective that had in the first version been applied to the body's contours. The lines of Faustina's body, instead, are described as *groß* (heroic in size):

...*Bleibet geschlossen!*
Ihr macht mich verworren und trunken, ihr raubet
Mir den stillen Genuß reiner Betrachtung zu früh.
*Deise Formen wie groß! Wie edel gewendet die Glieder!*⁴⁷⁵

...Stay closed!
 You make me confused and light-headed, too soon, you steal
 the silent enjoyment of pure contemplation from me.
 These contours, how vast! How nobly formed are the limbs!

In Elegy 15 ("Zünde Licht an, o Knabe"), Goethe returned to the theme of fire. The opening words of the poem leave the reader in doubt of the identity of the boy who is commanded to kindle the lamp. He might be a servant, or he might be Amor himself.

The boy's response dispels the ambiguity of the opening line, since he replies that opening the shutters would do just as well, and that lighting the lamp would be a waste of wick and oil, since the sun has not set and the vesper bells will not ring for another half hour. His concern for economy betrays that the boy is merely a mortal. The impatient elegist forces the issue: "*Unglückselger geh und gehorche*"⁴⁷⁶ ("You wretch! Go and do what I say!"). Faustina will soon be there, and in the meantime, the elegist needs to be comforted by the lamplight that will create the illusion that evening has already come.

"*Zwei gefährliche Schlangen*," originally Elegy 16, was not submitted to Schiller for the *Horen*. One of the few poems ever written on the subject of syphilis, it is a powerful piece, but patently unsuitable for the polite reading public.⁴⁷⁷ The tone is bitter throughout, contrasting with the blithe optimism of Elegy 14. The elegist now distrusts Amor's smooth claim that sexual happiness gives a poet the chance to transport himself into a golden past ("*Lebe glücklich und so lebe die Vorzeit dir auf*").⁴⁷⁸ When the danger of contagion haunts lovers, *das glückliche Leben* is not so easily come by.⁴⁷⁹ Although this poem is not part of the narrative of the Faustina poems, it reflects the darker side of the elegist's otherwise happy experiences. The poem may also have been meant as a *consolatio* for Carl August, who continued to suffer from syphilis.⁴⁸⁰ The poem also makes it clear that the speaker lives and loves in modern times. In other elegies the boundaries between ancient and modern Rome occasionally had been blurred, but here the poet is plainly a contemporary speaker, longing for better days of an unreachable past.

Perhaps because this poem is so concerned with the relationship between past and present, it is particularly rich in literary echoing. Sources for mythological material in the elegy include the Old Testament, the *Homeric Hymn to Pythian Apollo*, the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes*, the *Odyssey*, and the *Aeneid*.

*Zwei gefährliche Schlangen, vom Chore der Dichter gescholten,
Grausend nennt sie die Welt Jahre die Tausende schon
Python dich und dich Lernäischer Drache! Doch seid ihr
Durch die rüstige Hande tätiger Götter gefällt.*⁴⁸¹

Two dangerous serpents, censured by choirs of poets
The world has called them fearful down through the ages,
You, Python, and you the Lernean Hydra! But you have been felled
by the valiant hands of powerful gods.

The poem begins with an image that explicitly links the ancient and modern worlds: monsters of the remotest past time are still potent figures, since the power of ancient poetry had made them, even in the speaker's day, well-known symbols for horror, even once slain. The two dangerous serpents call to mind Python and Typhaon, the monsters of the *Hymn to Pythian Apollo*. Yet the reference is not complete, since in the hymn, only the monstrous female dragon Python, an earth monster, is killed by Apollo. (The other monster, Typhaon, mysteriously disappears from the narrative almost as soon as it is introduced.) The elegist's second serpent comes from another source: the legends of Herakles, whose second labor was the killing of the Lernean Hydra, a many-headed water-creature. Although the monsters come from different sources, they meet with similar ends: both are destroyed by arrows and fire. Apollo shoots the Python with his bow, but when she dies, the god's incandescence causes her body instantly to rot away: τὴν δ' αὐτοῦ κατέπυσ' ἱερὸν μένος ἠελίοιο (*HH Pyth. Apol.* 371). The Hydra is initially lured out of its swamp by flaming arrows. When its many heads are hewn off, Herakles halts their proliferation by cauterizing the stumps with burning brands.⁴⁸² Both of these monsters are deadly. The Hydra in particular evokes thoughts of human mortality, since it is present in the Underworld in Virgil's *Aeneid*. When Aeneas descends to Hades, he finds it there, surrounded by other horrifying creatures with extra limbs and hideous bodies.⁴⁸³

The great monsters of antiquity have been slain, and no longer trouble the herds and the crops, the elegist admits. Yet it seems that humankind, like Herakles, is perpetually doomed to be fighting with serpents.⁴⁸⁴ A new terror has been sent to plague the human race, a horrible prodigy born of poisonous mud (*“ungeheure Geburt giftigen*

Schlammes”).⁴⁸⁵ This idea follows on the origin of Python, for in the *Homeric Hymn*, Hera conceived the monster parthenogenically with the aid of the chthonic deities and Γαῖα φερέσβιος, the life-giving earth-goddess (*HH. Pyth. Apol.* 341). The serpent, a symbol for venereal disease, creeps into the loveliest garden, like the snake in Paradise (Gen. 3:1-15), plotting harm to lovers. It is not born from the life-giving earth, but rather from filthy slime. This modern monster ruins sexual pleasure, and should have no place in love’s garden. It is far worse than the dragons of the old days, who had their functions. The elegist salutes graciously another of Herakles’ foes:

*Sei mir hesperischer Drachen begrüßt, du zeigtest dich mutig,
Du verteidigtest kühn goldner Apfel Besitz!
Aber dieser verteidiget nichts -- und wo er sich findet
Sind die Gärten, die Frucht keiner Verteidigung wert.*⁴⁸⁶

Hail, you Hesperian dragon! You proved your courage
in stalwart defense of your golden apples!
But this one defends nothing -- and where it is found
the gardens and harvest are not worth defending.

A mythological serpent defending an apple tree is admissible and even laudable to the poet, but not the deadly snake of Eden, for it turns love’s rejuvenating dew into poison (“wandelt in Gift Amors belebenden Tau”).⁴⁸⁷ The snake and the garden are both obvious sexual symbols. The harvest that is not worth defending may signify the diseased offspring of untreated syphilitics. As if the thought of present danger is too much for him to bear, the elegist proceeds to apostrophize two of his Roman predecessors, Lucretius and Propertius. Lucretius is congratulated on his capacity to renounce romantic love while at the same time still enjoying promiscuous sex.⁴⁸⁸ Propertius’ infidelities to his mistress Cynthia at least put neither lover at medical risk.⁴⁸⁹ In the three following distiches, the elegist laments that the modern lover, unlike the ancients, must submit to the constraints of monogamy. Yet while he can trust himself, there can be no guarantee that his partner will not put him at risk. The modern poet cannot enjoy the freedom of his predecessors. If the ancient times represents an era of

sexual freedom to the elegist, the Golden Age Roman writers described so lovingly seems to have had its dangers: the speaker realizes that even Zeus needed to consider the purity of his prospective partners.

*O! der goldene Zeit! da Jupiter noch, vom Olympus
Sich zur Semele bald, bald zu Callisto begab.
Ihm lag selber daran die Schwelle des heiligen Tempels
Rein zu finden den er liebend und mächtig betrat.
O! wie hätte Juno getobt, wenn in Streite der Liebe
Gegen sie der Gemahl giftige Waffen gekehrt.⁴⁹⁰*

Oh, the Golden Age! Then, Olympian Jupiter still
visited Semele now, then had a tryst with Callisto.
It was his own concern to find the steps clean
at the holy temple he entered with love and with might.
Oh, how Juno would have scolded, if in the battle of love
her husband had turned poisoned weapons against her!

Neither the willing Semele and the unwilling Callisto was randomly chosen by the elegist. If the father of gods and men was hardly safe in his amours, his partners were considerably less so. Although a few of Jupiter's mortal lovers lived happily ever after, the fates of Callisto and Semele were both particularly disastrous. Callisto was turned into a bear, while Semele was incinerated by Jupiter's thunderbolt. In Ovid's versions of these stories, each woman was destroyed by a jealous Juno.

By noting that we old heathens ("*wir alte Heiden*") are not entirely abandoned, even in the present day, the elegist makes a smooth transition into the closing section of the poem, a paean to Mercury. To this point in the cycle, his guide and guardian has been Amor, playing the role of a Hermes. Now that he has reconsidered Amor's faults as a teacher, he allows the true messenger of the gods to take his rightful place. Some Homeric material for this section comes from the Hymn to Hermes, which follows immediately on the Hymn to Apollo in the sequence of the Homeric Hymns. The cycle's controlling motif of fire is part of this hymn; Hermes was the inventor of fire-blocks and fire: Ἑρμῆς τοι πρῶτιστα πυρήϊα πῦρ τ' ἀνέδωκε (*HH Herm.* 111). Hermes, too, is an appropriate mentor for a poet, for it was he who as compensation for the theft

and slaughter of Apollo's herd gave the god his lyre (*HH Herm.* 418-508). Yet it is for his role as a dispenser of the magic herb moly (*Od.* 10.277-306) that the god came to be connected with medicine. When Odysseus is about to meet the nymph Kirke, Hermes gives him the herb as prophylaxis against Kirke's drugs, and warns the hero not to sleep with the witch unless he has first made her swear to do him no evil. Only Hermes has the power to protect the hero from the poisons mixed by an unknown and dangerous lover. The element mercury may have gotten its name from the quick darting motions of its silver globules, for Hermes with his winged sandals is traditionally associated with swiftness, but mercury ointment was also the eighteenth century's only specific for syphilis.⁴⁹¹ Every reader knows the god and honors him. (*...ihr kennt ihn alle verehrt ihn!*)⁴⁹² This is one of the few points in the cycle where the elegist addresses his audience directly, and the context of this address brings them into complicity with him. They too can be expected to understand what is at stake, and may at any time need to have recourse to the treatment, for none are safe but the celibate, and the elegist numbers neither himself nor his readers among them. The play on words (Mercury the god/mercury the element) here has a bitter flavor, since the elegist notes that while the metaphorical temple of Jupiter the philanderer stands in ruins, that of Hermes is still well known and flourishing.

*Wird des Sohnes Tempel doch stehn und ewige Zeiten
Wechselt der Bittende stets mit dem Dankenden ab.*⁴⁹³

Yet the shrine of his son will stand, and eternally
The suppliant will take the place of the one giving thanks.

The ordering of the line is pointed; however many victims the god will heal, more patients will come to him for a cure. While Amor offered the poet a school, Mercury provides merely a clinic.

The elegy closes with an address to the Graces, begging them to protect the speaker's garden forever. Hermes, for the elegist, has only one virtue, that of a healer. More than this is needed for patron deity of a lover. The Graces, associated with beauty and fecundity and often depicted in a fertile, flowering landscape, are chosen as intercessors, rather than the Muses. This may be because the Graces also have the power to heal the wounds of love. In the *Odyssey*, when Aphrodite has been released from the chains that bound her to Hephaistos, she flees for comfort to her shrine in Paphos:

ἔνθα δέ μιν Χάριτες λοῦσαν καὶ χρίσαν ἐλαίῳ
 ἀμβρότῳ, οἷα θεοὺς ἐπενήνοθεν αἰὲν ἔόντας,
 ἀμφὶ δὲ εἴματα ἔσσαν ἐπήρατα, θαῦμα ἰδέσθαι. (*Od.* 364-6)

and there the Graces bathed her and anointed her
 with divine oil, such as covers the immortal gods,
 and covered her with beautiful garments, a wonder to see.

The Graces are entreated to protect the elegist's garden, here, perhaps a symbol of Faustina's body. This is suggested by his diction, for the garden is described as *artig* (pleasing), a word Goethe sometimes applied to a lover's body.⁴⁹⁴ The structure of the line also suggests that the garden represents Faustina, for the poet goes on, in a parallel clause, to ask protection for himself. Amor, here once more called a rascal ("*Schalk*"), is untrustworthy, but the Graces, if kindly disposed, may safeguard the poet's future.

Elegy 20 ("*Eines ist mir verdrießlich*") stands as a companion poem to the sixteenth. Echoes of the fear of sexually transmitted disease are still present in the poem, but they are muted, balanced against the poet's hatred of sleeping alone and his love of the security that he fondly believes he has found with his faithful Faustina. Wild adventures are for the young, says the elegist. A man of his age prefers security to excitement. The literary echoes in this peaceful poem are mainly Tibullan.

*So erfreuen wir uns der langen Nächte, wir lauschen,
 Busen an Busen gedrängt, Stürmen und Regen und Guß.*⁴⁹⁵

So we take delight in the long nights, we listen,
 lying bosom to bosom, to tempests and rainfall and torrents.

Compare:

*o quam iuvat immites ventos audire cubantem
et dominam tenero continuisse sinu* (Tib. 1.1.45-6)

How it delights me, lying in bed, to hear threatening winds,
and to have held my mistress to my tender breast.

In Elegy 21 (“*Ja, vom guten Rufe*”), Goethe transformed the legend of Ares and Aphrodite (*Od.* 8.267-366), by adding to it elements from several other sources and tailoring it to his main themes, stressing the aspects of secrecy and publicity in the myth. This story is an apposite choice for a cycle of poems depicting a secret love-affair. Already in Elegy 7, Faustina’s misery over the loss of her reputation had cast a shadow over the relationship between the elegist and the domina. In the second half of the cycle, this shadow returns again and again. In Elegy 17 (“*Caesarn wär ich wohl nie,*”) Faustina furtively traces the number four on a table in her uncle’s tavern to signal the time for a planned tryst, while in Elegy 18 (“*Warum bist du Geliebter,*”) a companion-piece to its predecessor, Faustina reproaches the elegist for having failed to appear in the vineyard where they were to have met. His explanation is that he had seen her uncle working there, been frightened, and fled. Faustina responds that what he had seen was only a scarecrow. In Elegy 19 (“*Manche Töne sind mir zuwider,*”) the elegist complains that a barking dog nearly betrayed Faustina as she stole in to visit him. The issues of privacy and publicity, speech and silence are dominant themes in the book; indeed, some of Faustina’s initial appeal for the elegist is that she barely has heard of *Werther*:

*Glücklich bin ich entflohn sie kennet Werthern und Lotten
Kennet den Namen des Manns der sie sich eignete kaum,*⁴⁹⁶

I am glad to have escaped. She hardly knows of Werther and Lotte,
hardly knows the name of the man she belongs to.

The Greek accusative endings of Werther and Lotte, while not unusual in courtly writing of the time, seem in this context somewhat artificial and deliberate, evoking

Homeric diction. Moreover, Faustina's uncertainty about her lover's name is hardly surprising at this stage of their affair, since they have only just met. Even during his last winter in Rome, Goethe was still occasionally using his various incognitos, which may also account for Faustina's confusion. In the printed version of the cycle, he prudently suppressed these obviously autobiographical details, wishing to stress as much as possible the fictional nature of his elegist-persona and distance himself from the Roman love-affair. Yet the cycle, laid in contemporary rather than Augustan Rome, itself publicized Goethe's love-affair with Faustina while simultaneously depicting its concealment. The eventual notoriety of the *Römische Elegien* was an ironic reflection of the ending of the story of Ares and Aphrodite: complete and embarrassing disclosure.

Elegy 21 is a pivotal poem within the cycle, and Goethe's forging of the Ares/Aphrodite story into a semi-serious epyllion, therefore, is a key to understanding not only the cycle as a whole but also the book's implications for Goethe's newfound relationship with Homeric epic. Structurally, this poem is a climax for the cycle. Seventy lines long, and thus the longest of the *Römische Elegien*, it falls near the close of the book. Goethe had certainly read *Od.* 8 in Sicily and when seeking mythological material for an mock-epic treatment of the story of an exposed love-affair his thoughts naturally turned to the myth of Ares and Aphrodite. In the Homeric account, when the cuckolded Hephaistos discovered the guilty couple, he trapped them in a golden net and summoned all of the Olympians: ...ἐν δὲ γέλωσ ὦρτ' ἀθάνατοισι θεοῖοσι (Od. 8.343) ("...and laughter arose among the immortal gods.) Goethe may also have thought of Ovid's versions of the story, which he used in *Met.* 4.183-4 and in *AA* 2.561ff. In the *Metamorphoses*, Ovid concluded the story with the words *diuque/ haec fuit in toto notissima fabula caelo*. ("And for a long time, this was the best-known story in all of the heavens") In the *Ars Amatoria*, the section begins *fabula narratur toto notissima caelo*. ("a very famous story is told in all of the heavens.") In all three retellings memorable

words placed in structurally significant places directly address the issue of notoriety stemming from the exposure of a furtive romance. In this poem, Goethe's elegiac persona, in telling the story once more, confronts his own fear of being found out, and re-shapes the myth, adapting it to his own situation. This kind of creative re-shaping of mythological material is a hallmark of Augustan elegy. Goethe, in simultaneously imitating and transforming a theme used by a Roman predecessor, was following in the elegiac tradition of creative redeployment of conventional topoi. In addition, he hit on a delightfully Ovidian and ironic device: by retailing the disgrace of Fama as though the story were spicy gossip, he hoisted the goddess of rumor by her own petard.

To achieve this, Goethe had to do some violence to the original story, but this kind of adaptation is well in line with the norms of Augustan humor. Indeed, it was a mark of excellence, for a *doctus poeta* felt free to offer alternative versions of familiar myths, or even to make them up, just as his Alexandrian predecessors had done in their turn. Indeed, Ovid's rendering of the scene in *Met.* 4.169-189, while obviously based on *Od.* 8.267-366, is quite different from the Homeric original. Ovid's narrative is quite compressed, and in his version of the story a motif of revenge is added. In the *Odyssey*, the lovers are betrayed by Phoibos Apollo, who sees the pair and tells Hephaistos. Ovid carried this over to the *Metamorphoses*, but added the detail that Venus, angry at Phoebus for having exposed her adultery, causes the god to fall in love with Leucothoe, daughter of Eurynome (*Met.* 4.185ff). When Ovid recast the story in his *Ars Amatoria*, he used it as a warning to lovers neither to lay traps for their partners nor to betray the illicit affairs of other couples, for these practices can only end in regret: secrecy should be considered sacred. The story of Ares and Aphrodite was a particular favorite of Goethe's: he would translate *Od.* 8.267-366 in 1795. In re-working the myth into an German elegiac form,

Goethe followed Ovid's innovative examples by adding a revenge-motif of his own, but changing the story into an Alexandrian-style aetiological account of the perpetual struggle between Fama and Amor.

In the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth elegies, Goethe had emphasized the theme of secrecy, and thus prepared the ground for the opening lines of Elegy 21 (*Ja, vom guten Rufe*), in which he signaled that he was about to address directly, for the first time, the danger that has to this point underlain the relatively light surface texture of the cycle. Although Goethe would end the *Römische Elegien* on a positive note, never depicting the lovers' parting, he had included enough evidence in the preceding poems for a reader to guess that the love affair he celebrated in the poems was a relationship that by its very nature could never be permanent, safe, or respectable. Despite the elegist's protestation in Elegy 20 that dangerous *nequitiae* are only for the young, and that he is grateful for the security and peace of mind he enjoys with Faustina,⁴⁹⁷ details throughout the cycle, and especially in the second half of the book, suggest that the elegist will not offer her any security in return. The opening lines of this poem, therefore, have a strong impact:

*Ja vom guten Rufe geht etwas verloren, denn Fama
Steht mit Amorn, ich weiß, meinem Gebieter, in Streit.*⁴⁹⁸

Indeed, something is lost from our good reputation, for Rumor,
I know, contends with my master, Amor.

This original version, which admits that some damage has been done to both the elegist and his partner, was changed and weakened in the printed version of the text. In recasting the opening line, Goethe implied that at this point in the cycle the lovers' secret was still safe, although threatened by wagging tongues. Nevertheless, the threat of disclosure pervades even the second version of the poem, which otherwise was not substantially changed.

*Schwer erhalten wir uns den guten Namen, denn Fama
Steht mit Amorn, ich weiß, meinem Gebieter, in Streit.*⁴⁹⁹

We can hardly keep our good name, for Rumor,
I know, contends with my master, Amor.

The Greek accusative ending, *Amorn*, which lends the line a classical air here as elsewhere, might more properly have become a dative after *mit*, and agreeing with *meinem Gebieter*. As it stands, however, the form is not disturbing in context; more latitude is allowable in poetry than in prose. The goddess Fama was not invented for this occasion by Goethe, but rather appears in *Aen.* 4.173-197 as a grotesque feathered sleepless monster with myriad eyes and mouths.⁵⁰⁰ The role of Fama within Virgil's epic casts a grim light on Faustina's chances for future happiness. In *Aen.* 4, the evil goddess is introduced directly after Dido and Aeneas have taken shelter in a cave during a rainstorm and consummated their relationship, which Dido calls a marriage. With astonishing candor, in these opening lines, the elegist implicitly casts himself in the unflattering role of Aeneas. Like Dido, Faustina is doomed to suffer the loss of a partner who will be called to higher duties, a foreigner whom she has treated graciously, but who has promised more than he could deliver.

Fama, the monster, plays a large part in Dido's doom. In Goethe's elegy, she is painted as less terrifying, but equally hateful. No longer a horrific but isolated apparition, in the elegy she has become an Olympian in regular attendance at the feasts of the gods, but universally despised:

*Immer war sie die mächtige Göttin, doch für die Gesellschaft
unerträglich, den gern führt sie das herrschende Wort.*⁵⁰¹

She was always a powerful goddess, but in society
unendurable, for she was glad to have the last word.

Fama boasts that Herakles has become her slave, and that he is no longer himself. He has become a god on earth through his service to her. Indeed, he no longer worships Jupiter, but only his goddess, who heralds his path and trumpets his triumphs abroad. Soon the

king of the gods will have to betroth him to her. At this, the gods are silent, for fear of provoking her wrath. Amor, however, cannot resist a chance to make mischief. The account of this scene originally read:

*Alles schweig und Amor schlich sich bei Seite, den Helden
Bracht er mit weniger Kunst unter der Schönsten Gewalt.*⁵⁰²

They were all silent, and Amor slipped away. With little effort,
He brought the hero under the power of the fairest lady.

The words *alles schweig* are another invocation of Virgil, a translation of the opening words of *Aen. 2: conticuere omnes*, a description of the silence at Dido's court as Aeneas begins to tell about the fall of Troy. Perhaps realizing that he could exploit the epic potential of these lines still more, in the printed edition, Goethe expanded the couplet to a quatrain, and in the process, made the scene more Homeric than Virgilian.

*Alles schwieg, sie mochten nicht gern die Prahlerin reizen,
Denn sie denkt sich, erzürnt, leicht was gehässiges aus.
Amorn bemerkte sie nicht: er schlich beiseite; den Helden
Bracht er mit weniger Kunst unter der Schönsten Gewalt.*⁵⁰³

The were all silent, not wanting to irritate the braggart,
For when angered, she easily invents hateful slander.
She did not notice Amor: he slipped out. With little effort
he brought the hero under a fair lady's power.

In the expanded version, Amor has once again been given a Greek accusative form. Goethe was concerned to create a close mimesis of conventional Homeric diction; in this passage he succeeded admirably. "*Amorn bemerkte sie nicht*" evokes the Greek verb *λανθάνω* (to escape the notice of), a common word in Homeric epic. "*Mit weniger Kunst*" likewise evokes *ἐπισταμένως* and *περιφραδέως* (skilfully). The tension of the audience falling into silence rather than daring to irritate a potentially dangerous speaker recalls the embassy of Talthybios and Eurybates to Achilles in *Il. 1.326-344*:

τῷ μὲν ταρβήσαντε καὶ αἰδομένῳ βασιλῆα
στήτην, οὐδέ τί μιν προσεφώνεον οὐδ' ἐρέοντο (*Il.* 1.331-2)

The two were afraid and in awe of the king
They stood, nor did they address him or ask any question.

Goethe's well-educated readers might well initially have identified the unnamed fairest lady (*die Schönste*) as the Lydian queen Omphale, especially when reading the following lines, which depict Herakles being dressed as a woman. When Herakles killed Iphitos, who was to have been his brother-in-law, the Delphic Oracle decreed that the only way he could expiate the sin was to be sold into slavery for three years. Herakles was bought by Omphale, who used him as a sex-slave, took away his club and lion-skin and wore them herself, and dressed the hero in women's clothing.⁵⁰⁴ Goethe's use of heroic diction for such a trivial anecdote produces a comic effect. The underlying tone of the elegy as a whole, however, strikes a balance between mock-heroic humor and tender concern over the effects the interplay of Love and Fame will have on the elegist and his domina. In mood, this elegy might fairly be compared to Tibullus 2.3, which contains the poet's most lengthy and elaborate mythological exemplum, the story of Apollo's enslavement to Admetus (2.3.11-28). Tibullus, unlike Ovid or Propertius, tended to use his learning very subtly, avoiding odd diction, obscure place-names, and aetiological stories.⁵⁰⁵ This story is a rare exception to the rule. The dominant feeling of the elegy is tense and sorrowful; the story of Apollo and Admetus provides welcome comic relief. Phoebus' song is interrupted by the mooing of the cattle (2.3.19-20), his famous locks are roughened by his work (2.3.23-6), and although he is famous for being the originator of medicine and song, here he is reduced to the status of inventor of cheese-making:⁵⁰⁶ "*et miscere novo docuisse coagula lacte/ lacteus et mixtis obriguisse liquor*" (Tib. 2.3.14b-14c) ("and he taught how to mix rennet with new milk/ and once mixed, the milky liquid curdled.")

Goethe's mingling the story of Herakles and Omphale with the Odyssean and Ovidian versions of the myth of Ares and Aphrodite constitutes a highly effective use of *contaminatio*. Generically, the two myths are suitable for one another, since in earlier models, both stories appear chiefly in lighter contexts. The Augustan elegists regularly treated the story of Herakles and Omphale as a joke.⁵⁰⁷ Ovid used the hero's predicament

as a warning to lovers never to allow their partners too much power (AA 2.561-590). Propertius altered the story to use it as evidence that female beauty has the power to transform even the greatest of heroes into abject slaves, and that therefore, it is no wonder and no disgrace that the elegist himself is completely in the power of his domina Cynthia (3.11 1-4, 17-20). In one of Propertius' most comical elegies, Hercules himself speaks, and reveals the embarrassing circumstances of his bondage:

*idem ego Sidonia feci servilia palla
officia et Lydo pensa diurna colo
mollis et hirsutum cepit mihi fascia pectus
et manibus duris apta puella fui.* (4.9.47-50)

I myself did a slave's work in a Tyrian dress,
did my day's ration of spinning on a Lydian distaff;
A soft breast-band bound my hairy chest,
and even with my callused hands, I was a proper girl.

The Latin in this passage admits of a momentary misreading that makes for a amusing ambiguity. *Apta puella fui* could mean "I was a changed woman." but only if the speaker is female. The stronger reading, "I was a suitable/ likely girl" is still entertainingly absurd.

In Goethe's elegy, for comic effect and to humiliate both of the lovers, Amor mischievously dresses the unnamed *Schönste* and Hercules in the wrong clothes:

*Neckisch verummmt er sein Paar; ihr hängt er die Burde des Löwen
Über die Schultern und lehnt mühsam die Keule dazu.
Drauf bespickt er mit Blumen des Helden stäubde Haare,
Reichet den Rocken der Faust, die sich dem Scherze bequemt.*⁵⁰⁸

Playfully he disguises the couple; over her shoulders he hangs
the weight of the lion, laboriously, he props up the club.
Then with flowers, he adorns the hero's stubbly hair:
in his fist, he places a distaff, fit for the prank.

In the second version the text is virtually identical. In the opening line, however, one word was changed: "*neckisch*" became "*nun*." From the standpoint of prosody, this is a significant change. The original text is light and almost completely dactylic. The only spondaic foot is at the caesura: *Paar; ihr*. When *neckisch* is replaced by *nun*, however, the whole shape of the first three feet is changed, and the opening three syllables all

become long. This slows the movement of the story considerably and heightens tension, lending the passage a fine heroic gravity. The change from *neckisch* to *nun* also tightens the narrative; by eliminating the unnecessary adjective *neckisch* (playful, roguish), the poet forced Amor's action to speak for itself. "Nun," itself almost colorless, is used in the manner of a Greek particle such as δέ or ἄρα. The passage contains a generous wealth of detail, as is fitting for a Homeric arming scene, but the details chosen by the poet keep the tone light. The synecdoche of the skin of the Nemean lion turning into the lion itself is ludicrous, as is the idea that a woman could carry such a burden. Amor, by convention, is a youthful god; the inclusion of the detail that he can only lift Herakles' club with difficulty adds to the comic effect of the scene. Despite Herakles' claim in Prop. 4.9.50 to have become a credible girl, his bristling locks are a poor background for flowers. The distaff is placed not in a maidenly hand, but in a virile fist (*Faust*).

At this point, Amor summons the rest of Olympians, who are tricked by his seriousness into believing that they are about to view a wondrous spectacle. Goethe used Voss' vocabulary for this episode, a parallel to the exposure of the Ares and Aphrodite at *Od.* 8.321. For οἱ δ' ἀγέροντο θεοὶ ποτὶ χαλκοβατῆς δ« ("then the gods hurried to the house with the bronze floor"), Voss had written "*Da eilten zum ehernden Hause die Götter*" ("then the gods hurried to the bronze house"). Depicting the same scene, Goethe echoed Voss' choice of diction, but on a lower level:

*alles eilte, sie glaubten dem losen Knaben, denn ernstlich
hat er gesprochen und selbst Fama sie blieb nicht zurück.*

Everyone hurried: they believed the naughty boy, for he had spoken earnestly, and Fama herself did not stay behind.

Fama's attendance on the scene is a necessary modification of the Homeric original, in which the gods rush up to see the show, but the goddesses modestly stay at home (*Od.* 8.324). Not only is Fama present in Goethe's elegy, Juno is there as well, and as an old enemy of Herakles, cannot restrain her glee.⁵⁰⁹ The elegist's depiction of Juno's

Schadenfreude sounds like a malicious gossip telling a particularly savory anecdote: “*Wer sich freute den Mann so tief erniedrigt zu sehn / Denkt ihr! Juno!*”⁵¹⁰ (“Who was pleased to see the fellow so deeply disgraced? Just imagine! Juno!”)

At first Fama cannot believe what she sees, and she insists that the pair are masked actors from the tragic stage. Perhaps this is a reference to the cross-dressing in Euripides’ *Bakchai*, in which Pentheus dresses as his mother Agave (*Bacc.* 917-974), and Dionysos appears in an effeminate costume. Goethe probably had not yet read the play, but would have known its contents from *Théâtre des Grecs* (Paris 1730) by Pierre Brumoy (1688-1742), which he had first read in the early 1770’s.⁵¹¹ If Fama is referring to the *Bakchai*, she speaks more wisely than she knows, since at least one of Pentheus’ tragic flaws is an excessive concern for public opinion.

As the gods look on the compromised couple, suddenly, the anonymous *Schönste* is revealed to be the wife of Vulcan, not Omphale. This is a startling reversal, since the elegist had not mentioned Amor having enlisted Vulcan in his plot to discredit Fama and her protégé Herakles. Indeed, the line *mit weniger Kunst* would seem to point in exactly the opposite direction. Yet the lines that follow do imply that this was the case. Vulcan does not seem to be surprised at what he sees, and at least at first, unlike the Homeric Hephaistos, he is hardly troubled by the scene:

*Nicht zum tausendste Teil verdroß es Vulkanen sein Weibchen
Mit dem rüstigen Freund unter den Maschen zu sehn.*⁵¹²

It didn’t trouble Vulcan the slightest to see his sweet wife
under her mask with her stouthearted swain.

Either the elegist is portraying an uncharacteristically and comically urbane Lemnian, or the reader is meant to understand that Vulcan, having helped to entrap the couple, is sadistically enjoying the joke. Neither explanation seems entirely satisfactory, since his

role in the plot is not made sufficiently explicit. Goethe may have been so caught up in retelling the story that he had forgotten how he had framed the prologue to the *notissima fabula*.

The reactions of the other gods are much the same as they are in the Homeric version of the story. In Demodokos' song, Hermes and Apollo agree that it would be well worth the embarrassment of public disclosure to have the chance of sleeping with Aphrodite (*Od.* 8.334-342). In the elegy, Mercury and Bacchus share the same joke, and their exchange is again reported as spicy gossip: "*Wie sich die Jünglinge freuten! Merkur und Bacchus!*" ("How the boys laughed!") Both plead with Vulcan not to release the pair; they want to see more. Vulcan, now seeing that the joke is at least partially on him, refuses. In the Homeric account, the lovers are released through the diplomacy of Poseidon, and each flies away swiftly, Aphrodite to Kypros, Ares to Thrace (*Od.* 8.360-363). Goethe made a deft substitution in his retelling: it is the guilty pair that remains in chains, but Fama flies off in a rage. Since that time, Fama has been an enemy to Amor and to lovers, persecuting them with fervor and assiduousness. In the poem's closing quatrain, the elegist reveals that he himself has already suffered from Fama's persecution:

*Und so geht es auch mir schon leid ich ein wenig; die Göttin
Eifersüchtig sie forschet meinem Geheimnisse nach
Doch ist es ein altes Gesetz ich schweig und verehere
Denn der Könige Zwist büßten die Griechen, wie ich.*

It is like that for me; I already suffer a little: the goddess
Jealously researches my secrets
Still, this is an ancient law. I am respectfully silent, for the Greeks
did penance for feuds between kings, just as I do.

From a metrical standpoint, these lines are boldly constructed, notable for their gravity and weight. The proportion of spondaic feet is unusually heavy for the cycle, and the chain of the ten monosyllables that opens the line "*Und so geht es auch mir...*" slows its progress considerably. The ordering of the second sentence, with its awkward inversion, makes it at first difficult to understand. The second couplet also begins with a chain of

monosyllables; the scansion of the line is not apparent on first reading; if the first three syllables are read as a dactyl, and there seems little reason not to do so, the line becomes a pentameter where a hexameter belongs. The final sentence, “*der Könige Zwist büßten die Griechen, wie ich,*” likewise requires some careful analysis, for the reader needs mentally to answer two questions before the line makes sense. What kings’ feuds did the Greeks expiate? What feuding kings does the speaker serve? The key is in Horace *Ep.* 1.2.14, to Lollius: “*Quidquid delirant reges plectuntur Achivi,*” (“Whatever the princes do foolishly the Greeks suffer for.”) The feuding kings turn out to be Achilles and Agamemnon, and the background behind their quarrel, in turn, is the strife between Amor and Fama. At least as Horace paints it, the rage of Achilles stems mainly from his desire for Briseis, mingled with the confounding of his pride and grief over the loss of status he might suffer by losing the girl. Fama and Amor war within Achilles, and at the same time the hero quarrels with Agamemnon: “*hunc amor, ira quidem communiter urit utrumque*” (*Ep.* 1.2.15) (“Love burns him, but mutual anger burns both of them.”) The elegist, however, is suffering directly rather than indirectly for the feud between Amor and Fama; Amor has been his prince and guide from the second elegy of the book onward, although by Elegy 16 he has been revealed as a sophist and occasional rascal. Nevertheless, the poet is obliged to suffer for the god’s pranks. The ultimate effect of this metrically heavy and sober ending quatrain is not to trivialize the Homeric story, but rather to elevate the elegiac situation and lend it a more prepossessing stature.

The closing elegy of the cycle, originally 22 (“*Zieret Starke der Mann*”) resolves the tensions and ambiguities of the poem that immediately precedes it by creating an alternative goddess to the evil Fama and then coming to terms with the fact that she cannot always be obeyed. This goddess is *Verschwiegenheit* (Discretion). The elegist praises her in the highest possible terms, calling her “*Stadtbezwingerin...Fürstin der Völker*”⁵¹³ (“conqueror of cities, Queen of the human race”), Both of these titles are reminiscent of

Homeric diction. *Stadtbezwingerin* is a feminized form of one of Odysseus' most common epithets: πτολίπορθος. *Fürstin der Völker* might be a feminine form of ἄναξ ἀνδρῶν, a title most often given to Agamemnon, although not by any means limited to him.

The opening line of the elegy are a key to its contents:

*Zieret Stärke den Mann und freies mutiges Wesen,
O so ziemet ihm fast tiefes Geheimnis noch mehr.*

If might suits a man, and a liberal and happy existence
O, a closely-kept secret all but befits him still more.

There follows on this couple the generous praise of *Verschwiegenheit*, but before the poet even expresses this praise it is qualified by the adverb *fast* (nearly). Mighty as she is, the goddess of discretion ultimately must give ground to the autonomy and pleasurable life that make a man's life worthwhile. In the long run, the constraints of secrecy prove an impossible burden for the elegist. Like the servant of Midas, the elegist finds himself in need of a confidant, for when a secret is too delicious, it simply cannot be kept. The story of Midas is a close imitation of Ovid (*Met.* 11.174-193). In this myth, Midas, now cured from the curse of his golden touch, is invited to judge a musical contest between Pan and Apollo. All who hear the music judge Apollo the winner, except for Midas, who foolishly insists that Pan's music is better. Angered, Apollo gave the king donkey-ears in place of his own, as punishment for Midas' lack of a human musical ear. Midas was able to conceal his deformity from everyone but his barber, and when the barber could no longer stand to keep the joke to himself, he dug a hole near the banks of a river, and whispered the tale to earth.⁵¹⁴ When reeds grew up in the same place, stirred by the breezes, they repeated the secret.

