

Article

Goethe's Early Historical Dramas

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Abstract: In this essay, Goethe's early historical plays, *Götz von Berlichingen*, published in 1773, and *Egmont*, published only in 1787, are compared. So far, scholarly work has not recognized enough of the differences between both works. Goethe's intellectual development from the young Storm and Stress writer of *Götz* to the publication of *Egmont* fourteen years later has not been considered sufficiently. Goethe's development is clearly reflected in his protagonists' deeds and intentions. Goethe's *Götz* fights predominantly for his own rights and his family. *Egmont* aims higher; he is more concerned with the welfare state of society and reflects on political issues *Götz* is unable to consider. Moreover, Goethe takes, in both cases, poetic license to create a different picture of his protagonists' failures than historical sources provide. This finally leads to the introduction of the term preclassic to differentiate between *Götz* and *Egmont*.

Keywords: Goethe; early plays; historical plays; drama; history and theory

From *Götz* to *Egmont*

1. Preliminary Considerations

Goethe's historical dramas *Götz von Berlichingen* and *Egmont* both focus on proven war heroes of the 16th century. The revised completion of the first drama in 1773 and the first draft of the second—*Egmont*—either in 1774 or 1775 lie close together.¹ Even today, both works, both heroes *Götz* and *Egmont*, are all too readily and all too often mentioned in the same breath because of their extraordinary nature and attributed to the *Storm and Stress* era.² But does this not mean that we recklessly abandon a differentiated view? Both figures are historically well known, but this is where the similarity ends, for it is unmistakable that Goethe's historical, thematic design could not be more different without the author, however, allowing this perception to be snatched from him by a first cursory glance. Perhaps for this reason, Ebrahim Estarami quotes Friedrich Meinecke's widely known and often translated treatise on historicism from 1936 in his doctoral thesis *Selbsthelfer in Zeiten des Umbruchs* (*Self-helpers in times of upheaval*), in which the latter makes the statement about both works that both Goethe's *Götz* and *Egmont* are plays that depict the struggle of naturally strong and genuine humanity against humanity that is of lesser value but is allowed to triumph (Estarami 2005, p. 29). However, this statement, as simple and seductive as it may seem at first glance, should be questioned. Did Goethe, as a person and writer, not undergo any development between the years 1771, the completion of the first version of *Götz*, and the famous sentence of September 5, 1787, in Rome '... *Egmont* [...] was completely finished early...'³? Do both dramas, in effect, deal with the same subject? Can we also be satisfied with such a generalizing view in terms of drama theory and Goethe's view of history, and are his heroes *Götz* and *Egmont* flawless characters? What does it mean to set off '... strong and genuine humanity against a humanity that is less valuable...?' (Meinecke 1936, p. 496), as Meinecke suggests, can such a distinction be made at all with regard to Goethe's characters? Is the regent in *Egmont* less valuable than the hero himself? Did Goethe not write a first version and a second version of *Götz*, and can



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we not see from a simple comparison of the first scene that even in the first version, the individual sentences of the characters are more static assertions, narrative reports, not tied to individual characters and certainly not speeches that directly translate action or can be translated into action? The second version is quite different: here, almost every appearance of a character is always linked to an action or an intention to act; mere reasoning is almost completely banned. Based on such a simple assertion, should we not also speak of a necessary further development of the dramatic conception from *Götz* to *Egmont*? Certainly, there are many indications that Goethe's first preoccupation with the *Egmont* problem between 1773 and 1775 in Frankfurt is to be seen in direct connection with the *Götz* play (Hartmann 1988, p. 14; see also Schröder 1994, p. 51; Goethe 1948), but more than a decade passes before its completion in 1787, Goethe meanwhile lives in Weimar and travels to Italy. Does the mature cosmopolitan Goethe not present us with a different view through his tragedy than the youthful *Sturm und Drang*, author of *Götz*? Is it not an inadmissible scholarly superficiality to describe *Egmont* as an inadequate poetic latecomer to *Götz*, as Staiger suggests?⁴ Again, a recent Goethe biography, hot off the press, following in the footsteps of his predecessors points out that *Götz* and *Egmont* are very similar—fallen out of time—characters. As a matter of fact, Steinfeld even calls into question whether *Storm and Stress* as a literary epoch exist at all. In contrast, this article will clarify that *Götz* clearly can be assigned to the *Storm and Stress* period while *Egmont* needs its own evaluation. Both characters act under different premises, following different individual moral principles and ideas.

