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From Goethe to Gundolf

ESSAYS ON GERMAN LITERATURE AND CULTURE
2. Goethe and Stolberg in Italy

The Consequences for Romantic Art

The eighteenth century saw travel literature come into its own as a major literary genre. Not only did it give accounts of actual travels: it also contained useful information for the traveller, real or intended, on what to see, which places to visit, which paintings to look at (which hazards to avoid). With the emergence of the Grand Tour in Italy in the eighteenth century, travel accounts provided the necessary vade-mecum. When Johann Wolfgang Goethe and Friedrich Leopold von Stolberg went to Italy, within five years of each other in the latter part of that century, they used travelling companions and artists as guides, but also had recourse to — by then — standard travelogues, some of which they also cite by name: Johann Heinrich Bartels and Patrick Brydone (Stolberg) and Johann Hermann von Riedesel and Johann Jacob Volkmann (Goethe).

But I run ahead of my subject. We should take a moment to refresh our memories of the essential facts of Goethe’s Italian Journey. Travelling through Italy had been his lifelong desire, and this was finally fulfilled in September 1786, when he left Carlsbad and made his way over the Brenner, through Venice, Bologna, Perugia and Rome. Afterwards, he stopped in Naples and Sicily, and then returned to Rome. He kept records throughout his travels, including notes and letters home, and in 1789, he published his first work relating to Italy, Das Römische Carneval/The Roman Carnival. This was to be the first of several.¹

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¹ An earlier version of this paper was given at the University of Groningen in 1992. On the subject of Goethe and Romantic art, see the older but still essential work by Richard Benz, Goethe und die romantische Kunst (Munich: Piper, 1940) and the more recent ‘Ein Dichter hatte uns alle geweckt’, Goethe und die literarische Romantik, ed. by Christoph Perels (Frankfurt am Main: Freies Deutsches Hochstift, 1999).

² These are found in Erich Schmidt, ed., Tagebücher und Briefe Goethes aus Italien an Frau von Stein und Herder, Schriften der Goethe-Gesellschaft 2 (Weimar:
Goethe wished to return to Italy a second time to create an exhaustive description of the country, its people and their customs. However, despite his evidently thorough preparations, the Revolutionary Wars prevented him from doing so.\footnote{Goethe-Gesellschaft, 1886} While working on his autobiography, \textit{Dichtung und Wahrheit /Poetry and Truth}, begun in 1813–14, and thus in self-reflective mood, Goethe revisited his notes on his Italian journey of 1786–87. They were to appear in published form as \textit{Italienische Reise}, in three parts; the first two volumes detailed his time up to and including Sicily and appeared in 1816–17, while the last volume (\textit{Zweiter Römischer Aufenthalt /Second Sojourn in Rome}) came out in 1829. Goethe showed little sentimentality towards his sources, cutting up letters he had received during his travels and sticking them on to the manuscript of his autobiography. Posterity may be aghast, but why do unnecessary copying? The \textit{Italienische Reise}, however brought about, is worth the result.\footnote{See Melitta Gerhard, ‘\textquoteleft Die Redaktion der \textquoteleft Italienischen Reise\textquoteright im Lichte von Goethes autobiographischem Gesamtwerk\textquoteright, \textit{Jahrbuch des Freien Deutschen Hochstifts} (1930), 131–50; Albert Meier (ed.), \textit{Ein unsäglich schönes Land. Goethes \textquoteleft Italienische Reise\textquoteright und der Mythos Siziliens/Un paese indicibilimente bello. Il \textquoteleft Viaggio in Italia\textquoteright di Goethe e il mito della Sicilia} (Palermo: Sellerio, 1987); Gerhard Schulz, ‘Goethes Italienische Reise’, in: \textit{Goethe in Italy, 1786–1986. A Bi-Centennial Symposium November 14–15, 1986, University of California, Santa Barbara: Proceedings Volume}, ed. by Gerhart Hoffmeister, Amsterdamer Publikationen zur Sprache und Literatur, 76 (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1988), 5–19.}