The lengthened ears of the king call to mind the conventionally long and pointed ears of the satyrs who are associated with Pan. Ironically, in the myth, the phallic reeds that form the pipe of the king's patron are the instrument of Midas' undoing. The earth

itself, still the life-giving Γαῖα φερέσβιος (*HH. Pyth. Apol.* 341) collaborates with the breezes on the side of life, fertility, and the unbridled sexuality for which Pan is famous. If Midas has become a satyr, the natural world conspires to make the story known, using the very instruments that were responsible for his transformation.

This myth is a key to the elegist's choice of a resolution for his dilemma. He desperately needs to speak of his own transformation, however disastrous the consequences.

*Schwerer wird es mir nun ein schönes Geheimnis zu wahren,
Ach den Lippen entquillt Fülle des Herzens so leicht.*⁵¹⁵

It becomes even harder for me to keep a lovely secret,
Alas, the heart's fullness so easily flows from the lips.

Yet speech alone will not suffice for the writer: he needs an audience for his secret. Male friends might steal Faustina, while female friends might envy her. The elegist is not young enough and not lonely enough to confide in the beauties of Nature. At length he decides on his appropriate hearers:

*Dir Hexameter dir Pentameter sei es vertraut
wie sie des Tags mich erfreut wie sie des Nachts mich beglückt.*

To you, hexameter, to you, pentameter, let me confide this:
how she gladdens my days, how she enriches my nights.

The elegiac meter, the poet's companion, is the only possible confidant. Since the poet, like Midas, has been transformed into something more sensual, and in the eyes of the polite world ridiculous and unsuitable, his poetic ear is a changed one. Goethe's other major projects for this period, *Egmont*, *Tasso*, *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*, and the beginnings of *Faust* were all works of considerable gravity and length. He may have felt that the writing of the *Römische Elegien* was in some way a betrayal of his own poetic persona, that of a preeminently serious writer. If it was a betrayal, it also betrayed the poet's own private life and his most private needs. In addressing the elegiac meter itself

in the final elegy, he also addressed his own role in relationship to the generic expectations raised by the its use, self-consciously meditating on his new identity as writer of light poetry, a form belonging more to the school of Pan than to that of Apollo. The elegies are light poetry, but with a vein of genuine seriousness that suggests that both the romantic adventure that inspired them and the taking on of a new poetic voice were not taken lightly. It is only fitting that the lines of his elegiacs become both the recipient of his secret and the musical instrument by which the secret is revealed. In this final elegy for the cycle, the elegist breaks the proscenium for a moment and reveals himself with his reed-pen, whole-heartedly embracing this new meter and *métier*. The cycle ends by blessing itself.

*Und ihr wachset und blüht geliebte Lieder und wieget
 Euch im leisesten Hauch lauer und liebender Luft.
 Und wie jenes Rohr geschwätzig entdeck den Quiriten
 Eines glücklichen Paars schönes Geheimnis zuletzt.*⁵¹⁶

And you, beloved songs, grow and bloom, cradle yourselves
 in the gentlest breeze of warm and loving air.
 and loquacious, like those reeds, reveal to the Romans at last
 the lovely secret of a fortunate couple.

Here all issues of speech and silence, notoriety and privacy, are at least temporarily resolved. When the secret is confided to paper, it may or may not be published, depending on the atmosphere, and the elegist, by implication, will do his best to insure his poems a welcoming venue: *lauer und liebender Luft*. Even if the second of the two Priapic poems were to be read as the true conclusion of the cycle, it would serve merely to amplify the triumphant closing lines of this joyous poem.⁵¹⁷ Although Goethe would dabble in elegiacs again in the coming decade, none of his later elegiac works are as rich in allusiveness and depth as the *Römische Elegien*, which constitute a turning point for his understanding of his own relationship to the world of classical antiquity. As the occasionally unreliable narrator Amor pointed out in Elegy 14: “...*die Schule der Griechen/ Blieb noch offen das Tor schlossen die Jahre nicht zu.*”⁵¹⁸ Goethe ultimately

took this statement at face value, and found it true. His return to Weimar in 1790 began a fallow period that lasted until 1793. After November 1793, however, he returned to the study of Homer. The works of the following decade (1793-1803) bear the stamp of this fresh engagement with Greek epic, which proved for him not only a literary inspiration but also a subject that repaid serious study. His studies broadened his acquaintance with recent scholarship in the field and led him to cultivate the friendships of many noted German philologists of his day, not only Voss, but also Friedrich August Wolf (1759-1824), Aloys Ludwig Hirt (1759-1839), and Gottfried Hermann (1772-1848). The connections formed during this decade in Weimar and beyond had far-reaching consequences and benefits not only for German literature but also for classical scholarship, for Goethe's initial acceptance of Wolf's theories promulgated them and popularized the subject, leading to widespread debate on the Homeric Question. In turn, Wolf's 1795 *Prolegomena ad Homerum* freed Goethe from his the anxiety in the face of Homer, and allowed him to begin his own epic, *Hermann und Dorothea*.

³⁶¹ The date for this essay was first established from palaeographical evidence in 1901. Bernhard Suphan, “*Homerisches aus Goethes Nachlass*” *GJb* 22 (1901) 15.

³⁶² Thoukydides noted that the *Kyklopes* and *Laistrygones* were thought to have been the earliest settlers in Sicily, but he did not consider them to be indigenous to the island: παλαίτατοι μὲν λέγονται ἐν μέρει τινὶ τῆς χώρας Κύκλωπες καὶ Λαιστρυγόνες οἰκῆσαι ὧν ἐγὼ οὔτε γένος ἔχω εἰπεῖν οὔτε ὁπόθεν ἐσῆλθον ἢ ὅποι ἀπεχώρησαν. (Thouk. 2.2) (“The first [people] to have settled in the land are generally said to have been *Kyklopes* and *Laistrygones*; I can say nothing about their stock, nor can I tell where they came from and where they went.”)

³⁶³ *DKV* 18.195. In line 86, modern texts read ἐγγύς for ἐγγύ.

³⁶⁴ It is impossible to tell if the word *Τηλέπυλον* is intended as a proper name for the town or simply a descriptive epithet. Homer, *The Odyssey of Homer*, W.B. Stanford, ed. (Walton-on-Thames 1992) 1.368. This translation attempts a compromise.

³⁶⁵ For the practice of herding sheep home for milking at the close of each day, cf. *Od.* 9.233-249, 307-314, 337-342. Unless it is lambing season, or they are lactating ewes, modern sheep usually are kept in their pastures day and night.

³⁶⁶ Eustathios’ explanation of the passage is as follows: δείκνυσι δὲ διὰ τούτων ὁ ποιητὴς καθ’ ἱστορίαν, ἀγαθὰς εἶναι νομὰς ἐν τῇ τῶν Λαιστρυγόνεων γῆ, τὰς μὲν βουκόλοις, τὰς δὲ ποιμέσι. καὶ τοὺς μὲν βουκόλους νύκτωρ νέμειν διὰ τὸν ἐπιπολάζοντα τοῖς βουσὶν ἐκεῖ πολέμιον οἶστρον τὸν καὶ μύωπα. ὃς δὴ ζωύφιόν ἐστιν ἐχθρὸν βουσί, τοὺς δὲ ποιμένας βόσκειν ἡμέρας οὔσης. (In this way, the poet shows that according to [his] research, there are good laws in the land of the *Laistrygones*, some for herdsmen, some for shepherds, and that the herdsmen pasture [their cattle] by night because of the troublesome gadflies and horseflies that hover over the cattle. Since these little creatures are hostile to cattle, it is the shepherds who graze during the day.) Eustathios, *Commentary on Odyssey* 10.84-88.

³⁶⁷ Virgil described the gadfly as a terrible pest, mentioning the torments of *Io*, and recommended as a remedy:

*hunc quoque (nam mediis fervoribus acrior instat)
arcebis gravido pecori, armentaue pasces
sole recens orto aut noctem ducentibus astris.* (*Geo.* 3.154-6)

(This too (for it threatens more harshly in the middle of the heat), you will ward off from your plentiful flock, and you will graze your herds when the sun has just risen or when the stars are leading in the night.)

³⁶⁸ Translators have found this line problematic. Robert Fitzgerald rendered it as “the low night path of the sun is near the sun’s path by day,” Fitzgerald 168. Allen Mandelbaum’s rather nebulous translation is: “the paths of light traverse both day and night,” Mandelbaum 193. Robert Fagels rendered it even more vaguely as “the nightfall and the sunrise march so close together.” Fagels 233. Richmond Lattimore, in his translation mirrored the line’s ambiguity to good effect: “There the courses of the night and day lie close together.” Lattimore 154.

³⁶⁹ Stanford 1.368. The polar night was a puzzling idea to the ancients. Herodotos, for example, mentioned that he had heard about people living in the very far north who were said to sleep for six months at a time, an idea he dismissed as incredible. “οἱ δὲ φαλακροὶ οὔτοι λέγουσι, ἐμοὶ μὲν οὐ πιστὰ λέγοντες,

οἰκέειν τὰ ὄρεα αἰγίποδας ἄνδρα, ὑπερβάντι δὲ τούτους οἱ τὴν ἑξάμηνον κατεύδουσι.
τοῦτο δὲ οὐκ ἐνδέκομαι ἀρχήν.” (*Hist.* 4.25) In the *Theogony*, Hesiod described the home of Night as
place where Day and Night greet each other daily as they change guard: “ἴθι Νύξ τε καὶ Ἡμέρη ἄσσον
ἰοῦσαι/ ἀλλήλας προσέειπον...” (*Theog.* 748-9). For a thorough discussion of the history of this
interpretation, see Heubeck and Hoekstra 2.48.

³⁷⁰ DKV 48.

³⁷¹ Richard Hennig, *Die Geographie des Homerischen Epos: Eine Studie über die erdkundliche Elemente der Odyssee. Neue Wege Zur Antike* 10 (1934) 79-82. Johann Heinrich Voss, *Homers Odyssee* (Hamburg 1781: Stuttgart 1881) 174.

³⁷² Johann Heinrich Voss, *Homers Odyssee* (Stuttgart 1814: 1872) 114.

³⁷³ Bergler’s translation of these lines is as follows:

*Sex dierum quidem continue navigavimus noctesque dies
Septima vero venimus Lami ad excelsam urbem,
Longe distantes portas habentem Læstrygoniam, ubi pastorem pastor
Evocat ingens pecus, alter vero exigens obedire solet.
Ibi insomnis vir duplicem perciperet mercedem,
Unam pascendus bobus, alteram albis pecudibus
Prope enim noctisque et diei sunt viæ.*

³⁷⁴ DKV 18.195. Bodmer’s version was published in Zürich in 1778.

³⁷⁵ DKV 18.195. Voss substantially revised his *Odyssey* translation after the first edition, and gave Goethe a copy of this four-volume edition as a present on or about 7 October 1814 (Ruppert 177). The changes he made may reflect the influence of Goethe. As printed in 1814, the passage read:

*Drauf am siebenten kam ich zur lästrygonischen Veste
Lamos thurmender Stadt Telepylos: dort wo dem Hirten
Ruft eintreibend der Hirt, und der austreibend ihn höret,
Und wo ein Mann schlaflos zweifältigen Lohn sich erwürbe,
Diesen als Rinderhirt, und den als Hüter des Wollviehs;
Denn nah ist zu des Tags und der nächtlichen Weide der Ausgang.*

³⁷⁶ The first Voss translation was published in Hamburg in 1781.

³⁷⁷ DKV 18.196.

³⁷⁸ Heubeck surmised that Lamos might have been a legendary founder-king of the city. Heubeck and Hoekstra 48. Horace and the *gens Lamia*, as noted above, took it for granted, as did Ovid (*Met.* 14.233 ff). Virgil used Lamos as a proper name: Nisus kills a Rutulian Lamos at *Aen.* 9.334. Ovid (*Her.* 9.54) mentioned a Lamos who was the son of Omphale and Herakles, as did Diodoros of Sicily (4.31).

³⁷⁹ Herbert Weir Smyth, *Greek Grammar* (Cambridge 1920: 1984) 313, section 1292.

³⁸⁰ DKV 317, section 1322.

³⁸¹ Voss, unlike Bodmer a professional philologist, may have been thinking of Horace *Odes* 3.16 and 3.17. His own translation of Horace’s complete works appeared in 1806.

³⁸² Bergler 247.

³⁸³ The other use of this word occurs at *Od.* 23.318. “It is by no means certain that the following phrase should be read as Τηλέπυλον Λαιστρυγονίην ‘the Laestrygonian town Telepylus’ or as τ. qualifying Λ as the name of the town; the meaning and morphology of τηλεπυλος are quite obscure.” Heubeck and Hoekstra 48.

³⁸⁴ DKV 18.196-7, 1135.

³⁸⁵ DKV 18.196.

³⁸⁶ Bergler 247.

³⁸⁷ A. Kappelmeister wrote “*Eymologisch kann “Tälepulos” nicht die Stadt mit doppelten Türen sein, sondern “ferntörig,” d.h. die Stadt mit einem Tore, deren Flügel sehr groß sind.*” (“From an etymological standpoint, Telepylos cannot be “the city with double gates.” Rather [it must be] “far-gated,” which is to say “the city with one gate, the leaves of which are very large.”) This would seem closer to the mark, but in the absence of other occurrences of the word, Kapellmeister’s assertion remains merely a conjecture. A. Kappelmeister, “Goethe als Homerübersetzer und Homerinterpret” *WS* (1901) 1060. Another untenable reading is that of Denys Page, who argued that since the meaning of τηλεπυλος defeated even him, the word must have been ancient, and probably mystifying even to the author of the *Odyssey* and the poem’s original audience. “The poet has this adjective here because it and always has been linked to the noun Λαιστρυγονίην; neither he nor anyone else knew what it meant.” Denys Page, *Folktales in Homer’s Odyssey* (Cambridge 1976) 37. Page may have been right, but his claim remains unproven and unprovable.

³⁸⁸ DKV 18.196.

³⁸⁹ DKV 18.197.

³⁹⁰ Smyth 681-2, section 3042.

³⁹¹ Page assumed that two grazing shifts took place during an extended summer day, indicating that the Laestrygonians live in the far North. He failed, however to take into consideration that the Homeric text speaks of the closeness of day and night’s paths in the land of the Laistrygones as a constant condition, whereas the continual daylight of Arctic summer is balanced by a correspondingly long winter night. Page 39-40.

³⁹² DKV 18.197.

³⁹³ Suphan 16.

³⁹⁴ Johann Heinrich Voss, *Homers Odyssee* (Hamburg 1782; Stuttgart 1872) 114.

³⁹⁵ With respect to the introduction of archaeological knowledge into the essay, Suphan wrote: “*Sie zeigt uns, wie er auch in diesem Bezirk das Verständnis sich auf Anschauung gründen läßt. Dies giebt ihr immer einen Werth.*” (“It shows us how under these circumstance he allowed his understanding to be guided by what he had seen. This gives it a permanent value.”) Suphan 16.

³⁹⁶ Suphan 15.

³⁹⁷ Perhaps Goethe found it impossible to imagine a tragic ending for the *Odyssey*. Yet although the reunion of Penelope and Odysseus provides the epic with a satisfying conclusion, the *Odyssey* does close with various issues still unaddressed. The vengeful families of the slain suitors are pacified in Book 24, but ancient readers were divided on whether Odysseus and Penelope actually did live happily ever after.

³⁹⁸ Boyle 506-7.

³⁹⁹ The text of Gallus' elegies was as yet unknown.

⁴⁰⁰ Dominick Jost, *Deutsche Klassik: Goethes Römische Elegien* (Pullach 1974) 47.

⁴⁰¹ Voss (1872) 174-5 and passim.

⁴⁰² Only once did Goethe call the bed a *Bette* (Elegy 2, *Mehr als ich ahndete schön*). Similarly unique is *Stätte* (Elegy 11, second version, *Alexander und Caesar und Heinrich*). Elsewhere, including in the original version of Elegy 11, it is routinely called a *Lager* (Elegy 2, *Mehr als ich ahndete schön*; Elegy 14, *Amor bleibt ein Schalk*; Elegy 20, *Eines ist mir verdrießlich*). DKV 1. 394,412,413,416,417,428.

⁴⁰³ Jost 47.

⁴⁰⁴ Trevelyan 183.

⁴⁰⁵ Hans Rudolph Veget, Introduction to *Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's Roman Elegies and The Diary*, trans. David Luke (London 1988) 11.

⁴⁰⁶ Faustina's true identity remains uncertain, but of her historicity there is very little doubt.

⁴⁰⁷ Goethe's letters to Carl August are among his most sexually explicit. Goethe did periodically burn his old correspondence, and it seems reasonable to assume that some of his most private letters do not survive. Those to Carl August may have escaped destruction simply because of the status of their addressee. Yet it may be that Goethe had attained a level of closeness with Carl August that was unique for him; the two had shared many adventures during Goethe's first wild years in Weimar, and Carl August's reputation as a ladies' man is well-attested. Their adventures may have been resumed upon Goethe's return from Italy. In a letter to the Duke dated 16 November 1788, Goethe described the three beautiful daughters of a court official and made plans for their visit to Weimar. The closing words of the letter are "*Ich schäme mich vor Ihnen der Studenten Ader nicht, die sich wieder in mire zu beleben anfängt.*" DKV 30. 448. "With you, I am not ashamed of my student streak, which is beginning to flare up in me once again."

⁴⁰⁸ DKV 30.387-8.

⁴⁰⁹ In the *Italienische Reise* entry for 14 March 1788, Goethe recorded how happy he had been in recent weeks: "*Ja kann ich sagen daß ich die höchste Zufriedenheit meines Lebens in diesen letzten acht Wochen genossen habe...*" ("Indeed, I can say in the last eight weeks, I have enjoyed the greatest happiness of my life.") DKV 15.556.

⁴¹⁰ DKV 30.408. The text of the letter includes a sketch of an enameled French brooch in the shape of a heart; Goethe must have been in an uncharacteristically sentimental mood.

⁴¹¹ The speed with which Goethe accepted Christiane into his life suggests that he had returned from Rome with the express intention of taking a mistress as soon as possible. Trevelyan 180-181.

⁴¹² The relationship with Vulpius was not the only factor in this breach; Goethe had been foolish enough to tell Charlotte von Stein about his Roman lover. He referred to this in a letter to her dated 1 June 1789: “*Was ich in Italien verlassen habe, mag ich nicht wiederholen, du hast mein Vertrauen darüber unfreundlich genug aufgenommen.*” DKV 30.489. (“I dare not rehearse again what I left in Italy, since you received my confidences on the subject in such an unfriendly way.”) Their correspondence would resume in 1794, but the coolness that had grown between them would severely constrain the friendship. Boyle 2.454-5.

⁴¹³ Vaget 9.

⁴¹⁴ Of the four others, three died in infancy and one was stillborn.

⁴¹⁵ DKV 1.1089.

⁴¹⁶ For a thorough discussion and survey of work on structure in the *Römische Elegien*, see Eva Dessau Bernhardt, *Goethe's Römische Elegien: The Lover and the Poet* (Bern 1990) 13-28.

⁴¹⁷ Tibullus' Book I, for instance, contains some 810 lines. Tibullus' second book contains only six poems and a total of, at most 438 lines, assuming that three couplets are missing from 2.3. Hard evidence to support the conclusion that book is incomplete, however, is scanty. Paul Murgatroyd, *Tibullus Elegies II* (Oxford 1994) (xi-xv). For an argument that the book is incomplete, see M.D. Reeve, “Tibullus 2.6” *Phoenix* 38 (1984) 235-9.

⁴¹⁸ In a letter to Carl August, written on 20 November, 1789, Goethe referred to the project as a “*Büchlein.*” DKV 30.506.

⁴¹⁹ Theodore Ziolkowsky, *The Classical German Elegy, 1795-1950* (Princeton 1980) 74.

⁴²⁰ Karl Philipp Moritz, *Versuch einer deutschen Prosodie* (Berlin 1786).

⁴²¹ Voss realized that accent and quantity are different things in German, but did not recommend that writers of German hexameters consider only quantity. Instead, he preferred a compromise that would make use of both. At the time when he was writing the *Römische Elegien*, Goethe had not read Voss' work yet, but he was to consult him on metrical issues from 1793 onwards. Trevelyan 195-6. Voss' *Ueber den deutschen Hexameter* first appeared as part of the prologue to his edition of Virgil's *Georgics* (Hamburg 1789; Altona 1831).

⁴²² DKV 1.1082.

⁴²³ Trevelyan 297-8.

⁴²⁴ Ziolkowsky 74-5.

⁴²⁵ H.G. Haile “Prudery in the Publication History of Goethe's *Roman Elegies*” *The German Quarterly* 49 (May 1976) 287-294.

⁴²⁶ Jost 183-4. Jost's edition includes a full *apparatus criticus* that takes into account five manuscripts and nine separate printings of the cycle.

⁴²⁷ DKV 12.189-94. The edition of the *Priapaea* he possessed was that of Scaliger, published in Padua in 1664. Ruppert 202, Grumach 1.385-88. The commentary includes the solution to a rebus poem: a childish line-drawing of a penis.

⁴²⁸ Vaget 16; Harry Haile, "Goethe. *Erotica Romana*" *Boston University Journal* 27 (1979) 3-19; Bernhardt 23.

⁴²⁹ Because of the multiple orderings to which the cycle has been subjected over years, the elegies are here referenced by their original numbers in the manuscript and opening words.

⁴³⁰ DKV 31.67-8.

⁴³¹ Vaget 9.

⁴³² DKV 1.392.

⁴³³ Since the Priapus poems contain little or no Homeric material, they will not be discussed in detail.

⁴³⁴ DKV 1.392.

⁴³⁵ DKV 1.392.

⁴³⁶ Francis Cairns felt that Tibullus was the inventor of the deceptive beginning in elegy. Francis Cairns, *Tibullus: a Hellenistic Poet at Rome* (Cambridge 1979) 191.

⁴³⁷ This abode of love is described as a "*niedre, zierliche Pforte*" (lowly and dainty entrance), certainly a phrase with some erotic connotations. This may have been one reason the elegy seemed to Schiller unfit for publication. "*Zierlich*" was the term Goethe used to qualify female genitalia in the withheld Venetian epigram 34, *Was ich am meisten besorge*. DKV 1.470-471.

⁴³⁸ Tibullus 1.1 in particular is full of reflections on the theme of *paupertas: me mea paupertas traducat vita inertis* (1.1.5); *non ego divitias patrum fructusque requiro* (1.1.41); *parva seges satis est* (1.1.44).

⁴³⁹ Bernhardt 47.

⁴⁴⁰ DKV 31.121.

⁴⁴¹ DKV 1.394.

⁴⁴² Karl Eibl wrote: "*Insofern hat auch die Entkleidung am Ende der elegie durchaus symbolische Beisinn: Erst muß die kontingente Hülle des Menschlichen, der zeit- und gesellschafts Plunder, herab, dann aber genießt der Reisende dasselbe, was auch Jupiter geneißt.*" ("To this extent, the undressing at the end of the elegy has a completely symbolic secondary meaning: the incidental teguments of mortality, the trappings of time and society must first be discarded. Then, however, the traveler can enjoy the same things that Jupiter too enjoyed.") DKV 1.1100.

⁴⁴³ Propertius 1.2.7-8, and 2.29A.7; Ovid *Am.* 1.10.15-16. Sulpicia, whose work Goethe would have known as part of the *Corpus Tibullianum*, also discussed issues of privacy and openness in terms of nakedness: "*Tandem venit Amor, qualem texisse pudoris/ quam nudasse alicui sit mihi fama magis.*" Francis Cairns traced a long and honorable Hellenistic lineage for Amor's nudity. Cairns 37-8.

⁴⁴⁴ Bernhardt 49.

⁴⁴⁵ This is a reflection of Ovid, *Met.* 1.468-74, in which the poet described the arrows the vengeful Cupid uses to insure that Apollo will love Daphne, but that she will not love him in return. Goethe innovated

on his source; in his original manuscript, the arrows are “*tausendfach*,” (thousand-fold); in the first printing, somewhat more weakly “*vielfach*” (multiple).

⁴⁴⁶ DKV 1.398.

⁴⁴⁷ James W. Halporn, Martin Ostwald, and Thomas G. Rosenmeyer, *The Meters of Greek and Latin Poetry* (Indianapolis 1994) 67-71.

⁴⁴⁸ DKV 1.399.

⁴⁴⁹ Bernhardt 53-56.

⁴⁵⁰ Bergler 716-730.

⁴⁵¹ Bernhardt 53.

⁴⁵² Modern American readers will know the melody, later quoted in Beethoven’s Op. 91 *Wellingtons Sieg* (1813), as “The Bear Went Over the Mountain.” The tune’s popularity proved exceptionally enduring. As late as 1874, Thomas Hardy was able to assume that his audience would recognize it: the Casterbridge chimes play “Malbrook.” Thomas Hardy, *Far From the Madding Crowd* (Oxford 1993) 291.

⁴⁵³ Rumors circulating about Virgil’s Dido lead her people to blame her and Aeneas for neglecting their royal duties in amorous play, but they do not censure her for faithlessness to the dead Sychaeus. (*Aen.* 4.191-5.) Ovid’s Dido, however, describes the voice of her late husband calling to her from the underworld, summoning her to join him there (*Her.* 7.154-8.)

⁴⁵⁴ Bernhart perceived that Goethe’s elegiac domina was here taking on a larger than elegiac role at this juncture, but did not carry her intuition further than this tentative conclusion: “As she ends by telling her lover to go, she is impressive, almost heroic in stature.” Bernhart 85.

⁴⁵⁵ Whether or not Penelope is being disingenuous with the disguised Odysseus in *Od.* 19, at the end of the book, in bed, she inconsolably weeps for her lost husband until Athene puts her to sleep. (*Od.* 19.693-4).

⁴⁵⁶ DKV 1.408.

⁴⁵⁷ *Am.* 2.6 is a fine parody of Catullus 1.2, itself a slyly humorous piece lamenting the death of Lesbia’s pet sparrow.

⁴⁵⁸ DKV 1.408.

⁴⁵⁹ DKV 1.408.

⁴⁶⁰ Torches were part of Roman weddings, but also associated with elegiac love. Tibullus’ mistress Nemesis uses a torch to torment him (*Tib.* 2.4.5-6) The traditional association of love and torches persisted even into Christian times; in Italy, St. Valentine’s Day was called *Domenica de Brandonibus*. Brewer 152.

⁴⁶¹ Bernhardt noted that *Freude* was Goethe’s usual word in this cycle for physical pleasure. Bernhardt 108, note 3. Here, however a double entendre can be admitted, since Faustina has had to leave the bed in order to stir up the fire.

⁴⁶² Stanford 1.297.

⁴⁶³ Tibullus also mentions this requirement in his description of a rural celebration of the same festival:

*vos quoque abesse procul iubeo, discedat ab aris,
cui tulit hesterna gaudia nocte Venus.
casta placent superis...* (Tib. 2.1.11-13)

I bid you as well, keep far from the altar
you to whom last night Venus brought joy
chastity pleases the gods....

⁴⁶⁴ These jokes may have become part of the mysteries at Eleusis: as part of the ritual there, on the fifth day, initiates crossed a bridge, where masked figures pelted them with abuse and obscenities. G.E. Mylonas, *Eleusis and the Eleusinian Mysteries* (Princeton 1961) 256.

⁴⁶⁵ DKV 1.414.

⁴⁶⁶ DKV 1.415.

⁴⁶⁷ DKV 416-17.

⁴⁶⁸ Goethe seems to have invented the connection between the story of Iasion and the Eleusinian Mysteries.

⁴⁶⁹ DKV 1.416-17.

⁴⁷⁰ DKV 1.416-17.

⁴⁷¹ DKV 1.416-19. In the second version of the elegy, the words “*die Attische Schule*” were changed to “*die Schule der Griechen*.”

⁴⁷² In *Am.* 1.1 Ovid complains not that his creative process has been stopped short by Amor, but rather that he is now unable to write hexameters, since the god has taken away one foot from his verse. When he complained that he had no fitting material for the elegiac meter, the god promptly presented him with a painful romantic obsession.

⁴⁷³ DKV 1.418-19.

⁴⁷⁴ DKV 1.418-20.

⁴⁷⁵ DKV 1.421.

⁴⁷⁶ DKV 1.420-21.

⁴⁷⁷ Lind 198. The most notable earlier treatment of the subject is the Latin hexameter poem *Syphilis* of Girolamo Fracastoro of Verona (1478-1533). First published in Verona in 1530, *Syphilis* also contains one of the earliest European poetic depictions of the first voyage of Columbus. Geoffrey Eatough, ed., *Fracastoro's Syphilis: Introduction, Text, Translation and Notes* (Liverpool 1984) 2.

⁴⁷⁸ DKV 1.418.

⁴⁷⁹ Bernhardt 154.

⁴⁸⁰ On 6 April 1789, Goethe wrote to his patron “*Sagen Sie mir gelegentlich ein Wort wie Sie sich befinden. Ich fürchte das leidigliche Übel hat Sie noch nicht verlassen. Ich werde ihm ehstens in Hexametern und Pentametern aufs schmälichste begegnen, das hilft aber nicht zur Cur.*” (“Send me an occasional word how you are. I am afraid that the painful illness has not yet left you. I will soon address it in the most abusive terms in hexameters and pentameters, but that doesn’t help your cure.”)

⁴⁸¹ DKV 1.420.

⁴⁸² Herbert Jennings Rose, *A Handbook of Greek Mythology, Including its Extension to Rome* (New York 1959) 212.

⁴⁸³ Aeneas’ first view of the underworld reveals the realm of the dead as a series of chambers of horrors:

*multaque praeterea variarum monstra ferarum,
Centauri in foribus stabulant Scyllaeque biformes
et centumgeminus Briareus ac belua Lernae
horrendum stridens, flammisque armata Chimaera,
Gorgones Harpyiaque et forma tricorporis umbrae.* (Aen. 6.285-9.)

and also, many prodigies of assorted wild beasts.
in the gates, the Centaurs are stabled, and two-formed Scylla
and hundredfold Briareus and even the monster of Lerna
horribly hissing, and flame-armed Chimera
Gorgons and Harpies and the form of the three-bodied shade [Geryon].

⁴⁸⁴ Bernhardt 155-6.

⁴⁸⁵ DKV 1.420.

⁴⁸⁶ DKV 1.422.

⁴⁸⁷ DKV 1.422. L. R. Lind wrote “The worm may now be called the spirochete of syphilis, and “love’s enlivening dew” is the human semen.” Levi Robert Lind, *Johann Wolfgang von Goethe’s Roman Elegies and Venetian Epigrams* (Lawrence, Manhattan, Wichita 1974) 198. This interpretation must be meant metaphorically, since in the eighteenth century, the spirochete had not yet been identified. The line certainly does refer to contagion. Yet the identification of *Amors belebenden Tau* as semen seems forced. It would seem more likely that the phrase signifies female sexual fluids.

⁴⁸⁸ This is a reference to *DRN* 4.1073-75, in which the poet recommends sexual pleasure without romantic complications: “*nec Veneris fructu caret is qui vitat amorem...*” (“nor does the man who eschews love miss the delight of sex.”)

⁴⁸⁹ Prop. 4.8 is an amusing account of how the elegist, seeking to be unfaithful to his absent domina, finds himself cuckolded in his turn.

⁴⁹⁰ DKV 1.422.

⁴⁹¹ The effects of heavy metal treatment for syphilis are for the most part merely palliative, but mercury ointment, if applied during the primary stage of the disease, sometimes effected a cure. George Davis Gammon, M.D., Yale University, personal communication, 13 December 2000. Already by 1530, mercury was recognized as a treatment for the disease. This is documented in Fracastoro’s *Syphilis* 2.270-1. Eatough 74.

*Argento melius persolvunt omnia vivo
pars maior: miranda etiam vis insita in illo est*

With quicksilver, most people better dissolve
all their symptoms, for it has a marvelous power.

⁴⁹² DKV 1.422.

⁴⁹³ DKV 1.422.

⁴⁹⁴ Venetian epigram 34, *Was ich am meisten besorge*. DKV 1.470-471.

⁴⁹⁵ DKV 1.430.

⁴⁹⁶ DKV 1.400. The original version of this piece includes the line “*Wäre Werther mein Bruder gewesen, ich hätte ihn erschlagen.*” (“If Werther had been my brother, I would have killed him.”) This elegy underwent an intermediate re-casting before finally taking on the form it assumed in the printed edition. Each successive version changed the shape of the poem. In the first version (originally Elegy 4), *Werther* and Goethe’s resentment at his notoriety as the book’s author are stressed. In the second version, however, the lines about Faustina’s ignorance were changed to “*Sie erkündigt sich nicht nach neuer Märe, sie fraget/ Nach dem Name des Manns, der sie sich eignete, kaum.*” DKV 402. (“She doesn’t seek out new stories; she hardly asks the name of the man she belongs to.”) The final printed version was radically changed, presenting Faustina not as ignorant or foolishly indiscriminate, but rather as solicitous: “*Sie erkündigt sich nicht nach neuer Märe, sie spähet/ Sorglich den Wünschen des Manns, dem sie sich eignete, nach...*” DKV 1.397. (“She doesn’t seek out new stories; she is attentive to the wishes of the man she belongs to.”)

⁴⁹⁷ DKV 1.420, 431.

⁴⁹⁸ DKV 1.430.

⁴⁹⁹ DKV 1.431.

⁵⁰⁰ Virgil’s description of Fama occurs in Book 4 of the *Aeneid*:

*monstrum horrendum, ingens, cui quot sunt corpore plumae
tot vigiles oculi subter (mirabile dictu)
tot linguae, totidem ora sonant, tot subrigit auris.
nocte volat caeli medio terraeque per umbram
stridens, nec dulci declinat lumina somno. (Aen. 4.181-5).*

A terrifying monster, colossal, with sleepless eyes
under every feather on her body, amazing to say;
she speaks with as many voices and mouths, and cocks as many ears.
By night she flies between the earth and sky through the shadows,
shrieking, nor does she close her eyes in sweet sleep.

⁵⁰¹ DKV 1.430,431. The text of the printed edition is the same as that of the manuscript.

⁵⁰² DKV 1.432.

⁵⁰³ DKV 1.433.

⁵⁰⁴ For a good general discussion of Herakles' relationship with Omphale, see Philip Slater, *The Glory of Hera; Greek Mythology and the Greek Family* (Boston 1968) 379. Another thorough study is Karl Galinsky's *The Herakles Theme: the Adaptations of the Hero in Literature from Homer to the Twentieth Century* (Oxford 1972).

⁵⁰⁵ Cairns 28, 43, 81, 138.

⁵⁰⁶ Paul Murgatroyd, *Tibullus Elegies II* (Oxford 1994) 98. Murgatroyd rightly saw this detail as humorous.

⁵⁰⁷ Most of the Augustans' source material for this myth is from comedy, in which Herakles was a popular figure. The fifth century BC poet and playwright Ion wrote a satyr play called 'Ομφάλη, as did the fourth century BC writer of comedy, Kratinos the Younger. Nikocharēs, an early fourth century BC writer, wrote 'Ηρακλῆς γαμῶν (*Herakles the Bride*). Lucian added the detail that Herakles was beaten with Omphale's golden sandal: καὶ παϊόμενος ὑπὸ τῆς 'Ομφάλης χρυσοῦ σαυδάλω (*Dialogues of the Gods* 15.13).

⁵⁰⁸ DKV 1.433.

⁵⁰⁹ Hera's enmity toward Herakles is founded on her resentment of Zeus' liaison with Alkmene, the hero's mother.

⁵¹⁰ DKV 1.432.

⁵¹¹ Trevelyan 60.

⁵¹² DKV 1.432.

⁵¹³ DKV 1.436.

⁵¹⁴ In elegy and satire, barbers are conventionally depicted as gossips.

⁵¹⁵ DKV 1.436.

⁵¹⁶ DKV 1.438.

⁵¹⁷ Vaget made some compelling arguments for the Priapic frame as crucial for the understanding of this cycle, whose true goal he saw as the rehabilitation of Priapus and the frank celebration of sensuality. He wrote: "...the other Priapean elegy, the 'epilogue', reveals and confirms the secret mission of the Elegies, the recovery and vindication of Priapus." Vaget 13-17.

⁵¹⁸ DKV 1.416.