2. *Götz* and *Egmont*

Of course, there are similarities between *Götz* and *Egmont* at first glance. Goethe's heroes act in accordance with their time, are full of heroic energy and vitality, and are less children of the Enlightenment than Schiller's Marquis de Posa in *Don Carlos*, for example.⁵ However, in order to understand them effectively, one must distance oneself from the idea that Goethe had a completely unbroken relationship with his protagonists⁶ and to historical events of the past. Does he not himself complain in his autobiographical work *Dichtung und Wahrheit* (*Poetry and Truth*) that critics have accused him of wanting to reintroduce those irregular periods of Faustian law,⁷ as if he were pleading with his knees to maintain a critical distance from his feud-tested hero, and does he not write clearly enough elsewhere? '...The author, however, who by his nature must be and remain impartial, seeks to penetrate the states of both fighting parts, where then, if mediation becomes impossible, he must resolve to end tragically.'⁸ Goethe may also remark that he is dramatizing the story of one of the noblest Germans, saving the memory of a good man,⁹ but his *Götz* is not only the story of a wild journeyman incessantly entangled in feuds, although the right to feud had actually been abolished by the Imperial Diet of 1495 as an instrument of self-help through the establishment of the Imperial Chamber Court, but is also only occasionally biographically oriented towards real historical events. How else could the knight's violent end in the drama be interpreted¹⁰, caused by incessant feuds and the Peasants' War, which he survived in reality? *Götz*'s end is tragic precisely because Goethe is completely familiar with the conditions of the two fighting parties. Goethe already plays masterfully with fact and fiction here, without immediately revealing his secret to us, because the feud is historically abolished by Emperor Maximilian I of all people, the only one to whom *Götz* feels subservient in the drama. '...Before Your Imperial Majesty, as always, I have the utmost respect',¹¹ he says and yet acts as if there were no public peace in place, which is not even mentioned in the drama. Just as we immediately perceive an ambivalence here with regard to the relationship between historical event and dramatic realization, because in Goethe's drama, the hero at least verbally supports the very person who historically deprives him of the right to feud, it is advisable to take a look at further differences between the historical models and the poetic realization in both works, because only such an examination will clarify what a fractured relationship Goethe himself must have had to history, the dramatic realization and his own historically heroic figures.