The facts concerning Goethe’s \textit{Italienische Reise} and its emergence as a cult book — W. H. Auden is one of its more recent admirers and translators\footnote{Johann Wolfgang Goethe, \textit{Italian Journey, 1786–1788}, trans. by W. H. Auden and Elizabeth Mayer (London: Collins, 1962).} — need not be further rehearsed here. My purpose is to record reactions from some of Goethe’s younger contemporaries, the Romantics — themselves no mean travellers — and to explain their mainly aggrieved tone at reading his \textit{Italian Journey} and what followed it. It will be necessary to quote from Goethe’s original, but to contrast it with the account of Italy given by Friedrich Leopold Count Stolberg, whose four volumes of \textit{Reise durch Deutschland, die Schweiz, Italien und Sicilien in den Jahren 1791–92/Travels through Germany, Switzerland, Italy and Sicily in the Years 1791–92} came out in 1794. (Goethe later quotes...}
from them.) Through quotation and comparison, we may gain some insight into why the Romantics reacted as they did. It will emerge that Stolberg’s account in many ways prefigures much of what the Romantics were later to espouse. Our comparison makes sense in that Goethe and Stolberg were near contemporaries; more than that: they were acquaintances, having gone together to Switzerland in 1775, and were within a few years of travelling to Italy on their separate — and very different — journeys. The much later publication date of Goethe’s Italian Journey is crucial to Romantic reactions. It was not the Goethe to whom they had once looked up and revered. When Stolberg reissued his account of Italy in 1821–23, many of his attitudes to art and culture of 1791–92 would be accepted and welcomed by an even younger generation of German painters, mainly based in Rome and known as the Nazarenes.

It is crucial, as said, to note the late year of publication of Goethe’s Italian Journey (nearly thirty years after the event) and the similarly late reactions of the two Romantics cited, Friedrich Schlegel and Ludwig Tieck. For both of them, Goethe’s later attitudes to art, as encapsulated in his Italian Journey are hurtful to their mature sensitivities but are representative of a Goethe whom they had clearly misunderstood. They were however the ones who had changed, not Goethe. True, the brothers August Wilhelm and Friedrich Schlegel had adulated Goethe and had made him the centre of a cult in the 1790s, and he in his turn had been gracious to them. Their periodical Athenaeum (1798–1800) had placed Goethe on a pedestal, elevating him to the very incarnation of modern progressive poetry, while Goethe in his turn liked the energy and verve of these young men, who also included Tieck. But this mutual relationship was one based on selection and a willingness to overlook major differences. Goethe did not care for the increasingly Christian tendencies of their art appreciation and their preference for religious art. Goethe revered Raphael, as they did, but saw him through classical Greek eyes and not only as the sublime painter of the Sistine Madonna. The Romantics chose not to look too closely at the passages in Goethe’s periodical Propyläen (1798–1800), many of which stood at variance with

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6 Cf. Goethe, Sämtliche Werke, Artemis-Gedenkausgabe, ed. by Ernst Beutler, 18 vols (Munich: dtv, 1977), XIII, 846 (all subsequent references to Goethe’s works are from this edition, cited as SW).
what they themselves professed on art in *Athenaeum* (notably in August Wilhelm Schlegel’s long article *Die Gemälde/The Paintings* of 1799).\(^7\) Goethe, in presenting Schlegel with a complimentary copy of *Propyläen*,\(^8\) may not have drawn his special attention to Heinrich Meyer’s article there on the ‘subjects of art’.\(^9\) For Meyer, Goethe’s acolyte and guide in matters of art, had effectively excluded many sacred icons of Christian art from the artist’s repertoire (no crucifixions, no martyrdoms). But attitudes had not yet hardened, as they would later, and the Romantics believed that a co-existence was possible. They could not yet read Goethe’s ungracious words of 1805 about ‘das klosterbrudrisierende, sternbaldisierende Unwesen’, which were directed against the young Tieck and his now dead friend Wilhelm Heinrich Wackenroder and what Goethe perceived as the fakery of their veneration of Christian art.\(^10\) But then again Goethe could equally not yet have read August Wilhelm Schlegel’s epistle from Rome in the same year that elevated a new school of German art there, one which would continue to alienate Goethe.\(^11\) Furthermore, the Romantics were increasingly turning to Italian masters who were never Goethe’s favourites: Antonio da Correggio was a good example.

Yet in technical terms, the differences between Goethe and the Romantics were more apparent than real. In matters of subject, however, Goethe preferred the bright light of Classicism, not the penumbra — as he saw it — of religious rite and the cult of death. Both schools paid homage to the classical principles enunciated by Johann Joachim Winckelmann, but Goethe — again in 1805 — had forced the issue by publishing a Life of the great art historian, little more than a hagiography, and had

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stressed the pagan side of Winckelmann’s art appreciation. Further polarities ensued when Friedrich Schlegel converted to Catholicism in 1808, while Tieck and August Wilhelm Schlegel had at various times stood in the odour of Catholicizing proselytism.