CHAPTER 5

“ETWAS UNENDLICHES”

Beginning in 1793, Goethe reimmersed himself in the study of Homeric epic, a subject which he confidently and accurately predicted would continue to engage him for the rest of his life. On 18 November 1793, he wrote to his old friend the merchant and philosopher Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi (1734-1819) “*Um etwas unendliches zu unternehmen habe ich mich an den Homer gemacht. Da hoffe ich nun in meinem übrigen Leben nicht zu darben.*”⁵¹⁹ (“In order to undertake something eternal, I have turned to Homer. In this way I hope never to be in want for the rest of my life.”) A new engagement with epic, if not Homer, probably pre-dated November of 1793, however, for in the same letter, Goethe noted that his poem *Reineke Fuchs*, which he had begun in January 1793, was almost ready for the printer. The epic was a considerable undertaking, comprising some 4500 lines in twelve cantos. The first draft was completed between January 1793 and 2 May of the same year.⁵²⁰ Goethe revised and corrected it in the following weeks, at the beginning of the four months he spent with Carl August near the siege of Mainz. *Reineke Fuchs* was first published in June 1794. It was Goethe’s longest work to date in hexameters. The old Low German satire upon which it is based, the picaresque story of the trickster Reynard the Fox, is hardly Homeric subject material, but Goethe did adorn his text with occasional Homeric-style epithets and turns of phrase. The book displays Goethe’s continuing fascination with both the hexameter of the Greeks and Romans and the German national literary heritage in which Herder was so interested.

Indeed, it was Herder who had first suggested that Goethe make a version of the story, for he believed that it had in it as much poetry as the *Odyssey*.⁵²¹ According to Boyle, Goethe borrowed a prose version of the story by Johann Christoph Gottsched (1700-1766) from Herder and worked from this.⁵²² The volume of Gottsched that Goethe actually used, however, was probably a copy belonging to the Weimar Court Library: records show that he had taken the book out on 30 March 1791, and did not return it until 25 January 1798.⁵²³

Reineke Fuchs received little contemporary attention, and the epic met with mixed reviews among Goethe's circle of literary friends. While Schiller and Knebel praised Goethe's verses for their suppleness and lightness, Voss and later August Wilhelm von Schlegel (1767-1845) both found Goethe's hexameters too frequently flawed to be acceptable. In a letter to Goethe written 17 July 1794, Voss was polite to Goethe, praising the work, if in muted terms, and only suggesting that he would have liked to see more metrical variation.⁵²⁴ On 13 July, however, upon first reading *Reineke Fuchs*, he had confided his first reaction in a letter to his wife, and had criticized the versification roundly:

*Goethes Reineke Voß [sic] habe ich angefangen zu lesen; aber ich kann nicht durchkommen. Goethe bat mich, ihm die schlechtesten Hexameter anzumerken; ich muß sie ihm alle nennen, wenn ich aufrichtig sein will. Ein sonderbarer Einfall, den Reineke in Hexameter zu setzen.*⁵²⁵

I started to read Goethe's *Reineke Voß* [sic], but I cannot get through it. Goethe asked me to mark the worst hexameters for him. If I want to be candid, I must mark them all. A queer notion, setting Reineke into hexameters.⁵²⁶

Goethe himself must have been conscious that some of his verses were faulty, for he had written in his 18 November 1793 letter to Jacobi "*Es macht mir noch viele Mühe, dem Verse die Aisance und Zierlichkeit zu geben die er haben muß. Wäre das Leben nicht so kurz, ich ließ ihn noch eine Weile liegen...*"⁵²⁷ ("It is still giving me a lot of trouble to lend

the meter the ease and grace it ought to have. If life were not so short, I would let it be for a while yet...”). Eager to be done with the massive project, he sent it to the printer that month. Seven years later, Goethe would embark on a revision of the epic under the guidance of Schlegel, trying to bring the prosody of the poem more into line with the Homeric hexameter, but this daunting undertaking was never completed.

In the same notebook that contains some revised lines from *Reineke Fuchs* and diary entries for May 1793 there appears a translation of *Od.* 7.81-85. Since later entries also appear in the notebook, these lines cannot be dated definitively, but they probably were written at the Siege of Mainz.⁵²⁸ These five lines seem to be Goethe’s earliest surviving translation of Homeric epic. He had long made a practice of extemporaneously translating aloud for friends, especially when traveling.⁵²⁹ It is tempting to think that this fragment might have been jotted down after such a reading. In this passage at the beginning of the seventh book of the *Odyssey*, Odysseus has been led to the dwelling of Alkinoos, by Athena, who is disguised as a young girl. Although Athena gives the hero useful advice about how to approach Alkinoos and Arete, she tells him nothing about the unusual nature of the palace itself.⁵³⁰ Instead, she vanishes, flying over the sea to Athens, where she enters the well-built house of Erechtheus (δῦνε δ’ Ἐρεχθῆος πυκινὸν δόμον *Od.* 7.81), on the Akropolis. This provides an easy narrative transition to Odysseus’ own movement toward the Scherian palace, which forms the second half of the line. At this point Odysseus is left on his own, confronted with an awe-inspiring edifice.

αὐτὰρ Ὀδυσσεὺς
 Ἄλκινόου πρὸς δώματ’ ἴε κλυτά. πολλὰ δέ οἱ κῆρ
 ὥρμαιν’ ἰσταμένω, πρὶν χάλκεον οὐδὸν ἰκέσθαι
 ὥς τε γὰρ ἠελίου αἴγλη πέλεν ἠὲ σελήνης
 δῶμα καθ’ ὑπερεφές μεγαλήτορος Ἄλκινόοιο.

But Odysseus
approached the glorious palace of Alkinoos. His heart pondered
much as he stood there before he reached the bronze threshold,
for there was a radiance like that of the sun or the moon
around the high-roofed house of great-hearted Alkinoos.

Goethe rendered the text as follows:

Aber Ulysses
Nahte sich der herlichen [sic]Wohnung Alcinous und es bewegte
Sich das Herz ihm viel er stand und dachte er - -
Denn wie die Sonne leuchtet oder der Mond
*So leuchtet es um das Haus des großmutigen Alcinous.*⁵³¹

But Ulysses
approached the princely home of Alkinoos and his heart
moved much within him. He stood and he thought
For as the sun shines, or the moon
so did it shine around the house of great-hearted Alkinoos.

The translation is on the whole a close one, although Goethe appears to have been in some doubt over the appropriate reading for ὀρμαίνω. The verb can mean either “to ponder over” or “to be eager, chafe, fret.”⁵³² The latter reading is only post-Homeric, however, and Goethe may have been thinking less of the Homeric vocabulary he had known better in his Italian days than of the usage of authors he had been reading more recently such as Plato and Theokritos.⁵³³ If he had taken a text with him on the campaign in Mainz, he would most likely have chosen Bergler’s compact little octavo edition, which does read ὄρμαίν’.⁵³⁴ If he was translating from memory, or working with a text but no lexicon, however, he might have misremembered the verb as ὀρμάω, which in an Homeric context can mean “to spur or goad oneself on.”⁵³⁵ That he was indeed working from memory is suggested by the fact that Bergler’s Latin translation: “*plurima vero illi cor/cogitabat stanti*”⁵³⁶ (“...indeed, his heart pondered much as he stood there”) makes the meaning of ὄρμαίν’ plain. If the book had been at hand, it seems hard to believe that Goethe would not have consulted the facing translation. His hesitancy in translating the word is shown by his inclusion of both possibilities. This crowded the line enough so that it became impossible to fit in the phrase πρὶν χάλκεον οὐδὸν ικέσθαι (before going

over the bronze threshold). At a loss, Goethe let the line break off and forewent the impressive detail of Alkinoos' bronze threshold, rather than allowing a hypermetric line.

"*Leuchtet es*" is a surprisingly prosaic rendering of αἴγλη πέλεν, but it gives the line a pleasing simplicity that works on the same level as some of the other plain, homely words he chose for his translation. Goethe's diction (*Wohnung, Haus*) de-emphasizes the kingly grandeur of Alkinoos' palace. He did translate κλυτὰ faithfully as *herlich* (splendid), but other word-choices suggest that his intent was to bring the palace down to mortal scale. Indeed, in the last line, he chose to leave out the impressive ὑπερεφῆς (high-roofed). His use of "*Leuchtet es*" had left little space for ornamental epithets, and he preferred to retain the warmer and more human of the two descriptive terms, μεγάλητῶρ (great-hearted, great-souled), rendering it as *großmutig* (generous, magnanimous), a word with friendlier connotations than the Homeric original necessarily carries.

The ultimate effect of these choices of wording is to focus the reader's attention on Odysseus and his reactions rather than on the scene around him. With the high roof and bronze threshold absent, the palace is merely a home, however *herlich*, while the heroic and lordly Alkinoos is changed into the amiable host he will prove to be when Odysseus finally meets him. The terror and mystery of the original is dimmed, but the human figures become more vivid.

Later, possibly also in 1793, Goethe translated the passage again, this time as part of a longer excerpt that included lines 78-131.⁵³⁷ 1793 was the same year in which Voss' translation of the *Iliad* and the second, much revised edition of his *Odyssey* translation appeared. Goethe's translations may have been an attempt to see whether he could surpass Voss' versions, at least in a few favorite passages. Voss himself spent the summer of 1794 in Weimar, where he read parts of his Homer translations to the *Freitagsgesellschaft*, a circle of the leading Weimar intellectuals who met weekly at

Goethe's house to discuss literature and culture. Perhaps these readings were what prompted Goethe to make his first extensive translations of Homeric epic.

The second version of the passage differs markedly from the fragment above. Ulysses remains on center stage, but the remarkable appearance of the palace is given its full due. Now less concerned to translate line-for-line, Goethe made free use of enjambment.

*Aber Ulysses erreichte des Königs Wohnung, da stand er,
Dachte vieles bei sich eh er die Schwelle berührte.
Denn wie die Sonn und Mond uns blenden, so leuchtet es glänzend
Um die hohe Wohnung Alcinous...⁵³⁸*

But Ulysses reached the home of the king, where he stood
And thought many things privately, before touching the threshold.
For just as the sun and the moon dazzle us, so it shone brilliantly
Around the high home of Alkinoos.

This translation is much looser than his earlier attempt, but still polished, accurate, and highly readable. Ulysses, now moved to the beginning of a line, retains in this marked position the prominence he enjoyed at the end of the line in the Homeric original. His actions are conditioned by his reaction to the sights before his eyes, and as he halts before the threshold, the narrative too halts, as it does in the original, and as it had in Goethe's first rendering of these lines. In Goethe's reading of this passage, the palace of Alkinoos is presented through the meditative gaze of Ulysses. It is hardly disturbing for the reader that Alkinoos' epithet *μεγαλήτῳρ* is not present in this translation, for how can Ulysses know that the king is great-hearted until he has met him? Indeed, Alkinoos himself is to some extent placed in the background: the *Odyssey* text and Goethe's first translation had mentioned him by name twice, but here in line 78, he is referred to merely as a *König*. The descriptions of the building and its gardens, explicitly focalized, gain an immediacy lacking in the first attempt at translation, but present, though in a different way, in the original. Ulysses' emotional response to what he sees is not specified in

Goethe's translation, but a direct comparison to an ordinary human experience summons the reader to enter into the hero's experience and to picture a kind of effulgence at once familiar and magical. Goethe significantly altered the original Greek by translating ὥς τε γὰρ ἡελίου αἴγλη πέλεν ἢ σελήνης ("for there was a radiance like that of the sun or the moon") as "*Wie die Sonn und Mond uns blenden,*" ("as the sun and the moon dazzle us") but his decision was sound. The phrase invites a close engagement with the text, since it implies that both the reader and the effaced narrator have experienced something at least comparable to the radiance that surrounds the palace, and can therefore easily imagine what this brilliant light might have looked like.

The quality of the light (*glänzend*) in the passage is reminiscent of Ulysses' praise for Alkinoos' kingdom in *Nausikaa*: "*Ein weißer Glanz ruht über Land und Meer.*"⁵³⁹ ("A white radiance rests over the land and the sea") Perhaps while translating this passage, Goethe was remembering the impact that the southern sunlight had had upon him in Sicily six years previously. This was the same passage he had translated extemporaneously for his companion Kneip on 7 April 1787 in Palermo. He had written in the *Italienische Reise* that he hoped that someday, back up North, it would be possible for him to recreate a vision of the Sicilian countryside and shoreline, which he had identified so strongly with the land of the Phaiakians, in literary form: "*...auch dereinst in Norden aus meiner Seele Schattenbilder dieser glücklichen Wohnung hervor zu bringen*"⁵⁴⁰ ("...also, someday up North, to bring forth from my soul silhouettes of this happy abode"). His choice of the word *Schattenbilder* is an interesting projection: surrounded by a highly colored landscape, he imagined his own attempts to re-create it as doomed to be merely monochromatic.⁵⁴¹ He might have been thinking of the black and white of a printed page rather than silhouettes or engravings. His return to the Homeric passage he had read with such delight in Palermo seems to be an attempt to fulfill his old wish, for echoes of Goethe's Sicilian readings of Homer abound in this translation.

Notable in the lines following Odysseus' first approach to the palace are the prominent placement of color-words and words for metals. Colors, too, had had a vivid impact on Goethe during his Sicilian stay, especially the sky-blue hue of the sea (*Himmelblau*), that he had likened to the best ultramarine pigment.⁵⁴² He also described minutely the colors of the landscape at sunrise: *“Der Widerschein der aufgehenden Sonne und des Monds zeigt sich erst in der Nähe des Beobachters und geht nach hinten zu, ist erst röthlich dann gelblich dann Silber...Schöne Gegensätze der hell und dunkeln Töne...”*⁵⁴³ (“The reflection of the rising sun and moon is first apparent in the vicinity of the observer and then proceeds into the background, is first reddish, then yellowish, then silver... Beautiful contrasts between light and dark shades...”). As Goethe translated the following section, the bright metallic colors in Alkinoos' palace might well have recalled to his mind the hues of a southern landscape.

χάλκεοι μὲν γὰρ τοῖχοι ἔληλέατ' ἔνθα καὶ ἔνθα,
 ἐς μυχὸν ἐξ οὐδοῦ, περὶ δὲ θριγκὸς κυάνοιο·
 χρύσειαι δὲ θύραι πυκινὸν δόμον ἐντὸς ἔεργον·
 ἀργύρεοι σταθμοὶ δ' ἐν χαλκῷ ἔστασαν οὐδῶ,
 ἀργύρεον δ' ἐφ' ὑπερθύριον, χρυσῆ δὲ κορώνη.
 χρύσειοι δ' ἐκάτερθε καὶ ἀργύρεοι κύνες ἦσαν
 οὓς Ἥφαιστος τεύξεν ἰδυίησι πρᾶπίδεσσι
 δῶμα φυλασσέμεναι μεγάλητορος Ἀλκινόοιο,
 ἀθανάτους καὶ ἀγήρωσ ἦματα πάντα. (*Od.* 7.86-94)⁵⁴⁴

χρῦσειοι δ' ἄρα κοῦροι ἐνδμήτων ἐπὶ βωμῶν
 ἔστασαν αἰθομένας δαΐδας μετὰ χερσὶν ἔχοντες. (*Od.* 7.101-2)

Bronze were the walls that extended hither and yon
 from the deepest recess to the threshold, around them a molding of blue.
 Gold were the gates that closed up the well-built house from within;
 silver door-posts were set on the bronze door-sill,
 silver was the lintel above it, golden the latch.
 gold and silver watch-dogs stood on either side.
 which Hephaistos had made with cunning art
 to guard the household of great-hearted Alkinoos,
 immortal and young for all time.

Golden boys stood on well-built pedestals
 holding bright torches in their hands.

Goethe's translation displays an admirable sensitivity to the shades of emphasis communicated by word-order in this passage. Whenever possible, words for colors and metals are placed in their original positions. In following the Homer text, he was also following the example of Bergler's Latin translation, for Bergler had been at some pains to reflect the ordering of his original.⁵⁴⁵ Indeed, Bergler had in his text made the words for metals more prominent still, for in line 89 he had followed the manuscript reading and printed the unmetrical ἀργύρειοι δ' σταθμοί.⁵⁴⁶

...ehrende Mauren

*Waren hüben und drüben errichtet von vornen bis hinten,
Himmelblau lief das Gesimse herum. Es schließen von innen
Goldene Türen das Haus, es stehen silberne Pfosten
Auf der ehrenen Schwelle, die Oberschwelle von Silber
Deckt die Pforte, darin ein goldner Türning bewegt wird.
Golden' und silberne Hunde, zu beiden Seiten, bestellte
Vor Alcinoos Haus unsterbliche Wächter Hyphaistos*

*Goldene Jünglinge dann auf schönerfundenen Stühlen
Standen erhöht, mit denn Händen die brennende Fackel erhebend..⁵⁴⁷*

...bronze walls
were placed far and near, up and down,
sky-blue the cornice ran around. The house was enclosed by
gold doors, there were silver gateposts
on the bronze threshold, the lintel of silver
topped the door, within which a golden doorknob was set.
Gold and silver dogs were on either side, placed
Before Alkinoos' house as immortal guardians by Hephaistos.

Golden boys stood on beautifully made seats
placed on high, holding the burning torches in their hands.

The bronze walls, in Goethe's text, do not begin the line, but they keep some of their original prominence, placed, as they are, at the end of the line. The formulaic phrase ἔνθα καὶ ἔνθα is suitably reflected by the equally formulaic and idiomatic rhyming "*hüben und drüben.*" As in Goethe's first translation of this passage, the level of diction is kept low. Indeed, in some places, the text is even simplified. "*Von vornen bis hinten*" -- literally, "from the front to the back," -- does not really reflect ἐς μυχὸν ἐξ οὐδοῦ, "to the innermost recess (or chamber) from the threshold." This must have been a conscious

decision on Goethe's part, however, since Bergler's Latin version, which he would have had available to him at the time of the translation (sometime between 1793 and 1795), renders the line very closely as *in penetrabile a limine*.⁵⁴⁸ The decision not to name the parts of the house may reflect the fact that the scene in the translation is still being depicted as seen through the eyes of Odysseus, who has not yet seen the innermost chamber of the house.⁵⁴⁹ In this translation, therefore, the blue cornice must be imagined as an external decoration, or as part of the courtyard portico. The color-word *κυάνοιο* (blue) is moved from its original position at the end of a line to the beginning of the following line, a more emphatic position than it originally had held, and rendered as "*Himmelblau*" ("sky-blue"). Voss, in his translation, had chosen the harsher and more clumsy-sounding "*gesimst mit der blaue des Stahls*"⁵⁵⁰ ("corniced with the blue of steel,") which verges on inconcinnity, but does import one more metal-word into a passage already rich in color.⁵⁵¹ Both are vivid and easily understood renderings, but Goethe's willingness to choose a brighter shade of blue is very much in line with his sensitivity to the heightened color-values of a southern landscape. As he envisioned *θριγκὸς κυάνοιο*, Goethe may have been remembering a kind of faux-lapis-lazuli he had acquired in Sicily as part of his collection of local minerals. In his 13 April entry in the *Italienische Reise*, speaking of Sicilian lapidaries, he wrote:

*Doch wissen sie...sich noch viel mit einem Material einem Feuerzeugnis ihrer Kalköfen. In diesen findet sich nach dem Brande eine Art Glasfluß, welcher, von der hellsten blauen Farbe zur dunkelsten, ja zur schwärztesten übergeht. Diese Klumpen werden, wie anderes Gestein, in dünne Tafeln geschnitten, nach der Höhe ihrer Farbe und Reinheit geschätzt und anstatt Lapis Lazuli, beim Fournieren von Altären, Grabmälern, und andern kirchlichen Verzierungen, mit Glück angewendet.*⁵⁵²

Indeed, they are even more capable in their processing of a substance that is a by-product of the burning of their lime-kilns. In these, after the firing, a kind of melted glass appears, which ranges from the lightest shade of blue down to the darkest, and even the blackest. As with other stones, these lumps are sawn into

thin slabs, appraised according to the brilliance and purity of their colors, and used successfully as a substitute for lapis-lazuli in inlays for altars, monuments, and other ecclesiastical decorations.

The metals at the beginnings of lines 87-90 are arranged in chiasmus: χρύσειαι, ἀργύρειοι, ἀργύρεον, χρύσειοι (gold, silver, silver, gold). This arrangement Goethe preserved, although he did not choose to place all of these words at the beginnings of lines. In his translation, the color gold stands out, while silver is subordinated to some extent, although it is still strongly positioned at and near the ends of lines. The bronze threshold (*ehrenen Schwelle*) is moved up in the line, preserving the balance of the original, for in the *Odyssey* passage, the term χάλκεος appears twice, but only once at the start of a line. The color-words in this passage are densely packed: the original text features nine color-words within the space of six lines (85-90). Goethe managed the same feat in almost the same space.

Lines 91-4, as Trevelyan pointed out, were compressed by Goethe into a single couplet. This he believed was due to a “curious blindness in Goethe towards one aspect of Homeric genius... Homer’s four lines have shrunk to two, and in the process all the naïve love of the old poet for the rather obvious but significant detail has gone.”⁵⁵³ Trevelyan noted that Alkinoos had lost his epithet μεγάλητῶρ (great-hearted), and that Hephaistos’ cunning wit (“...to Homer a thing of awe whenever he thought of it and deserved to be mentioned, however obvious an attribute it was of the craftsman god”) had also been left out. He was most troubled, however by the lack of fullness in the description of Alkinoos’ metallic watch-dogs:

Saddest of all, Homer’s ἀθανάτους καὶ ἀγήρωσ ἦματα πάντα has dwindled to the single adjective “unsterbliche”. Here was to Homer the greatest marvel of all. The dogs were immortal, and not only immortal but ageless! and that for all their days! Of all this Goethe kept nothing but the one idea “immortal”, which he stuck in, unemphasized, almost unnoticed.⁵⁵⁴

Perhaps the compression in this line is not, however, the result of an insensitivity to the appeal of Homeric naiveté, but stems rather from a wish, based on sound dramatic instincts, to prolong the moment in which the house is seen through the eyes of Odysseus. Thus, Alkinoos and Ares have lost their epithets not merely for the sake of brevity, but rather because the Odysseus beholding the house is not the effaced omniscient narrator. Instead, whether consciously or unconsciously, Goethe seems to have mentally slipped for a moment back into the world of *Nausikaa*.

Only at the very end of the passage does the voice of the narrator return, for Odysseus himself can hardly know that the metal dogs are the work of Hephaistos. The narrative gains from the tightening here, although, as Trevelyan noted, some of the tone of the original is lost. Voss, in his own version of the same lines, had reflected the word order as closely as he could, especially in the placement of words for metals. He had also faithfully reflected the original number of lines devoted to the description of the watchdogs.

*Wänd' aus gediegen Erz erstreckten sich hiehin und dorthin,
Tief hinein von der Schwelle gesimst mit der Blaue des Stahls.
Eine goldene Pforte verschloß inwendig die Wohnung;
Silbern waren die Pfosten, gepflantzt auf eherner Schwelle,
Silbern war auch oben der Kranz, und golden der Thürning.
Goldene Hund' umstanden und silberne jegliche Seite
Die Hefästos gebildet mit kundigem Geist der Erfindung,
Dort des hochgesinnten Alkinoos Saal zu bewachen,
Sie unsterblich erschaffen in ewig blühender Jugend. (Od. 7.89-97)⁵⁵⁵*

Walls of pure bronze extended themselves hither and yon
deep in from the threshold corniced with the blue of steel.
A golden gate enclosed the dwelling from inside;
silver were the doorjambs, placed on the bronze threshold,
silver was the mantel above it as well, and golden the door-knob.
Golden dogs stood by, and silver, on each side
which Hephaistos had made with the clever wit of invention,
there to watch over the chamber of noble Alkinoos,
he created them deathless in eternally blooming youth.

In places, Goethe's version is more attractive and closer to the original. For example, Voss imported into the text the term *gedeigen* (pure). "*Tief hinein von der Schwelle*" loses the concreteness and specificity of ἐς μυχὸν ἐξ οὐδοῦ, while "*der Blaue des Stahls*," with its consonant clusters that make it less melodious than Goethe's choice "*himmelblau*," gives the hexameter line a rather clumsy monosyllabic ending not present in the Greek.⁵⁵⁶ The gates in the original text had been plural (χρύσειαι δὲ θύραι), while Voss made them singular, for no particular reason. "*Goldene Hund' umstanden und silberne jegliche Seite*" is a tight rendering of line 91, χρύσειοι δ' ἐκάτερθε καὶ ἀργύρεοι κύνες ἦσαν, with its separation of the two adjectives, preserving the Homeric word-order as much as possible. Translating δῶμα as *Saal*, while not strictly accurate, imparts to the line a certain grandeur. Goethe, by contrast, had chosen the humble word *Wohnung* (dwelling) for δῶμα, as had Voss himself for the same word above in line 88. Goethe's "*Unsterbliche Wächter*," while perhaps too tight a compression of lines 93-4 to constitute an accurate rendering, at least imports no extraneous material; Voss, on the other hand changed ἀθανάτους καὶ ἀγήρωσ ἦματα πάντα (literally, "immortal and young for all days") as "*unsterblich...in ewig blühender Jugend*" ("immortal... in ever-blooming youth"), a formulation that seems needlessly flowery in an Homeric context.

Voss' long chain of end-stopped lines mimics the original more closely than Goethe's rendering, which gains much of its fluidity from the poet's free use of enjambment. Another element in Goethe's translation but not in Voss' that makes the verses flow smoothly is the use of impersonal constructions with "*es*" to add an extra weak syllable where one was needed for the sake of the meter. "*Es schließen... es stehen*." This stylistic feature, while metrically convenient, also adds an air of simple story-telling to the translation, for the impersonal "*es*" is a common narrative convention for the beginnings of *Märchen* and folk-songs.⁵⁵⁷ Goethe had often used impersonal constructions in his own lyric poetry, especially when writing after the manner of

traditional ballads, a field in which he was something of an expert, having collected many himself and contributed them to Herder's 1778 and 1779 collections of *Volkslieder*.⁵⁵⁸

When the name of Hephaistos is mentioned in line 92 of the original text, it becomes clear that the narrative focus at this point has shifted away from Odysseus and his views of the building in front of him. The narrator's voice becomes more prominent, as information is revealed that Odysseus cannot know. As the panorama of the palace unfolds, the hero is frozen in front of the threshold: he has not entered the gates and gazed on the scene the narrator proceeds to describe. The main room inside is lined with the customary seats of the Phaiakian leaders whom Odysseus has not yet met. Nor has he yet gazed on the gold lamps fashioned in the image of young men. The staff of fifty housemaids at their various duties are described, but not as seen through Odysseus' eyes. In Goethe's translation, this section is characterized by still more impersonal constructions with "es," (*es sassen, es standen, es waren, es lehrte*), and a persistently low level of diction. In line 97, for instance, the leaders of the Phaiakians (ἡγήτορες Φαιήκων) are rendered as "*die ersten Phaiaken*" ("the first Phaiakians"). This seems to have been a deliberate alteration of the text, for Bergler had translated ἡγήτορες unambiguously as *ductores* rather than *principes*.⁵⁵⁹ "*Hohe Beherrscher*" ("noble rulers") was Voss' choice.⁵⁶⁰ Both Voss and Bergler opted for translations that mirrored the military connotations of ἡγήτορες, while Goethe instead chose to represent Alkinoos' guests as simply the leading citizens. The chairs on which they sit (θρόνοι) are mere *Bänke* (benches) for Goethe, while Voss chose the somewhat more dignified and luxurious *Sessel* (seats or armchairs).⁵⁶¹ These leaders constantly sit in their chairs and eat and drink, for they have never-failing abundance: ἐπιετανὸν γὰρ ἔχεσκον (*Od.* 7.99). Goethe's rendering of this short sentence is a particularly good example of his preference for the simplest possible diction: the rich and magical image of an inexhaustible store is replaced by the laconic, even off-hand remark "*Sie hatten genug*" ("They had

enough”).⁵⁶² Bernard Suphan praised this passage not only for the simple diction Goethe employed but also for its pacing: “*Es ist in jenen Sätze derselbe bald läßliche, bald anmutig begehende Gang zu merken vom dem schon im Reineke Fuchs der Leser sich angenehm fortgezogen fühlt...*”⁵⁶³ (“These lines have the same movement, now relaxed, now charmingly graceful, which had already drawn the reader along in *Reineke Fuchs*.”)

In the text of the *Odyssey*, Scheria is not described as an island, but the idea of an “Island of the Phaiakians” seems to have been well-established enough by the 1790’s that Goethe, perhaps unconsciously, imported it into his text. The phrase ὡς δὲ γυναῖκες / ἰστῶν τεχνῆσσαι (*Od.* 7.109-110) (“so are the women skilled weavers”) became in Goethe’s version “*so wissen die Frauen der Insel / Herrlich zu weben*”⁵⁶⁴ (“so do the women of the island/ know how to weave beautifully.”)⁵⁶⁵ The *Odyssey* text itself contains enough details to mislead any but the most careful of readers. Odysseus arrives there from Kirke’s island, and he requires a ship in order to get back to Ithaka. The Phaiakian men are repeatedly described as excellent sailors, which would be natural for people living on an island, though also typically Greek.⁵⁶⁶ Yet Nausikaa’s reassurance to her companions at *Od.* 6.204: οἰκέομεν δ’ ἀπάνευθε πολυκλύστῳ ἐνὶ πόντῳ (“we live far away in the much-surgng sea”) could as easily suggest a promontory as an island. Indeed, the beginning of *Od.* 6 does not mention that Phaiakians came to Scheria from Hyperia by sea. In order to reach Ithaka, whether he began his journey home from an island or a far-off coastal region, Odysseus would have needed a ship in any case, for unlike Scheria, Ithaka is undoubtedly an island. One other significant factor, however, may have conditioned Goethe’s error. If, as seems likely, he was remembering Sicily as he translated, it would have been no great mental leap to assume that Phaiakia, too, is an island.

Goethe ended his translation with lines 112-132, the description of Alkinoos’ garden, which he had depicted so vividly in *Nausikaa*. Verbal correspondences between

his translation and Nausikaa's Act 1, Scene 4 speech suggest strongly that he was influenced by Sicilian memories while translating. The speech is a much shorter and more condensed picture of the garden, but in it, all the essentials are there:

*...Dort dringen neben Früchten wied<er> Blüten
Und Frucht auf Früchte wechseln durch das Jahr
Die Pomeranze die Zitrone steht
Im dunkeln Laube und die Feige folgt
Der Feige. Rings beschützt ist rings umher
Mit Aloe und Stachel Feigen...*

*...Es rieselt neben dir der Bach geleitet <?>
Von Stamm zu Stamm der Gärtner träncket sie
Nach seinem Willen.⁵⁶⁷*

There ripe fruits are crowded out by blossoms again
and harvest after harvest, changing through the year.
The pomegranate and the lemon adorn
the dark foliage, and figs take the places of
figs. All around, on every side protected
by aloe and by prickly pears.

Next to you, the stream trickles, directed to flow
from trunk to trunk. The gardener waters them
at will.

Goethe's Nausikaa had described a garden that shares the great fertility of its Homeric model, and also its plentiful water supply (*Od.* 7.129-131). Yet Nausikaa's garden was full of exotic tropical plants that hardly belong in a Homeric garden, including the merely ornamental aloe, originally Indian and not known in the Mediterranean world until Hellenistic times, and the *cactus opuntia*, a native of the New World. The garden in *Od.* 7.113-121, however, goes some way toward explaining the Phaiakians' never-failing store, for every plant mentioned bears edible fruit.

...περὶ δ' ἔρκος ἐλήλαται ἀμφοτέρωθεν.
ἔνθα δὲ δένδρεα μακρὰ πεφύκασι τηλεθόωντα,
ὄγχυαι καὶ ῥοιαὶ καὶ μηλέαι ἀγλαόκαρποι
συκέαι τε γλυκεραὶ καὶ ἐλαῖαι τηλεθόωσαι,
τάων οὐ ποτε καρπὸς ἀπόλλυται οὐδ' ἀπολείπει
χείματος οὐδὲ θέρεως, ἐπετήσιος. ἀλλὰ μάλ' αἰεὶ
Ζεφυρὴ πνεῖουσα τὰ μὲν φύει, ἄλλα δὲ πέσσει.
ὄγχνη ἐπ' ὄγχνη γηράσκει, μῆλον δ' ἐπὶ μῆλω,
αὐτὰρ ἐπὶ σταφυλῇ σταφυλῇ, σῦκον δ' ἐπὶ σῦκῳ. (*Od.* 7.113-121)

ἐν δὲ δύω κρῆναι ἡ μὲν τ' ἀνὰ κῆπον ἅπαντα
σκίδνεται, ἡ δ' ἐτέρωθεν ὑπ' αὐλῆς οὐδὸν ἴησι
πρὸς δόμον ὑψηλόν, ὅθεν ὑδρεύοντο πολῖται.
τοῖ' ἄρ' ἐν Ἀλκινόοιο θεῶν ἔσαν ἀγλαὰ δῶρα. (Od. 7.129-132)

...hedged in on every side.

There, great flourishing trees grow:
pear trees and pomegranates, apples bearing bright fruit,
sweet figs and olive trees flourish
whose harvest never goes bad, never fails,
winter or summer, year to year. But forever and ever
Zephyros with his breathing make some spring forth, others ripen.
Pear on pear ripens, apple on apple,
bunches on bunches of grapes, fig upon fig.

There are two springs there, one which runs through the whole garden,
and another, on the other side, flows under the court threshold,
toward the high-roofed hall. The people get their water from this one.
In Alkinoos' house, such were the gifts of the gods.

Goethe's translation of this passage is as follows:

*...von allen Seiten umgezäunet.
Wohlgewachsen trugen daselbst die grünenden Bäume
Birnen, Granaten und Äpfel die Äste glänzten gebogen
Süße Feigen fanden sich da und Beeren des Ölbaums.
Niemand mangelt es hier an Früchten. Im Sommer und Winter
Bringet Zephir die einen hervor und reifet die andern.
Apfel eilet nach Apfel dem süßen Alter entgegen,
Birn nach Birn und Feige nach Feigen und Traube nach Trauben.*

*Auch zwei Quellen dringen hervor, es eilet die eine
Durch den Garten sich aus, es eilet die andere dem Haus zu,
Unter der Schwelle des Hofes hindurch und tränket die Bürger
Solche Gaben der Götter ersah man im Hause des Königs.⁵⁸⁸*

...fenced in on all sides

well grown, just there, the green trees bore
pears, pomegranates, and apples. The laden branches shone.
Sweet figs were there, and the olive-tree's fruits.
Here, the harvest never fails. In summer and winter
Zephyros makes some spring forth and ripens the others.
Apple hastens after apple to sweet ripeness,
pear after pear and fig after fig and grape after grape.

And two springs surge forth. One rushes outward
though the garden, the other rushes toward the house,
goes under the courtyard threshold, and gives the citizens water.
Such were the gifts of the gods one saw in the house of the king.

Both in Nausikaa's speech and in Goethe's translation, a sense of teeming urgency permeates the description of Alkinoos' garden. The preternatural fecundity of the garden is stressed by the use of the verbs *dringen* (to push or press) and *eilen* (to rush). *Eilen* was a conscious choice on Goethe's part, for he had first written *reifen* (to ripen), and then emended it.⁵⁶⁹ The fruits Nausikaa describes contend for space: fruit that is ripe is threatened by the growth of the next crop as it ripens in turn: "*Dort dringen neben Früchten wied<er> Blüten.*" The two springs of the translation are imagined as bursting forth (*dringen*) and rushing off in different directions, ready to quench (*tränken*) the thirsty. Nausikaa describes figs following upon figs, almost as though in pursuit ("*und die Feige folgt der Feige.*") In the translation, the fruits do not merely follow but actually hurry to take one another's places: *Apfel eilet nach Apfel*. In line 130, Goethe transposed the places of the figs and the grapes, which made little difference in meaning, but enabled him to end the line with the rich-sounding diphthong in *Trauben* that reflects the weight of the omega subscript that ends this passage in the original: σὺκκω. This minor rearrangement of words shows the poet's ear for the smoothly flowing motion of his original. Goethe's fondness for reading his translations aloud is well-documented, and his Homer translations reflect the concerns of a performer. His typical preference for long and open vowels and his avoidance of clustered consonants resulted in lines remarkable for their graceful movement and light, clear texture. Compare Voss' rendering of the same line, much less easy to read aloud, and ending with a word containing not one, but two thick consonant clusters: "*Traub' auf Traube gelangt, und Feig' auf Feige, zum Vollwuchs.*"⁵⁷⁰

Nausikaa's garden is artificially irrigated. This is quite explicit in her speech, for the streams are *geleitet* (directed). In the *Odyssey* passage, and in Goethe's translation, the two streams flow in appropriate directions, but seem to be doing so spontaneously and eagerly. The eagerly rushing water imported into this passage may be another

reflection of Goethe's memories of Sicily, for in the public gardens at Palermo, which he had first toured on 7 April 1787, there were a series of elegant fountains he had found enchanting.⁵⁷¹ Two days later, on 9 April, he toured the eccentric Prince Palagonia's equally eccentric villa, where he was impressed with a lively fountain: "*Jener Brunnen in Palermo gehört unter die Vorfahren der pallagonischen Raserei, nur daß diese hier, auf eigenem Grund und Boden, in der größten Freiheit und Breite sich hervortut.*"⁵⁷² ("That fountain in Palermo is among the descendants of the Palagonian silliness. It's just that this one here, in its own place and setting, emerges in the greatest freedom and breadth.") The personification of the streams and the plants in Goethe's vision of the *Odyssey* passage allows the garden momentarily to eclipse both the beholder and the inhabitants of the palace. In this setting, the human figure is dwarfed: Odysseus has for the moment retreated from the narrative, while the Phaiakians, who presumably were the designers of this magical *hortus inclusus*, disappear almost entirely. In the garden of *Od.* 7.122-25, a few anonymous vineyard workers are mentioned in passing, but they appear only as servants of the vineyard's exuberant multifold growth, mere figures in a landscape. The foreground of the picture is occupied not by human beings, but by the ripening grapes:

ἔνθα δέ οἱ πολύκαρπος ἀλωή ἐρρίζωται
 τῆς ἕτερον μὲν θειλόπεδον λευρῶ ἐνὶ χώρῳ
 τέρσεται ἠελίῳ, ἑτέρας δ' ἄρα τε τρυγόωσιν,
 ἄλλας δὲ τραπέουσι· πάροιθε δέ τ' ὄμφακες εἰσιν...(Od.7.122-25)

And there his fruitful vineyard is planted
 a section of which, a drying-ground on a level patch,
 is baked in the sun; they harvest some sections
 while they trample others. But in front there are immature grapes...