Should we not ask further questions? Should Goethe's own development not become apparent precisely through the comparison of the two protagonists? For the Götz in the play, who is still entirely an individual, constantly involved in disputes and quarrels, the actual cause of a dispute or, more precisely, a feud, seems to be only a secondary matter—as he writes in his biography; the main reason and underpinning his chivalric self-image is the violent conflict itself, for only this makes him what he is, a feared, admired, stubborn knight. As already mentioned, he only wants to be subservient to his Emperor Maximilian I. All others who stand in his way or contradict him are fought and, if necessary, defeated. He struggles almost exclusively for his own personal advantage. Although he tries to win over certain feared opponents such as Weislingen, to his side, ideas that affect the general public, the big picture, hardly play a role in his life. In this respect, Jürgen Schröder's statements also need to be scrutinized. Schröder claims that Goethe's *Götz* replaced the old corporative state with the vision of a democratic, fraternal, and monarchical people's and unitary state.¹² In Goethe's work, for example, Götz only wants to fight for the peasants' cause out of necessity; this is evident in both versions. What the peasants are actually fighting for in their struggle and with their twelve articles plays no role in this play. The peasants' commitment to equality, ultimately to democratic ideas and freedom,¹³ is not even perceived by Götz in the drama; he is only concerned with the feuds appropriate to his social status. In this respect, Goethe is very close to the descriptions of the life of the knight Götz von Berlichingen because here it is often simply a matter of brawling and arguing, even with the peasants, who are not held in very high esteem by the historical Götz and are beaten up severely (von Berlichingen 1998, p. 23).¹⁴ The peasants' moral aspirations to change social conditions in their favor are hardly worth a serious line, neither to the historical knight Götz nor to Goethe. If it were not for Brother Martin, who links Götz with characteristics of a fighter for the poor right at the beginning of the drama by commenting on his chivalrous attitude and thanks God that he has let himself see '*... this man whom the princes hate and to whom the oppressed turn!*'¹⁵, the legitimacy, the moral cause of his actions would remain highly doubtful, as in the life descriptions of the knight himself. Only occasionally do we find references in this work to Götz helping the poor. For example, when the knight points out that he wanted to help the tailor and excellent rifle shooter Hans Sindelfinger from Stuttgart to get his prize for a good shot. In his biography, Götz writes, '*... the people of Cologne had cheated him out of it and did not want to pay it to him*' (von Berlichingen 1998, p. 36).¹⁶ Götz helps the tailor, and a settlement is finally reached between him and the city of Cologne, but he does not tell us whether Sindelfinger received his hundred guilders. Goethe does not have this Götz appear directly in his drama; we only know of this action through the account of his wife, Elisabeth. If we judge according to her, Götz defeated the people of Cologne and helped the tailor to his rights,¹⁷ Press remarks about the historical Götz: '*Berlichingen's successes in his feuds [...] signaled to the nobility that even under changed conditions he was not to be thrown in the scrap heap—just as one must generally see the function of the feud in the fact that it underlined the military qualifications of the individual nobleman*'.¹⁸ This point of view has to be taken into account; with all the wars and feuds that Götz depicts in his biography, the rightfulness or wrongfulness of this violent conflict is not disputed. It is an end in itself, assuring the knighthood of its defensibility and supremacy.¹⁹ Brother Martin's commentary and his wife Elisabeth's report also give Götz moral legitimacy in the drama, but without it being translated into dramatic action. From the outset, Goethe gives his hero the character of a fighter for the poor and the unjustly accused or robbed. The historical Götz of the Middle Ages does not yet have to legitimize his attitude so clearly; he acts successfully within the social system of the corporative state as a knight, and the fact that he helps the poor in the process is incidental and happens in passing.

Even the idea championed by Schröder above, that Goethe's Götz is a monarchist and loyal supporter of Maximilian I, should be considered in a differentiated way. In both versions of *Götz*, the emperor confronts Götz's adversary, Weislingen, after merchants from Nuremberg have complained to him that Götz is involved in a feud with Nuremberg

and has robbed them.²⁰ In the ensuing drama, Weislingen suggests to the emperor that Sickingen, Selbitz, and Berlichingen should be sidelined, and is it not, in fact, Emperor Maximilian I himself who, at the Imperial Diet in 1495, abolishes the right to feud as an instrument of self-help, which has been enshrined in law since 1235, by establishing the Chamber Court?²¹ A right to which both the historical Götz and Goethe's Götz clung for as long as possible with all the means at their disposal. Can Weislingen's suggestion not be symbolically upgraded and understood as a metaphorical reference to the new forces that seek to overcome the older, more primitive, violent, outdated, imperial-knightly structures through the new Imperial Chamber Court? All the more so since the young Goethe actually worked at the Imperial Chamber Court in Wetzlar.²² Although the emperor insists in the play that the noble and brave knights are dear to him, he does want to keep them quiet.²³ The reflective dramatist's relationship with his hero is not unbroken. Möser may have sung the praises of this still entirely medieval right of the knight in 1770, a work well-known to Goethe²⁴ *von dem Faustrechte* (on the right to private warfare), but the '... Times of first law in Germany seem to me to have always been those in which our nation showed the greatest sense of honor, the most physical virtue, and national greatness of its own,'²⁵ Goethe's Götz appears to be an honest and faithful fighter for his rights and the poor, but he can hardly be described as a hero who fights for ideas that go beyond his personal rights to freedom as a knight. He is no Robin Hood who seeks to bring justice to the oppressed peasants, for Goethe portrays the peasants as a savage and brutally murderous mob, which Götz does not serve entirely voluntarily. Goethe's Götz is worn down by the constant conflict between the different classes. He does not want to give up his ancestral right to feud, thereby disturbing the peace in the country desired by the emperor and acting in contradiction to the resolutions of the medieval Imperial Diet, but the play's Götz is not a social revolutionary who wholeheartedly supports the cause of the peasants.