While it is one-sided to claim that Goethe wrote his *Italienische Reise* against the grain of Romantic art appreciation — and similar claims have been made for his novel *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* — it is certainly true that his account, playing down as it does religious observances and religious art and identifying more with the ‘klassischer Boden’, the subsoil of classical culture, might offend some Romantic sensitivities. Tieck and August Wilhelm Schlegel had already been to Italy and could draw their own conclusions (Friedrich would go in 1819). But the publication in 1817 under Goethe’s sponsorship of the article *Neudeutsche religios-patriotische Kunst* was bound to ruffle some feelings. For its main target was the school of young religious painters in Rome, the Nazarenes, who also included Friedrich Schlegel’s stepsons, Johannes and Philipp Veit. Schlegel in his turn was no longer the co-editor of *Athenaeum*, once so well-disposed to Goethe, but was about to embark on the ultramontane and conservative periodical *Concordia*. His reaction has to be seen against this background:


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14 ‘Even Goethe’s most devoted acolytes were unhappy with his attack on the new art style. At last I too have found time to read the whole lot of these art brochures and prints, and what an amazing and incredible farrago they are. The Germans will
Schlegel is here conflating the *Italian Journey*, parts of which he had clearly enjoyed, with Goethe’s (and Meyer’s) rejection of the up-and-coming school of painters in Rome to which he felt ideologically and personally close. Where the *Italian Journey* had veiled much under its engaging style, it was now galling to read in all clarity that the Nazarene school, based on the so-called Italian primitives, stood for credulity and dogma in its manifestations of art. It had not always been so: Goethe shared some of the Romantic enthusiasm for the Middle Ages, indeed it was he who had helped to touch off the cult of things medieval away back in the 1770s. He had admired the Boisserée collection of medieval art (now in Munich) and had cultivated its sponsors. But, Schlegel avers, he had not acknowledged the Romantics’ part in opening up the appreciation — veneration — of this older art. Hence the tone of pique and affront.

Ludwig Tieck’s letter of 1816 is equally querulous:

> Goethes Buch über Italien hat mich angezogen und mir äußerst wohlgutetan. Nicht, daß ich seiner Meinung immer wäre, daß ich dieselben Dinge zum Teil nicht ganz anders gesehen hätte; sondern diese Erscheinung hat mich nun endlich nach vielen Jahren von dem Zauber erlöst (ich kann es nicht anders nennen), in welchem ich mich zu Goethe verhielt: […] Ist es Ihnen nicht auch aufgefallen, wie dieses herrliche Gemüt eigentlich aus Verstimmung, Überdruss sich einseitig in das Altermut wirft und recht vorsätzlich nicht rechts und nicht links sieht? Und nun: ergreift er denn nicht auch oft den Schein des Wirklichen statt des Wirklichen? […] Er vergisst um so mehr, daß unsere reine Sehnsucht nach dem Untergegangen, wo keine Gegenwart uns mehr stören kann, diese Reliquien und Fragmente verklärt und in jene reine Region der Kunst hinüberzieht. Diese ist aber auch niemals so auf Erden gewesen, daß wir unsere Sitte, Vaterland und Religion deshalb geringschätzen dürften […] Ich hatte auch die Antike gesehen, Sankt Peter, und konnte den Straßburger Münster nur um so mehr bewundern. Nach dem auswendig gelernten Raffael verstand ich erst die Lieblichkeit really swallow everything once they have taken a shine to someone. On the other hand I really am enjoying reading his first Italian journey of 86. Its style is fresh and direct and it is full of lovely things but of course a lot that are hostile and wrong-headed as well. But above all a number of extremely naive admissions make clear just how little he understood about art then and of course still does now. The most trivial and base things he makes a great fuss about and the greatest things he passes over’. Friedrich Schlegel, *Kritische Ausgabe*, ed. by Ernst Behler et al. (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1958-), XXX, 211.
und Würde altdeutscher Kunst — und dies wäre Oberflächlichkeit, Einseitigkeit etc. in mir gewesen? Ich liebe die Italiener und ihr leichtes Wesen, bin aber in Italien erst recht zum Deutschen geworden.

Und nun! Ist Goethe als Greis nicht gewissermaßen von neuem irre geworden? Und etwa durch neue Entdeckungen? Durch dasselbe, was auch in seiner Jugend da war, was er zum Teil kannte, durch Gedanken, die er zuerst ausgesprochen. Ohne Vaterland kein Dichter! Sich von diesem losreißen wollen, heißt die Musen verleugnen.¹⁵

The testiness of this letter is all the greater for Tieck’s once having been one of Goethe’s most sedulous admirers. He is suggesting that Goethe’s insistence on the timeless and classical in art had alienated him from national values, that Goethe in Italy had in effect ‘gone native’. He, Tieck, by contrast, had discovered his own true national identity there. But the fact is that Tieck, had by 1816 also moved on. He had of course not neglected his early Romantic beginnings: the collection of stories and plays called *Phantasus* (1812–16) was witness to that.¹⁶ Nor had he been disloyal to the memory of his dead friends Wackenroder and Novalis. But he was devoting more and more time to Shakespeare, for whom Goethe by now had but qualified enthusiasm, and he was rediscovering Heinrich von Kleist and Jakob Michael Reinhold Lenz, in his eyes