If the original text presents human beings as indistinct background figures, upstaged by their vines, Goethe's translation subsumes them into the landscape completely:

*Denn es stehen Reben gepflanzt im sonnigen, weiten
 Raum, es trocknet daselbst ein Teil der Trauben am Stocke,
 Andere liesest man ab und keltert sie, andere nähern
 Langsam der Reif sich noch.*⁵⁷³

For there are grape-vines planted in a sunny, ample space. Some of the grapes dry right on the vine, others one harvests and presses, while others are still slowly ripening.

The use of the impersonal phrase “*man lieset ab und keltert sie*” does not specify that human figures are active in the landscape being described; it merely suggests that some of the grapes are ripe for processing.⁵⁷⁴ Within the world of the garden, human beings are of secondary importance. This is also suggested by the closing words of the section, in which Alkinoos is not mentioned by name and epithet, as he is in the original text, but is once more referred to merely as the king: “*Solche Gaben der Götter ersah man im Hause des Königs*” (“Such were the gifts of the gods one saw in the house of the king.”)

During the same period that he made his version of *Od.* 7. 78-131, Goethe also translated *Od.* 8.267-326, 339-346, 351-353, and 347-350, all parts of the story of Ares and Aphrodite.⁵⁷⁵ This was a tale he knew well and had previously used as a source for *Elegy 21* (“*Ja, vom guten Rufe / Schwer erhalten wir uns*”).⁵⁷⁶ As a story-within-a-story, the selection is a natural choice for a translator wishing to work on a self-contained episode from a larger work. The setting is Alkinoos’ court, and the lines are the song of the blind Phaiakian bard Demodokos. Indeed, in this show-piece, Goethe made the story a formal *epyllion*, for in the opening lines he departed from the original text, and began his translation with a made-up invocation to the Muse. The *Odyssey* account, by contrast, opens with Demodokos beginning to play:

Αὐτὰρ ὁ φορμίζων ἀνεβάλλετο καλὸν ἀεΐδειν
ἀμφ’ Ἄρεος φιλότητος εὐστεφάνου τ’ Ἀφροδίτης
ὡς τὰ πρῶτα μίγησαν ἐν Ἥφαιστοιο δόμοισι
λάθρη. πολλὰ δ’ ἔδωκε, λέχος δ’ ἤσχυνε καὶ εὐνήν
Ἥφαιστοιο ἄνακτος. (*Od.* 8.266-9)

But accompanying himself on the lyre, he began to sing the sweet song
Of the love of Ares and well-garlanded Aphrodite,
how they first came together in the house of Hephaistos
secretly. He gave her many gifts, and shamed the bed and linens
of lordly Hephaistos.

In Goethe's version, the figure of Demodokos does not appear. Since the bard belongs to the larger story, including him would have marred the unity of this piece of translation, which the poet framed as an episode that could stand on its own. Sacrificing the dramatic tension of the moment of narrative transition when the first chords are struck, Goethe instead used a combination of words from the beginnings of both the *Odyssey* and *Iliad* to begin his epyllion.

Μῆνιν ἄειδε, θεά, Πηληϊάδεω Ἀχιλῆος... (*Il.* 1.1)

Sing, goddess, the wrath of Pelias' son Achilles...

*Ἄνδρα μοι ἔννεπε, μοῦσα... (*Od.* 1.1)

Tell me of the man, Muse...

Goethe's version begins:

*Singe Muse mit Lust den Liebeshandel des Ares
Den er erst sich erkühnt mit Aphroditen zu wagen.
Erst verbanden sie sich im Hause des alten Hephästos
Heimlich, mit vielen Geschenken gewann sich Ares das Lager
Des abwesenden Königs...*⁵⁷⁷

Sing joyfully, Muse, of the love affair of Ares
which he first ventured upon with Aphrodite.
They first mingled in love in the house of old Hephaistos
secretly, and with many presents, Ares won for himself the bed
of the absent king.

The Muse is imported from the opening line of the *Odyssey*, while her singing is taken from the beginning of the *Iliad*. The line as a whole, however, openly parodies the first line of the *Iliad*. In place of the fatal wrath of Achilles, that brought so much grief to the Greeks, that sent many brave heroes' souls down into Hades (*Il.* 1.1-3), the Muse is enjoined to celebrate an adulterous love-affair. As soon as the hero's name is mentioned, it becomes clear that this story will be a frivolous one, for Ares, whose name is placed prominently at the end of the first line, is an unlikely candidate for the role of lover. Very little mythology is attached to the unmarried Ares' private life.⁵⁷⁸ (Ares' only other known partners were Eos (Dawn) and the Attic heroine Alkippe.) The general tone of the

passage is as light as the opening lines promise. Horst Rüdiger wrote that Goethe had translated this love scene and that between Zeus and Hera at *Il.* 14 329-351 “*mit heidnischer Lust*”⁵⁷⁹ (“with a pagan delight.”)

Appropriately, mock-heroic diction marks this passage. In practically any other context, the expression “*sich erkühnen...wagen*” (to dare to venture in upon”) would be perfectly suitable for the actions of a war-god. When his bold venture turns out to be mere *Liebeshandel*, the result is comical, for he will not conquer a mighty city or a even great warrior, but merely Aphrodite, of all Olympian goddesses the most accommodating. Nor is his victory won by armed conflict of any kind. Instead, he gains his triumph by the astute use of bribery. These opening lines of the translation are not far removed in tone from the worlds of the *Römische Elegien* and of Roman elegy itself. In the original text, the many gifts that Ares gives the goddess need not necessarily be Aphrodite’s price. In Goethe’s version, however, Aphrodite is cast as the *domina* who demands presents, Ares as the *exclusus amator* who is not excluded for long.⁵⁸⁰ Once cast as *domina*, Aphrodite naturally forfeits her honorific εὐστεφάνος (well-garlanded). In place of the omitted Homeric epithets, diction typical of the *Römische Elegien* surfaces. The bed of the cuckolded Hephaistos, for instance, is called a *Lager*, Goethe’s normal term for the bed shared by the elegist and Faustina.⁵⁸¹ Hephaistos, to add to the comedy of the scene, loses his epithet ἄναξ (lord) and is cast as an old man (“*im Hause des alten Hephästos,*”) the conventional *senex amator* role or cuckolded *coniunx* of elegy, although in Goethe’s version of the story, he is at least spared the mention of his dishonored bed. While on the surface merely a translation, with respect to tone, Goethe’s version of this story owes as much to Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* and *Ars Amatoria* 2 as it does to the *Odyssey*.⁵⁸²

In the first two lines, Goethe rewrote his original completely. After the opening distiche, however, it becomes apparent that he was working closely with the Homeric text, paying attention to all details. In *Od.* 8.269, for instance, the word λάθρη (secretly)

begins the line, separated from the rest of the sentence. Goethe mirrored this bold use of enjambment in his version of the scene, beginning the analogous line with “*heimlich*.”

In the *Odyssey* text, as in Goethe’s version, Helios betrays the lovers to Hephaistos. The narrative of the original is spare and moves along quickly. Helios does not hesitate to tell Hephaistos, whose reaction follows immediately on the revelation.

...ἄφαρ δέ οἱ ἄγγελος ἦλθεν
Ἥλιος, ὃ σφ’ ἐνόησε μιγαζομένους φιλότητι.
Ἥφαιστος δ’ ὥς οὖν θυμαλγέα μῦθον ἄκουσε,
βῆ ῥ’ ἴμεν ἐς χαλεῶνα κακὰ φρεσὶ βυσσοδοείων,
ἐν δ’ ἔθετ’ ἀκμοκέτω μέγαν ἄκμονα, κόπτε δὲ δεσμούς
ἀρήκτους ἀλύτους, ὄφρ’ ἔμπεδον αὖθι μένοιεν. (*Od.* 8.270-275)

...but immediately a messenger came to him,
Helios, who had noticed them mingling in love.
Hephaistos, when he heard the heart-rending news
made his way to the forge, planning terrible things in his mind.
There he set his great anvil on the anvil-block, and hammered out chains
unbreakable and unreleasing, to keep them stuck there.

Goethe’s text moves as briskly as the original does. Now that the formal beginning of the section is over, the translation is tight and more faithful. Word order is preserved whenever possible, and few details are omitted. Yet the tone remains playful and the level of diction conversational, in places smoothed out, far more so than in the *Odyssey*.

*Denn die Sonne verriets, die ihre Spiele gesehen
Als nun aber der Alte der Traurige Mähre vernommen
Schritt er der Werkstatt zu im Sinne Böses bewegend
Und er setzt auf dem Block den großen Amboß und schmeid<et>
Fesseln die festesten aus die immer und ewiglich hielten.*⁵⁸³

For the Sun, who had seen their dalliance, betrayed it.
Once the old man heard the sad story,
he strode into his workshop, calling forth evil things in his mind
and he placed the great anvil on top of the block and forged
the firmest of fetters, which held tight forever and always.

In this version, μιγαζομένους φιλότητι (mingling in love), an explicitly erotic phrase, is considerably toned down. “*Ihre Spiele*” certainly has erotic connotations, but the phrase is far more light and frivolous than μιγαζομένους φιλότητι. In Goethe’s

version, Helios is merely called “*die Sonne*,” for this reading of the story is strengthened by the limitation of the number of characters. Even Hephaistos, a major actor in the plot, initially is portrayed less distinctly and sympathetically than he is in the original. Not mentioned by name, but simply called “*der Alte*,” he is robbed of his divine status. His suffering, too, is minimized. A θυμαλγέα μῦθον --literally an utterance painful to the heart -- is hardly on the same level as “*traurige Mähre*” (“sad tidings.”) θυμαλγής, in Homeric texts, is reserved for the deepest possible distress and grief, especially in situations where someone is humiliated.⁵⁸⁴ Goethe’s reading, humorous in its own way, tames some of the harshness in the original by de-emphasizing Hephaistos’ chagrin. In addition, this translation may show the influence of Bergler, for he had translated line 272 as “*Vulcanus autem ubi tristem sermonem audivit*”⁵⁸⁵ (“But Hephaistos, when he heard the sad report...”).

Line 273, βῆ ῥ’ ἴμεν ἐς χαλκεῶνα κακὰ φρεσὶ βυσσοδοεῦων is very closely rendered by “*Schritt er der Werkstatt zu im Sinne Böses bewegend*.” Imitating the original word order, Goethe placed the verb first in the line, the direct object after the caesura, and ended the line with a participle. Yet the line sounds neither clumsy nor affected. Felicitously, in the last two feet of the line, he even contrived to echo the sound of βυσσοδοεῦων with *Böses bewegend*. Voss, by contrast, translated the same line “*Eilt’ er zu gehn in die Schmiede, das Herz voll arges Entwurfes*.”⁵⁸⁶ (“He hurried to go into the smithy, his heart full of evil designs.”) The two translations are almost on a par with respect to syntactical equivalence. Although “*Schmiede*” is technically a closer reading of χαλκεῶνα than “*Werkstatt*,” which Goethe had preferred, βῆ ῥ’ ἴμεν does not necessarily imply hurried movement. That Hephaistos’ movement was precipitous had already been specified in the preceding line, “Ἥφαιστος δ’ ὡς οὖν θυμαλγέα μῦθον ἄκουσε, which Voss had rendered as “*aber sobald Hefästos die kränkende Rede vernommen...*”⁵⁸⁷ (“As soon as Hephaistos heard the mortifying report...”).⁵⁸⁸ Where

Goethe's line flows melodiously, however, Voss' version, with its opening chain of six monosyllables, is choppy by comparison, although closer to the original meter. In addition, the many consonant clusters in the line slow down its movement considerably. The chains, which are described alliteratively in the original as ἀρρήκτους ἀλύτους ("unbreakable and unreleasing,") Goethe also reflected with his own equally alliterative, if not very close rendering "*Fesseln die festesten*" ("the firmest of fetters.")

The use of alliteration carries over into the next line: "*Als er im Zorne nun so den bei<den> böses bereitet*"⁵⁸⁹ ("As in his wrath he prepared evil things for the pair.") The original line is αὐτὰρ ἔπει δὴ τεῦξε δόλον κεχολωμένος Ἄρει (*Od.* 8.276) ("But when, in his anger, he laid a trap for Ares.") The story, once more, is made less complicated through the omission of a proper name, and the god's anger is now as much at his erring spouse as her partner in crime, which works well in Goethe's elegiac reading of the story.

At this point in the story, Hephaistos covers his bed with a net of fine chains and makes a pretense of leaving on a trip to his well-beloved Lemnos. Ares, taking advantage of the god's absence, visits Aphrodite.

οὐδ' ἀλαοσκόπιῃν εἶχε χρυσηνίος Ἄρει
ὥς ἴδεν Ἥφαιστον κλυτοτέχνην νόσφι κίοντα·
βῆ δ' ἰέναι πρὸς δῶμα περικλυτοῦ Ἥφαιστοιο
ἰσχανόων φιλότητος εὐστεφάνου Κυthereίης.
ἦ δὲ νέον παρὰ πατρός ἐρισθενέος Κρονίωνος
ἐρχομένη κατ' ἄρ' ἔζεθ' ὁ δ' εἴσω δώματος ἦει
ἐν τ' ἄρα οἱ φῦ χειρί, ἔπος τ' ἔφατ' ἔκ τ' ὀνόμαζε·
"Δεῦρο, φίλη, λέκτρονδε τραπέιομεν εὐνηθέντες·
οὐ γὰρ ἔθ' Ἥφαιστος μεταδημιος, ἀλλὰ που ἤδη
οἴχεται ἐς Λῆμνον μετὰ Σίντιας ἀγριοφώνους."
ὥς φάτο, τῆ δ' ἀσπαστόν ἐείσατο κοιμηθῆναι (*Od.* 8.285-295)

Nor did gold-reined Ares keep watch in vain.
When he saw the famous craftsman Hephaistos going away,
he made his way to the house of the famous Hephaistos
longing for the love of the well-garlanded Kytherea.
She had just left the side of her father, the mighty son of Kronos
and was sitting down. He came into the house
clasped her hand, spoke a word, and addressed her by name.
"Come to bed, dear. Let's lie down and enjoy ourselves.

Hephaistos isn't here anymore. Indeed, I fancy he's already gone to Lemnos, to the Sintians with their foreign speech." So he spoke, and it seemed like a good thing to her to lie down.⁵⁹⁰

The *Odyssey* text is studded with epithets: five in a row modify proper names in lines 285-9. In two consecutive lines, Hephaistos is characterized as famous (περικλυτός, κλυτοτέχνης) an ironic touch, for the ultimate dividend of his trick upon the lovers will be an entirely unwelcome notoriety. Significantly, when Ares speaks disdainfully of his lover's husband, he uses no honorific, but instead derides Hephaistos' Lemnian worshippers, alien adherents of a crippled god. Goethe's rendering of this passage is one of the high points of his translation.

*Aber Ares bemerkte sogleich den Wandernden eilig
Ging er ins Haus des Mannes der süßen Cithere begehrend
Diese war eben vom Vater der größten Chronion gekommen
Hatte sich niedergesetzt es kam der Freund sie zu grüßen
Faßte sie bei der Hand und sprach die reizende Worte
"Komm mein Liebchen gehn wir zum Bette zusammen zu schlafen
Dein Gemahl ist hinweg ich sah nach Lemnos ihn wandern"
Also sprach er sie beehrte der süßen Unarmung⁵⁹¹*

But Ares immediately noticed the traveler. In haste he entered the house of sweet Cytherea's husband, full of desire. She had just lately come from her father, the great son of Kronos, had sat her down. Her sweetheart came to salute her, took her by the hand, and spoke the enchanting words: "Come, my darling, let's go to bed to sleep together. Your husband is gone: I saw him departing for Lemnos." So he spoke. She desired that sweet embrace.

The action here is compressed and details are left out in order to speed the movement of the passage. Line 285, οὐδ' ἀλαοσκόπιήν εἶχε χρυσηνίος Ἄρες ("Nor did gold-reined Ares keep watch in vain") is omitted entirely. Imported into the passage is a sense of passionate urgency, communicated by the words "*sogleich*" ("immediately,") and "*eilig*" ("in haste.") "*Eilig*" may be a reflection of "*institit ire*," Bergler's invariable translation for the formula βῆ ῥ' ἴμεν ("he went his way.")⁵⁹² "*Begehrend*" ("full of

desire,") too, is a strong translation of ἰσχανόων ("longing"): when applied to animals, the word can mean "rutting." Goethe left the object of Ares' desire, "φιλότητος ἐυστεφάνου Κυθρείης" ("the love of the well-garlanded Kytherea") unspecified, probably for the sake of narrative economy. The reader can be expected to know what Ares longs for.

Noteworthy in this section, as in the passage as a whole, is Goethe's elimination of conventional epithets: of the six epithets in this section, only ἐρισθενής is retained. As above, Goethe refrained from naming Hephaistos. Indeed, in his translation, the god is so diminished in stature that he is merely referred to as Aphrodite's husband, or as a *Wanderer*. Ares' address to Aphrodite, despite the fact that Goethe's translation had reflected accurately the fact that the story is about the lovers' first tryst, suggests an intimacy consistent with a pre-existing relationship not implied in the original text: Ares is called Aphrodite's "*Freund*" ("sweetheart, boyfriend,") whose "*Gruß*" ("salute or greeting") is presumably meant to be taken in a physical light. Goethe may have been remembering the story as told in AA 2. 2.561ff, in which the two have been successful in concealing their meetings for some time before they are seen by the Sun.⁵⁹³ The endearment *Liebchen* (darling) is a straightforward if colloquial rendering of φίλη (dear). Here, as elsewhere in the translation, Goethe was at pains to use simple, ordinary words. "*Dein Gemahl*" ("your husband,") Ares' designation for the unnamed Hephaistos, a more elegant term than might have been expected, injects a malicious note of ridicule for the cuckold. The Homeric formula ἔπος τ' ἔφατ' ἔκ τ' ὀνόμαζε ("spoke a word, and addressed her by name") is transfigured into the appropriately elegiac "*sprach die reizende Worte*" ("spoke the enchanting words.")⁵⁹⁴ Voss rendered the phrase simply as "...redete, also beginnend" ("spoke, beginning thus...").⁵⁹⁵

Od. 8.294, ὣς φάτο, τῆ δ' ἀσπαστὸν εἰσατο κοιμηθῆναι ("So he spoke, and it seemed like a good thing to her to lie down") appears in Goethe's translation as

“*Also sprach er sie beehrte der süßen Unarmung*” (“So he spoke. She desired that sweet embrace.”) While this is a deliberate modification of the original, it does serve to create a link to the opening of this section. As Ares had entered Hephaistos’ house, he had been described as *begehend*. By the end of the section, through his words and his gesture, his desire has been transmitted to Aphrodite. Voss’ translation is simpler, but less explicit: “*Also der Gott; und ihr war sehr willkommen das Lager*”⁵⁹⁶ (“So the god spoke, and the bedstead was very welcome to her”).

The trap that Hephaistos has laid catches the lovers. When he returns from his supposed trip to Lemnos, the god, confronted with the scene, is overcome with anger and summons the rest of the gods to witness their disgrace. His speech to the other Olympians is full of anguish. Goethe’s translation, in following close on the Homeric text, moves away from its original elegiac tone and becomes more serious. In his agony, Hephaistos at length gains if not much dignity, at least a hearing. His sentences are short and expostulatory; his speech reveals him as a fool, but an angry and dangerous fool. The harangue can be divided into two sections. In the first section, the outraged and humiliated Hephaistos angrily abuses his wife and his parents. His rhetorical strategies are ineffectual and carelessly thought out. Exposing Aphrodite’s disgrace, he exposes his own shame, and humiliates himself still further. When he protests that even the baneful Ares looks better to Aphrodite than her lame husband, he pathetically calls attention to his own physical imperfection. In his misery, blaming his parents for the way he looks, he reveals himself as too passionate to be taken seriously and thus loses all credibility as a speaker. The remainder of the speech consists of outpourings of rage and despair.

Ζεῦ πάτερ ἡδ’ ἄλλοι μάκαρες θεοὶ αἰὲν ἔοντες,
 δεῦθ, ἵνα ἔργα γελαστὰ καὶ οὐκ ἐπιεικτὰ ἴδησθε,
 ὡς ἐμὲ χωλὸν ἔοντα Διὸς θυγάτηρ Ἀφροδίτη
 αἰὲν ἀτιμαζει, φιλέει δ’ αἰδηλὸν Ἄρηα
 οὔνεχ’ ὁ μὲν καλὸς τε καὶ ἀρτίπος, αὐτὰρ ἐγὼ γε
 ἠπεδανὸς γενόμεν. ἀτὰρ οὔ τί μοι αἴτιος ἄλλος,

ἀλλὰ τοκῆε δῦω, τῶ μὴ γείνασθαι ὄφελλον.
ἀλλ' ὄψεσθ', ἵνα τῶ γε καθεύδεται ἐν φιλότῃτι
εἰς ἐμὰ δέμνια βάντες, ἐγὼ δ' ὀρόων ἀκάχημαι. (Od. 8.306-14)

Zeus, my father, and you other blessed gods who live forever,
Come here and see something ridiculous and perverse:
how, since I am crippled, Zeus' daughter Aphrodite
always disgraces me! She loves deadly Ares
because he is handsome and sound of foot, but I for my part
was born sickly. But that seems to me nobody's fault
but my parents'. I wish they had never had me.
But you'll see them, the ones who went to sleep together in love
in my bed! But when I see it, I am broken hearted.

Goethe's rendering of this passage is both faithful and fluent. Since Hephaistos' diction level is low and his wording artless, the simple style Goethe had been using throughout the passage is especially effective at reproducing the tone of the speaker.

*Zeus mein Vater und ihr andern der seligen Götter zusammen
Kommt daß ihr sehet die Werke die lächerlich sind und unerträglich
Wie mich hinkenden Mann die Tochter Zeus Aphrodite
Ewig entehrt und in Liebe den schädlichen Ares umarmet
Weil er schön ist und grad ich aber freilich dagegen
Bin gebrechlich geboren doch ich und niemand ist schuldig
Nur die Eltern beide o hätten sie mich nicht geboren
Aber sehet nun her wie sie in Lieb sich unarmen
Meine Lager besteigend ich aber sehe sie traurig.⁵⁹⁷*

Zeus, my father and you others of the blessed gods,
gather, so you can see deeds that are ridiculous and insupportable
How Zeus' daughter Aphrodite constantly disgraces me, a lame man,
and embraces the destructive Ares in love
because he is handsome and straight [limbed], while indeed
I was certainly born sickly. But I, and it's nobody's fault...
Only both my parents: if only they'd never bred me!
But just look here, how they embrace one another in love
coming up into my bed. But I am sad when I see them.

The degree to which word order is preserved in the passage is remarkable. In Goethe's version, the opening of practically every line is mirrored closely. Many line-endings also echo the Homeric text. The translation is accurate without seeming forced. In contrast to the earlier sections of the passage, even some formulaic phrases and epithets are preserved: Διὸς θυγάτηρ Ἀφροδίτη and αἰδήλον Ἄρηα are rendered as "die

Tochter Zeus Aphrodite” and “*den schädlichen Ares*” respectively. Both are placed as near the end of the line as possible. Only the blessed gods lose their immortality, for αἰὲν ἑόντες is not translated, possibly because it would have been difficult to fit into the line. In Goethe’s version of this passage, the pair’s love-making is described with a specificity that goes beyond the simple frankness of the original: φιλέει δ’ αἰδηλον Ἄρηα (“she loves deadly Ares”) becomes “*und in Liebe den schädlichen Ares umarmet*” (“embraces the destructive Ares in love,”) while καθεύδετον ἐν φιλότητι (“went to sleep together in love,”) becomes “*sie in Lieb sich umarmen*” (“they embrace one another in love.”) Goethe’s importation of the verb “*umarmen*” (“to embrace”) into both lines gives his rendition a lusty charm.

Hephaistos’ informal diction becomes even simpler in Goethe’s idiomatic rendition. As a translation of χωλός, “*hinkenden Mann*” (“a limping man”) is precise, and a more vivid rendering than either of the more common terms “*Lahmender*” and “*Krüppel*” would have been.⁵⁹⁸ It also lends to the passage a fruitful and ironic ambiguity, for in this context “*Mann*” could also mean “husband.” Even the Greek particles are meticulously reflected in Goethe’s translation: “*doch ich*” is an exact translation of ἐγὼ γε. The addition of “*freilich*” merely intensifies the particle “*doch.*”

Lines 8.310-1 αὐτὰρ ἐγὼ γε/ ἠπεδανὸς γενόμεν. ἀτὰρ οὐ τί μοι αἴτιος ἄλλος (“but I for my part was born sickly, but that seems to me nobody’s fault”), are rendered as “*ich aber freilich dagenen/ Bin gebrechlich geboren doch ich und niemand ist schuldig*” (“I was certainly born sickly. But I, and it’s nobody’s fault...”) In the original, μοι could be read as either a dative of possession (“my parents,” referring to the τοκῆε δύω of the next line) or as an ethical dative (“it seems to me.”) In the absence of punctuation, it is not clear how Goethe read μοι: in his translation the line appears somewhat fractured and incoherent. While not as closely read as the rest of the section, this line, with its syntactical breakdown is appropriate for the mood of the passage:

Hephaistos, even in the original, seems at a loss for words. The last line of this segment of the speech, ἐγὼ δ' ὀρόων ἀκάχημαι. (“But when I see it, I am broken hearted,”) Goethe toned down slightly, rendering it was “*Ich aber sehe sie traurig*” (“But I am sad when I see them.”) At other places in the *Odyssey*, ἀκαχέω is used for the deepest and most bitter grief, generally in mourning for the dead. This is an emotional state well beyond mere *Traurigkeit* (sadness).⁵⁹⁹ In *Od.* 4, when Telemachos has left on his journey, Penelope sinks into despair fearing that he will die:

Ἥ δ' ὑπερώϊω αὖθι περίφρων Πήνελόπεια
κεῖτ' ἄρ' ἄσιτος, ἄπαστος ἐδητύος ἠδὲ ποτῆτος (*Od.* 4.787-8)

But wise Penelope in her upper room
lay there drinking no drink, eating no food.

Athene, in the likeness of Penelope's sister Iphthime, comforts her, telling her that Telemachos will be safe: οὐ μὲν σ' οὐδὲ ἔωσι θεοὶ ῥεῖα ζῶοντες / κλαῖεν οὐδ' ἀκάχησθαι (*Od.* 4.805-6) (“the gods who live comfortably do not allow you to lament or grieve.”) Odysseus' grief for fallen comrades invariably is expressed with the same verb in the formulaic phrase: ἔνθενδὲ προτέρω πλέομεν ἀκαχήμενοι ἦτορ (*Od.* 9.62, 9.105, 9.565, 10.77 etc.) (“we sailed away from there, grieving in our hearts.”) As with θυμαλγῆς in line 272, Goethe buffered the sadness of Hephaistos, making it less deeply felt and destructive.

This toning down of Hephaistos' unhappiness is a feature of the translation: if his version of the story had included too much genuine sorrow, it could not have seemed funny to Goethe's audience. Thus, in this reading, the Homeric world is tamed and re-written, robbed of some of its casual lack of compassion for outsiders. Yet characters in Homeric epic hardly ever display pity for those who are different. Even though a god, Hephaistos, patron of banausic trades, is the misfit of the Olympian pantheon, for he is ugly and lame in a world where physical beauty and wise counsel transparently stand for

worthiness. In the Homeric world, the humiliation of a lame character can only be seen as laughable. Like Thersites in *Il.* 2, Hephaistos is doomed to be ridiculed.⁶⁰⁰

The closing of his speech includes a demand that Zeus return Aphrodite's dowry, and a final, bitter outburst: οὐνεκά οἱ καλὴ θυγάτηρ, ἀτὰρ οὐκ ἐχέθυμος (*Od.* 8.320) ("for his daughter is beautiful, but not discreet.") In his translation of this line, Goethe continued to preserve the casual diction that marks Hephaistos' speech throughout: "*herrlich schön ist sie wohl doch unbezwungenen Gemütes*" (Indeed, she is wonderfully beautiful, but she has a free spirit.") Goethe rendered οὐκ ἐχέθυμος with notable delicacy, mirroring the litotes of the original.

Although the goddesses modestly stay at home, the gods rush in to see the spectacle. (*Od.* 8. 321-7) Each god, in Goethe's translation, is given his proper epithet:

*Poseidon der schreckliche und der gewandte
Hermes und so kam auch der treffende König Apollo.*⁶⁰¹

Poseidon the terrifying and the messenger
Hermes and the sharp-shooter King Apollo also came.

None of these epithets is rendered very exactly: in the original text, Poseidon is γαῖόχος ("the earth-shaker,") Hermes is ἐριούνης ("the helper,") and lordly (ἄναξ) Apollo, is ἐκάεργος ("he who shoots from afar," or "he who shoots a long way.")⁶⁰² Yet any inclusion of epithets in a translation which generally avoids them is worthy of note. The titles of the gods add to their dignity and lend this section an extra weight.

The scene continues:

ἔσταν δ' ἐν προθυροῖσι θεοί, δωτῆρες ἐάων
ἄσβεστος δ' ἄρ' ἐνῶρτο γέλωσ μακάρεσσι θεοῖσι (*Od.* 8.325-6)

The gods stood in the doorway, the givers of good things.
and unquenchable laughter arose among the blessed gods

Goethe translated the passage as follows:

*In dem Vorhaus standen sie nun die Götter versammelt
Unter ihnen entstand sogleich ein unendlich Gelächter.*⁶⁰³

In the foyer stood the assembled gods
among them arose an unquenchable laughter.

Here the finished translation comes to a halt. Goethe chose not to include the terms δωτῆρες ἐάων and μακάρες θεοὶ two complimentary titles of the Olympians. The irony of the original juxtaposition of good gods and cruel laughter is thus forfeited. Although Demodokos' song continues on for another forty lines, Goethe's attempts at translating the remainder of the bard's song consist merely of a few short scattered fragments. This opening section, *Od.* 8.267-327, however, is relatively substantial. It exists as a copy in the handwriting of Goethe's secretary Ludwig Geist, dating from 1795 or later, and this copy does not include the other fragments. Therefore, it is possible that Goethe regarded *Od.* 8.267-327 as complete and worthy to stand on its own.⁶⁰⁴ The ending of this section would also suggest that the poet eventually decided to close the narrative at *Od.* 8.327, with the gods' laughter. Since the interpolated opening words of this section are, "*Singe Muse mit Lust*" ("Sing joyfully, Muse") it would have made good structural sense for the poet to end the tale by once again taking up the theme of the pleasure of the gods.⁶⁰⁵ This is further evidence that Goethe tended to shrink back from what he considered the more unpalatable side of the Homeric world. The lines he left untranslated are harsher in tone than the those he chose to include, and show the gods' response to the scene in a particularly unflattering light:

ὤδε δέ τις εἶπεσκεν ἰδὼν ἐς πλησίον ἄλλον·
"Οὐκ ἀρετᾶ κακὰ ἔργα· κίχάνει τοι βραδὺς ὠκύν,
ὡς καὶ νῦν Ἥφαιστος ἐὼν βραδὺς εἶλεν Ἄρηα
ὠκύτατόν περ ἐόντα θεῶν οἱ Ὀλυμπον ἔχουσιν
χωλὸς ἐὼν τέχνησι· τὸ καὶ μοιχάγρι' ὀφέλλει."
Ὡς οἱ μὲν τοιαῦτα πρὸς ἀλλήλους ἀγόρευον·
Ἑρμῆν δὲ προσέειπεν ἄναξ Διὸς υἱὸς Ἀπολλων·
"Ἑρμεία, Διὸς υἱέ, διάκτορε, δῶτορ ἐάων,
ἦ ῥά κεν ἐν δεσμοῖς ἐθέλοις κρατεροῖσι πιεσθεῖς
εὔδειν ἐν λέκτροισι παρὰ χρυσέῃ Ἀφροδίτῃ;" (*Od.* 8.328-337)

One would look at his neighbor and say
"Evil deeds do not thrive. The slow catches the fleet,
just as Hephaistos, even though he is slow, has caught Ares
even though he is the fastest of all the Olympian gods,

lame though he is, with his craft. And so he has to pay for his adultery.”
 This was the sort of thing they said to one another.
 But lordly Apollo, son of Zeus, said to Hermes
 “Hermes, son of Zeus, messenger, giver of good things,
 Even if you were bound in mighty chains, wouldn’t you like
 to lie down in bed next to golden Aphrodite?” (*Od.* 8.328-337)

This section shows the gods behaving no better than common soldiers. Hephaistos’ own self-deprecation did not destroy the essential lightness of the passage, but the overt mockery of the gods at *Od.* 8.329-31 might have looked disagreeably brutal to Goethe. The coarseness of Apollo’s suggestion to Hermes may also have offended the poet’s sensibilities: certainly this piece of dialogue, although elegantly studded with honorifics, is hardly suitable for a courtly and tempered reading of the text. Nor does the phrase τὸ καὶ μοιχάγρι’ ὀφέλλει (“and so he has to pay for his adultery”) belong in the pseudo-elegiac construction Goethe made out of the song of Demodokos: although the conventional world of an elegiac lover revolves around love-affairs which may very well be adulterous, the legal and moral ramifications of such relationships tend to be discreetly blurred.⁶⁰⁶ In addition, the way Goethe drew back from handling the closing of the story suggests that he was either unaware of or did not want to focus on two of the major mechanisms for the resolution of conflict within Homeric epic: ritual and reciprocity. In removing these elements from his translation of the passage, Goethe separated the episode from the larger structure of the epic, since in the *Odyssey*, exchanges of gifts of compensation constitute a major mechanism for the restoration of order, while the failure to complete such exchanges lends tension and forward impetus to the plot.⁶⁰⁷

Goethe again took up the narrative with Hermes’ response to Apollo. This fragment may have been written at the same time as the preceding section, but was probably later discarded.

“Αἶ γὰρ τοῦτο γένοιτο, ἄναξ ἑκατηβόλ’ Ἄπολλον·
 δεσμοὶ μὲν τρεῖς τόσσοι ἀπείρονες ἀμφὶς ἔχοιεν,
 ὑμεῖς δ’ εἰσορόωτε θεοὶ πᾶσαι τε θέαιναι,
 αὐτὰρ ἐγὼν εὐδοίμι παρὰ χρυσῆν Ἀφροδίτην;
 ὣς ἔφατ’, ἐν δὲ γέλωσ ὦρτ’ ἀθανάτοισι θεοῖσιν.

οὐδὲ Ποσειδάωνα γέλωσ ἔχε, λίσσετο δ' αἰεὶ
"Ἥφαιστον κλυτοεργὸν ὅπως λύσειεν Ἄρηα
καὶ μιν φωνήσας ἔπεα πτερόεντα προσηύδα· (Od. 8.339-346)

"Indeed, may it happen to me, Lord Apollo, farshooter!
Let chains three times as heavy tie me up,
and you gods look on, and all of the goddesses,
as long as I can lie down next to golden Aphrodite!"
So he spoke. And laughter arose among the deathless gods.
But Poseidon did not laugh. He repeatedly begged
the famous craftsman Hephaistos to free Ares, and
and spoke to him, addressing him with winged words.