As already indicated, Goethe has his hero die by violence during or as a result of the Peasants' War, in complete contrast to the historical facts, as he does not die until 1562 at the age of 82.²⁶ The historical Götz is a much cleverer and negotiating knight than Goethe presents him to us as being. After the defeat of the peasants and the execution of some of their ringleaders, for example, he writes a defense to play down his commitment to their cause and get himself out of the line of fire. Without his intervention, he reveals, 'hardly a house'... *In diocese, Mainz [...] would still stand unburnt, whereby perhaps some citizens would lose their lives* (Ulmschneider 1980, p. 20). The historical Götz also later fought in the Turkish War of 1542 and took part in the campaign in France in 1544 after the resolution of his oath of truce at the instigation of some friendly counts.²⁷ Although Goethe's Götz fulfills all the prerequisites for coming close to Möser's ideal type of knight who is accustomed to medieval feudal law and bursting with virility. Still, he does not act as intelligently as the historical Götz in weathering all political storms and general state goals, or acting for the welfare of an entire nation, as Egmont does, is not his concern at all. In the drama, Götz acts in part, as Preuss states, based on historical facts similar to Götz's 'brother-in-law' Franz von Sickingen. 'Franz von Sickingen's egotistical excessiveness of his goals must have caused offense in the long run, even among his peers—Berlichingen acted more prudently here, perhaps he better embodied the goals and desires, the way of thinking and acting of the nobility. Sickingen ultimately overstepped his bounds and failed,'²⁸ In difference; there is not much evidence of Götz's prudence in the play. His attempts to win Weislingen over to his side remain unsuccessful because he acts and thinks far too naively and too convinced of his own personality and inexperience in court intrigue; he wants to give Weislingen his sister Maria as his wife, trusting him unreservedly. 'Shake hands, and I will say amen'²⁹ Goethe's intention, as one could easily interpret it with Meinecke in this case, is not accustomed to singing the praises of honest, undisguised humanity in terms of underhandedness and rank intrigue. However, it can be pointed out that Götz first has to kidnap Weislingen in order to show his honest, undisguised humanity and achieve his goal. Is it then even possible to speak of honest humanity? Parallels can be drawn here with *Egmont*. Is this

willing naivety, which immediately gives its heart away, not—as in *Egmont*—drawn with such a thick pen stroke that failure is inscribed in it?

In *Egmont*, Goethe has created a figure, a count who dies for an idea and dedicates his life to the fight against despotism and tyranny. This character does not primarily fight for his own rights like the historical Götz. Egmont tells Alba about the fear of the Dutch and adds questioningly, ‘... *who will vouch for their freedom?*’³⁰ The dramatized *Egmont* has much more in mind than Götz in terms of ideas concerning the common good—the internal order of the country—only dealt with in passing in Götz during the Emperor’s single appearance—is the main driving force behind all the actions of the main characters in *Egmont*. There is not just one book on the theory of the state in Goethe’s library in Weimar, and certainly, one of the main figures in the play In the Service of the Regent is Machiavelli, for Machiavelli’s ‘Disputationum de Republica quas Discursus’ can be found in a prominent place in Goethe’s library (Machiavelli 1643). This work by this political mastermind, philosopher, historian, and thinker deals with a republican constitution. Indeed, Goethe’s Machiavelli is a rhetorician with all the diplomatic skills³¹, very close to his historical Italian role model, who knows how to adopt the attitude of the oppressed Dutch and thus almost succeeds in deceiving the regent Margaret of Parma herself. ‘*You are taking the side of your opponents*’, she asks, a little confused by her political advisor’s fearful change of heart, and Machiavelli replies in the manner of the historical Machiavelli, ‘*certainly not with my heart; and I wish I could be completely on our side with my mind*’.³² Machiavelli argues with the regent about the welfare of the Dutch states, showing a moderate, republican attitude sympathetic to the Dutch, a wise attitude that takes into account the human desire for independence and the free practice of religion.³³ ‘*You do not need to suppress the new doctrine*’³⁴, Machiavelli, although himself a Catholic, advises the regent that any other means would devastate the country. Such a wise, well-considered attitude can also be found in Goethe’s source. The state must mediate between the people’s excessive desire for freedom and the great ones’ desire for rule; otherwise, ‘... *tyranny would immediately follow*’ (Machiavelli 1941b, p. 57). Machiavelli thus sees tyranny as a great evil and misfortune. An attitude that the regent’s successor, the despotic Duke Alba, completely lacks. Alba also wants to and should punish the iconoclasts, as wished by the Spanish King Phillip II, put the people ‘in their place’ and subjugate the Dutch (Hartmann 1988, p. 21). The antagonists that Goethe juxtaposes with his Egmont, therefore, have completely different political abilities from the outset than Weislingen in Götz; even if Alba establishes a tyrannical reign of terror and completely lacks Machiavelli’s political cleverness, he still knows how to intellectually manage the establishment of such a reign. Weislingen is only aiming for personal advantage and is guided by his feelings: Political foresight? Insight into the inner workings of a state? No thought that he would be able to deal with this, or at most only try to impress Emperor Maximilian and get rid of his opponents.³⁵ After all, he has broken his word to Götz, and one can ask whether he is not only accusing Götz and his followers out of unacknowledged feelings of guilt. ‘... *it is they whose spirit animates the rebellious crowd*...’³⁶, he tells the emperor. Motives of revenge for the capture by Götz may be responsible for this attribution of blame. Machiavelli and Alba do not act as dependent on their personal feelings, as can be interpreted in the case of Weislingen.