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¹⁵ ‘I was much taken with Goethe’s book on Italy and I read it with great pleasure. Of course I did not always share his views, and our ideas on some things diverged utterly. But the publication of this book has finally broken the spell (I have no other word for it) in which Goethe kept me bound. […] Have you not noticed as well how this man with his wonderful mind has gone charging into antiquity at the expense of everything else? And pique and peevishness make him deliberately overlook what is there for all to see? And now: does he not grasp at the appearance of things instead of the things themselves? […] He forgets all the more that when we express a pure longing for past things without letting the present interfere, it transfigures these relics and fragments and draws them over into the pure sphere of art. But nowhere has this meant that we should find no value in our own custom, country or religion […] I too had seen Roman ruins, St Peter’s, but that led me to admire the Strasbourg Minster all the more. Only when I knew Raphael backwards did I begin to understand Old German art and its grace and dignity. And was I being merely one-sided or superficial? I love the Italians and their easy ways, but it was in Italy that I first really became a German.

And now! Has Goethe taken leave of his senses again in old age? Were new things and discoveries responsible? It was the same things that were there in his youth. He knew them in part, and he was the first to articulate these thoughts. There can be no poet without his native land! Tear yourself loose from this and you deny the Muses’. Tieck to Solger, December 16, 1816. *Goethe in vertraulichen Briefen seiner Zeitgenossen*, ed. by Wilhelm Bode, 3 vols (Weimar: Aufbau, 1979), II, 667f.

¹⁶ See Chapter 8 in this volume.
wrongly neglected authors, in Goethe’s, however, objects of abhorrence. There were clearly misunderstandings on both sides, a talking past each other that would culminate in Goethe’s famous disqualification of Romanticism in 1829 as ‘das Kranke’, the ‘unhealthy’.\footnote{As recorded by Eckermann on April 2, 1829. Johann Peter Eckermann, \textit{Gespräche mit Goethe in den letzten Jahren seines Lebens}, ed. by Ludwig Geiger (Leipzig: Hesse, n.d. [1902]), 265.}

How justified were these reactions? Even allowing for the one-sidedness of Schlegel’s and Tieck’s contrariety, it is evident that Goethe’s \textit{Italienische Reise} brought out a body of resentment on the part of his erstwhile admirers. Was there a view of Italy which was more suited to their sensitivities? There is no evidence that they preferred Stolberg’s \textit{Reise durch Deutschland, die Schweiz, Italien und Sicilien in den Jahren 1791–92} (published 1794),\footnote{4 vols (Königsberg, Leipzig: Nicolovius, 1794). All references to this work and to others by Stolberg are found in Gesammelte Werke der Brüder Christian und Friedrich Leopold Grafen zu Stolberg, 20 vols (Hamburg: Perthes u. Besser, 1820–25) (referred to subsequently as \textit{GW} with volume number).} for the simple reason that he was not Goethe. And yet a comparison of selected passages from Stolberg’s \textit{Reise} of 1794 and Goethe’s later redaction of his notes from 1786–87, the \textit{Italienische Reise}, show that in many ways Stolberg was closer to their way of thinking. It will at any rate enable us to think beyond the aggressive tones of Schlegel and Tieck and look at essentials.

In many ways the very titles suffice by way of comparison, for Stolberg’s account is not restricted to Italy — after 300 pages he has only got as far as Geneva — although clearly the sections on Germany and Switzerland are a lead-up to the ultimate southern experience. Goethe, as he makes clear, was following an urge away from the German lands to the long-awaited fulfilment of imperative wishes and could not wait to achieve that aim. True, as already said, Goethe had planned a less rushed visit with the intention of giving a more comprehensive account of the country, its antiquities and \textit{moeurs}, but nothing had come of this. It is not entirely surprising that the Romantics took little immediate notice of Stolberg’s \textit{Reise}: it is almost wearily comprehensive. True, he took with him in his baggage a set of ideological presuppositions altogether different from Goethe’s, some, but not all, of which might appeal to the younger generation. But he was also still in many ways rooted in the 1770s, still unashamedly ‘empfindsam’, given to the cult of feeling that had once produced \textit{Werther}. That novel still had resonances
with the young Romantics, and his adulation of Edward Young (of the *Night Thoughts*)\(^{19}\) would find an echo in Novalis’s reading of that text. But no-one still shared the cult of Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock, with whom Stolberg was exchanging reverential letters and whose relations with Goethe had notably ended in a fracas. But there was more. Whereas Goethe’s Greekness was pagan, sensuous, Stolberg — also a notable translator from the Greek — sought to reconcile Plato and Christ. Stolberg’s remarks on Raphael lead almost seamlessly into the Romantic cult of ‘der göttliche Raphael’. What is more: Stolberg was to attack Friedrich Schiller’s poem, ‘Die Götter Griechenlands/The Gods of Greece’, with its threnody for the old Greek pantheon; Schiller was for him seeking ‘after strange gods’. Worse (depending on one’s viewpoint) was to come. Stolberg’s conversion to Catholicism in 1800 was to cause general éclat. It helped to define ideological positions, for a step taken by a member of the high nobility might attract those of lower social status. While remaining on good terms with Goethe, Stolberg became a Catholic apologist and saw history and art through that tinted lens. He became a kind of older, aristocratic mentor to Romantic converts like Friedrich Schlegel. This was, however, some time in the future.