If Goethe, having translated these lines, had any particular reason for leaving this section out of the main narrative, it may have been merely that he realized that he recognized the uselessness of including a punchline without its joke. The translation itself is technically outstanding: what prompted its omission may have been nothing more than structural considerations. Goethe's version is lively and fresh, marked, as usual, by informal diction and the omission of epithets:

*O! geschähe das doch Apoll! Umschlängen die Fesseln
dreifach, um und um uns, unendlich sähet ihr Götter
Alle gegenwärtig auf mich und die Götter<nnin> alle
Dennoch wünscht ich zu liegen die schöne Venus umschließend.
Also sprach er und unter den Göttern entstand ein Gelächter
Nur Poseidon war ernst, und bat inständig den Künste<r>
Das er löse den Mars, und sprach die geflügelten Wörter.⁶⁰⁸*

Oh, let it happen, Apollo! Let the fetters twine round
threefold, around and around us, unceasingly let the gods watch
standing right there, and all of the goddesses,
nevertheless I would want to lie embracing lovely Venus.
So he spoke and laughter arose among the gods.
Only Poseidon was serious, and constantly asked the craftsman
to release Mars, and spoke these winged words:

Suddenly Goethe has changed the names of the principals in this story: they are now no longer Ares and Aphrodite, but rather Venus and Mars. Apollo is now *Apoll*. These changes suggest that this fragment was written at different date than the more substantial section above. That Poseidon is given his Greek name may indicate that this section did not receive a final polishing, for Goethe did not normally mingle Greek and Roman forms

within a single poem. Another possibility would be that Goethe's first draft for this translation used mostly Roman forms, and when a fair copy was made by his secretary, some editing took place. There would, however, have been no need to change fragments that were omitted from the final copy. In "*Ja vom guten Rufe,*" (*Römische Elegie* 21), all of the Olympians mentioned are referred to by their Roman names. If the original draft for this translation had also used Roman forms, it would have been perfectly well in line with Goethe's first treatment of the story. Such inadvertent *contaminatio* might also explain to some extent the elegiac mood Goethe imported into this Homeric passage.

In this second fragment, the translation itself contains a few clever verbal effects, including a choice bit of word-play. The assonance of "*um und um uns, unendlich*" ("*around and around us, unceasingly*") with its chain of voiced labials, has a frank and voluptuous effect that goes far beyond the original's double alliteration of τρὶς τόσσοι ἀπίρονες ἀμφίς. Goethe's Hermes openly enjoys speculating about an encounter with Venus. The text is changed to reflect this: the relatively restrained phrase παρὰ χρυσῆν Ἀφροδίτην ("next to golden Aphrodite") is eroticized into "*die schöne Venus umschließend*" ("embracing lovely Venus.") Unusually for this translation, Hephaistos is referred to by an epithet ("*der Künstler*") rather than by his name.

The rest of this story is mainly concerned with the negotiations over Aphrodite's bride price. Ares will pay it, says Poseidon, if only Hephaistos will free him. Hephaistos suspects that he is being tricked, and speculates that if Ares were to run away without paying, there would be no guarantee that the price would be paid. He answers Poseidon, but does not immediately grant the god's request.

“Μή με, Ποσειδάων γαιήοχε, ταῦτα κέλευε·
 δειλαί τοι δειλῶν γε καὶ ἐγγύαι ἐγγυάσθαι.
 πῶς ἂν ἐγὼ σε δέοιμι μετ’ ἀθανάτοισι θεοῖσιν,
 εἴ κεν Ἄρης οἴχοιτο χρέος καὶ δεσμὸν ἄλυξας;
 Τὸν δ’ αὖτε προσέειπε Ποσειδάων ἐνοσίχθων·
 “Ἥφαιστ’ εἴ περ γάρ κεν Ἄρες χρεῖος ὑπαλύξας
 οἴχηται φεύγων, αὐτὸς τοι ἐγὼ τάδε τίσω.” (*Od.* 8.350-357)

“Poseidon, earth-enveloper, do not order me to do this.
 it is a wretched thing to accept a pledge from a wretch
 How could I tie you up, here among the immortal gods,
 if Ares should run away, escaping his chains and his debt?”
 Poseidon the earth-shaker responded:
 “Hephaistos, if Ares should leave and escape his debt
 by running away, I myself will pay you.”

The politeness of Hephaistos’ use of the epithet γαῖήοχε (“earth-enveloper”) is immediately voided by the direct insult to Ares in 8.351, which, with its heavy alliteration has the air of a maxim carelessly applied. The wretch is Ares, but the advocate and guarantor of the pledge is Poseidon. Hephaistos’ hesitancy in the face of this offer implies that sea god’s protégé is entirely unreliable, but also suggests an unwillingness to believe that he will be paid at all. Poseidon has not volunteered to be put in chains, if Ares defaults, but Hephaistos says that this is the only offer that will satisfy him. Poseidon, now given the more weighty and imposing epithet ἐνοσίχθων (earth-shaker), commendably holds his temper, and manages to return the negotiations to a purely financial level, taking it for granted that the hostages will in any case be freed.

Goethe’s version of this section is the most fragmentary of the three passages. The lines that are preserved are plainly a first draft, rough jottings that were never finished. The lines are rearranged and the whole passage is somewhat garbled.

*Schwach ist immer die Bürgschaft die einem Schwachen gelobt wird
 Und wie könnte ich, mächtige<r> Gott, zum Ersatze dich zwingen
 Wenn mir Ares entfloh der Schuld und die Fesseln entweichend (Od. 8.352-3)*

*Lös ihn! Ich aber verspreche, wie du es selber begehrest
 Soll er das billige dir vor allen Gött<ern> erstatten.
 Ihm antworte<te> drauf der herrliche hinkelnd<e> Künstl<r>
 Erderschütterer Neptun wie kannst du mir diese<s> gebieten (Od. 8.347-50)⁶⁰⁹*

The guarantee that is credited to a weak man is always weak.
 And how could I, mighty god, compel you to be a substitute
 if Ares ran away, escaping his debt and his fetters?

Free him! I for my part promise to do what you want:
 he will pay you what is fair before all the gods.
 To this, the lordly limping craftsman responded
 “Earthshaking Neptune, how can you ask me this?”

As the passage is preserved, the ordering of lines initially leaves the reader in doubt of the identity of the speaker. The first three lines cannot have been intended to follow on immediately after the end of the second fragment, for that section closes with Poseidon addressing Hephaistos. Again, the inconsistency in the use of Greek and Roman names within a single poem (“Ares,” “Neptun,”) would suggest that this section was never revised for public reading. That the passage, in Goethe’s translation, focuses more on the emotions of Hephaistos and Poseidon, on the passion and drama of the scene, than on the promised resolution of conflict that the negotiations will bring about, also suggests Goethe’s reluctance to read into the passage some of the larger themes the original story reflects.

In the Homeric world, even among the Olympians, issues of status are often sorted out by various kinds of exchange: when someone is insulted to the detriment of his κλέος (glorious reputation), he can only be mollified either by the exaction of vengeance or by the payment of some species of ransom. In many situations where potential or actual violence impends, Homeric characters resolve conflicts by the giving of gifts. Dramatic highpoints in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* occur at places where someone displays reluctance to give or accept a gift, thus denying a giver the honor of giving or an angry hero the tribute he considers his honorable due. When a donor and a recipient join in the giving and receipt of generous and suitable gifts, both parties’ κλέος is enhanced, and the danger of bloodshed and potential vengeance-feuding is averted. This mechanism does not operate only among feuding warriors, but also, indeed most frequently, between guests and hosts. A host receives honor from entertaining lavishly and giving glorious gifts, while a guest’s status is augmented by the honor done to him, and by his courteous and modest behavior while visiting.⁶¹⁰ Honor can also be done a visitor by offering him a bath. The visitor, by taking part in the ritual of cleansing, displays his trust in his host, for a man bathing is in a vulnerable position, and also becomes, temporarily, equal in

status to the members of the household, tacitly agreeing to conform to the norms of household behavior. As Sheila Murnaghan wrote “...identity is expressed in the acknowledging gestures of others.”⁶¹¹

Ares, in this story, has filled his role of guest improperly, coming to the house of his host Hephaistos secretly and unbidden, making free use of property (Aphrodite) that has not been offered to him by the householder. That the property in question is the daughter of Zeus, the patron of guest-friendship (ξενία), only adds to the seriousness of his offense. Hephaistos, finding that he has been dishonored both as a host and as a husband, demands compensation in order to retrieve his lost κλέος. Since Zeus the supreme adjudicator is not present, even though he has been explicitly summoned, Poseidon, also one of the older generation of the Olympians, attempts to fill his brother’s role, initially by promising him that Ares will pay, and then, when pushed to it, personally taking on Ares’ legal obligation. Poseidon’s gesture, despite Hephaistos’ angry words, does defuse the conflict. Recognizing that propriety demands that he stand down, the abashed Hephaistos assents, saying Οὐκ ἔστ’ οὐδὲ ἔοικε τεὸν ἔπος ἀρνήσασθαι (*Od.* 8.358) (“I cannot refuse to accede to your word, nor would it be seemly.”) The lovers are released, and each departs as quickly as possible, Ares to his traditional homeland of Thrake and Aphrodite to Paphos on Kypros, one of her principal shrines.

The closing lines of Demodokos’ song focus on the healing ritual of bathing that frequently follows the dissolution of conflict by gift-giving in Homeric epic:

ἔνθα δέ μιν Χάριτες λοῦσαν καὶ χρίσαν ἑλαίῳ
ἀμβρότῳ, οἷα θεοῦς ἐπενήνοθεν αἰὲν ἔοντας,
ἀμφὶ δὲ ἔϊματα ἔσσαν ἐπήρατα, θαῦμα ιδέσθαι. (*Od.* 8.364-6)

There the Graces bathed her and anointed her
with immortal oil, such as shines on the gods who live forever,
and the dressed her in lovely clothing, a wonder to see.

Because this is meant to be a light and amusing song, the substitution of Poseidon for his brother as upholder of the law makes the conflict seem less dangerous. The integrating ritual of the bath, appropriately in such a context, is here trivialized into a purely erotic scene: the naked Aphrodite is comforted by her attendants, the Graces, and as an added consolation, is arrayed in “lovely clothing, a wonder to see.” Rituals of bathing and dressing serve to reconstitute identity and status.⁶¹² The embarrassing scene in Hephaistos’ house is as if forgotten: the goddess resumes her normal elegance, and the unchanging verities of the Homeric world are reasserted.

Although in the *Odyssey* the story functions as comic relief after Odysseus has proven himself a worthy competitor in the athletic games of the taunting Phaiakian youth, it addresses a major theme that both begins and ends Odysseus’ journeys. Paris’ abuse of the institution of guest-friendship had provided the impetus for the war that first took Odysseus away from his home, and when he returns to Ithaka he will again be faced with guest-friendship gone wrong, but this time multiplied, for every suitor wishes to make off with Penelope. Indeed, as Douglas Stewart wrote, “The suitors are engaged in a grotesque parody of the siege at Troy.”⁶¹³ This account of the faithless Aphrodite’s receiving her just deserts is also a reversed image of the ultimate vindication of the faithful Penelope. Another major theme, the bath that restores harmony, is evoked in the closing lines of Demodokos’ song. Aphrodite’s bath is echoed in the larger story by the washing of Odysseus’ feet at *Od.* 19.317-505, which partially reestablishes his identity, and by the bath he takes at *Od.* 23.153-63, after which Athene sheds a magical radiance upon him and makes him look like the gods (ἀθανάτοισιν ὁμοῖος.)

Goethe showed his lack of interest in the essential contours of the story by omitting the completion of the bargain for Aphrodite’s bride-price and her healing bath at Paphos. If the first large fragment can be regarded as complete in itself, and there is enough evidence to suggest that Goethe did regard it that way, the reading suggested is

relatively shallow. The song of Demodokos, originally entertaining, but soundly integrated with the epic as a whole, is transformed into a piece of charming and accomplished occasional poetry, divorced from its setting. Although the passage is, with a few exceptions, a very close translation, the story told is substantially different from that of the Homeric narrative. It is given a new ring-composed structure through the insertion of an invented invocation and the decision to stop short with the gods' laughter at *Od.* 8.326-6, but since the conclusion of the tale is not told, the result is not a complete narrative of conflict, resolution, and healing, but merely a charming erotic vignette.

Goethe's translations of five brief passages from the *Iliad* (*Il.* 6.1-6, 12.243, 12.442-452, 14.329-351, and 15.6, 9-10) probably date from about the same time as the Ares and Aphrodite story. The shorter *Iliad* fragments are workmanlike, faithful, and characterized by the same easy flowing movement that marks the *Odyssey* translations, generally short and unremarkable, except for *Il.* 14.329-351, an enchanting piece of work. It too is essentially a mere erotic vignette, but Goethe's elegiac treatment of the action works well in context. In this passage, in order to lull Zeus to sleep and give Poseidon a chance to help the Greeks, whom she favors, Hera seduces her husband. Her preparations for the seduction are lengthily detailed. At *Il.* 14.166-186 she bathes and adorns herself. She then visits Aphrodite, who loans her a magical girdle that allows its wearer to accomplish her every desire (*Il.* 14.187-223), and bargains with Sleep to come and overpower Zeus while he is vulnerable (*Il.* 14.224-291). Then Hera entices her husband to come and lie down with her, at first pretending that she has come to tell him of her travel plans before she makes a visit to the house of Okeanos. Zeus is overcome with her charms, and urges her to lie down with him immediately (*Il.* 14.292-328). She assents, but with coy reservations:

Τὸν δὲ δολοφρονέουσα προσήυδα πτόνια "Ἥρη·
 "αἰνότατε Κρονίδη, ποῖον τὸν μῦθον ἔειπες.
 εἰ νῦν ἐν φιλότῃτι λιλαίεαι εὐνηθῆναι
 "Ἴδης ἐν κορυφῇσι, τὰ δὲ προπέφανται ἅπαντα·

πῶς κ' ἔοι, εἴ τις νῶϊ θεῶν αἰγιγενετάων
 εὔδοντ' ἀθρήσειε, θεοῖσι δὲ πᾶσι μετελθῶν
 πεφράδοι; οὐκ ἂν ἐγὼ γε τεὸν πρὸς δῶμα νεοίμην
 ἐξ εὐνης ἀνστάσα, νεμεσητὸν δέ κεν εἶη.
 ἀλλ' εἴ δή ῥ' ἐθέλεις καί τοι φίλον ἔπλετο θυμῷ,
 ἔστιν τοι θάλαμος, τόν τοι φίλος υἱὸς ἔτευξεν
 Ἥφαιστος, πυκινὰς δὲ θύρας σταθμοῖσιν ἐπῆρσεν·
 ἔνθ' ἴομεν κείμεντες, ἐπεὶ νῦ τοι εὔαδεν εὐνή."
 Τὴν δ' ἀπαμειβόμενος προσέφη νεφεληγερέτα Ζεὺς·
 "Ἥρη, μήτε θεῶν τό γε δεῖδιθι μήτε τιν' ἀνδρῶν
 ὄψεσθαι· τοῖόν τοι ἐγὼ νέφος ἀμφικαλύψω
 χρύσειον· οὐδ' ἂν νῶϊ διαδράκοι Ἥελιός περ,
 οὐ τε καὶ ὀξύτατον πέλεται φάος εἰσοράσθαι."
 Ἥρα, καὶ ἀγκὰς ἔμαρπτε Κρόνου παῖς ἦν παράκοιτιν·
 τοῖσι δ' ὑπὸ χθῶν δία φύεν νεοθηλέα ποίην,
 λωτόν θ' ἐρσήεντα ἰδὲ κρόκον ἦδ' ὑάκινθον
 πυκνὸν καὶ μαλακόν, ὃς ἀπὸ χθονὸς ὑψὸς ἔεργε.
 τῷ ἔνι λεξάσθην, ἐπὶ δὲ νεφέλην ἔσσαντο
 κάλην χρυσεῖην· στυλῖναί δ' ἀπέπιπτον ἔερσαι. (II.14.329-351)

Then regal Hera addressed him, thinking craftily:
 "Most formidable son of Kronos, what did you say?
 If you long to go to bed in love now
 on the peaks of Ida, where everything is open to view,
 how would it be, if one of the immortal gods were to see us
 sleeping, and go around to the other gods
 and tell? I for my part could not go to your house
 after I had gotten out of bed: it would be most shameful.
 But if you would like, and it pleases your heart,
 you have a chamber, which your dear son, Hephaistos,
 with sturdy doors built on its sills.
 Let us go there to lie down, since you want to go to bed."
 Answering her, Zeus the cloud-gatherer said
 "Hera, do not fear that any of the gods or mortals
 will see. I will cover us up with a golden cloud
 so that even Helios will not see us,
 he whose light is the keenest for seeing."
 The son of Kronos spoke, and took his wife in his arms.
 Beneath them, divine Earth produced new grass
 lotus sprinkled with dew, crocus, and hyacinth
 abundant and smooth, that sprung up from the ground.
 There the two of them lay down, and were covered
 with a lovely golden cloud: shimmering dew fell upon them.

Goethe may well have chosen this scene as a companion piece to the tale of Ares and Aphrodite, intending the two passages to be read aloud and juxtaposed. The tale of Hera and Zeus makes a fine counterpart for the story of Ares and Aphrodite, for while both are

accounts of erotic encounters between gods, each told within a small framework, the stories are entirely different, and so the two passages would have worked well together. While Ares and Aphrodite are secret lovers, Zeus and Hera, by contrast, are married. Ares is the seducer in the *Odyssey*, but in the *Iliad*, it is the female partner who beguiles her husband. The adulterous couple are exposed in full view, but the married couple enjoy a magical privacy. Both stories feature a magical golden covering made by a husband, but in the *Odyssey*, Hephaistos' net is a cruel trap, while in the *Iliad* passage, Zeus' cloud is a beautiful shield against prying eyes. Finally, Ares and Aphrodite are motivated only by desire, but Hera has a secret agenda, while Zeus is the helpless victim of the enchanted girdle she is wearing.

Goethe's translation of the episode of Hera's seduction of Zeus is crafted very much along the lines of his *Odyssey* translation. Epithets are kept to a minimum, and the diction is simple and clear. While the largest of the *Odyssey* fragments had featured the use of Greek names for the gods, however, in this passage from the *Iliad*, proper names are given in their Roman forms, apart from the patronymic Kronion. If the two passages were meant to be performed as a pair, this would have sharpened the contrast between them. Goethe's rendering of the passage is as follows:

*Doch betrüglich sagte darauf die mächtige Juno
Hoher Sohn des Saturns welch eine Rede vernehm ich
Hier begehrt du der Lust und ehlichen Liebe zu pflegen
An den Gipfel gelehnt des offenbaren Gebirges
Blickte nun der göttlichen eine auf unser Umarmung
Ging und sagt es den Himmlischen an, ich kann nicht wieder
Von dem Lager erwacht zu deinem ewigen Hause
Nein es kränkte zu sehr. Doch wenn du meiner begehrt
Wenn das Herz es gebeut so laß in deinem Gemache
Das Vulkan dein Sohn mit klugen Sinnen erbauet
Fest mit Türen verschloß uns mit einander vergnügen.*

*Ihr antwortet drauf der Wolkensammeler Kronion
Juno keiner der Götter und keiner der sterblichen Menschen
Soll uns sehen, fürchte das nicht, mit goldenem Nebel
Deck ich dein Lager umher es soll die wandelnde Sonne
Mit dem Blicke der alles durchdringt die Hülle nicht durchsehn.
Sprachs und faßte sein Weib in Göttlichen armen bezwingend*

*Unter ihnen hub sich der Boden von sprossenden Kräutern,
Feuchten Lotos und Krokus und Hyazinthen erzeugend
Stark und weich die göttlichen trug das schwellende Lager
Golden wallte der Nebel umher und träufelte glänzend.*⁸¹⁴

But treacherously, the mighty Juno said in return,
“Noble son of Saturn, what do I hear you saying?
You long for your pleasure here and conjugal love
Resting on the peak of the mountain, all exposed.
If one of the immortals caught sight of our embrace,
and went and told the heavenly ones, woken from our bed,
I could not come to your house again.
No, it would be too vexing. But if you desire me,
if your heart is so inclined, then let us -- in your chamber
that your son Vulcan built with clever skill,
with the doors barred, take our delight together.”

At this, cloud-gathering Kronion responded
“Juno, none of the gods, none of the mortals
will see us. Don’t be afraid. With a golden cloud,
I will cover your bed, so the roving sun
with his gaze that pierces through all cannot penetrate the veil.”
He spoke, and masterfully took his wife in his arms.
Beneath them, the ground surged with burgeoning plants,
bringing forth damp lotus and crocus and hyacinth
strong and soft, the growing bed bore the gods;
golden, the fog floated around them, and sparkling dew fell.

In this translation, Juno’s epithet is transferred to her spouse: in the original text, she is described as πόντια (queenly or noble). Jupiter here is the *Hoher Sohn des Saturns* (noble son of Saturn). In turn, his epithet αινότατε (most formidable), is given, although in somewhat weakened form, to *mächtige Juno* (the mighty Juno). Juno is a far more powerful figure here than in the original. Hera’s initial reluctance is expressed in terms of humiliation: if any of the gods should see them, she says, it would be most shameful (νεμεσσητὸν δέ κεν εἶη.) Goethe’s Juno, on the other hand, would not be humiliated, but rather annoyed: “*Nein es kränkte zu sehr*” (“No, it would be too vexing,”) she says. Her language is franker than that of Hera. If her husband is willing to go indoors where they can be private, she offers “*wenn du meiner begehrst,*” (“if you want me,”) “*laß... uns mit einander vergnügen*” (“let us take our delight together.”) Hera, by contrast, studs her speech with euphemisms and never mentions her own pleasure. She

grudgingly assents to Zeus' entreaty, saying ἀλλ' εἰ δὴ ῥ' ἐθέλεις καί τοι φίλον ἔπλετο θυμῷ, ("but if you would like, and it pleases your heart...") they should go inside, ἐπεὶ νύ τοι εὖαδεν εὐνή (since you want to go to bed.) Even in the course of seducing her husband, she is either unwilling or unable to admit any desire she may feel. Zeus, conversely, is entirely under her spell. Goethe's translation emphasizes the god's urgency. Zeus merely takes his wife into his arms, (ἀγκὰς ἔμαρπτε... ἦν παράκοιτιν,) but Goethe's Kronion does so masterfully ("*bezwingen*<d>.") Similarly, Goethe's rendering heightens the level of the couple's passion by transferring their feelings to the earth itself, which not only grows magical flowers to make a bed for them, but rises up to meet them ("*Unter ihnen hub sich der Boden*") ("Beneath them, the ground surged.") This is not in the Homeric text. Another detail imported into the text in Goethe's translation is the metaphor of earth as a bed, now made explicit: "*die göttlichen trug das schwellende Lager*" ("the growing bed bore the gods.") The original text, τῶ ἔνι λεξάσθην ("There the two of them lay down") is far more subtle. As in the *Odyssey* translation, this passage is marked by elegiac diction: one more the metaphorical bed is a "*Lager*," while the lovers' coupling is described as "*Umarmung*." These minor echoes of diction that had marked the *Römische Elegien* are strengthened by Goethe's choice of Roman rather than Greek names for the gods.

These two passages are Goethe's longest translations from Homeric epic. Both are well-turned and faithful to the originals, but their content betrays the concerns of the translator: they do not so much reflect a deep understanding of the epics as a sentimental return to the world of *Römische Elegien* and to memories of Sicily. Goethe's last extended piece of translation from Homeric material, however, is substantially different from his *Iliad* and *Odyssey* excerpts, and a tight rendering of a particularly difficult text.

In 1795, about the time he translated *Il.* 14.329-351, Goethe also made a translation of the first 139 lines of the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*, which he sent to Schiller

at the beginning of July for publication in *Die Horen*. On 8 August, he wrote to Schiller requesting his manuscript back for a hasty revision, for he had wanted it to go into the August issue.⁶¹⁵ Goethe worked swiftly, and returned the revised manuscript to Schiller on 18 August 1795, saying he had done his best. “*An der Hymnus, der hierbei folgt, habe ich soviel getan als die Kürze der Zeit und die Zerstreung in der ich mich befinde, erlauben wollte.*” (“I have worked as much on the Hymn, sent herewith, as the shortness of time and the disquietude in which I find myself have allowed.”) Presumably, this haste and distraction account for the fact that Goethe did not translate the whole of the poem, but chose instead to end his version at line 139.

Although Goethe could not complete the poem, he made a sound decision to finish off his translation where he did. The main action of the hymn, the tale of Apollo’s birth and the choosing of Delos as his special cult-center, is contained within the opening section (1-139), while the closing section (140-178) functions primarily as a coda, bringing the narrative down to the human plane. At the same time, Goethe’s version loses from the sacrifice of its ending, since the original well-balanced structure of the piece is forfeited. Originally the hymn had been ring-composed, both opening and closing with the speaker’s declaration of his intention to praise Apollo the archer.

The translation, while in places loose, is as pleasing a rendering from the Greek as anything Goethe had ever yet achieved, full of his own typical lightness of texture and easily flowing pace. No romantic sentiment was imported into the text, but the feelings and motivations of the characters within it are fully realized and depicted memorably, sometimes even magnified for dramatic effect. With the exception of “*Jupiter*” for Zeus -- in all probability *metri gratia*-- Greek forms are used for the names of gods, goddesses, and places throughout. The rendering is also remarkable for the degree to which Goethe succeeded in preserving the word order of his original text. That he accomplished this without making his own translation any more lapidary and condensed than the original is

a considerable feat. Although unfinished, Goethe's *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* was at its time, and remains now, one of the most powerful and resonant renderings of this piece into German.

Since the piece is one of the lengthier Greek selections Goethe translated, only selected structurally important passages are examined. The opening of the Hymn, with its impressive entrance of Apollo into the Olympian court, is full of splendor and solemnity:

Μνήσομαι οὐδὲ λάθωμαι Ἀπόλλωνος ἑκάτοιο,
ὄν τε θεοὶ κατα δῶμα Διὸς τρομέουσιν ἰόντα
καί ῥά τ' ἀναΐσσουσιν ἐπὶ σχεδὸν ἐρχομένοιο
πάντες ἀφ' ἐδράων, ὅτε φαίδιμα τόξα τιταίνει. (*HH Ap.* 1-4)

I will remember and not overlook Apollo the far-shooter,
at whom the gods tremble as he comes into the house of Zeus,
and as he comes near them, they all arise
from their seats, when he strings his shining bow.

Apollo's approach is imposing, even overtly threatening. In the Homeric corpus, none of the other Olympians inspires such a reaction from the assembled gods. At *Il.* 15.86, Hera's arrival causes the gods to jump up from their seats, and at *Il.* 15.33, the entrance of Zeus also prompts them to rise. Apollo's appearance, however, gives rise to genuine consternation among the gods.⁶¹⁶ Jenny Strauss Clay wrote "They tremble at his approach, then leap up from their chairs, not so much out of respect, but rather out of uncontrollable fear at the sight of the god brandishing his bow."⁶¹⁷ Goethe's rendering reflects the grandeur and menace of the original. Indeed, his translation heightens the tension:

*Dein gedenk ich Apollo du Fernretter, und werde
Nie vergessen dein Lob zu verkünden. In Jupiters Hause
Fürchten die Götter dich alle, sie heben wie du hereintrittst
Von den Stühlen sich auf, den kommenden Sieger zu ehren.*⁶¹⁸

I think of you, Apollo, you far-shooter, and will
never forget to herald your praise. In Jupiter's house
all of the gods fear you, they arise as you come in
from their chairs, to honor the advancing victor.

The phrase “*dein Lob zu verkünden*” would have seemed a natural formulation for a hymn for Goethe, who would have been familiar with Luther’s psalm-translations. The original text, however, includes no promise of praise from the speaker. The trembling of the gods here is specified, magnified to actual fear. Here, possibly influenced by Bergler’s translation of the line: “*Quem et dii ipsi per domum Jovis metuunt euntem.*”⁶¹⁹ Goethe’s rendering is even stronger than the original. On 17 May 1777, some twenty years previously, he had written to Herder comparing the effectiveness and honesty of ancient writers as opposed to modern ones, praising the specificity of ancient texts:

*Laß mich meinen Gedanken kurz so ausdrücken: Sie stellten die Existence dar, wir gewöhnlich den Effekt; sie schilderten das Fürchterliche, wir schildern fürchterlich. . . .*⁶²⁰

Let me explain my feelings briefly thus: They [the ancients] presented existence, we generally present the effects; they depicted the frightful, we depict in a frightful manner.

By choosing to describe the cause rather than the effect of the gods’ trembling, Goethe, true to his old insight, made his text simpler and more forceful than the original. “*Den kommenden Sieger zu ehren*” (“to honor the advancing victor”) is imported into line 4, at the expense of the simple and explicitly threatening gesture ὅτε φαίδιμα τόξα τιταίνει (“when he strings his shining bow.”) Goethe also began the poem in the first person and moved into the second person in the middle of line 2. The opening line of the original, however is in the first person, but the narrative immediately switches into the third person. The direct address to the threatening Apollo adds immediacy and stress to the already dramatic opening lines of the poem. At this point in the Homeric poem, Leto greets her son, takes away his weapons, and serves him nectar, while the other Olympians rejoice. The tension is defused, and Leto is praised for her mighty children. The poet then feigns uncertainty, once more addressing the god directly.

Πῶς τ' σ' ὑμνήσω πάντως εὖμνον ἔόντα;
πάντη γάρ τοι, Φοῖβε, νόμοι βεβλήατ' ἀοιδῆς,
ἡμὲν ἀν' ἠπειρον πορτιτρόφον ἠδ' ἀνὰ νήσους·
πᾶσαι δὲ σκοπιαὶ τοι ἄδον καὶ πρόωνες ἄκροι
ὑψηλῶν ὀρέων ποταμοὶ θ' ἄλαδε προρέοντες
ἄκται τ' εἰς ἄλα κεκλιμέναι λιμένες τε θαλάσσης. (HH Ap. 19-24)

How shall I sing of you, since you are celebrated in song in every way?
for everywhere, Phoibos, the laws of song are under your rule,
both on the cattle-nurturing mainland and on the islands;
all mountain peaks delight you and the high headlands
of lofty mountains, and the rivers flowing to the sea
the beaches that slope down to the shore, and the ocean's harbors.

This broad panoramic view of the natural world moves from the domestic and pastoral dry land out through the seas, from the loftiest peaks, and then, as if impelled by gravity, down into the hills to sea-level, and then back across the sea to its inlets. The movement of this passage is striking, and the lines are rich in details. Goethe reflected this in his translation, but intensified it.

*Wie besing ich, o Phöbus, dich Liederreichen? Es kommen
Alle Lieder von dir, die auf der nährenden Erde
Auf den Inseln des Meers den Menschen festlich erschallen.
Freie Gipfel gefallen dir wohl der höchsten Gebirge
Nach dem Meere sich stürzende Flüsse, die offenen gekrümmten
Weitgestreckten Ufer des Meers, die Buchten und Häfen.⁶²¹*

How shall I sing of you, O Phoibos, rich in song? All songs
come from you, that resound joyously for men
on the nourishing earth, on the islands.
Open peaks of the highest mountains please you well,
rivers plunging into the sea, the open winding
far-outstretched shore of the sea, the bays and the harbors.

This rendering focuses not merely on the vast landscape that is under Apollo's hegemony, but also on the human beings who inhabit it. The earth here nourishes human beings rather than cattle, and the songs of the god ring out for their benefit as well. The epithet *Liederreichen* for εὖμνον, and the omission of πάντως play down the speaker's pretended hesitance to choose his theme: here it is understood that however he chooses to

sing, Apollo will guide him. The earth and the islands are the realm of men: the three lines that describe their world are neatly answered by the three that follow, describing the mountains and the sea. The balance is certainly present in the original text, but Goethe, by sharpening the contrast between the two worlds, underscored the tight structure of the passage.

The speaker answers his first question with another question: shall he sing of Apollo's birth on an island in the sea? He follows the path of Leto's voyage in search of a place to give birth, naming thirty-one places where she sought a home for her unborn son, all of which rejected her. Finally she came to Delos, and spoke to the island, asking it to be the site of Apollo's temple, and playing on its poverty and lack of fertility.

“εἰ δέ κ' Ἀπόλλωνος ἐκαέργου νηὸν ἔχησθα,
 ἄνθρωποι τοὶ πάντες ἀγινήσουσ' ἐκατόμβας
 ἐνθάδ' ἀγειρόμενοι, κνίσση δέ τοι ἄσπετος αἶεὶ
 δηρὸν ἄνακτ' εἰ βόσκοις, οἳ τε θεοὶ κέ σ' ἔχωσιν
 χειρὸς ἀπ' ἄλλοτρίης, ἐπεὶ οὗ τοι πῖαρ ὑπ' οὕδας.” (HH Ap. 56-60)⁶²²

“But if you will have the temple of Apollo the far-shooter,
 all men will bring you hekatombs,
 gathering here, and the fragrant smoke will rise forever
 for a long time, if you nourish the lord, the gods will keep you
 from the hands of foreigners, for your soil is not rich.”

Even in a poetic context, where more flexibility is allowable, Goethe's rendering of this passage stretches the boundaries of German word-order, imitating the ordering of the original lines.

*Ehret dich aber Apollos des herrlichen Tempel, so bringen
 Hekatomben die Menschen dir alle versammelt; es duftet
 Immer glänzend der Rauch des dampfenden Opfers, dich schützen,
 Bist du die Wohnung des Gotts, die Götter für feindlichen Händen.
 Nun bedenke, wie wenig du sonst durch Früchte berühmt bist.*⁶²³

But if the lordly temple of Apollo honors you, then men
 will bring hekatombs to you, all gathered together; the smoke
 of the burning sacrifice will always smell splendidly. The gods,
 if you are the home of the god, will protect you from enemy hands.
 Now consider, how little renowned for your harvests you are otherwise.

This rendering is somewhat loose, but the Greek in lines 59-60 is confusing in Bergler's edition, which Goethe was evidently using, and although Bergler's translation (*diu regem si tueris, diique te tuebuntur/ manu ab aliena*) makes it clearer, Goethe was apparently not comfortable with the opening phrase. He chose to leave out δηρόν, in the process making the line significantly more comprehensible. In this passage, Leto is characterized by her subtle speech, subtler in this rendition than it had been in the original. She makes her offer more enticing by referring to Apollo's temple as an honor, and tempts the island with a fame it would not otherwise have. Eventually, the island consents, first making Leto swear an oath by the river Styx that Apollo will build her a temple, for Delos fears being depopulated. Leto's labor is long and hard, but after nine days, the goddesses who have gathered around her send Iris to summon Eileithyia, the goddess of birth, who has been distracted by a jealous Hera. When she arrives, Apollo is born, and once he has been fed nectar and ambrosia, immediately begins to speak and walk.

“Εἶη μοι κίθαρίς τε πῖλη καὶ καμπύλα τόξα,
 χρήσω δ' ἀνθρώποισι Διὸς νημερτέα βουλήν.”
 Ὅς εἰπὼν ἐβίβασκεν ἐπὶ χθονὸς εὐρυοδείης
 Φοῖβος ἀκερσεκόμης, ἑκατηβόλος· αἱ δ' ἄρα πᾶσαι
 θάμβεον ἀθανάται. χρυσῶ δ' ἄρα Δῆλος ἅπασα
 βεβρίθει, καθορῶσα Διὸς Λητοῦς τε γενέθλην,
 γηθοσύνη, ὅτι μιν θεὸς εἴλετο οἰκία θέσθαι
 νήσων ἠπείρου τε, φίλησε δὲ κηρόθι μᾶλλον.
 ἦνθησ', ὡς ὅτε τε ρῖον οὔρεος ἄνθεσιν ὕλης. (HH. Ap. 131-139)

“The lyre will be dear to me and the curved bow;
 I shall proclaim to men the unfailing will of Zeus.”
 So speaking, he went walking on the wide-pathed earth,
 Phoibos the long-locked, the far-shooter. And all of the immortal
 goddesses were amazed. All Delos was laden with gold,
 having beheld the child of Zeus and Leto;
 in joy, for the god had chosen it for a home
 rather than the islands and the lands. It loved him still more in its heart.
 It bloomed, like the peak of a mountain with forest flowers.

This passage links two themes that are keys to Goethe's understanding of the Homeric world: landscape and divine creativity, and obliquely refers to a third, love. The birth of Apollo, lord of poets, takes place on a barren island made fertile by his coming.

Goethe's translation is expansive, smooth, and evenly flowing, simply expressed, but expressive. It forms a satisfying conclusion for this foreshortened version of the hymn.

*Lieben werd ich Zither und Bogen, den Ratschuß Kronions
Werd ich wahrhaft und treu den Menschen allen verkündigen.
Also sprach er und schritt die weiten Wege hernieder,
Phöbus der lockige Gott, der Ferntreffer. Es staunten
Die unsterbliche Frauen, und wie von Golde beladen
Glänzte Delos für Freuden, den Sohn Kronions und Lätos
Endlich schauend, den Gott, der sie vor allen erwählet,
Allen Ländern und Insuln sich einen Tempel zu bauen.
Und es ergriff sie gewaltige Liebe, sie leuchtete freundlich,
Wie im Frühling der Rucken des Berges von blühenden Wäldern.*⁶²⁴

“I shall love the bow and the lyre. The council of Kronion,
I shall faithfully and truly impart to all men.”
So he spoke, and strode forth, down the broad paths,
Phoibos the long-locked god, the far-shooter.
The immortal women were amazed, and as if laden with gold,
Delos shone for joy, finally beholding the son of Kronion and Leto,
the god who had chosen her over all others,
all lands and all island, to build him a temple.
And powerful love overcame her; she shone benevolently,
as a mountain ridge does in the springtime, with blossoming forests.