3. The Constitutional Question

If one goes one step further and asks about the political maturity of the people in both dramas, one realizes that even the people, the citizens, even if they do not have the best reputation among their peers, dare to question the right of a ruler, as Vansen does in *Egmont*³⁷, and obviously not without good reason. Instead, in *Götz*, either the pure admiration of the great man by the people and the clergy takes the place of this independent thinking, for example, when the monk Martin says after a conversation with the knight himself: ‘*It is a pleasure to see a great man*’³⁸, or the direct, contentious confrontation with the knight through a feud. In *Egmont*, the citizens want freedom, privileges, and their

constitution³⁹, but such ideas are hardly present in *Götz*. However, it is significant that the scribe, Vansen, is the only one in *Egmont* who openly speaks of sedition and refers to the Constitution. As a scribe, he also knows about the constitution more by chance than through conscious discussion, while the citizens in the tragedy only have a rough idea that the Netherlands had one—but this makes his rebellious attitude psychologically understandable, as he is well aware of the guaranteed rights.⁴⁰ At the same time, however, he is aware of the danger Count Egmont is in through Alba and knows from conversations that the citizens of Brussels are not at all prepared to risk their lives lightly for an abstract idea such as freedom. ‘... if one has only the daily bread’,⁴¹ says the Brussels Soest and Soapboiler even slaps Vansen when his views sound too seditious. The fact that other citizens then defend Vansen as a man of honor and a scholar makes it clear that the citizens of Brussels are divided. ~They discuss their rights, the constitution, and privileges.⁴² ‘Doesn’t the citizen of Brussels have a different right than the citizens of Antwerp? The citizen of Antwerp than the citizen of Ghent?’⁴³, asks Vansen. Such theoretical liberal debates about the personal individual rights of each person at the state level are not yet to be found in Goethe’s *Götz*, despite the twelve articles of the peasants, which are precisely about this freedom. It is significant that they are not mentioned at all in the play. An educated, self-confident bourgeois figure like Vansen has no equivalent in *Götz*. Although Hippler is praised in the biographies of *Götz* and in the history books as a scribe working on a constitution and was therefore known to Goethe, he still refrains from including such a figure in this work.⁴⁴ It is the personal relationship that counts. Although Goethe does not always orientate himself on this, as Weislingen and Lerse are not, in fact, historical characters, he often uses this model enough for his work. The friendship and brotherhood in arms between *Götz* and Selbitz are not only mentioned once in the biographies. Emperor Maximilian’s exclamation after *Götz* and Selbitz had robbed some Nuremberg merchants in the play ‘Holy God! Holy God! What is this? One has only one hand, the other only one leg; if only they had two hands and two legs, what would you do then?’ finds its equivalent almost word for word in the descriptions of the life of *Götz*.⁴⁵ However, the design of the fortified, in fact, robber-knight-like male friendship, even if it is at the expense of that of the bourgeois merchants, is not only based on the model, it goes even further in the play because the fictional character Weislingen is made responsible for the declaration of respect against *Götz* by Selbitz, who claims to have seen him at the Imperial Diet in Augsburg. Now, the two knights immediately plan to attack Weislingen again. This attitude is in keeping with the spirit of the biographies, for when *Götz* and Selbitz meet there, they are constantly involved in fortified confrontations.⁴⁶ However, the close bond of friendship and trust between *Götz* and Selbitz is much more pronounced in the play, as they discuss approaches and attack tactics in speech and counter-speech and have a common enemy in Weislingen, who is breaking his word and needs to be punished for it—something that never happens in the knight’s autobiography.