For all that, Goethe and Stolberg as sojourners in Italy are looking for essentially the same things and follow the same antiquarian authorities, even if Stolberg may try our patience with endless quotations from classical authors (or from Klopstock). They look at the identical landscape, the antiquities, the art, yet with different consequences. We notice a difference in tone: Stolberg is serious to a fault, while Goethe has his lighter moments. Each has his own view of ‘klassischer Boden’, Goethe conveying a real sense of how people and customs form a unity with antiquity and art, not shying away from seemingly prosaic details of a botanical or geological nature (which doubtless so annoyed Friedrich Schlegel). Yet compared with Stolberg, Goethe is selective. Stolberg — who had chosen to come over the Alps whereas Goethe had come via the Brenner — does not omit any notable city or feature and proceeds systematically as if following a guidebook. Behind this is a purpose: while sorting through his notes towards the planned *Reise*, Stolberg could write to Christoph Martin Wieland on January 30, 1794.

of how his enjoyment of Italy was to be subjected to high moral uplift and an amplitude of scope:


There we have it. Where commentators have noted Goethe’s reticences or ambivalences (on Christian iconography, on ruins) and thus a certain preferentiality of detail, Stolberg’s published text by contrast is concerned to integrate all of Italy into a higher scheme of things sub specie aeternitatis, as this passage further illustrates:

20 ‘The Elysian beauty of nature, a mild and fruitful climate, the national character. A fleeting glance at the history of the regions and cities, esp. in Magna Graecia and Sicily. Bringing alive the ancient authors, esp. the poets and historians, by describing local customs and ways; works of ancient and modern art, if a dilettante, who can only be a layman and can only speak through his feelings, may have his say on them. These are the things that I am mainly looking for. You may well imagine that I took note of characteristics here and there, having a whole year’s stay in Italy and Sicily among the liveliest people in Europe, a people with a fine spirit, whose friendliness has been misunderstood by many. I have spent the happiest months of the journey staying with the lovely country folk on the island of Ischia, a real paradise, and in the lofty crags on the coast at Sorrento. I have seen two eruptions of Vesuvius and the fiery lava flowing down the slopes of Etna. From the top of Etna I have seen the whole of Sicily. Most travellers only go as far as Naples. If only they were to visit the whole of the coast of the Bay of Naples and its islands, and Vietri and Cava, they would already see paradises. But hardly anyone does even that’. Friedrich Leopold Graf zu Stolberg, Briefe, ed. by Jürgen Behrens, Kieler Studien zur deutschen Literaturgeschichte 5 (Neumünster: Wachhholz, 1966), 304.

We tread here the realm of comparative mythology, with not just Italy but the whole of the Mediterranean, its cosmogony and the cultures issuing from it. One notes the all-enveloping nature of the physical and historical panorama, with an accompanying insouciance for
distinctions. This is Stolberg’s grand entry into Italy. Goethe, on the other side of northern Italy, for his part notes a specific topographical and meteorological feature:

Nach Mitternacht bläst der Wind von Norden nach Süden, wer also den See hinab will, muß zu dieser Zeit fahren; denn schon einige Stunden vor Sonnenaufgang wendet sich der Luftstrom und zieht nordwärts. Jetzo nachmittag wehet er stark gegen mich und kühlt die heiße Sonne gar lieblich. Zugleich lehrt mich Volkmann, daß dieser See ehemals Benacus geheißen, und bringt einen Vers des Virgil, worin dessen gedacht wird:

*Fluctibus et fremitu resonans Benace marino.*

While Stolberg is kept warm by his religious zeal, Goethe studies the weather. But Volkmann, his travel guide, has conveniently provided a quotation from Virgil’s *Georgics*, bringing ‘klassischer Boden’ alive to him in a way that perhaps the reams of Stolberg’s Latinity (and Greek) do not.