Goethe's version is fuller than the original, but the general sense of the passage is faithfully rendered. The term νημερτέα (never-failing), describing Zeus' council, has been transferred to Apollo and expanded upon: *wahrhaft und treu* has a grand heroic sound to it. Apollo's first words are his first prophecy, and his reliability is underlined by the repetition in this phrase. By reading χρυσῶ δ' ἄρα Δῆλος ἅπασα βεβρίθει as a simile, and thus subordinating it, Goethe made clearer sense of a somewhat garbled passage. The last two lines of Goethe's translation expand considerably on the original. In the hymn, the personified Delos loves Apollo very much (φίλησε δὲ κηρόθι μᾶλλον), but Goethe's translation intensifies this feeling: “*und es ergriff sie gewaltige Liebe*” (“and powerful love overcame her.”) The following words, “*sie leuchtete freundlich, Wie im Frühling...*” (“she shone benevolently, as...in the springtime”) are not in the original. These invented details slow the pace of the passage, and help to make it full enough to seem a convincing closure for the hymn.

He did have the full text of the hymn available to him in Bergler's edition, so the decision to halt at 139 must have been a deliberate one. In doing so, he eliminated from the hymn some of its high points: the description of Apollo's worship on Delos, the closing salutation to the god, and the famous passage in which the Delian women, if asked who composed the hymn, are instructed to respond

τυφλὸς ἀνὴρ, οἶκει δὲ Χίῳ ἔνι παιπαλοέσση
τοῦ πᾶσαι μετόπισθεν ἀριστευσουσιν ἀοιδάι. (*HH Ap.* 173-4)

A blind man; he lives in rocky Chios;
All of his songs will be the best in time to come.

Despite his protestation to Schiller that he was hurried and distracted, lack of time may not have been the only reason Goethe left these particular lines untranslated. Homer, to him, was a monumental and towering figure, more than merely human. In the hymn, the speaker, traditionally identified as Homer, reveals himself as a mere man, indeed a flawed man, although a supremely gifted one. A colossal Homer such as Goethe envisioned would have had no need to ask ἐμεῖο δὲ καὶ μετόπισθεω/ μνήσασθ' (*HH Ap.* 166-7) ("and remember me in the time to come.")

The Hymn to Apollo reflects two of the main keys to the Homeric world for Goethe: emotional and artistic blossoming and a mystically beautiful landscape. His treatment of the hymn demonstrates a continuity in his vision reaching back to his earliest encounters with the Greek text. Among his greatest interests had been the monumental personalities of the Homeric heroes, and Homer, himself seen as a hero. In the autumn of 1770, Herder wrote of Goethe's first delight in Homer:

*Goethe fing Homer in Straßburg zu lesen an, und alle Helden wurden bei ihm so schön, groß und frei watende Störche; er steht mir allemal vor, wenn ich an eine so recht ehrliche Stelle komme, da der Altvater über seine Leier sieht (wenn er schon konnte) und in seinen ansehnlichen Bart lächelt.*⁶²⁵

Goethe started reading Homer in Strasbourg, and all of the heroes seemed to him splendid, gigantic, and freely paddling storks. He comes before my eyes, whenever I

come to a really proper passage, a place where the Father of Poets looked out over his lyre (if only he could have) and smiled through his distinguished beard.

The physical stature of Homeric heroes was not the only thing about them that excited Goethe: their larger-than-life passions also stirred a responsive chord in him. In 1771, in the *Rede zum Shakespears Tag*, it was feeling he stressed:

*Und in was für Seelen!
Griechischen! Ich kann mich nicht erklären, was das
heisst, aber ich fühls und berufe mich der Kürze halber auf
Homer und Sophokles und Theokrit, die habens mich
fühlen gelernt!*⁶²⁶

And in what souls!
Greek ones! I cannot express what that means, but I feel
it, and for the sake of brevity, I mention Homer and Sokrates
and Theokritos, the ones who taught me to feel!

By 1772, when he was writing reviews for the *Frankfurter Gelehrte Anzeiger*, Goethe was still seeing Homer as a hero, a poet's spiritual father, a figure colossal in the way Homeric heroes are enormous. Goethe wanted to know nothing of the physical circumstances or the customs of the Homeric world: in his review of Seybold's *Schreiben über den Homer*, he condemned the section on descriptions as "*Archäologischer Trödelkram*"⁶²⁷ ("antiquarian rubbish.") His derisive dismissal of the section on customs in the Homeric world is notable for his insistence on the centrality of human emotion in the epics, passion on an heroic scale.

*Sitten! und da, anstatt Gefühls des höchsten Ideals
menschlicher Natur, der höchste Würde menschlicher
Thaten, entschuldigt er den Homer, daß seine Zeit,
Tapferkeit für die höchste Tugend hielt, daß die Stärke der
Leidenschaft den übrigen Stärke gleich war...!*⁶²⁸

Customs! And then, in place of [Homer's] feeling for the highest ideals in human character, for the superlative value of human deeds, he excuses Homer for having lived in a time when bravery was considered the noblest virtue, when the strength of passion was equal to the other strengths...!

Goethe idealized Homer, the poet, and during this period the sheer intensity of his characters' feelings put them on center stage for him. Looking back to the summer of 1772 in Wetzlar, Goethe claimed that his acquaintance with *Göttinger Hain* circle and their readings of Robert Wood's *An essay on the original genius and writings of Homer* had opened his eyes to the fact that the world of Homeric epic was a physical one, the society depicted within it an account of a genuine historical time. In *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, some forty years after the fact, he wrote "*Wir sahen nun nicht mehr in jenen Gedichten ein angespanntes und aufgedunsenes Heldenwesen, sondern die abgespielte Wahrheit einer uralten Gegenwart, und suchten uns dieselbe möglichst heranzuziehen.*"⁶²⁹ ("No longer did we see in these poems a lively and indistinct heroic plane, but rather the reflected truth of a present primeval time that we sought to understand as clearly as possible.") In the long run, the theoretical readings he did that summer in Wetzlar certainly had a strong impact on Goethe and his *Göttinger Hain* acquaintances, who included Voss, but in the short term, they they had little or no effect on his attitude toward Homeric epic. During the mid 1770's and beyond, he continued to view these texts as wondrous narratives, places into which to escape. For example, on 5 February 1773 he wrote a letter to Johann Christian Kestner, ending it with a set of salutations from a whole array of Homeric figures, none of whom are human beings within a genuine landscape. Instead, they are the statues in his room, fancifully personified for Kestner's amusement.

*...es grüßen euch meine Götter. Namentlich der schöne Paris hier zur rechten, die goldene Venus dort und der Bote Mercurius, der Freude hat an den Schnellen, und mir gestern unter die Füße band seine göttliche Solen die schönen, goldnen, die ihn tragen über das unfruchtbare Meer und die unendliche Erde, mit Hauche des Winds. Und so segnen Euch die lieben Dinger im Himmel.*⁶³⁰

...my gods greet you. Namely, the handsome Paris here on my right, golden Venus over there, and the messenger Mercury, who loves the swift, and who yesterday bound under my feet the sandals, beautiful and golden, that carry him over the barren sea and boundless earth with the breath of the wind. And so all the dear things in heaven bless you.

This letter shows Goethe still willing to describe the Homeric world as magical and mythical, full of fantastic details such as the magical sandals that are to be found in *Od.* 5, of which Goethe's whimsical paraphrase is actually a fairly close translation. Hermes has been ordered by Zeus to go and visit Kalypso and force her to release the imprisoned Odysseus:

αὐτικ' ἔπειθ' ὑπὸ ποσσὶν ἐδήσατο καλὰ πέδιλα
ἀμβρόσια χρύσεια, τὰ μιν φέρον ἡμὲν ἐφ' ὑγρὴν
ἦδ' ἐπ' ἀπείρονα γαῖαν ἅμα πνοιῆς ἀνέμοιο. (*Od.* 5.43-45)

Immediately thereafter he bound under his feet the beautiful sandals immortal and golden, that bear him over the dry land and over the boundless sea, like the breath of a wind.

Goethe continued to think of the Homeric world as a enchanted and fantastical land throughout the 1770's and beyond. In 1775, long after he was supposed to have been fascinated by Wood's *Essay on the Original Genius of Homer*, which he claims prompted a new interest in the physical surroundings and customs of the Homeric world, he wrote his physiognometric evaluation of a bust of Homer found in Constantinople for Lavater's *Physiognomische Fragmente*. This appraisal displays as much happy Homeric intoxication (and as much worship of Homer as a hero) as anything Goethe had previously written on the subject.

Es ist Homer!

*Dies ist der Schädel, in dem die ungeheuren Götter
und Helden so viel Raum haben, als im weiten Himmel
und der grenzlosen Erde. Hier ist's wo Achill*

μέγας μεγαλωστὶ ταυθεὶς
κεῖτο!

*Dies ist der Olymp, den diese rein erhabne Nase
wie ein anderer Atlas trägt, und über das ganze Gesicht
solche Festigkeit, solch eine sichere Ruhe verbreitet.*⁶³¹

This is Homer!

This is the skull in which the colossal gods and heroes have as much room as in the broad heavens and the boundless earth. This is where Achilleus

lay outstretched, immense in his immensity!

This is the Olympos that bears, like another Atlas, this truly splendid nose, and casts such resolution, such secure tranquillity over the whole face.

As discussed in more detail in Chapter Two, Goethe's view of Homer's face is essentially that of a landscape, first a celestial and terrestrial stage for enormous actors, then the shoreline that is the ever-present backdrop to the great drama of Troy, and finally, the home of the gods themselves. The Homer apprehended here is no mere human being. Rather, he is a divinely blank canvas onto which Goethe painted the archpoet of his fancy, or indeed, the very "*angespanntes und aufgedunsenes Heldenwesen*" ("lively and indistinct heroic plane") that he later claimed to have already left behind him through reading contemporary scholarship on the Homeric world. The predominant impression is of Goethe confronted with a godlike and overwhelming figure belonging to a vast sunlit landscape.

Thus, it is hardly surprising that in Goethe's 20 November 1774 letter to Sophie von La Roche he recommended that her husband, who was learning Greek, take his vocabulary flashcards outdoors: "*... lerne dran zu Hause und auf dem Feld... Und so immer ein dreisig Verse nach dem andern, und hast du zwey drey Bücher so durchgearbeitet, versprech ich dir, stehst du frisch und frank vor deinem Homer...*"⁶³² ("...study them...out in the meadow... Go on that way, always thirty verses at a time, and once you've worked through two or three books, you'll be able to look your Homer right in the eye.") The outdoors is the right place not only for reading the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, but even for committing Greek verbs to memory. In this letter, Homer is seen not only as godlike figure one must gird oneself up to confront without shame, but also as a figure in which one assume a proprietary interest: "*vor deinem Homer.*"

The centrality of landscape for Goethe's reading of Homeric epic is also suggested in *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers*, for Werther's Homeric readings mostly take place

outside, among beautiful country landscapes. Werther refers to Homer as his own property more than once. “...*ich brauche Wiegengesang and den habe ich in seiner Fülle gefunden in meinem Homer...*”⁶³³ (“I need lullabies, and have found them in plenty in my Homer;”) “...*trinke meinen Caffee da, und lese meinen Homer...*”⁶³⁴ (“I drink my coffee there and read my Homer.”)

The great landscape and great passions Goethe found in Homer’s world also surface in his 1774 poem, *Künstlers Morgenlied*. This ballad, which contains Goethe’s first reference to the Ares/Aphrodite story, can be read as a summary in microcosm of Goethe’s attitude toward Homeric epic, not only in the mid-1770’s but for the rest of his creative life. For the next two decades and beyond, his readings of Homer would highlight the beauty he saw in the Homeric landscape first as he imagined it and later as he perceived it in the Mediterranean world. Equally central to his readings would be the divinity of Homer the bard, whose text he viewed as a sacred lectionary. Only when Goethe had read Wolf’s *Prolegomena ad Homerum* (1795) and had begun to give theories of oral transmission some serious thought, would the figure of Homer himself retreat into the background. Most importantly, Goethe’s readings stressed and would continue to stress the colossal human passions his Homer depicted and the romantic love he did not.

Appropriately, *Künstlers Morgenlied* begins with an address to the Muses and the evocation of an idyllic, sunlit space:

*Ich habe euch einen Tempel baut
Ihr hohen Musen all
Und hier in meinem Herzen ist
Das Allerheiligste.*

*Wenn Morgens mich die Sonne weckt
Warm froh ich schau umher
Steht rings ihr ewigen Lebenden
In heiligem Morgenglanz...*

*Ich trete vor den Altar hin
Und lese wie sich's ziemt
Andacht liturgischer Lektion
Im heiligen Homer.*⁶³⁵

I have built you a temple
All you noble Muses
And here in my heart
is the holiest thing of all.

When the sun wakes me in the morning
warm and happy, I look about.
You immortals stand round about me
in the holy light of morning.

I go before the altar
and read, as suits my devotion
my scriptural lesson
in holy Homer.

⁶³⁶

Immediately, the speaker is lost in the contemplation of assorted scenes from *Iliad* 16-18, which inspire him to draw the visions the text has inspired, identifying himself with the image that he is drawing or painting: Achilles fighting for the corpse of Patroklos. So strong is his imagination, that the artist becomes part of his own picture, and speaks in Achilles' voice:

*Ich drange mich hinan hinan
Da kämpfen sie um ihn
Die tapfern Freunde, tapferer
in ihrer Tränenwut.*

*Ach rettet! Kämpfet rettet ihn
Ins Lager bringt ihn rück
Und Balsam gießt dem Toten auf
Und Tränen Toten Ehr.*⁶³⁷

I thrust myself forward and forward:
there, they are fighting for him,
the brave friends, braver
in their weeping fury.

Ah, save him! Fight! Save him!
Bring him back to camp,
and pour balsam over him,
and tears, honor to the dead.

At this point, the speaker's thoughts move him back to his own world, and he addresses an unnamed lover. This shift of perspective is unprepared: the juxtaposition of warlike passion and heroic grief with the embrace of an partner makes for a sharp contrast.

*Und find ich mich zurück hierher
Empfängst du Liebe mich
Mein Mädchen! Ach im Bilde nur
Und so im Bilde warm!*

*Ach wie du ruhest neben mir
Mich schmachtetst liebend an
Und mir's vom Aug durchs Herz hindurch
In Griffel schmachtete.*

And if I find myself back here,
you will welcome me, my love,
my lass! Ah, only in a picture,
but yet warm in the picture.

Ah, how you rested beside me
and gave me yearning looks,
and from eye to heart to stylus
it made me yearn.

The text here is -- perhaps deliberately -- unclear. Initially, the speaker seems to be addressing a real person, but by the words "*Ach im Bilde nur*" ("only in a picture"), momentarily she has become nothing more than another prepossessing image in the speaker's room. The following stanza, however, resolves the ambiguity: the addressee truly is a lover, but she is not present. Perhaps a remembered model, she has rested by the speaker's side. In the following stanzas, the speaker recalls the delights of her embraces, and calls upon her to return to him. She will encompass every role for him, from Madonna to nymph. This plethora of identities assigned to the beloved is natural and possible if she is the artist's model, for she will have the capacity to assume any role he commands. Also, because the speaker never describes the model, her image, for the reader, is infinitely malleable. The poet finally promises that he himself will join his lover in the picture universe he creates, for the two will be immortals:

*Und liegen will ich Mars zu dir
Du Liebesgöttin stark
Und ziehn ein Netz um uns herum
Und rufen dem Olymp*

*Wer von den Göttern kommen will,
Beneiden unser Glück,
Und soll's die Fratze Eifersucht
Am Bettfuß angebannt*

And I will lie next to you as Mars,
O mighty goddess of love,
and cast a net around you
and summon all Olympos.

Whoever of the gods will come
will envy us our joy
and let the rascal, Envy
be stuck to the foot of the bed.

The artist here plays a dual role. In the Homeric account of Ares and Aphrodite, it is not Ares who casts the net over the lovers, but rather Hephaistos. In this short lyric, however, the artist who frames the scene in which he imagines himself playing Ares' part is paradoxically bound in a net of his own creation, for it is he who will paint the links of the chains. The personified "*Eifersucht*" ("Envy,") probably a disapproving or unreceptive audience, will have to be riveted to the spot, and watch on, however unwilling.

The themes of this poem, the enchanting visual allure of the Homeric world, a creative response to it in the midst of imaginative engagement, and the integration of fantasies of romantic love, all echo and re-echo through Goethe's responses to Homeric epic throughout his life. His readings were intensely personal, for he imagined himself within the action of epic narrative, and his own shadow sometimes fell upon what he beheld and thus occluded his vision. His willingness to import sentimental love into the Homeric world is a sign of this tendency. Yet romance, as such, hardly belongs within the context of Homeric epic. As early as 1775, Wood had noted the absence of European-style sentimental love among the Arab tribesmen he considered survivals of

Homeric society.⁶³⁸ Goethe himself, however, had been unable to accept this idea, for he considered that the society depicted in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* fairly sophisticated.⁶³⁹ It may also have been that he was unable to imagine any world devoid of romantic love as understood by contemporary Europeans.

Once he was actually face to face with Italy, a landscape he identified as Arcadia itself, it was natural for him to immerse himself in Homeric dreams, à la the artist's experience he had depicted a decade before in *Künstlers Morgenlied*. His creation of *Nausikaa*, a project into which he rushed with some urgency, inspired by the Sicilian scenery, came, as he himself admitted, from his own experience, and was filtered through his own perceptions. The story told in the unfinished play, therefore, stems from the fertile juxtaposition of original Homeric material with his own ingredients: landscape and love. David Constantine wrote of *Nausikaa*:

“No poem ever sprang from clearer sources than *Nausikaa*. It was the real Sicilian landscape which drove him to read Homer, and out of Homer's lines -- almost literally: the pencil marks are still there to be seen in the margins of his copy -- out of Homer's own words Goethe began to draw his *Nausikaa*. Those two elements, Greek landscape and Greek poem, are the ground itself. He added a third constituent, a discrepant one: sentimental love.”⁶⁴⁰

The landscape in *Nausikaa*, as discussed in Chapter Two, is certainly central to the play and was seemingly central to the vision that prompted Goethe to write it, for only after being reminded of the text by the beautiful public garden in Palermo did he embark on a play revolving around sentimental love in a Homeric setting. Landscape dominates the extant fragments of *Nausikaa*, sometimes even to the extent of subsuming within it the human figures. To these elements, however, should be added Goethe's own self-image, for the situation his Ulysses finds himself in at the Phaiakian court parallels the poet's own circumstances in a way that can hardly be accidental. Goethe himself, looking back in *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, recognized the correspondences, although he did not perceive

that in the play *Nausikaa* he had himself created a rather unhomeric Ulysses after his own image, endowing him with many of his own idiosyncratic inclinations and motivations.⁶⁴¹

Although Goethe's interest in the *Nausikaa* project swiftly died off when he left Sicily, he remained convinced of the centrality of landscape and physical remains for the understanding of Homeric epic, as is seen in his "*Versuch eine Homerische dunkle Stelle zu erklären.*" His own personal experience once again colored his reading of Homeric epic, for it was his visits to the ruins at Agrigento and Paestum that made it possible for him to guess that the Laistrygonian city had two gates joined by a narrow defile.

By the time he began to plan the *Römische Elegien* in 1787, Goethe was sufficiently comfortable with his Homer that he was willing to play with Homeric source material, recasting and combining it with elements from his own life and from Roman elegy. Romantic love dominates the cycle and the visual apprehension of beauty and the creative impulse go hand in hand. The elegist, reading his ancient authors, finds that the past and the present join their voices to address him, for within his vision of Rome temporal boundaries are blurred.

*Froh empfind ich mich nun auf klassischen Boden begeistert.
Lauter und reizender spricht Vorwelt und Mitwelt zu mir.
Ich befolge den Rat durchblättere die Werke der Alten
Mit geschäftiger Hand täglich mit neuem Genuß.*⁶⁴²

Joyous, I find myself inspired on classical soil.
The past and the present address me more loudly, more charmingly.
I follow advice, and leaf through the works of the ancients
with an industrious hand, each day with new delectation.

In *Künstlers Morgenlied* (1774), Goethe had created the persona of a painter who was inspired by Homeric visions and an intensely desirable artists' model. Now, a decade later, he played the role he had created, for he was travelling incognito as a painter, and his lover, Faustina Antonioni, may well have been a professional artists' model. His visual delight in her is linked with both physical pleasure and creative renewal, for as he gazes at his sleeping mistress, he comes to a new understanding of ancient sculpture.

*Dann versteh ich erst recht den Marmor, ich denk und vergleiche,
Sehe mit fühlendem Aug, fühle mit sehender Hand.*⁶⁴³

Then for the first time, I understand marble; I think and compare,
See with an eye that feels, feel with a hand that sees.

This new understanding makes it possible for him to create poetry that is intimately bound up with his own present-day feelings, and yet belongs to the ancient world. The mistress' classical beauty allows the artist to transcend time, and so, following the footsteps of ancient literary models, he simultaneously imitates Homer and the Roman elegists. The use of a speaker's relationship with a domina as subject matter for a poetic book belongs to Augustan elegy. The story of the elegist's affair with Faustina is told in elegiacs, but the meter the elegist claims to compose in is Homeric.

*Oftmals hab ich auch schon in ihren Armen gedichtet
Und des Hexameters Maß leise mit fingernder Hand
Ihr auf den Rücken gezählt, es schlummert das liebliche Mädchen
Und es durchglüheth ihr Hauch mir bis ins tiefste die Brust.*⁶⁴⁴

Often, I have even written poetry there in her arms,
and, gently, with a caressing hand, tapped out
hexameter beats on her back. The dear girl sleeps,
and her breath radiates warmth deep down in my heart.

The sixth of the *Römische Elegien* ("Froh empfind ich mich,") only twenty lines long, is a concentrated meditation on the connection the elegist -- and by extension, Goethe -- perceives between the ancient world, its modern beholder, and the creative power that romantic love in such a context can unleash. This is suggested by the three most prominent uses of the word *Hand* in the poem.⁶⁴⁵ The first hand comes in contact with the ancients' books, the second sees (while the gazing eye, conversely, feels), and the third hand simultaneously caresses and creates. Both vision and human contact are necessary to make the study of ancient literature fruitful for the creative artist.

Since the *Römische Elegien* are primarily played out on the stage of the city of Rome, the Arcadian countryside Goethe associated with Homeric epic is placed somewhat in the background, but now and again surfaces when it can be adduced to good effect.

Elegy 8 (“*O wie machst du mich, Römerin, glücklich,*” later “*O wie fuhl ich in Rom mich so froh!*,”) for instance, evokes the description of Olympos in *Nausikaa*. After remembering the grey clouds, rain and celibacy of the north, the elegist rejoices in Italy’s climate, more welcoming both by day and by night:

*Nun umleuchtet der Glanz des hellen Äthers die Stirne,
Phöbus rufet der Gott Formen und Farben hervor.
Sternenhelle glänzt die Nacht, sie klingt von Gesängen
Und mir leuchtet der Mond bis an dein stilles Gemach.*⁶⁴⁶

Now the radiance of the bright ether shines on my brow,
Phoebus the god summons forth colors and forms.
The night shines with starlight and rings with songs
The moon lights my path up all the way to your quiet chamber.

Although the lovers ordinarily meet in Faustina’s quiet chamber, in several of the poems, they meet secretly in a vineyard. “*Folge mir eilig ins Rohrbusch unten am Weinberg,*”⁶⁴⁷ (“Quick! Follow me down to the thicket of reeds by the vineyard.”) urges the elegist in Elegy 13 (“*Hörest du Liebchen,*”) and in Elegy 18 (“*Warum bist du Geliebter,*”) the lovers are prevented from keeping a tryst in the same place.

Nevertheless, although the elegist and his Faustina are both city-dwellers, the two Priapic poems that were written perhaps to frame the cycle set the stage firmly within a beautiful and fertile Arcadian landscape. In both poems, Priapus’ garden is described as a fruitful place where love and beauty nurture artistic creativity. In the first of these poems, probably intended as the opening poem for the cycle, the elegist speaks:

*Hier ist mein Garten bestellt, hier wart ich die Blumen der Liebe,
Wie sie die Muse gewählt weislich in Beete verteilt.
Früchte bringenden Zweig, die goldenen Früchte des Lebens,
Glücklich pflanzt ich sie an, warte mit Freuden sie nun.*⁶⁴⁸

Here my garden is placed, here I tend the flowers of love,
as the Muse chose them, wisely arranged in their beds.
Branches that bear fruit, the golden fruit of life,
I planted them gladly, and now I tend them with joy.

In the collection's end-piece, the second of the Priapic poems, Priapus himself provides the cycle with an epilogue, thanking the elegist for having redeemed him from neglect and infamy, for the sheer fecundity of his garden's untended plants had threatened to destroy him utterly until the elegist came to tend it.

*Kürbisranken schmeigten sich auf veralteten Stämme,
Und schon krachte das Glied unter den Lasten der Frucht.*

Gourd-vines were thronging up my aged trunk;
Already my member had cracked under the weight of the fruit.

Priapus ends the poem and the cycle by blessing the elegist for rehabilitating him, and granting him perpetual virility.

From his earliest readings of Homeric epic, Goethe had consistently focused on gardens and beautiful landscape, human passion and romantic love, and on the creative inspiration he as a poet derived from contact with antiquity. It is small wonder that when he came to choose a set of passages for translation, he opted for *Od.* 7.78-131, the description of Alkinoos' palace and garden, *Od.* 8.267-326 and its associated fragments, the story of Ares and Aphrodite, and *Il.* 14.329-351, Hera's seduction of Zeus. *Il.* 14.329-351 in particular, must have been irresistible for Goethe, since the passage contains not only an amorous scene and a fruitful Earth that sends up lilies, crocuses, and hyacinths to act as a bed, but also a nimbus of golden light of the sort the poet fondly recalled from his visit to Italy. The passages Goethe chose to translate were those that best reflected his own view of the Homeric world, a world he had partially apprehended through close reading and some limited archaeological study, and partially created himself out of love and artistic delight.

As yet, despite the experience he had gained by using hexameters for *Reinicke Fuchs*, Goethe was not ready to compose a serious epic poem of his own. Before he could embark upon such a project, he would need to resolve his insecurities in the face of meter, and also to acquire more knowledge of contemporary Homer scholarship. He

would also have to come to terms with his relationship to Homer, and either cease to worship him as an inimitable and superhuman figure, or decide to create epic in spite of a knowledge that he could never hope to out-do his hero. Weimar would prove the ideal milieu for such development.

⁵¹⁹ DKV 30.707.

⁵²⁰ MA 4.1 1022.1023.

⁵²¹ That Goethe valued the Reineke Fuchs story as material with appeal that transcends time is shown in one of the epigrams called *Xenien* that he contributed to Schiller's *Horen*. This elegiac distiche is dated July 1796. DKV 1.537.

Vor Jahrhunderten hätte ein Dichter dieses gesungen?
Wie ist das möglich? Der Stoff ist ja von gestern und heut.

A poet sang this centuries ago?
How can it be? The theme is yesterday's and today's.

⁵²² Boyle 2.150 (Grumach 4.2-3).

⁵²³ Keudell 5.

⁵²⁴ MA 4.1 1027.

⁵²⁵ DKV 30.720

⁵²⁶ The seeming error "*Reineke Voss*" may have been a private joke in the Voss family. In his 17 July letter to Goethe, Voss wrote "*Ihr Reinike [sic] hat mich im Wagen begleitet. Da ich das Original fast jeden Winter den Meinigen vorlese, so war mirs zum Vergleichen gegenwärtig genug.*" MA 1027. ("Your *Reinicke [sic]* accompanied me on the coach. Since I read the original aloud for my family nearly every winter, it was fresh enough in my mind for comparison"). Voss had two sons, one of whom, Johann Heinrich (1779-1822), grew up to be a professor of philosophy at Heidelberg.

⁵²⁷ *ibid* 30.707.

⁵²⁸ DVK 12.1005. Trevelyan conjectured that the lines had been written in late August 1793, soon after Goethe's return from Mainz. Trevelyan 189.

⁵²⁹ In Sicily, Goethe had recorded translating aloud for his companion Kneipe on 7 April 1787. DKV 15.259. As early as 1771, he wrote in *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, he had spent many hours entertaining his sister by performing favorite Homeric passages, translating as he went. DKV 14.601.

⁵³⁰ Nausikaa, however, had warned Odysseus that her father's house was unique: οὐ μὲν γάρ τι ἐοικότα τοῖσι τέτυκται / δῶματα Φαιήκων, οἷος δόμος Ἀλκινόοιο/ ἦρωος (Od. 6.301-3) ("For the houses of the Phaiakians are not built in any way like the house of the lordly Alkinoos").

⁵³¹ DKV 12. 1005.

⁵³² LSJ 1252.

⁵³³ Trevelyan 188.

⁵³⁴ Bergler 168.

⁵³⁵ Cunliffe 299.

⁵³⁶ Bergler 169.

⁵³⁷ The translations cannot be dated with complete certainty, but they come from a notebook that contains other entries dated that year. *DKV* 12.1007.

⁵³⁸ *DVK* 12.148.

⁵³⁹ *DVK* 5.1341.

⁵⁴⁰ *DVK* 15.249.

⁵⁴¹ Indeed, Goethe's traveling companion Kneip, confronted with the beauty of the seacoast around Naples, had lamented that it would be impossible to paint the harmonious reality of such a vista. He did, however, allow himself to be persuaded, and eventually furnished Goethe with a colored sketch of the scene. "*Kneip trauerte daß alle Farbenkunst nicht hinreiche diese Harmonie wiederzugeben... er ließ sich bereden und lieferte eine der genauesten Zeichnungen die er nachher kolorierte.*" *DVK* 15.338-9.

⁵⁴² *DVK* 30.283. Kneip had instructed Goethe in the techniques of watercolor painting in the course of their trip to Sicily. "*Übrigens hat er mir, die langen Stunden der Überfahrt zu verkürzen, das Mechanische der Wasserfarben Malerei (Aquarelle), die man in Italien jetzt sehr hoch getrieben hat, aufgeschrieben.*" *DVK* 15.248.

⁵⁴³ *DVK* 30.283.

⁵⁴⁴ The text in line 90 here follows Bentley's conjecture ἀργύρεοι σταθμοὶ δ' as printed in Stanford: another possibility would be Barnes' σταθμοὶ δ' ἀργύρεοι. Stanford 323. At. 7.86, Bergler printed ἐρηρέδατ', translating it as "*firmati sunt*;" Goethe followed him. Bergler 168.

⁵⁴⁵ Bergler's translation features frequent alliteration. Bergler 169.

*Ærei etenim muri firmati sunt hinc atque hinc,
In penetrare a limine: cancelli autem cyani.
Auræ vero fores firmam domum intus claudebant:
Argentei autem postes in æreo stabant limine,
Argenteum vero superliminare, aureus autem circulus.
Aurei autem utrinque & argentei canes erant,
Quos Vulcanus fecerat peritis præcordiis,
Domum ut custodirent magnanimi Alcinoi
Immortales futuros & insenescentes dies omnes. (Od. 7.86-95)*

*Aurei vero juvenes fabrefactus ad aras
Stabant, ardentes faces in manibus habentes. (Od 7. 100-101)*

⁵⁴⁶ *ibid.* 169.

⁵⁴⁷ *DKV* 12.148.

⁵⁴⁸ Bergler 169.

⁵⁴⁹ The *μυχός* seems to have been a relatively private nook in a house. Andromache does her weaving in the *μυχός* at *Il.* 22.440, and the *μυχός δόμου* is Arete and Alkinoos' bedchamber (*Od.* 7.346-7). In Odysseus' own house, the *μυχός* is a storage room off the main chamber (*Od.* 16.285). During his visit to Alkinoos' palace, Odysseus himself will not even enter a bedchamber. Instead, he is put to bed under the courtyard portico (ἄιθουσα), as is usual for an Homeric guest (*Od.* 7.344-5).

⁵⁵⁰ *DKV* 12.1008.

⁵⁵¹ At the time Goethe was translating this passage, his main Greek lexicon was that of Johann Scapula (1540?-1600?). Ruppert 89. Scapula's definition of *κυάνοις* suggests a relatively dark shade of blue. "*Aliquando dicitur de colore caeruleo nigricante...unde exponitur etiam niger, ater, item fuscus...*" ("sometimes it is spoken of as a blue color shading into black...thence it is even explained as "black," "pitch black," and, similarly, "dark.") Johann Scapula, *Ioan. Scapulae Lexicon graeco-latinum, e probatis auctoribus locupletum, cum indicibus, et graeco et latino, auctis, et correctis* (Amsterdam 1652) 841-2. Voss' translation was much closer to such a definition, while Goethe's was more imaginative.

⁵⁵² *DKV* 15.270.

⁵⁵³ Trevelyan 191.

⁵⁵⁴ *ibid.* 190-91.

⁵⁵⁵ Voss 2.77.

⁵⁵⁶ Suphan noted the inconcinnity of "*gesimst mit der bläue des Stahls.*" He found Goethe's translation in general truer to the original in pace and in tone than either of Voss' efforts. "*Goethe schaltet mit der Sprache auch übersetzend als Hausherr, Voß als Schaffner. Und er wird immer unhomischer, je mehr er sich befließigt, das Sprachgewand seiner Odyssee dem Original nachzufalten. Dabei mehren sich die Schrullen und Härten, die verkalkten Ausdrücke und Phrasen...*" ("Goethe deals with language, even when he is translating, as a master of the house, Voss, as a steward. And the more pains he takes to crinkle up the habiliments of his speech in imitation of the original, the more unhomeric he becomes.") Suphan 8.

⁵⁵⁷ Many German folk-tales begin "*Es war einmal...*" ("Once there was..."). Ballads frequently begin with such a construction as well: "*Es ging ein wohlgezogener Knecht,*" "*Es wolt ein meydlein Wasser holen,*" "*Es hät ein Biederman ein Weib,*" and "*Es wolt ein fraw zum Weine gehen,*" are all seventeenth century examples. Two of Goethe's better known uses of the construction include "*Willkommen und Abschied*" ("Welcome and Farewell"), written in 1771, which begins "*Es schlug mein Herz...*" ("My heart was beating...") and "*Der König in Thule,*" probably dating from 1774, whose opening line is "*Es war ein König in Thule*" ("There was a King in Thule.") *DKV* 1.128, 665, 837, 1223.

⁵⁵⁸ *DVK* 1.823.

⁵⁵⁹ Bergler 169.

⁵⁶⁰ Voss 2.77.

⁵⁶¹ *DKV* 12.148, Voss 2.77.

⁵⁶² Voss made more of this passage, depicting the Phaiakian leaders reveling in a perpetual banquet ("*des beständigen Mahls sich erfreuend.*") Voss 2.77.

⁵⁶³ Bernard Suphan, "Homerisches aus Goethes Nachlass," *GJb* 22 (1901) 7.

⁵⁶⁴ *DKV* 12.149.

⁵⁶⁵ This was an error that Voss avoided: he rendered the passage "*So siegen die Weiber dort in der Kunst des Gewebes*" ("So the women there excel in the art of weaving.") Voss 2.77.

⁵⁶⁶ At *Od.* 6.270-2, Nausikaa tells Odysseus that her people are not hunters but are proud of their swift ships. At *Od.* 7.34-6, Athene, disguised as a little girl, boasts of the Phaiakians' prowess in sailing. Their men are called the most skilled sailors in the world at *Od.* 7.108-9. At *Od.* 7.317-28, when Odysseus asks for passage home, Alkinoos responds that his people can sail to ends of the earth and return in the space of a single day. The Phaiakians are given the epithet ναυσικλυτοί (famous for their ships) at *Od.* 7.39, 8.191, 8.369 13.166, and 16.227.

⁵⁶⁷ *DKV* 5.1339.

⁵⁶⁸ *DVK* 12.140.

⁵⁶⁹ Suphan 4.

⁵⁷⁰ Voss 78.

⁵⁷¹ In his *Italienische Reise* entry for 7 April 1787, Goethe wrote "*Eine hinter der flachen Raum erhöhte Bank läßt einen so wundersam-verschlungenen Wachstum übersehen und lenkt das Blick zuletzt auf große Bassins, in welchen Gold- und Silberfische sich gar lieblich bewegen...*" ("A bench which is raised up beyond the flat surface offers a prospect of such amazingly tangled growth and finally leads the gaze to great fountain basins, in which gold and silver fish move charmingly.") *DVK* 15.258

⁵⁷² *DKV* 15.261.

⁵⁷³ *DVK* 12.149. That Goethe employed the proper vocabulary for the harvest and pressing of wine-grapes (*ablesen, keltern*) is not surprising, in view of the fact that his family fortune had come from the wine-trade.

⁵⁷⁴ Voss, by contrast, introduced a human being into the description: his version of 7.124 includes the phrase "*andere schneidet der Winzler*" ("the vineyardist harvests others.") Voss 2.78.

⁵⁷⁵ The *Od.* 8.267-326 translation exists in fair copy made by Goethe's secretary Geist; the other fragments, however, are only preserved in an undatable autograph. *DKV* 12.1004-5.