Questions of constitutional history are still largely ignored in *Götz*; it is only in *Egmont* that they become more than an accompanying secondary motif.⁴⁷ While the citizens of Brussels can discuss the meaning and purpose of the constitution, the peasants in *Götz* are not accustomed to the written word. ‘Every reverence that a procurator makes you, you must pay for’⁴⁸, says the bride’s father to *Götz* at the peasants’ wedding, alluding to a trial he had to conduct, dealing with the written word—which is relatively easy for the citizens of Brussels in *Egmont*—is still such a precious commodity in *Götz* that you have to pay for it. It is also significant that this criticism of the legal system is voiced to *Götz*, who, tragically, hardly understands anything about the modern Roman legal system himself and clings to the old feudal law.⁴⁹ In this play, the legal scholar only appears in connection with the aristocratic bishop of Bamberg and his abbot, to whom he explains the legal system and complains about the rabble, who understand nothing about it.⁵⁰ A self-confident, educated crowd that critically scrutinizes everything, as in *Egmont*, is not yet to be found in *Götz*.

This is primarily about the figure of the colossally great man in the form of Götz, who seeks to defend his individual rights to freedom.⁵¹ Goethe shapes his two main characters in a similar way with poetic freedom. Götz is said to have had ten children, Egmont even eleven, while Goethe allows his Götz just one son, who also enters a monastery, and his Egmont remains completely childless, but Egmont is of a different nature to Götz in Goethe's drama. The general right, the freedom of an entire people, is clearly close to his heart. Egmont gives good advice to the citizens of Brussels, who want him to rule instead of the Spaniards. 'Stay at home,' he says, 'don't suffer them to roam the streets. Reasonable people can do much.'⁵² In fact, unlike Götz, who seems to be concerned almost exclusively with finding out whether people are for or against him as a person, Egmont acts with the common good in mind. Goethe's biographical experiences, his life at the court in Weimar, which gave him profound insights into the sphere of life and power functions of the nobility, as well as drastically demonstrating the dependence of the prince on social circumstances and his own not insignificant role in state life, enabled him to create such a far-sighted hero, no longer entangled in petty feuds and quarrels.⁵³ Of course, Egmont appears under completely different historical conditions than Götz, but Goethe also treats him with poetic freedom more than once. However, it is precisely Egmont's childlessness and Goethe's alteration of historical facts that are among the main points of criticism in Schiller's famous review of the work. Schiller argues that the historical Egmont was forced to stay in Brussels precisely because he had a family with many children to support and did not want to give up his privileges. 'By taking away his wife and children, the author destroys the whole context of his behavior. He is quite compelled to let this unhappy stay spring from a reckless self-confidence, and thereby greatly diminishes our respect for his hero's intellect, without compensating him for this loss of heart.'⁵⁴ This argument, however tempting it may seem at first glance, needs to be examined. Certainly, the historian Schiller is speaking here, calling for an orientation towards historical facts, but is it not precisely Goethe's intention to show us the tension between individual freedom and reason of state, especially when this is linked to despotic rulership, as in the case of Philip II of Spain? Goethe's character of Count Egmont gains precisely from the fact that he is young, not plagued by doubts, and can assert his human rights without being hindered by family constraints. Do we not admire his courage, which is certainly a matter of the heart, but also his intellect, his rational reasoning, when he fearlessly answers the henchman of Philip II. Alba, when the latter asked him who was preventing the people from breaking away when goodwill was the only pledge they had? '... And is not the goodwill of a people the surest, the noblest pledge?'⁵⁵ Egmont's belief that man, the people, is essentially good, which can be seen as naïve in the political world of tyranny, nevertheless leads us to the idea of a free humanity and exposes the inhuman attitude of despotism. Here, in a symbolic or idealized form, the dark, all-watching mind in the figure of Duke Alba, which is overwhelmed by its task and suspects secret dangers and murderous intrigues everywhere, is contrasted with the politically free, open mind in the figure of Egmont. Who better to symbolize this attitude than a youthful, independent mind unburdened by family worries and financial fears? What Schiller characterizes as Egmont's reckless self-confidence presupposes a belief in the merciless oppression of the people in state life as a natural occurrence; Goethe wants to brand this very action by Alba as unnatural! In addition, the question remains repeatedly to be asked as to how unbroken the author's relationship to his hero actually is? Is it not Goethe's intention to present us with a flawless character without fault in the figure of Egmont?