But what of the obtrusive evidence of earlier civilizations? Both travellers have their artist companions like Christoph Heinrich Kniep or Johann Heinrich Wilhelm Tischbein or Jakob Philipp Hackert, their experts like Karl Philipp Moritz, to keep them on the straight and narrow and record or explicate the archaeological sites and the

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22 ‘After midnight the wind starts blowing from north to south. The traveller down the lake must set out at this time, as already an hour or two before sunrise the air current veers to the north. Now, in the afternoon, the wind is blowing strongly in my face and cools the sun’s hot rays very nicely. At the same time Volkmann informs me that this lake was formerly called Benacus and quotes a line of Virgil alluding to it:

*Fluctibus et fremitu resonans Benace marino.*

The first line of Latin whose subject I have seen with my own eyes. As I write, with the wind increasing in strength and the traveller having to face higher waves on the lake, the verse is as true today as many centuries ago. Much has changed, but the wind still whips up storms on the lake, its aspect still is ennobled by a line of Virgil’.*  
*SW, XI, 31 f.*
vistas. Goethe himself does drawings. Hackert illustrates the first edition of Stolberg’s *Reise*, an unnamed artist the second. Thus, ruins (a necessary corollary of antiquarian tourism) could be made into accessories or aids to the picturesque, and the many illustrated editions of Goethe’s *Italienische Reise* do precisely this. Their description in the text is another matter. Both authors, Goethe and Stolberg, face the question as to whether ruins are part of the natural order of things or supervenient, the result of catastrophe or natural disaster. Goethe had come to change some of his views. Long before going to Italy, Goethe had written a poem, ‘Der Wandrer/The Wanderer’ (1774),\(^{23}\) in which an idyllic conversation takes place among classical ruins which have reverted through nature to provide the dwelling for a bucolic couple and their child. Vegetation — nature — has smoothed over the wrecks of time; a resolution is found in the style of ‘peinture des ruines’. In Goethe’s poem, the ‘Wandrer’ is on his way to the archaeological site of Cumae, which Goethe was to visit in 1786. In his account of Sicily, Goethe was to describe the temple ruins of Segesta rising up from among the late spring flowers, in one of the descriptive high points of the *Italienische Reise*, drawing attention to the landscape, not the (for him) less impressive archaeological ambience. But it was to be Stolberg who came closest to the spirit of Goethe’s early poem. For Goethe, the Sicilian ruins — Segesta, Girgenti — seemed out of scale and did not conform to Vitruvian or Palladian norms of the classical orders.\(^{24}\) In Girgenti, he saw disorder — heaps of masonry — and struggled to find a natural explanation:

Der Tempel des Herkules hingegen ließ noch Spuren vormaliger Symmetrie entdecken. Die zwei Säulenreihen, die den Tempel hüben und drüben begleiteten, lagen in gleicher Richtung wie auf einmal zusammen hingelegt, von Norden nach Süden; jene einen Hügel hinaufwärts, diese hinabwärts. Der Hügel mochte aus der zerfallenen Zelle entstanden sein. Die Säulen, wahrscheinlich durch das Gebälk zusammengehalten, stürzten auf einmal, vielleicht durch Sturmwind niedergestreckt, und sie liegen noch regelmäßig, in die Stücke, aus denen sie zusammengesetzt waren, zerfallen. Dieses merkwürdige

\(^{23}\) SW, I, 378–84.

Vorkommen genau zu zeichnen, spitzte Kniep schon in Gedanken seine Stifte.\textsuperscript{25}

One observes how Goethe, a convinced ‘Neptunist’, surrounded by the evidence of seismic or eruptive activity — as it were, in the shadow of Etna — is not willing to admit this as possible cause of the degradation. It must have been a storm: hence the regularity of the fallen columns. If this explanation does not suffice, art, in the form of Kniep the landscape artist, will come to restore order. The contrast with Stolberg could not be greater:

\begin{quote}
Ich bin versichert, daß diese Tempel, so wie auch die von Selinus, durch ein fürchterliches Erdbeben, vielleicht durch verschiedene, in solche Steinhaufen verwandelt worden. Zerstörende Menschenhand wirft alles flach über einander; nur der Natur gewaltiger Arm vermochte diese ungeheuern Massen so durch einander zu schleudern.

Siegend lächelt sie jetzt, diese immer junge Natur; unter den Trümmern der stolzen gegen sie ohnmächtigen Kunst. Mitten unter den Steinhaufen entgrünet dem Boden ein Hain von Feigen- und Mandelbäumen. Im Tempel des olympischen Zeus sah ich zum erstenmal einen Pistazienbaum. Er war schon bedeckt mit vielen noch kleinen röthlichen Nüssen, und blühete zugleich.\textsuperscript{26}
\end{quote}

Stolberg stands at two removes from the scene of ruination. There is nature, and for him this is always ‘die göttliche Natur’, a divine agency, whose ‘mighty arm’ has been manifested in this scene of destruction. It is

\textsuperscript{25} ‘The temple of Hercules on the other hand still betrayed traces of a symmetry it once had. The two rows of columns at right and left which accompanied the temple at each end lay in the same direction, as if they had fallen down together, from north to south, one uphill, the other downhill. The hill may have been formed out of the body of the temple as it collapsed. The columns, no doubt held together by the structure, collapsed all of a sudden, perhaps flattened by a violent storm, and they lie still in order, their ruins in the sections from which they were formed. Kniep was already mentally sharpening his pencils at the idea of recording this strange phenomenon’. \textit{SW}, XI, 302.