⁵⁷⁶ The first section of the Book 8 translation exists in a copy that must date from 1795 or later, but the date of its actual composition cannot be established with any certainty. *DKV* 12.1005.

⁵⁷⁷ *DVK* 12.149.

⁵⁷⁸ Ares and Aphrodite are said to have had as many as five offspring. Since the episode narrated in the *Odyssey* is the beginning of their affair, this suggests that even after they were exposed, the lovers contrived to continue meeting. Yet multiple offspring resulting from a single encounter are not unexampled in a mythological context: Leda's four children all seem to have been simultaneously conceived. The daughter of Ares and Aphrodite, Harmonia, was married to Kadmos. Eros and Anteros are said to be two of their sons. The other two sons, Deimos (Fear) and Phobos (Panic) are little more than personifications. Rose 158.

⁵⁷⁹ Horst Rüdiger, "Goethe und Schiller als Übersetzer aus den klassischen Sprachen." *Rivista di Letterature Moderne* 4 (1953) 288.

⁵⁸⁰ Although she does accept money from the elegist, Faustina is never depicted as extravagant or immoderately demanding. On the contrary, in Elegy 2, *Mehr als ich ahndete schön*, the elegist depicts her as grateful for his generosity. The Augustan elegiac domina, however, is proverbially grasping. Indeed, Ovid, in his *Ars Amatoria* identified the greatest challenge of all for the potential lover as winning his domina's gifts without giving any presents in return: "*Hoc opus, hic labor est, primo sine munera iungi*" (AA 1.453) "(This is the challenge, this is the task, to have sex for the first time before giving presents.)"

⁵⁸¹ Elegy 2, *Mehr als ich ahndete schön*; Elegy 11, *Alexander und Caesar*; Elegy 14, *Amor bleibt ein Schalk*; Elegy 20, *Eines ist mir verdrießlich*. DKV 1. 394,412,413,418,419,428, 429.

⁵⁸² Ovid told the story of Mars and Venus in *Met* 4.171-189 and AA 2.561-592.

⁵⁸³ DVK 12.130.

⁵⁸⁴ When Eumaeus tells Telemachos that he has placed the disguised Odysseus under the young man's protection, the youth responds in deep distress at his own powerlessness, saying Εὐμαί', ἦ μάλα τοῦτο ἔπος θυμαλγῆς ἔειπες (*Od.* 16.69) ("Eumaeus, you have spoken a heart-rending word.") The suitors' mockery of Odysseus at 18.347 and 20.285 is described as λώβη θυμαλγῆος ("shameful outrage."). At 22.189, when Telemachos and Odysseus hang the suitor Melanthios, they bind his ankles θυμαλγῆι δεσμοῦ (with humiliating shackles).

⁵⁸⁵ Bergler 197.

⁵⁸⁶ Voss 2.90.

⁵⁸⁷ *ibid.* 2.90.

⁵⁸⁸ In translating θυμαλγῆς as *kränkend*, Voss was closer to the original than Goethe had been with *traurig*.

⁵⁸⁹ DKV 12.150.

⁵⁹⁰ Stanford glossed ἀγριοφώνους as "of barbarous [non-Hellenic] speech." Stanford 1.339. Modern translators have rendered it in various ways. Fitzgerald rendered the term as "grunting." Fitzgerald 133; Mandelbaum's version was "with their strange speech." Mandelbaum 155; Fagles preferred "raucous." Fagles 200.

⁵⁹¹ DKV 12.150.

⁵⁹² Bergler 147, 149, 153, 197 *etc.*

⁵⁹³ Ovid's treatment of the theme in the *Ars Amatoria* is as frivolous as possible, and gains humor from the fact that the poet used the story as an exemplum for lovers who suspect their mistresses of infidelity: laying traps for faithless partners never results in anything but disaster.

*Sed bene concubitus primos celare solebant.
plena verecundi culpa pudoris erat.*

*Indicio Solis (quis Solem fallere possit?)
cognita Vulcano coniugis acta suae. (AA 2.571-4)*

But at first, they used to conceal their meetings well,
Their naughtiness was full of modest shame
By the Sun's testimony (who could fool the Sun?)
Vulcan found out what his wife had done.

⁵⁹⁴ This translation works on two levels, for it evokes both the Homeric formula ἔπεα πτερόεντα προσηύδα ("spoke winged words,") and also the coaxing speech Ovid recommended for seducers at AA. 1.467-8: "*sit tibi credibilis sermo consuetaque verba/ blanda tamen...*" ("Let your language be plausible, your words familiar/ but sweet...").

⁵⁹⁵ Voss 2.90.

⁵⁹⁶ Voss 2.91.

⁵⁹⁷ DKV 12.150-151.

⁵⁹⁸ "*Lahmender*" was Voss' choice. Voss 91.

⁵⁹⁹ Goethe's lexicon defines ἀκαχέω as "*doleo, aegresco, tristor.*" Scapula 215.

⁶⁰⁰ Compare the humiliating treatment Thersites receives at *Il.* 2.211-277, hated for his ugliness:

αἴσχιστος δὲ ἀνὴρ ὑπὸ Ἴλιον ἦλθε·
φορκὸς ἔην, χλωλὸς δ' ἕτερον πόδα· τῷ δὲ οἱ ὤμων
κυρτῷ, ἐπὶ στῆθος συνοχωκότε· αὐτὰρ ὑπερθε
φοξὸς ἦν κεφαλῆν, ψεδνὴ δ' ἐπενήνοθε λάχνη.
ἔχθιστος δ' Ἀχιλλῆϊ, μάλιστ' ἦν ἠδ' Ὀδυσσεῖ (Il. 2.216-220)

He was the ugliest man who went to Troy.
he was bandy-legged and lame in one foot. He had
humped shoulders on his body, and above it
his head was distorted, and he had a wispy beard.
He was most hateful to Achilleus and especially to Odysseus.

When Thersites proposes that the Greeks break their camp at Troy and sail home, Odysseus berates him and then attacks him physically (*Il.* 2.265-6). The men consider this the best joke of the war:

οἱ δὲ καὶ ἀχυμενοὶ περ ἐπ' αὐτῷ ἠδὺ γέλασαν·
ὧδε δὲ τις εἶπεσκεν ἰδὼν ἐς πλησίον ἄλλον·
"ὦ πόποι, ἦ δὴ μυρὶ Ὀδυσσεὺς ἐσθλὰ ἔοργε
βουλάς τ' ἐξάρχων ἀγαθὰς πόλεμόν τε κορύσσων·
νῦν δὲ τόδε μέγ' ἄριστον ἐν Ἀργείοισιν ἔρεξεν." (Il. 2.270-274)

But even although they were grieved, they guffawed merrily with one another
One would look at his neighbor and say
"Ho, ho! Odysseus has certainly done many great deeds
foremost in excellent counsel, first in war,
but this one now is the best thing he's ever done among the Argives!"

⁶⁰¹ DKV 12.151.

⁶⁰² Voss rendered these lines: “*Poseidon kam, der Umfuferer; auch Hermeias/ Kam, der Bringer des Heils; auch kam der Treffer Apollon.*” (“Poseidon came, the shore-surrounding one, also Hermes, the bringer of healing; also Apollo, the archer.”) Voss 91.

⁶⁰³ DKV 12.151.

⁶⁰⁴ DVK 12.1005.

⁶⁰⁵ In this very elegiac reading of a Homeric text, ring-composition and framing are particularly suitable, since these structural strategies are present in both contexts.

⁶⁰⁶ Ovid, in fact, goes so far as to absolve Helen and Paris of their adultery at AA 2.365-72.

*Nil Helene peccat, nihil hic committit adulter:
Quod tu, quod faceret quilibet, ille facit. (AA 2.365-6)*

Helen did not sin, that adulterer did no wrong:
He did what you'd have done, or anyone.

⁶⁰⁷ Richard Seaford, *Reciprocity and Ritual: Homer and Tragedy in the Developing City-State* (Oxford 1994) 23-4.

⁶⁰⁸ DKV 12.151.

⁶⁰⁹ DVK 12.152.

⁶¹⁰ Seaford 14-16.

⁶¹¹ Murnaghan 91.

⁶¹² *ibid.* 108-9.

⁶¹³ Douglas J. Stewart, *The Disguised Guest: Rank, Role and Identity in the Odyssey* (London 1976) 83-4.

⁶¹⁴ DKV 12.154.

⁶¹⁵ DVK 31.106.

⁶¹⁶ Andrew M. Miller, *From Delos to Delphi: a Literary Study of the Homeric Hymn to Apollo* (Leiden 1986) 12-13.

⁶¹⁷ Jenny Strauss Clay, *The Politics of Olympus: Form and Meaning in the Major Homeric Hymns* (Princeton 1989) 19-20.

⁶¹⁸ DKV 12.155.

⁶¹⁹ Bergler 659.

⁶²⁰ DKV 15.345

⁶²¹ DVK 1.55.

⁶²² The text is Bergler's. For line 59, modern texts print δημοῦ ἀναΐξει βοσκήσεις θ' οἱ κέ σ' ἔχωσι. ("and you will nourish the folk who live on you.") Bergler 661.

⁶²³ DKV 1.56.

⁶²⁴ DVK 159.

⁶²⁵ Wilhem Bode, *Goethe in vertraulichen Briefen seiner Zeitgenossen* (Munich 1979) 1.42.

⁶²⁶ DKV 18.10.

⁶²⁷ DVK 18.55.

⁶²⁸ DVK 14.580.

⁶²⁹ DVK 14.585-6.

⁶³⁰ DVK 28.289.

⁶³¹ DVK 18.151.

⁶³² DVK 28.403-4.

⁶³³ DVK 8.17.

⁶³⁴ DVK 8.27.

⁶³⁵ DVK 1.199-201.

⁶³⁶ Two readings are possible for *Andacht* in this stanza. Either it is part of a coined construction *Andachtlesen*, analogous to *Messelesen*, or, more simply, it should be taken as accusative (DVK 1.919). The poem as whole, while very tightly composed, elliptical in places, is characterized by a relatively low level of diction: hence the latter reading seems more likely and has been used for the translation.

⁶³⁷ DVK 1.200.

⁶³⁸ David Constantine, "Achilleis and Nausikaa: Goethe in Homer's World." *Oxford German Studies* 15 (1984) 97-8.

⁶³⁹ "...denn es ließ sich doch nicht leugnen, daß sowohl Europäer als Asiaten, in den Homerischen Gedichten schon auf einem hohen Grade der Kultur dargestellt worden, vielleicht auf einem höhern, als die Zeiten des Trojanischen Kriegs mochten genossen haben." ("...for it could not be denied that that in the Homeric poems both Europeans and Asiatics are portrayed at a high level of culture, perhaps a higher level than they might have attained at the time of the Trojan War.") DKV 14.585-6.

⁶⁴⁰ Constantine 103-4.

⁶⁴¹ "Es war in dieser Komposition nichts was ich nicht aus eignen Erfahrungen nach der Natur hätte ausmalen können. Selbst auf der Reise, selbst in Gefahr Neigungen zu erregen, die, wenn sie auch kein

tragisches Ende nehmen, doch schmerzlich genug, gefährlich und schädlich werden können; selbst in dem Falle in einer so großen Entfernung von der Heimat abgelegne Gegenstände, Reiseabenteuer, Lebensvorfälle zu Unterhaltung der Gesellschaft mit lebhaften Farben auszumalen, von der Jugend für ein Halbgott, von gesetztern Personen für einen Aufschneider gehalten zu werden, manche unverdiente Gunst, manches unerwartete Hindernis zu erfahren; das alles gab mir ein solches Attachement an diesen Plan, an diesen Vorsatz, daß ich darüber meinen Aufenthalt zu Palermo, ja den größten Teil meiner übrigen sicilianischen Reise verträumte.” (“There was nothing in this piece that I could not have painted from life from my own experiences. I was on a trip myself, myself in danger of arousing partialities that, even if they came to no tragic end, could have been were sufficiently painful, dangerous, and harmful. I myself, so far away from home, was in a position to depict distant circumstances, the adventures of travel, and daily events in the liveliest colors for the amusement of society; I was taken by the young for a demigod, by older people for a boaster. [I was in a position] to encounter many unearned kindnesses, many unforeseen obstacles. All of this gave me such an interest in this plan that I dreamt away my stay in Palermo, indeed the larger part of the rest of my Sicilian trip.”) *DKV* 15.321.

⁶⁴² *DVK* 1.404-5.

⁶⁴³ “The eye and the hand take on each other’s functions; their capacities are multiplied and sensations doubly enriched,” wrote Eva Dessau Bernhardt of this line. “In this line (10) of double and mirrored synesthesia, the first step toward creating has been taken.” Dessau-Bernhardt 81.

⁶⁴⁴ *DVK* 1.406-7.

⁶⁴⁵ Dessau-Bernhardt 81. Dessau-Bernhardt also noted the use of *Hand* in ll. 7-8, in which the speaker’s hand becomes a tool for research.

*Und belehr ich mich nicht, wenn ich des lieblichen Busens
Formen spähe, die Hand leite die Hüften hinab?*

And do I not teach myself, when I survey
the form of the dear bosom, and guide my hand over her hips?

⁶⁴⁶ *DKV* 1.408-11. The later version of the poem, which from beginning to end downplays the role of Faustina, substitutes “*heller als ehemals der Tag*” (“brighter than day used to be”) for “*bis an dein stilles Gemach*” (“all the way to your quiet chamber.”)

⁶⁴⁷ *DVK* 1.416-17.

⁶⁴⁸ *DVK* 1.440.

CHAPTER 6

“ALS LETZTER HOMERIDE”

Goethe's Homer translations were by no means created in a vacuum. In the winter of 1794 in Jena, while attending lectures on anatomy by Justus Christian von Loder (1753-1832), Goethe first made the acquaintance of the brothers von Humboldt. Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767-1835) was a statesman and philologist, his brother Alexander (1769-1859) a geographer and natural scientist. Their friendship was to prove fruitful and long-enduring. It was through Wilhelm von Humboldt that Goethe was first introduced to the writings of Friedrich August Wolf, under whom von Humboldt had studied at Halle.⁶⁴⁹ While visiting von Humboldt in Jena in May of 1795, Wolf would make a brief excursion to Weimar, where he would meet Goethe. This connection, too, would prove a useful and pleasant one: Wolf and Johann Heinrich Voss were to be among Goethe's principal guides to his renewed study of Homer.

Voss, whom Goethe first met at the beginning of June 1794, visited Weimar for most of that summer.⁶⁵⁰ There he read aloud passages from his translation of the *Odyssey* to a group that included Herder, Knebel, Wieland, Goethe, Christian Gottfried Schütz (1747-1832), a philologist at Jena, Johann Heinrich Meyer (1759-1832), and the young critic and antiquarian Karl August Böttiger, who wrote to Wolf about these meetings.⁶⁵¹

On the evening of 5 June 1794, Voss wrote, this circle had met at the home of Herder and discussed his ideas on Homeric geography, accepted his reconstructions of Odysseus' journeys, “*und freuten sich der homerischen Einfalt*”⁶⁵² (“and rejoiced in the

Homeric simplicity”). The assembled company asked him for a reading from his *Odyssey* translation. Voss’ account of the performance is illuminating. He wrote to his wife:

*...ich las den Sturm des fünften Gesanges und den ganzen sechsten Gesang von Nausikaa. Ein einhelliger, warmer Beifall erfolgte. Alle gestanden, sie hätten einen solchen Versbau, eine so homerischen Wortfolge, die gleichwohl so deutsch, so edel, so kindlich einfach wäre, sich nicht vorgestellt. Goethe kam, und drückte mir die Hand, und dankte für einen solchen Homer.*⁶⁵³

I read the storm from the fifth book and the whole sixth book, about Nausikaa. An unanimous warm applause followed. Everyone declared that they had not imagined such a versification, such a Homeric word-ordering, that was notwithstanding so German, so noble, and of such a childlike simplicity. Goethe came over and shook my hand, and thanked me for such a Homer.

Böttiger’s account of the same evening, sent to Wolf, is one of qualified approval:

*...Voß hielt wieder eine Vorlesung aus seiner Odyssee vom fünften Gesang V. 380 an bis zu Ende, und den ganzen sechsten. Gleich anfänglich las er die Stelle (V. 400ff), die in seiner Übersetzung durch Anhäufung rauh klingender Worte sehr hart zu seyn scheint, mit unnachahmlichem Wohl laut vor. Er söhnte uns durch seinen lebendigen Vortrag auf’s neue mit allen seinen Härten vor.*⁶⁵⁴

Voss gave us another reading from his *Odyssey*, from the fifth book, line 380, to the end, and the whole of the sixth. With an inimitable euphony, he commenced by reading the passage, lines 400ff., that seems very rough in his translation, owing to the clustering of harsh-sounding words. Despite all of its roughnesses, through his lively performance, he reconciled us to it afresh.

It is likely that the passages chosen were intended as a graceful compliment to Goethe, who might have mentioned his unfinished *Nausikaa* to Voss. Goethe may well have found Voss’ reading a stimulus for his own translation of some of the same material a year later. That the company were impressed by the dignified but ingenuous simplicity of the text was as much of a compliment to Homer as it was to his faithful translator

Voss. That evening, Herder brought up the question of whether the Homeric poems were written by the one person, or whether they were merely a compendium of earlier lays. He had heard that Wolf had suggested the latter. Goethe's response to this idea is not recorded, but Voss rejected the idea completely.⁶⁵⁵ In so doing, he may have prejudiced Goethe in advance against Wolf's theories. In a later account of that evening, Böttiger reported that Goethe had laughingly dismissed the idea of a Peisistratean recension. Goethe had pointed out that the Homeric narratives show few signs of Athenian bias.

*"...wenn in Athen erst unter dem Solon und den Pisistriden die Ilias zusammengedrechselt worden wäre, so würden wohl die Athener nicht so kahl und ruppicht im catalogo navium erscheinen, und eine viel anständigere Rolle spielen, wo ihrer Homer jetzt kaum erwähnt." Wir ließen dies inter pocula ganz wohl gefallen. Aber Voß schien doch selbst mit dieser Are von Verteidigung unzufrieden, and schüttelte ehrlich -- wie immer -- den Kopf.*⁶⁵⁶

"If the *Iliad* was first hewn into shape in Athens under Solon and the Peisistratids, the Athenians wouldn't seem so sorry and shabby in the Catalogue of Ships, and would play a much more respectable role, while Homer hardly mentions them." In our cups, we enjoyed this immensely. But even Voss himself seemed unhappy with this kind of defense, and honestly -- as ever -- shook his head.

Voss' reaction to Goethe's joking suggestion seems more a rejection of such light-hearted amateurish speculation than a considered response to Goethe's idea. Certainly the issue of the Athenian role in the Catalogue of Ships has received its fair share of serious attention from Homer scholars since Goethe's day.⁶⁵⁷

In the following autumn and winter, the Weimar *Freitagsgesellschaft*, formerly a meeting of Weimar's literary elite held monthly at the palace of Duchess Amalia, began meeting weekly at Goethe's house. At each session, one book of Voss' *Iliad* translation was read aloud by Goethe; some of the circle would follow along with Greek texts.⁶⁵⁸ Afterwards various guests would comment on the performance, the translation, and the content of the book.⁶⁵⁹ Goethe's performance was by all accounts elegant. Wrote

Böttiger to Wolf: “Die härtesten Stellen wurden durch Goethes treffliche Declamation und richtig wechselndes Andante und Adagio außerordentlich sanft und milde”⁶⁶⁰ (“Through Goethe’s skillful declamation and properly modulating andante and adagio, the hardest spots become exceptionally soft and gentle.”)

The most complete accounts of these meetings come from journal entries and letters to Wolf from Böttiger, whom Boyle described as “malicious and deceitful.”⁶⁶¹ Certainly he had a talent for satire, for the reports are highly flavored, and amusing reading. The sessions seem to have been devoted to close reading, textual criticism, discussion of related issues, and above all, to picking apart Voss’ translation. Böttiger reported on the first session, which took place at the end of October, 1794:

*Fragen. That Voß recht daran, das anstößige κυνώπα V. 159 und βοῶπις 551, jenes durch Ehrvergessener! dieses durch Hoheit blickende zu mildern und das echthomerischen 588 θεινομένην nur durch das saftere: wenn er dich straft, zu übersetzen? Antw. Keineswegs! in allen drei Fällen wird das stark Sinnliche durch abstractere Vorstellung entnervt.*⁶⁶²

Questions. Did Voss do right to soften the offensive κυνώπα 159 and βοῶπις 551, rendering the first as “forgetful of honor” and the second as “regally gazing,” and to translate the truly Homeric θεινομένην 588 as “if he punishes you?” Answer: Certainly not! In all three cases the strong physical thing is weakened by an abstract presentation.

Unfortunately, Böttiger did not record who brought up these points, but it might have been anyone but Wieland, who was not present at the first meeting. Logically, is it hard to see why the epithet κυνώπις (dog-eyed) should have disturbed Voss, for in context, the term is appropriate: Achilleus is insulting Agamemnon. βοῶπις (ox-eyed), as a complimentary title for Hera may have seemed to Voss an odd turn of phrase, but it is one of her most common epithets.⁶⁶³ It might have been Goethe who have objected to the weakening of θεινομένην (smitten), for later in Böttiger’s report of the same meeting, he is described as comparing the crudeness of the oldest myths to the rectilinearity and

stiffness of the earlier periods of Greek art. Directly following this passage is the notation “*Unverdauliche Abgeschmackheit im Göttersystem Homer’s. Seine Menschen handeln viel edler, als sein Götter.*”⁶⁶⁴ (“Crude tastelessness in Homer’s pantheon. His mortals behave much more nobly than his gods.”)⁶⁶⁵

The second meeting of the circle, which Böttiger reported on 7 November 1794, included a long discussion of the Catalogue of Ships. The company used a map to trace the toponyms in the catalogue, finding that the text followed a logical order: “*Er fängt mit Aulis an und machte einen doppelten Kreis*”⁶⁶⁶ (“He [Homer] began at Aulis, and made a double circle.”) Rightly, Wieland objected to Voss’ translation of ὧς ἔφατ’ at *Il.* 2.83 as “*Jener sagt’s*” (“that man said,”) since “*jener*” (“that man”) should be used in conjunction with “*dieser*” (“this man,”) and because in Homer, ὧς ἔφατ’ meant nothing of the sort. “*Goethe las also von nun an, um Wieland’s Ohr zu schonen, immer ‘also sprach er’*”⁶⁶⁷ (“From then on, in order to sooth Wieland’s ear, Goethe always read ‘thus he spoke.’”) Interestingly, in Voss’ second, revised edition of his *Iliad* translation, at *Il.* 2.83, ὧς ἔφατ’ is rendered as “*als er solches geredet*” (“as he said such things,”) but in other places with varying formulae, including the misleading “*Jener sprach’s.*”⁶⁶⁸ Wieland did not come right out and say it, but he may have thought Voss had mistaken ὧς for ὅς (used as the masculine singular demonstrative pronoun in Homer) or had, at any rate, laid himself open to such a charge.⁶⁶⁹

The *Iliad* sessions did not get any further than the sixth book, but Goethe’s own Homeric studies continued unabated. Invited by Böttiger, Wolf visited a meeting of the *Freitagsgesellschaft* sometime in May of 1795. In the course of his four days in Weimar, he forged a close friendship with Goethe.⁶⁷⁰ Toward the end of that month, Goethe read Wolf’s 1794 *Homeri et Homidarum opera et reliquiae. Ex veterum criticorum notationibus optimorumque exemplarum fide rec. Frid<ericus> Aug<ustus> Wolfius*, published at Halle.⁶⁷¹ This book contains some of the ideas that were later to be

expressed in fuller form in Wolf's forthcoming *Prolegomena ad Homerum* (Halle 1795), which was later to make such a stir in contemporary intellectual circles. Briefly expressed, Wolf considered the Homeric poems products of illiterate rhapsodes. The texts as they were finalized were the ultimate result of generations of oral transmission of an *Ur-Iliad* and *Ur-Odyssey*, not by the same authors. Eventually written down in Athens under Peisistratos, the poems underwent a series of redactions and revisions by multiple hands, especially in Alexandria. The artistic unity of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* stems in part from the efforts of these later editors.⁶⁷² These ideas were hardly revolutionary, most recently advanced by Robert Wood, but the concept of an illiterate Homer whose work had only later been written down had been a familiar one in the ancient world, and well known to Humanist scholars. Still, through Wolf's influential and widely-read works, even in non-academic circles, these theories eventually attained a first a notoriety and then a currency and legitimacy that they had never had before.⁶⁷³

On 6 June 1795, Böttiger gave Goethe a copy of the *Prolegomena*.⁶⁷⁴ Sometime during that month, Wilhelm von Humboldt wrote to Wolf about Goethe's initial reactions to the work. The letter is perhaps overly optimistic and diplomatic; Goethe himself had not expressed such positive sentiments at the *Freitagsgesellschaft* meeting the week following Wolf's visit. Indeed, he had explicitly rejected the idea of engaging in Homeric textual criticism on the order of Wolf's, for he himself was a poet and as such preferred to work from his own instincts, thanking the critics whenever they bore out his intuitions.⁶⁷⁵ Von Humboldt was plainly concerned to foster the relationship between his friends Wolf and Goethe.

Gegen Mittag kam Goethe zu mir und bedauerte sehr, Sie nicht mehr zu finden. Er ist Ihnen äußerst gut geworden und trägt mir viele herzliche Empfehlungen an Sie auf. Die Prolegomena beschäftigen ihn sehr ernstlich, und ich kann Ihnen nicht sagen, wie zufrieden er damit ist. Zwar ist er noch weit entfernt, sich überhaupt für eine Meinung entscheiden zu haben; Sie kennen seine weise Bedachtsamkeit. Allein die Methode und der Gang der

*Untersuchung machen ihn vorzügliche Freude, und er hat mir namentlich gesagt, daß in dieser Rücksicht schon jede Seite lehrreich sei.*⁶⁷⁶

Yesterday at noon, Goethe came to my house and was most vexed not to find you here anymore. He thinks very well of you, and bade me send you many warm greetings. He is very seriously occupied with the *Prolegomena*, and I cannot tell you how pleased he is with it. Of course he is a long way from having decided what his opinion might be; you know his wise circumspection. The technique itself and the path of the research especially delight him, and in particular, he has told me that in that respect, every page is edifying.

Initially, Goethe hardly knew how to respond to Wolf's theories. On 17 May 1795, he confided his feelings in a letter to Schiller, his principal confidant on aesthetic matters:

*Wolfs Vorrede zur Ilias habe ich gelesen, sie ist interessant genug, hat mich aber schlecht erbaut. Die Idee mag gut seyn, und die Bemühung ist respektabel, wenn nur nicht diese Herrn, um ihre schwachen Flancken zu decken, gelegentlich die fruchtbarsten Gärten des ästhetischen Reichs verwüsten und in leidige Verschanzungen verwandeln müsten. Und am Ende ist mehr subjectives als man denckt in diesem ganzen Krame. Ich freue mich bald mit Ihnen darüber zu sprechen.*⁶⁷⁷

I have read Wolf's *Prologue to the Iliad*. It is interesting enough, but I found it unedifying. The idea may well be good, and the meticulousness is praiseworthy, if only these gentlemen did not have occasionally to protect their weak flanks by laying waste the most fruitful gardens of the aesthetic realm and turning them into loathsome trenches. And ultimately there is more of the subjective than one might think in all this rubbish. I look forward to discussing it with you soon.

The imagery of this passage is illuminating. On the one hand, the Homeric world here is turned into a garden, and not merely a garden, but the most fruitful of the whole aesthetic realm. This conception of literature itself as a garden is nothing new for Goethe: with the Priapic poem "*Hier ist mein Garten bestellt*," probably intended as a programmatic piece for the *Römische Elegien*, he had already made this metaphor explicit. His life-long association of Homeric epic with beautiful landscape made this image a natural one for

him. In Goethe's apprehensive view, Wolf, suddenly multiplied into an anonymous "them" ("*diese Herrn*"), is almost from the first transmogrified into an invading warrior. Wolf's idea may be a good one -- Goethe does not presume to judge it -- and his preparation is laudable, but he has a weak flank, some fatal flaw Goethe draws back from describing, perhaps because he is not yet sure of what it is. To protect this weak flank, Wolf entrenches himself, in the process destroying the realm over which he is fighting.

The anxiety this book provoked in Goethe is somewhat surprising, for although Wolf had been a pupil of the great Heyne, and was swiftly making a fine reputation for himself, he was a much younger man, and had only held his professorship at Halle for two years. Goethe's initial response to the book is not merely negative but fearful. The assessment begins noncommittally, but as soon as Goethe has distanced himself from Wolf by pluralizing him, his consternation becomes plain, and his tone soon modulates into antagonism. "*Und am Ende ist mehr subjectives als man denckt in diesem ganzen Krame*" ("And ultimately there is more of the subjective than one might think in all this rubbish.") After this dismissive assessment, a paradoxical charge of lack of rigor against one of the most rigorous minds of his day, Goethe abruptly retreats, as if conscious that he has gone too far. The ideas in the book are obviously threatening, but still compelling. Rubbish it may be, but he needs urgently to discuss it, for the book has prompted for him a spiritual and emotional crisis. Goethe's private *hortus inclusus* of Homeric epic was perceived as being under attack. Worse still, his hero Homer was being annihilated. Hugh Lloyd-Jones wrote "...he could not part readily with his belief in the individual genius of the greatest of all poets."⁶⁷⁸

Yet Homer himself was an ongoing source of creative anxiety for Goethe. Wohlleben wrote: "There existed, as we see, before Goethe's epic period several reasons for finding his Homer inaccessible to imitation. He is too majestic a figure. It would have meant struggling with the gods, or insofar as Homer happened to be a constituent

part of his mind, struggling with himself. To deal with him is feasible only after “liberation.”⁶⁷⁹ Even after accepting Wolf’s theories, Goethe’s anxiety was to persist. On 16 May 1798, he was to write to Schiller: “*Ihr Brief trifft mich wieder bei der Ilias! Das Studium derselben hat mich immer in dem Kreise von Entzückung, Hoffnung, Einsicht und Verzweiflung durchgejagt*”⁶⁸⁰ (“Your letter catches me at the *Iliad* again! The study of the same has always chased me around in a circle of delight, hope, insight and doubt.”) Schadewalt described the twofold trepidation Homer’s presence and his possible absence provoked in Goethe thus:

*In der Scheu vor Homer, dem großen Einen, wirkt in Goethe noch etwas von jener ihn mächtig ergreifenden Begegnung nach: was ihn befreit hatte, hatte ihn zugleich gebunden, und von der Bindung mußte er sich, ehe er selber gestalten konnte, erst wieder befreien.*⁶⁸¹

In his fear of Homer, “the great nonpareil,”⁶⁸² an additional element of that powerfully affecting confrontation affected Goethe: that which had freed him had at the same time bound him, and before he could form himself, he had to free himself once more.

Goethe, however he felt about the *Prolegomena*, was concerned to maintain cordial relations with Wolf, but as yet unable to commit to any final judgment of the work. This situation would soon change, for he soon recognized that when weighed in the balance, fear of the monolith that was Homer was actually the obstacle that prevented him from entering in upon a project he had been considering for some time: an idyll after the manner of Voss’ popular hexameter poem *Luise*, which he greatly admired.⁶⁸³ Before he could attempt such a poem, however, he would have to come to terms with Wolf’s theories and pluck up the courage to embark on a long hexameter poem.

Fear of Homer had combined with self-doubt, for Goethe knew that by the most stringent standards of the day, his hexameters had failed to pass muster. In the often slap-dash lines of *Reineke Fuchs*, for instance, he had allowed more metrical variation than a purist such as Voss would stand for. In particular, he often substituted a trochee

for a spondee. He was, however, clearly committed to bettering his versification, and took pleasure in his developing skill.⁶⁸⁴ In the course of planning and composing *Hermann und Dorothea*, Goethe often had recourse to Voss' work on prosody.⁶⁸⁵ Even in 1805, long after *Hermann und Dorothea* had been published to great acclaim, Goethe applied to Voss' son, Johann Heinrich (1779-1822), who had replaced Böttiger as the Rektor of the Weimar Gymnasium in 1804, for help in recasting much of the poem according to stricter metrical rules.⁶⁸⁶ Nothing ever came of the project, but the fact that Goethe was willing to return to *Hermann und Dorothea* even after it had received such acclaim bears witness to his insecurity in the face of professional philologists' criticism of his hexameters.⁶⁸⁷

Nevertheless, Wolf's theories gave him the courage to forge ahead with the poem. On 10 June 1795, Goethe wrote to Wolf: "*Wie sehr ich mich freue ihre Bekanntschaft gemacht zu haben und welchen Gewinn ich mir davon verspreche war my Vorsatz Ihnen mündlich zu sagen*"⁶⁸⁸ ("It was my intention to tell you in person how pleased I am to have made your acquaintance, and what profit I promise myself thereby.") To Voss, on the same day, Goethe wrote "*Mit Herrn Prof. Wolf aus Halle habe ich auch vor kurzem Bekanntschaft gemacht, und freue mich auf eine nähere Verbindung mit demselben*"⁶⁸⁹ ("I have recently made the acquaintance of Professor Wolf of Halle, and look forward to a closer relationship with him.") The brevity of these notes stems from Goethe's health, for he was suffering from a swollen sinus cavity. This however apparently did not hinder his study of Wolf's *Prolegomena*. On 11 June 1795, Böttiger wrote to Wolf:

*Der arme Goethe! er leidet seit länger als 8 Tagen an einem
 haßlichen tumor maxillaris, und sieht aus wie eine
 Kropfganz. Er ist daher für niemand sichtbar, studiert also
 desto fleißiger Ihre Prolegomena. Da haben Sie einen
 großen Proselyten gemacht, auf den man wohl etwas stolz
 sein kann.*⁶⁹⁰

Poor Goethe! For more than eight days, he has been suffering from a nasty *tumor maxillaris*, and looks like a stuffed goose. Accordingly, he is not at home for

anybody, and so is studying your *Prolegomena* all the more devotedly. You have made a great convert there, something of which one might well be proud.

The early history of Goethe's response to the *Prolegomena* is an account of violent vacillations, self-contradictions, and eventual, although temporary willingness to replace his hero Homer with a tribe of Homeric heirs among whom he could enroll himself. Two of his *Xenia*, epigrams published in the *Horen*, testify to the ambivalence that ruled him throughout most of 1795.

Der Wolfische Homer

*Mit hartherzger Kritik hast du den Dichter entleibet,
Aber unsterblich durch dich lebt das verjüngte Gedicht.*

Homer

*Sieben Städte zankten sich darum, ihn geboren zu haben;
Nun da der Wolf ihn zerriß, nehme sich jede ein Stück.*⁶⁹¹

Wolf's Homer

With hardhearted criticism you have slain the poet,
But immortal, through you, lives the rejuvenated poem.

Homer

Seven cities sparred over which was his birthplace;
Now Wolf's torn him up, let each take a piece for itself.

Yet ultimately, as Goethe acknowledged, it was Wolf's work that had made it possible for him to compose his own epic poem. Writing to Voss on 6 December 1796, he thanked him graciously: "*Ich werde nicht verschweigen, wie viel ich bei dieser Arbeit unserm Wolf und Ihnen schuldig bin. Sie haben mir der Weg gezeigt und er hat mir Mut gemacht ihn zu gehen.*"⁶⁹² ("I will not conceal how much I owe you and our Wolf in connection with this work. You showed me the path and he gave me the courage to tread it.") Writing to Wolf on 26 December, Goethe made the indebtedness he felt even more explicit:

...Vielleicht sende ich Ihnen bald mit mehrerem Muthe die Ankündigung eines epischen Gedichtes in der ich nicht verschweige, wieviel ich jener Überzeugung schuldig bin, die Sie mir so fest eingeprägt haben. Schon lange war ich geneigt mich in diesem Fache zu versuchen und immer schreckte mich der hohe Begriff von Einheit und Untheilbarkeit der Homerischen Schifften ab, nunmehr da Sie diese herrlichen Werke einer Familie zueignen, so ist die Kühnheit geringer, sich in grössere Gesellschaft zu wagen und den Weg zu verfolgen den uns Voß in seiner *Luise* so schön gezeigt hat.

Da ich nicht im Falle bin Ihre Schifft theoretisch zu prüfen, so wünsche ich nur daß Sie mit diesem praktischen Beyfall nicht unzufrieden seyn mögen...⁶⁹³

...Perhaps I shall soon dare to send you the prospectus of an epic poem, in which I do not conceal how much I owe to that conviction that you impressed upon me so strongly. I had been inclined to attempt that genre for a long time, and the exalted idea of unity and indivisibility of the Homeric corpus had always frightened me off. But at this stage, since you assign these noble works to a family, it takes less audacity to venture into a larger group and to follow the path Voss so charmingly indicated in his *Luise*.

Since I am not in a position to analyze your work from the theoretical standpoint, I hope that you will not be displeased by this practical acclamation.