4. Dramaturgical Aspects

There are further trends from *Götz* to *Egmont* that cannot be overlooked, at least in terms of dramaturgical theory. Goethe's turn from purely static character speech to dynamic composition has already been mentioned in passing.⁵⁶—Even a simple comparison of the first scene of the first two versions of *Götz*, the '*Urgötz*'⁵⁷, which Goethe only published in 1832, and the later one from 1773 shows what is involved. The second rider begins with a lengthy argument: 'I cannot understand where von Weisling has gone.'⁵⁸, and then gives a

completely plotless and emotionally uninvolved description of how he has traveled and where Weislingen has spent the night; such undramatic epic narrative elements are almost completely omitted or changed in the second version. There we find only: *'Weislingen has been up at the castle with the Count for two days'*;⁵⁹ This tendency is even more refined in *Egmont*. There is no longer any character speech without inner emotional involvement, which would have a purely narrative character, and even when Alba and Egmont, the regent, and Machiavelli debate the theory of the State on a high level, these conversations are always conducted at the characters' immediate inner involvement, because everything they say could cost them their career, their future, their lives. However, even Goethe's unconditional devotion to anti-classical Shakespeare's concepts of dramatic structure has long since changed. The unity of place, time, and action, still completely disregarded in *Urgötz*, is now restricted, at least with regard to the abundance of places and the many actions running alongside each other. In the essay on Shakespeare's Birthday, while still living in Frankfurt, Goethe clearly expressed his enthusiasm for the dissolution of all forms. *'... It seemed to me that the unity of the place was so notoriously restrictive, the unity of action and time annoying chains on our imagination.'*⁶⁰ In Weimar and, during his stay in Italy (Figure 1) he changed his attitude. With *Egmont*, Goethe approaches classical ideals, which he realizes in *Iphigenia*, for example, with the one neutral place. After all, the place of action is only Brussels in *Egmont*, and the 'calming of the revolt' is central to the plot. Even the time that takes years in *Götz* can be reduced in *Egmont*, if not to the orbit of the sun demanded by Aristotle, then at least to a few days, along with the replacement of Margaret of Parma by Alba.



Figure 1. Goethe's Italian Journey: A step towards Classicism.

There are further lines of development in addition to these structural ones. Both heroes are initially convinced of their 'invulnerability'. Götz exclaims belligerently that if the mayor of Nuremberg were to come close to him, he should be astonished despite all his wit⁶¹, and Egmont believes in his heart that if the Spaniards wanted to assassinate his life, a terrible covenant would unite the people in an instant to save him.⁶² These convictions, as