\textsuperscript{26} ‘I am told on good authority that these temples, like those at Selinus, were reduced to such heaps of rubble by a terrible earthquake, perhaps by several. The destructive hand of man lays everything flat; only the mighty arm of nature was able to topple and jumble these huge masses. Now she rules in triumph, nature ever young; powerless against her, proud art lies in ruins. Sprouting up among the lumps of stone is a grove of figs and almonds. In the temple of Olympian Zeus was where I saw for the first time a pistachio tree. It was already covered with a mass of reddish nuts, quite small yet, and was flowering at the same time’. \textit{GW}, VIII, 464.
the same force that shows itself in the earthquake, the volcano (Stolberg climbed Etna) or in the plant-life which comes to restore order, where an impotent art cannot. Here we see the parallel with Goethe’s early poem, with that ‘entgrünet’, ‘sprouting up’, as a nice Klopstockian touch. But we are incidentally only one year after the publication of Constantin de Volney’s *Les Ruines, ou Méditations sur les Révolutions/The Ruins, or Meditations on Revolutions and Empires* (1791), where ruins are made to relate to the grand scheme of human affairs (for Stolberg, of course, ruins formed part of a larger religious framework).

In Rome this time, not in Sicily, Goethe and Stolberg see an essentially different Eternal City, in the Colosseum and the Pantheon respectively.


²⁷ ‘You have no idea how beautiful it is walking through Rome in the moonlight: one must have seen it for oneself. Every detail is swallowed by the huge masses of light and shadow, and only the greatest and most readily visible images stand out. For the last three days we have been enjoying to the full the brightest and most splendid of nights. Among the beautiful sights the Coliseum stands out. It is closed at night. A hermit has his lodging in a little chapel, and beggars find shelter in the ruined vaults. They had built a fire on the flat ground, and in the stillness of the air the smoke was driven out over the arena, so that one could not see the lower part of the ruins, and the massive walls above stood out in the darkness; we stood at the lattice and watched the spectacle, the moon standing high and serene. By and by the smoke escaped through the walls, cracks and openings, in the moon’s light, like
Goethe’s is an artist’s description, and another of the high moments of its kind in the *Italian Journey*, but not one of the standard views of the Colosseum like those of the painters Giovanni Volpato, Luigi Vanvitelli or Richard Wilson. It is in prose and must make use of the devices which that medium can offer. The great sights of Rome, antique or Renaissance, become fused in the interplay of light and shade, as the city is bathed in moonlight. There are questions of mass and contour, but the Colosseum also offers a friendly, human aspect (it is not the former scene of martyrdoms), populated as it is by Roman vagrants, with the impalpable column of smoke from their fires having the aesthetic effect of blurring contours and bringing out ‘gebildete Massen’. Light effects also dominate Stolberg’s view of the Pantheon:


Stolberg carries out an immediate shift of meaning, from the stance of the beholder, to that of the worshipper. The Pantheon’s former function
as a sanctuary to the gods is seized on, but given new significance as a temple of the Christian rite, symbolized in the shaft of light shining down from the rotunda. By implication: as once Augustus exemplified in his person the universal sway of Rome, so the newly functioned temple stands for the new dawn of the Roman-Christian era. Here, the proximity of Stolberg, already in 1792, to the later, ultramontane Friedrich Schlegel, is striking.

When, however, both Goethe and Stolberg both describe a painting by Raphael, they proceed aesthetically from common ground. They are both schooled in the art appreciation that has been handed down from French theory and connoisseurship to Winckelmann: the description is not technical in the modern sense but is intended rather to bring out states of mind and moral categories.

(Goethe) Trifft man denn gar wieder einmal auf eine Arbeit von Raffael, oder die ihm wenigstens mit einiger Wahrscheinlichkeit zugeschrieben wird, so ist man gleich vollkommen geheilt und froh. So habe ich eine heilige Agathe gefunden, ein kostbares, obgleich nicht ganz wohl erhaltenes Bild. Der Künstler hat ihr eine gesunde, sichere Jungfräulichkeit gegeben, doch ohne Kälte und Roheit. Ich habe mir die Gestalt wohl gemerkt und werde ihr im Geist meine 'Iphigenie' vorlesen und meine Heldin nichts sagen lassen, was diese Heilige nicht aussprechen möchte.29