Goethe began work on *Hermann und Dorothea* on 9 September 1796, while visiting Jena. The epic is based on a story by Leopold Friedrich Gunther von Göcking (1748-1828) called *Das liebtätige Gera gegen die Salzburgerischen Emigranten*, but the setting is transferred to the recent past: Dorothea is an Alsatian refugee from the French Revolution. Originally intended as a work of six cantos, in imitation of Voss' *Luise*, the work swiftly took shape. The first three books, later revised into the books 1-4 of the eventual nine, were completed by 15 November 1796.⁶⁹⁴ The work went quickly and easily. Schiller wrote to his friend the lawyer Christian Gottfried Körner (1756-1831) on 19 November, amazed at Goethe's diligence: for nine straight days he had been writing upwards of 150 hexameters.⁶⁹⁵

Work came to a halt over the winter, but was resumed in the spring. By 28 April 1797, the poem was finished.⁶⁹⁶ Goethe sent an elegy intended as an introduction for

Hermann und Dorothea to Schiller on 7 December 1796.⁶⁹⁷ The more pointed of the *Xenien* in Schiller's *Horen* had recently given rise to ill-feeling and resentment among their victims, and Goethe's elegy *Hermann und Dorothea* (see the Appendix for full text and translation) contains some veiled allusions to Goethe's vitriolic critics. The poem, however also contains warm praise and thanks for Voss and Wolf.

*Laß im Becher nicht fehlen den Wein! Gesprächige Freunde,
Gleichgesinnte, herein! Kränze! sie warten auf euch.
Erst die Gesundheit des Mannes, der, endlich vom Namen Homeros
Kühn und befreiend, uns auch ruft in die vollere Bahn.
Denn wer wagte mit Göttern den Kampf? und wer mit dem Einen?
Doch Homeride zu sein, auch nur als letzter, ist schön.
Darum höret das neuste Gedicht! Noch einmal getruncken!*

*Uns begleite des Dichters Geist, der seine Luise
Rasch dem würdigen Freund, uns zu entzücken, verband.*⁶⁹⁸

Let the cups never be empty of wine! Conversational friends,
kindred spirits, welcome! Garlands! They await you.
First, here's a health to the man who bravely and boldly
freed us from Homer's name, and called us to a weightier theme.
For who dares to vie with the gods? and who with the Nonpareil?
But to be a Homerid, even the last, is delightful.
So, hear my newest poem! Have another drink!
Wine, friendship, and love will charm your ears.

Let the spirit of the poet accompany us, who composed his *Luise*
boldly to charm his worthy friends.

Liberated at last from his fear of Homer, Goethe was at last free to compose in as Homeric a mold as he pleased. He signaled his intentions for *Hermann und Dorothea* with this Augustan-style apologia, naming his sources of inspiration (Propertius, Martial, and the Muse, as well as Wolf and Voss), setting the scene and tone for the epic (German and domestic), and finally announcing that he himself was the last of the Homeridai, and pleased to assume that position. The two closing lines of the elegy evoke the speech of Alkinoos at *Od.* 8.572-6:

ἀλλ' ἄγε μοι τόδε εἰπέ καὶ ἀτρεκέως κατάλεξον,
ὅππῃ ἀπεπλάγχθης τε καὶ ἄς τινας ἴκεο χώρας
ἀνθρώπων, αὐτούς τε πόλιος τ' εὐ ναιετώσας,
ἡμὲν ὅσοι χαλεποὶ τε καὶ ἄγριοι οὐδὲ δίκαιοι
οἵ τε φιλόξεينوι, καὶ σφιν νόος ἐστὶ θεουδής.

But come tell me this, and relate it truly,
where you have strayed, and what lands you have come to
of men, and their well-built cities
both those who are harsh, wild, and unjust,
and those who are hospitable, and have god-fearing minds.

Goethe ends his elegy and introduces *Hermann und Dorothea* by answering the question:
he too is an Odysseus, but his gaze is now directed elsewhere than foreign cities and men.

*Menschen lernten wir kennen und Nationen; so laßt uns,
unser eigenes Herz kennend, uns dessen erfreun.*⁶⁹⁹

We have come to know men and nations: knowing
our own hearts, let us take delight in them.

The pleasures of introspection are linked with the joy of self-knowledge. In *Hermann und Dorothea*, Goethe, at last confident of his own role and abilities, tells a story set in the fruitful landscape he had always seen in Homer, full of larger-than-life characters who belong in an epic, but ruled by the sentimental love he had so frequently imported into his own works inspired by Homer. Although he regarded *Hermann und Dorothea* as his only successful epic, in reality, it is an epyllion in the form of an idyll. It is something more than Voss' happy and thoroughly bourgeois *Luise*, for the themes, the background, and the conflicts of the poem are resonant and universal. Wrote Curt Hohoff:

*Idyllische ist das Einfach-Menschliche, das immer wiederkehrt in stillen Verhältnissen. Getreidefelder, Weinberge und Obstgärten umgeben die kleine Stadt. Man lebt in Rhythmus von Pflügen, Säen, Ernten, Wachsen, Gedeihen und Ruhen. ...Das Leben mit den Herden, das Treffen am Brunnen, Zorn und Segen des Vaters, ausgleichendes Verständnis der Mutter und das Heranwachsen von Kindern zu eigener Entscheidung. Goethe will die Welt aus der er kam, die er nie verließ, verherrlichen.*⁷⁰⁰

That which is simply human, which always returns in silent relationships, is idyllic. Pastures, vineyards and orchards surround the little town. One lives in the rhythm of plowing, sowing, harvesting, growing, developing, and resting. Life with flocks, the meeting at the fountain, wrath and blessing of the father, the balancing wisdom of the mother and the growth of children according to their own decisions. Goethe wishes to glorify the world from which he came, which he never left behind.

The imitations of Homeric style in the poem are little more than cosmetic details. Conventional epithets, such as “*der edle verständige Pfarrer*” and “*die kluge verständige Hausfrau*” lend the poem some of its weight and formal air. The famous repeated description of Dorothea’s appearance and her dress at 5.168-76 and 6.137-45 evokes Homeric repetition, and also serves to impress upon the reader her beauty. The minutely detailed account of Hermann harnessing his stallions at 5.132-141 is an evident imitation of *Il.* 24.266-80, the harnessing of Priam’s cart in preparation for his visit to Achilles to redeem the body of Hektor.⁷⁰¹ The landscapes, the heroic characters, and the love-story, however, are the core of Goethe’s Homeric vision in the idyll, and all are memorably depicted.

The gardens and landscapes of *Hermann und Dorothea* are ubiquitous and set the atmosphere in the poem, though they are hardly ever described in detail. In Book 3, when Hermann’s father has rejected Dorothea as a bride for his son, sight unseen, merely because she is poor and a refugee, the hero, although he is deeply upset, simply leaves the room, rather than confront his father. Concerned, his mother goes to look for him. At 4.2-59, she goes through her garden, enjoying the sight of the heavily laden apple and pear trees. These trees, reminiscent in their fecundity of those in the garden of Alkinoos, are buttressed with sticks to bear the weight of the ripening fruit. The mother, as she passes, adjusts the supports. This fruitful garden, however, unlike that of the Phaiakian king, is full of the signs of human presence, and its produce, however excellent, is homely. As Hermann’s mother walks through the garden, she plucks a few worms from her cabbages, a vegetable decidedly more German than Homeric.⁷⁰² Hermann’s mother proceeds out through a gate in the city wall, into the vineyard. The varieties of grapes growing there and their uses are enumerated. Beyond the vineyard, she reaches a field of wheat, the first landscape which is given any substantial description in the poem:

...Und so nun trat sie ins Feld ein,
Das mit weiter Fläche den Rücken des Hügels bedeckte.
Immer noch wandelte sie auf eigenem Boden, und freute
Sich der eigenen Saat und des herrlich nickenden Kornes,
Das mit goldner Kraft sich im ganzen Felde bewegte.
Zwischen den Äckern schritt sie hindurch, auf dem Raine, den Fußpfad
(4.47-52)

... And so she came into the field,
that covered the yoke of the hill with its great expanse.
She was still walking on her own land, and rejoiced
in what she had sown, and the splendidly waving grain
that moved in golden strength throughout the field.
Between the fields she walked, on the bordering footpath.

Throughout the description of the mother's movements, there is an emphasis on boundary markers. The beauty of the landscape is bound up with its utility, and the description is focalized, seen through the eyes of the mother. She passes the barrier of the city wall, walks along a path that is itself a property line, and finally reaches the pear tree under which Hermann is sitting. This tree also serves as a emblem of land-tenure, for it marks the border of the land that belongs to the family. The garden of Alkinoos is richly described and closely observed, but nowhere is the Phaiakian king shown in the same intimate relationship with his land that Hermann's family enjoys. The landscape in *Hermann und Dorothea* is beautiful. This goes without saying, and indeed Goethe lavished few adjectives on it. Its beauty comes from the apprehensions of beholders; the scenery is perceived as beautiful because the narrative makes it clear that it is beloved. From Goethe's imagined Homeric world come light and abundance, (the golden field that stretches so far) but the fond proprietary vision is entirely his own.

When Hermann's mother asks him why he is crying, his instinctive response is to tell her a plausible lie, for he cannot yet bear to discuss his new-found love for Dorothea. His response is that he is troubled by the thought of the enemy forces on the other side of the Rhine, especially when he looks out at the fruitful landscape before him.

*Und nun ging ich heraus, und sah die herrliche weite
Landschaft, dich sich vor uns in fruchtbaren Hügeln umher schlingt;
Sah die goldene Frucht den Garben entgegen zu neigen,
Und ein reichliches Obst uns volle Kammern versprechen.
Aber ach! wie nah ist der Feind!,,, (4.77-81)*

And now, I went out, and I saw the splendid broad
landscape, that extends before us into the fruitful hills;
saw the golden fruit bowing before the harvest,
and a rich harvest promising us full store-rooms.
But ah! How near the enemy is!...

He wonders whether he ought to be on the border, (“*an der Grenze*” 4.94) defending his country. This is an answer aptly chosen, for his mother is as closely connected to the land and its boundaries as he is. He takes his response a degree too far for credibility, however, and continues in a high-flown patriotic vein: if the young men of the country would stand together on the border (“*an der Grenze*” 4.99), the enemy would never conquer. He declares his intention to enlist. His mother weeps, and then, perspicaciously asks him what really is troubling him; his noble rhetoric has not fooled her. At first he protests that he has told her the truth, but swiftly capitulates; it was only half of the truth. The words of his father wounded him to the quick, and he has been lonely and depressed. The role of dutiful son is no longer enough for him; he wants to marry. The mother immediately realizes that Hermann is determined to wed Dorothea, the refugee girl. Hermann assures her that his life will be meaningless without her, and since his father has forbidden him to court Dorothea, he will enlist in the army. The mother offers to intercede for Hermann, and assures him that the father can be persuaded, if approached in the right way.

This scene between mother and son was clearly one into which Goethe had put some of his deepest feelings. On 17 October 1796, Caroline von Wolzogen, then a new arrival in Weimar, heard Goethe reading this section aloud. The lines had been composed sometime in the preceding fortnight. Her account of the reading is illuminating:

*Mit Rührung erinnere ich mich, wie uns Goethe, in tiefer
Herzensbewegung, unter hervorquellende Tränen den*

*Gesang, der das Gespräch Hermanns mit der Mutter am Birnbaume enthält, gleich nach der Entstehung vorlas. „So schmilzt mann bei seinen eignen Kohlen,“ sagte er, indem er sich die Augen trocknet.*⁷⁰³

I am touched when I remember how Goethe, his heart deeply moved, his tears welling forth, read aloud the canto that contains Hermann's conversation with his mother, directly after he had composed it. "This is how one is melted by his own coals," he said, as he dried his eyes.⁷⁰⁴

So enchanting was this imagined vista at the pear tree to Goethe that he revisited it in the eighth book of *Hermann und Dorothea*. Hermann brings Dorothea to his parents' home, and in the course of their journey, they retrace the steps of his mother, but in reverse. Instead of sunlight, the moon shines down upon the couple, and scene is hardly less brilliant than it had been by day. The landscape has lost its colors and though only discernible as a composition in *grisaille*, is still full of light.

*Herrlich glänzte der Mond, der volle, vom Himmel herunter;
Nacht war's, völlig bedeckt das letzte Schimmern der Sonne.
Und so lagen vor ihnen in Massen gegeneinander,
Lichter, hell wie der Tag, und Schatten dunkeler Nächte. (8.53-6)*

The moon shone effulgent, the full moon, down from the sky
It was night, and the last beams of the sun were entirely eclipsed.
There lay before them, in juxtaposed masses,
Lights, bright as the day, and the shadows of dark night.

Hermann and Dorothea rest under the pear tree, and Hermann shows Dorothea his home, proudly telling her that fields around them belong to his family. This scene, the counterpart of Hermann's conversation with his mother in the third book, contributes to the structural soundness of the epic. In a single day, Hermann has changed from a boy into a man. In the morning, he had wished for a bride, and now in the evening she is by his side, although she does not know it. Hermann's shyness and awkwardness had made it impossible for him propose to her in the village, among her people, and so she is under the impression that he has engaged her to be a maidservant at Hermann's father's inn. As the couple walk through the field of grain, a storm begins. By the time they reach the

vineyard, it is dark. Dorothea stumbles on one of the stone terraces, an omen of the uncomfortable scene which is due to be played out before she and Hermann can be united. As she falls, he catches her.

*...er stemmte sich gegen die Schwere.
Und so fühlt' er die herrliche Last, die Wärme des Herzens,
Und den Balsam des Atems, an seinen Lippen verhauchet,
Trug mit Mannesgefühl die Heldengröße des Weibes. (8.95-8)*

...he braced himself against the weight.
And so he felt the wonderful burden, the warmth of her heart,
and the fragrance of her breath, exhaled on his lips,
bore, with manly pride, the heroic frame of the woman.

Both Hermann and Dorothea are of noble proportions. While Goethe's fond vision of a fruitful Homeric landscape is certainly reflected in the poem, his enchantment with heroes who are larger than life dominates the narrative. Hermann and Dorothea are the only characters in the epic who are named, and their names are significant ones.

Dorothea is more than a simple "gift of God." When Hermann first sees her, she appears strong and competent; driving an obedient team toward a washing-place, à la Nausikaa. Her heroic stature and her actions in the narrative, however, suggest that she is an allomorph of Demeter. Echoes of the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* abound. When Persephone is snatched from Demeter's side, she wanders the face of the earth, until she comes to Eleusis. She finds her place in the household of Keleus and Metaneira because of a fortunate encounter with their kindly daughters by a well (*HH Dem.* 98-168). As she walks, her dark mantle flutters around slender feet (*HH Dem.* 183), and her great size is apparent: her head reaches the roof as she enters the palace (*HH Dem.* 188-9). Her appearance makes her noble birth obvious to Metaneira (*HH Dem.* 214-5). She finds relief from her own private sorrow in caring for someone else's child: the Queen's baby, Demophon. When her true nature is revealed, a heavenly fragrance wafts from her garments (*HH Dem.* 277-8.)

Dorothea, like Demeter, has a private sorrow: her fiancé, a idealistic revolutionary, was killed in Paris. She is compassionate, and cares for a new mother and her baby. Her encounters with Hermann by the village well bring her a position in a new home, and her blue skirt has pleats that swirl around her trim ankles (5.175-6; 6.143-4). She is as tall as Hermann: when the pair enter the room, the parents and their friends are astonished:

*Aber die Tür ging auf. Es zeigte das herrliche Paar sich,
Und es erstaunten die Freunde, die lieben Eltern erstaunten
Über die Bildung der Braut, des Bräutigams Bildung vergleichbar;
Ja, es schien die Türe zu klein, die hohen Gestalten
Einzulassen, die nun zusammen betreten die Schwelle. (9.56-60)*

But then the door opened. The noble couple appeared,
and the friends were amazed, the dear parents were amazed
by the stature of the bride, comparable to the bridegroom's stature;
indeed, the doors seemed too small to admit the tall figures,
that now crossed the threshold together.

Dorothea is a fitting mate for the heroic Hermann, who is named after the famous German folk-hero Arminius, chief of the Cherusci, who defeated the Roman general Varus and lost him three legions and auxiliaries in AC 9 at the battle of the Teutoburgian Forest.⁷⁰⁵ Goethe would have been familiar with Tacitus' account of Germanicus' visit to the battlefield (*An.* 1.61ff), but probably would not have read Velleius Paterculus' historical writings at this point.⁷⁰⁶

Hermann himself, for all his nobility of character and notable self-restraint, is something of a modern barbarian. His physical strength, signaled by the powerful stallions he drives, is prodigious, but it is equaled by his lack of sophistication. In the second book of the poem, Hermann's father urges him to marry one of the daughters of a rich neighbor. Hermann demurs, for he has already met Dorothea. In addition, he feels awkward and uncouth around the neighbor's stylish and cultivated daughters. The previous Easter Sunday, he had done his best to dress up like the fashionable clerks and salesmen who seemed to be their preferred swains, and paid a formal call at the

neighbors' house. The musical entertainment was quite over his head: the youngest daughter was playing the piano, the rest of the company singing. The text made no sense to Hermann:

*Manches verstand ich nicht, was in den Liedern gesagt war;
Aber ich hörte viel von Pamina, viel von Tamino,
Und ich wollte doch auch nicht stumm sein! Sobald die geendet,
Fragt ich dem Texte nach, und nach den beiden Personen.
Alle schwieg darauf und lächelten; aber der Vater
Sagte: Nicht wahr, mein Freund, er kennt nur Adam und Eva? (2.223-8)*

There was much I did not understand in the songs they were singing;
but I heard a lot about Pamina, a lot about Tamino,
and I did not want to seem tongue-tied! As soon as they finished,
I asked about the text, and the two characters.
Everyone was silent at that, and smiled, but their father
said "Indeed, my friend, do you only know Adam and Eve?"

Hermann is simple, but sensitive; after this humiliating rebuff, he says, he never visited the neighbors' house again. His inarticulacy and shyness will nearly cost him Dorothea's hand, for the misunderstanding about her prospective status in the inn is entirely his fault. At the same time, his strong feelings occasionally give rise to impassioned speeches in which he acquits himself honorably, so perhaps some of his speechless bashfulness stems from his youth, and as the Parson remarks upon Hermann's return from first seeing Dorothea, he seems to be maturing quickly. With Dorothea's example before him, he may well fulfill his heroic potential. When his father finally consents to his marriage, Hermann's stirring speech in response, a call to arms in defense of the land one loves, ends the epic on an optimistic and joyous note.

In writing *Hermann und Dorothea*, Goethe brought to a creative and fruitful culmination all of his years of Homeric study. Having internalized the features of the Homeric corpus that always affected him profoundly, he was able to endow his own epic with all of them: a magnificent and beloved landscape, a hero and heroine drawn on a truly Homeric scale, and a satisfying romance with a happy ending. Taking the things he loved best from his Homer, he transplanted them to a smaller and more familiar sphere,

the world he himself belonged in. *Hermann und Dorothea*, a poem in which Homeric landscape coalesces into Arcadia and epic and idyll combine, is illuminated throughout by a nostalgic fondness for a world of unchanging and simple verities, and in turn, it evokes such feelings in the reader. If the right to be called a later-day Homerid can be earned by the creation of poetry such as this, Goethe was well-entitled to give himself that honor.

⁶⁴⁹ Curt Hohoff, *Johann Wolfgang Friedrich von Goethe: Dichtung und Leben* (Munich 1989) 375.

⁶⁵⁰ Trevelyan 190. Initially, Voss, a stout republican, was unwilling to meet Goethe. Böttiger recorded in his journal, "*Sein Widerwille gegen Goethe kam daher, weil er sich ihn als einen aufgeblasenen Geheimen Rat dachte, und es ihm durchaus nicht verzeihen könnte, daß er sich durch das Adelsbrief unehrlich gemacht hat*" ("His objections to Goethe stemmed from the fact that he thought of him as a puffed-up Privy Councilor, and he could not forgive him for having disgraced himself by accepting the patent of nobility.") By the last few days of his stay, however, Voss had completely changed his mind, and confessed himself ashamed of cherishing such a prejudice against Goethe, who turned out to be quite different from the hypocrite of his preconceptions. Bode 8. One factor that drew the two men together was a common dislike of Lavater, wrote Böttiger. *DKV* 721.

⁶⁵¹ Trevelyan described this group as "as notable a constellation of minds as ever listened at one time to the father of poetry."

⁶⁵² Grumach, *Goethe und die Antike*. 1.136-7.

⁶⁵³ *DVK* 1.137.

⁶⁵⁴ Renate Grumach, ed., *Goethe: Begegnungen und Gespräche* (Berlin 1965) 4.66.

⁶⁵⁵ *ibid.* 4.66-7.

⁶⁵⁶ *ibid.* 4.64-5.

⁶⁵⁷ However dismissive Böttiger and Voss were of his casual and fanciful suggestion, Goethe was right to suppose that the question of textual transmission of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* is a complex one for which a simple solution is inadequate. The first ancient attestation for a Pisistratean recension is suspiciously late: it occurs in Cicero's *De Oratore* 3.137: "*quis doctior eisdem temporibus aut cuius eloquentia litteris instructor fuisse traditur quam Pisistrati? qui primus Homeris libros confusos antea sic disposuisse dicitur ut nunc habemus.*" ("During that period, who is said to have been more learned and knowledgeable about literature than Peisistratos? [It was] he, they say, who arranged the hitherto disordered books of Homer as we now have them.") Michael Haslam wrote "The 'Pisistratean recension' itself is controversial, some assigning to it the definitive formation of the Homeric poems, other denying it transmissional importance beyond the diction's acquisition of an attic veneer." Michael Haslam, "Homeric Papyri and the Transmission of the Text," In *A New Companion to Homer*, Ian Morris and Barry Powell, eds. Leiden 1997 82-3. Marianne Pade, however, did make a strong case for a pro-Athenian bias in the Catalogue of Women in Book 11 of the *Odyssey*. Marianne Pade. "Homer's Catalogue of Women." *Classica et Mediaevalia* 34 (1983) 7-15.

⁶⁵⁸ Bode 2.20-1.

⁶⁵⁹ Goethe wrote of the proceedings in his *Jahresheft* for 1796: "*Eine Gesellschaft hochgebildeter Männer, welche sich mehr und mehr bey mir versammelten betätigte sich mehr und mehr. Ich las einen Gesang der Ilias von Voss, erwarb mir Beyfall, dem Gedicht hohen Antheil, rühmliches Anerkennen dem Übersetzer. Ein jedes Mitglied gab von seinen Geschäften, Arbeiten, Liebhabereyen, beliebige Kenntniß, mit freymüthige Antheil aufgenommen.*" ("A society of scholarly men which gathered at my house more and more often, became more and more assiduous. I read a book of Voss' *Iliad*, and earned myself applause, the poem great approval, and the translator notable recognition. Each member contributed from his vocation, labors, hobbies, and preferred field of expertise, shared freely." *DKV* 17.56.

⁶⁶⁰ Bode 2.21.

⁶⁶¹ Boyle 2.265.

⁶⁶² Grumach 1.138.

⁶⁶³ *Hoheitblickende* is Voss' translation for βῶπις at *Il.* 1.551 and 568, 4.50, 8.471, 14.159, 222, and 263, 15.34 and 49, 16.439, 18.357 and 360, and 20.309. Only at 18.239 did he depart from his usual pattern, rendering the epithet even less exactly as "*Herrscherin*."

⁶⁶⁴ *ibid.* 138.

⁶⁶⁵ Julia Gauss maintained that this was a period in which Goethe became more and more skeptical of the purity of the ancient world. "*Nur die klassische Plastik, aber sie eben gerade als Bemeisterung rohen Mythenstoffes und Überwindung archaisch grotesker Vorstufen, zeigte reine Würde.*" ("Only the classical sculpture, and that indeed as a mastery of the crude matter of myth and the overcoming of grotesque first steps, showed pure worthiness.") Julia Gauss, *Goethe-Studien* (Göttingen 1961) 77.

⁶⁶⁶ Grumach 1.139. One of the most complete studies of the toponyms in the Catalogue of Ships and of the evidence for Bronze Age settlement patterns at these sites is R. Hope Simpson and J.F. Lazenbee's *The Catalogue of Ships in Homer's Iliad* (Oxford 1970). The place names do follow a logical and geographically coherent pattern, but nothing so simple as Voss' suggested double loop.

⁶⁶⁷ *ibid.* 1.139.

⁶⁶⁸ e.g. at 2.83. Voss 1.18.

⁶⁶⁹ Smyth 338 (97).

⁶⁷⁰ Boyle 2.265.

⁶⁷¹ *DKV* 31.70.

⁶⁷² J.E. Sandys, *A History of Classical Scholarship* (New York 1958) 3.56.

⁶⁷³ Anthony Grafton, *Defenders of the Text: Traditions of Scholarship in an Age of Science, 1450-1800*. (Cambridge and London 1991) 223-230. Grafton's discussion of Wolf's claims to originality is valuable for its wide range of sources and historical information.

⁶⁷⁴ Ruppert 180.

⁶⁷⁵ *DKV* 31.79-9.

⁶⁷⁶ *DVK* 31.80.

⁶⁷⁷ *DKV* 31.70.

⁶⁷⁸ Hugh Lloyd-Jones, *Blood for the Ghosts* (London 1982) 48.

⁶⁷⁹ Joachim Wohleben, "Goethe and the Homeric Question," *GR* 62.4 (1967) 262.

⁶⁸⁰ DKV 31.543.

⁶⁸¹ Wolfgang Schadewalt, *Goestudien: Natur und Altertum* (Zürich 1963) 150.

⁶⁸² This is a quotation from Goethe's *Elegie zu Hermann und Dorothea*.

⁶⁸³ *Luise* was first published in 1795. One element of the poem which must have attracted Goethe is the beautiful and fruitful landscape in which it is set. In this scene from the first idyll, *Luise* and her companions are picking berries for a birthday picnic. Johann Heinrich Voss, *Werke* (Berlin 1966) 95.

*Jene kamen und sahn die geschwellenen Beeren, die ringsum
Feuerrot und gedrängt am Sonnenstrahl aus den Kräutern
Schimmerten; und ihr Gedüft durchatmete würzig die Gegend.*

They came and saw the swollen berries round about
fire-red, and crowded in the sunshine, that shone on the bushes,
and their fragrance drifted deliciously through the area.

Luise is simultaneously much lighter and more belletristic than *Hermann und Dorothea* was to prove. Rife with private jokes, the narrative contains a scene in which *Luise* and her companions sing lyrics by the contemporary authors Fritz Stolberg, Friedrich von Hagedorn (1708-1754), Gottfried August Bürger, Matthias Claudius (1740-1815), Johann Wilhelm Ludwig Gleim (1719-1803) and Friedrich Jacobi (1743-1819). Voss 108. There is also scene in which *Luise*'s brother ineptly clinks a glass for a toast, and her father rebukes him, comparing the sound of his glass to the sound of modern poets' leaden hexameters. Voss 111. If this was a dig at the faulty verses of *Reineke Fuchs*, Goethe appears either not have noticed it or to have taken it in good part.

⁶⁸⁴ Bruce Kieffer, *Goethe's Metrics and his Classical Elegies* (Ph.D. Dissertation, Princeton 1979) 48.

⁶⁸⁵ Kieffer wrote on Goethe's commitment to the production of flawless verse in classical meters: "To be sure, one occasionally comes across negative comments by Goethe about Voss and his followers, but these are always directed at that contents of Voss's poems, never at their form or at Voss's rigoristic program... Clearly, the only thing that really disturbed Goethe about Voss was the latter's reticence about Goethe's metrical efforts and achievements: Goethe desired Voss's approbation but never received it." Kieffer 102. In a letter to Johann Heinrich Meyer (1759-1832), Goethe wrote of his work on *Hermann und Dorothea*: "In Absicht auf die poetische sowohl als prosodische Organization des Ganzes habe ich beständig vor Augen gehabt was in diesen letzten Zeiten bei Gelegenheit der Voss'schen Arbeiten mehrmals zur Sprache gekommen ist, und habe viele streitige Punkte praktisch zu entscheiden gesucht, wengstens kann ich meine Überzeugung nicht besser ausdrücken als auf diese Weise." "With respect to the poetic as well as the prosodic design of the whole, I have constantly had before my eyes the sections of Voss' work that have recently come under frequent discussion, and I have endeavored to resolve many debatable points. At the very least, I cannot express my conviction better than in this way."
DKV 31.264.

⁶⁸⁶ DKV 17.637.

⁶⁸⁷ Hermann Schreyer, "Goethes Arbeit an 'Hermann und Dorothea'" *GJb* 10 (1889) 198.

⁶⁸⁸ Renate Grumach 4.147.

⁶⁸⁹ *ibid.* 4.147.

⁶⁹⁰ *ibid.* 4.154.

⁶⁹¹ *DKV* 1.536.

⁶⁹² *DVK* 31.266.

⁶⁹³ Grumach 1.145-6.

⁶⁹⁴ *DKV* 31.259.

⁶⁹⁵ Renate Grumach 245.

⁶⁹⁶ *DKV* 31.329.

⁶⁹⁷ *DVK* 1.1198.

⁶⁹⁸ *DVK* 1.622-3.

⁶⁹⁹ *DVK* 1.623.

⁷⁰⁰ Curt Hohoff, *Johann Wolfgang von Goethe: Dichtung und Leben*, (Munich 1989) 377.

⁷⁰¹ Indeed, when Augustus Dühr translated *Hermann und Dorothea* into ancient Greek, he rightly looked to *Il.* 24.266-80 for the proper vocabulary for Hermann's harnessing scene, though he forbore to steal any lines from Homer. *Goethe's Hermann und Dorothea ins Altgriechische übersetzt*, Augustus Dühr, trans. (Gotha 1888) 31-2.

⁷⁰² Cabbages are mentioned in neither the *Iliad* nor the *Odyssey*, but they do come up in the *Batrachomyomachia* at 53-6, when a mouse taunts a frog, saying that he himself does not eat frog-food, such as radishes, cabbages and pumpkins. Goethe had known the *Batrachomyomachia* from childhood, and in fact, had been recently given a copy of a new edition of the poem by its editor, Karl Jakob Ludwig Iken (1789-1841), who had dedicated the work to him. This book, *Hymni Homerici cum reliquiis carminibus minoribus Homero tribui solitis et Batrachomyomachia*, was published in Halle in 1796. Ruppert 179.

⁷⁰³ Renate Grumach 4.247.

⁷⁰⁴ Hermann is contemplating his own death in battle, so some of the pathos in this section is derived from an Homeric echo, again from the Book 24 of the *Iliad*. When Achilles refuses to release the body of Hektor, Zeus sends Iris the messenger to Thetis, the hero's mother. She comes to Olympos, where Zeus asks her to go to Achilles and tell him that he has angered the gods by mistreating the corpse, and that he must release the body. She flies down from Olympus, and finds Achilles grieving. Having delivered Zeus' message, she tells her son to give up weeping, since he is doomed to die soon. The section closes with this memorable and moving couplet.

ὦς οἱ γ' ἐν νηῶν ἀγύρει μήτηρ τε καὶ υἱὸς
πολλὰ πρὸς ἀλλήλους ἔπεα πτερόεντ' ἀγόρευον. (*Il.* 24.141-2)

They sat there among the flotilla, mother and son,
and spoke many wise words together.

⁷⁰⁵ Volker Losemann, "Arminius." In *Der Neue Pauly Enzyklopädie der Antike*, Hubert Cancik and Helmuth Schneider, eds. (Stuttgart 1997) 2.14-16.

⁷⁰⁶ Goethe only acquired his two editions of the works of Velleius Paterculus in 1804. Ruppert 206. He did, however, own a 1668 copy of the historical works of Florus, another source for the life of Arminius.

APPENDIX

Hermann und Dorothea: Text and Translation of the Elegy

Also das wäre Verbrechen, daß einst Propertz mich begeistert;
Daß Martial sich zu mir auch, der Verwegne, gesellt?
Daß ich die Alten nicht hinter mir ließ, die Schule zu hüten;
Daß sie nach Latium gern mir ins Leben gefolgt?
Daß ich Natur und Kunst zu schaun mich treulich bestrebe;
Daß kein Name mich täuscht, daß mich kein Dogma beschränkt?
Daß des Lebens bedingender Drang nicht den Menschen verändert;
Daß ich der Heuchelei dürftiger Maske verschmäht?
Solcher Fehler, die du, o Muse, so emsig gepfleget,
Zeihet der Pöbel mich; Pöbel nur sieht er in mir.
Ja, sogar der Bessere selbst, gutmütig und bieder,
Will mich anders; doch du, Muse, befielst mir allein.
Denn du bist es allein, die noch mir die innere Jugend
Frisch erneuest, und sie mir bis zu Ende versprichst.
Aber verdopple nunmehr, o Göttin, die heilige Sorgfalt!
Ach! die Scheitel umwallt reichlich die Locke nicht mehr:
Da bedarf man der Kränze, sich selbst und Andre zu täuschen;
Kränzte doch Cäsar selbst nur aus Bedürfnis das Haupt.
Hast du ein Lorbeerreis mir bestimmt, so lass' es am Zweige
Weiter grünen, und gib einst es dem Würdigern hin;
Aber Rosen winde genug zum häuslichen Kranze;
Bald als Lilie schlingt silberne Locke sich durch.
Schüret die Gattin das Feuer, auf reinlichem Herde zu kochen;
Werfe der Knabe das Reis, spielend, geschäftig dazu.
Laß im Becher nicht fehlen den Wein! Gesprächige Freunde,
Gleichgesinnte, herein! Kränze! sie warten auf euch.
Erst die Gesundheit des Mannes, der, endlich vom Namen Homeros
Kühn und befreiend, uns auch ruft in die vollere Bahn.
Denn wer wagte mit Göttern den Kampf? und wer mit dem Einen?
Doch Homeride zu sein, auch nur als letzter, ist schön.
Darum höret das neuste Gedicht! Noch einmal getruncken!
Euch besteche der Wein, Freundschaft und Liebe das Ohr.
Deutschen selber führ ich euch zu, in die stillere Wohnung,
Wo sich nach der Natur, menschlich der Mensch noch erzieht.
Uns begleite des Dichters Geist, der seine Luise
Rasch dem würdigen Freund, uns zu entzücken, verband.
Auch die traurigen Bilder der Zeit, sie führ' ich vorüber;
Aber es siege der Mut in dem gesunden Geschlecht.
Hab ich euch Tränen ins Auge gelockt, und Lust in die Seele
Singend geflöß't, so kommt, drücket mich herzlich ans Herz.
Weise dann sei das Gespräch! Uns lehret Weisheit das Ende

*Des Jahrhunderts, wen hat das Geschick nicht geprüft?
 Blicket heiterer nun auf jene Schmerzen zurücke,
 Wenn euch ein fröhlicher Sinn manches entbehrlich erklärt.
 Menschen lernten wir kennen und Nationen; so laßt uns,
 unser eigenes Herz kennend, uns dessen erfreun. (DKV 1.622-23)*

So was it a crime that Propertius inspired me once,
 that Martial became my ally in rashness?
 That I did not leave the ancients behind to guard the school,
 that they happily followed from Latium into my life?
 That I faithfully try to regard nature and art,
 that no name deceives me, no dogma keeps me restrained?
 That the insistent pressure of life does not alter the man,
 that I despise the mocking of wretched facades?
 Such errors, O Muse, that you fostered so diligently,
 draw the mob on me, and the mob sees only the vulgar.
 Even my better self, so goodnatured and worthy,
 would like to change me, but you alone, O Muse, gave the orders.
 For it is you alone who still renews my inner youth
 And promises me this till the end.
 But O Goddess! Now double my sacred thoroughness!
 Ah! my locks do not wave thick on my brow anymore :
 Thus, a man needs a garland, to fool himself and fool others;
 Caesar put on a garland only out of necessity.
 If you have selected a laurel wreath for me, let it grow
 on its bush, and give it to a worthier man;
 but twine enough roses for modest garlands;
 soon the silver locks will peep through, like lilies.
 Let my wife tend the fire, to cook at her spotless hearth;
 lets the boy throw the rice, playfully, busily, too.
 Let the cups never be empty of wine! Conversational friends,
 kindred spirits, welcome! Garlands! They await you.
 First, here's a health to the man who bravely and boldly
 freed us from Homer's name, and called us to a weightier theme.
 For who dares to vie with the gods? and who with the Nonpareil?
 But to be a Homerid, even the last, is delightful.
 So, hear my newest poem! Have another drink!
 Wine, friendship, and love will charm your ears.
 Germans themselves I bring to you, in a quiet dwelling,
 where Man still learns, in a human way, after nature.
 Let the spirit of the poet accompany us, he who composed his *Luise*
 boldly to charm his worthy friends.
 And the sorrowful images of our times, I would pass them by:
 but let courage prevail in the robust stock.
 If I have lured tears into your eyes, and in my singing, poured joy
 into your souls, come, take me lovingly to your bosom.
 Let the discourse be wise! Wisdom schools us at the end
 of the century: who has not been tried by fate?
 Look back on those sorrows more joyfully now,
 as a blithe spirit explains so many dispensable things.
 We have come to know men and nations: knowing
 our own hearts, let us take delight in them.

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