(Stolberg) Im Pallaste Ranuzzi ist eine heilige Agatha von Rafael, welche mir lieber ist, als die viel berühmtere Cecilia. Jene hat den vollen Ausdruck erhabner Ruhe, mit weiblicher Anmut verbunden, welche kein Maler so wie Rafael darzustellen weiß.30

We are at the high point of European Raphael adulation, but still in the eighteenth century before the later discipline of art history puts an end to speculative attributions. For the Raphael they both admire — like the one that the young Tieck and Wackenroder claimed to see in

29 ‘Coming back to a work by Raphael or one that is fairly likely to be ascribed to him, I feel my health and joy restored. And so I have found a St Agatha, a wonderful picture, although not in a very good state of preservation. The artist has given her a healthy and serene virginity, but without it being frigid or coarse. I have taken this figure in. I will imagine myself reading my ‘Iphigenie’ to her and will not allow my heroine to say anything that this saint would not wish to utter’. SW, XI, 116.

30 ‘In the Palazzo Ranuzzi there is a St Agatha by Raphael. I prefer her to the much more famous Cecilia. She has the full expression of sublime calm, and with it goes a feminine grace, that no painter is able to represent like Raphael’. GW, VII, 42f.
Pommersfelden in 1793 — is alas not the genuine article, something that Goethe even hints at. Both, as said, are heirs to Winckelmann’s notions of classical repose, order and nobility in the work of art, and neither is concerned with technical details. Neither Goethe nor Stolberg spends time on the *vita sacra* behind the painting’s subject. Nor is this surprising, given Goethe’s dislike of aspects of the iconography of Christian legend. What Goethe sees in Raphael—or expects to see—are human qualities, pleasurable sensations that are good for the mind and the soul. The picture in question exudes a ‘healthy chastity’ (no ecstasies, no aureoles) which can immediately be related to the work by Goethe which in Italy reached its final form: *Iphigenie auf Tauris/*Iphigenia in Tauris. It has always been noted that this Euripidean adaptation — blank verse instead of trimeters — neatly fuses the moral and spiritual values and language of Platonism with those of Christianity, but secularized, non-dogmatic and of general human import: friendship, fraternal love, gentleness, mercy, kindness, truthfulness. That these were not always to the fore in Euripides is not the issue. Thus, Goethe’s Iphigenia and Raphael’s St Agatha may meet in common human values across the divide of religious observance. Indeed, in 1818 Goethe was to state that Raphael — for the young Tieck and the older Friedrich Schlegel the unattainable model of later Christian art — had become a Greek, that in fact every genuine artist had to become one.31

Stolberg’s admiration for Raphael comes out at various turnings of his Reise. After visiting the stanze of Raphael in the Vatican, he is inspired to write the nearly four-page-long dithyrambic poem, ‘Rafael’. It rehearses the Raphael hagiography, not least a nightly vision to the Pantheon (the site of Raphael’s grave), where the Muse of Apelles (the ultimate in Greek painting) speaks the lines:

Und dankbar weihst der Religion
Deiner Pinsel Zauber und Empfindung dar.32

It is ‘der unsterbliche Rafael’, the ‘immortal Raphael’, but a step from Wackenroder and Tieck’s ‘divine’ Raphael of 1796 and his sanctification in Romantic art criticism. The prose passage here tells us nothing of

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31 SW, XIII, 846.
32 ‘Devote in thanks to religion
Yours brushes and their magic touch’. GW, VII, 220.
the painting itself; the pre-Romantic (Stolberg) and the Romantic (Wackenroder and Tieck) cult of Raphael is not concerned with painterly qualities: it reads from the heart. Both, as said, are heirs to Winckelmann’s notions of classical repose, order and nobility in the work of art, but nevertheless they regard Raphael differently and note what they are predisposed to seeing. Stolberg falls back on the language of feeling which is never far from aesthetic discourse in the last quarter of the eighteenth century: ‘erhabene Ruhe’, ‘weiblicher Anmuth’ could be pure Winckelmann, were it not for the fact that Stolberg is describing not an antique statue but the Renaissance depiction of a Christian saint.

Had the Romantics looked at what Goethe had had to say, instead of living in the world of Werther or Iphigenie, had they looked with intent at Propyläen or his Winckelmann essay, they might have been less affronted by the Italian Journey and its reservations about many aspects of Christian art. Had they read his periodical Ueber Kunst und Alterthum (first volume 1816), they would have noted a lively human interest in the Christian Middle Ages that stopped short of veneration or surrender to dogma. Stolberg could never replace Goethe in their scheme of things, but his journey to Italy, published twenty years before Goethe’s account, was already closer to their aspirations. These two passages, by Friedrich Schlegel and Tieck, thus shed light on the causes of the Romantics’ often troubled relationship with Goethe and offer an alternative to his uncompromising Greekness.