well as the undeniable fact that as aristocratic landlords, they have the necessary classical Aristotelian height of fall to stir the people of the 18th and 19th centuries, allow us to speak initially of certain drama-theoretical similarities, but while Götz threatened by hostility, has to fight for almost every single follower⁶³, the hearts of the Dutch just fly to Egmont.⁶⁴ At the first moment of his appearance on stage, Count Egmont is still a sovereign ruler, generously helpful, mild, and inclined to mercy,⁶⁵ while Götz lies in wait to capture one of his opponents, Weislingen. Goethe's Götz is a knight entangled in a feud from the start: *'Five days and nights already lying in wait. The little bit of life and freedom is made sour. But if I have you, Weislingen, I can relax.'*⁶⁶ This warlike attitude can already be found in the knight's own descriptions of his life (von Berlichingen 1998, p. 40). Goethe's Götz is not fighting against an external enemy like Egmont, who is wrestling with the Spaniards but is unanimously supported by his fellow countrymen. Götz's situation is more difficult; he has various enemies within the country but remains courageous and self-confident. Nevertheless, both are heroes in the classic sense! Egmont is also unfamiliar with fickleness, considering his own safety and even fear of Alba, as is the case with Orania⁶⁷. When Alba has him imprisoned, he is surprised and acts like a naïve hero, completely oblivious to court intrigue.⁶⁸ He does not trust the Spanish royal family to see his benevolent criticism of possible oppressive tendencies as rebellion. It is historically documented that the Spanish royal family reinstated Egmont's son with property and title (see Hartmann 1988, p. 24)⁶⁹, but in Goethe's drama, the possible illegitimacy of Alba's act (he did indeed have Egmont executed) is not so clearly evident; of course, we learn nothing of his son's reinstatement, as Egmont is childless in the tragedy. It is up to the attentive reader or observer in the theater to judge whether Egmont's call for freedom is justified, whether it is directed against overly totalitarian absolutism in the style of Joseph II, or whether it is to be seen as a revolutionary, even democratic-republican act. It should not be forgotten that Goethe wrote his drama when the princely absolutist state was still taken for granted in Europe; republican sentiments, such as those repeatedly expressed by Egmont, can certainly be seen as revolutionary. As already mentioned above, *'who vouches. . .'* for the Dutch asks Egmont Alba *'... for their freedom?'*⁷⁰ But freedom is a problematic concept, especially political freedom, as much so in the 18th century and how much more so in the 16th century.

In both dramas, we have similar opening scenes, which, however, reveal clear differences: the hero, whether Götz or Egmont, is not present but is only mentioned quietly and with admiration by the assembled peasants, burghers, and mercenaries. However, while the Dutch glorify Egmont because of his extraordinary abilities as a battle-hardened marksman,⁷¹ friends of the knight Götz in the form of Metzler and Sievers, but also adversaries, namely the Bamberg horsemen, appear in the very first scene of *Götz*. These subordinates of the bishop immediately begin a violent confrontation with the peasants supporting Götz.⁷² The tensions could hardly be more different. While Götz's enemies also appear as members of the people as an immediate threat, Egmont is held in such high esteem that he indeed does appear as a favorite of the masses. The Dutch people appear here as a single entity. It is hard to imagine that any of them could be plotting against Egmont in a life-threatening way. Here, the threat comes from another country, Spain, and is linked to the reasons of the state; justified or unjustified is another question. In *Götz*, the first law still largely reigns, whereas in *Egmont*, constitutional law is already of decisive importance. But even in *Götz*, Goethe retains the view of an author familiar with multiple points of view on the Peasants' War, which is depicted differently in various sources. For example, he does not allow Götz's own views on the Peasants' War to remain the only ones, while the knight merely laments how the peasants *'... recently did it to so many brave men of the nobility at Weinsberg. . .'* (von Berlichingen 1998, p. 80), without naming a cause, Goethe allows Metzler to have his say and to convey to the historically documented character of the Peasants' War Link, the motive of revenge for injustice suffered as the cause of its murderous violence: *'... There was a Nixinger, when the fellow usually rode out hunting, with his panache and wide nostrils, and drove us before him with the hounds and like hounds. [. . .] Hash!*

*The spear between his ribs, ...*⁷³ Such acts of revenge by the peasants, which are probably also historically conditioned, do not play a role in Götz's own descriptions of his life. Wendel Hippler, with whom Götz, judging by historical sources, wrote a modification of the twelve articles (Ulmschneider 1980, p. 18; see also Braun 1925, p. 61), is explicitly praised by Götz in his autobiography as a '*... fine skillful man and writer. ...*' (von Berlichingen 1980, p. 208), while he does not appear in the play at all. As already indicated, the written word still carries little weight in this play. Similar to the descriptions of his life, in the play, Götz only allows himself to lead the peasants as captain under pressure in order to restore peace and tranquility. He angrily asks the furious peasants, '*... Who burned Miltenberg? ...*'⁷⁴ The peasants appear to be more or less blindly destructive, only prevented from doing far worse by Götz's courageous intervention, which is the only reason he becomes their captain, the play suggests.⁷⁵ However, there are other historical statements which, although extorted under torture, give the impression that Götz wholeheartedly championed the cause of the peasants (Ulmschneider 1980, p. 20; see also (Braun 1925, p. 61)). In the play, as indicated, Götz dies in the tower at Heilbronn as a hero tragically misjudged by his own class and maimed in body, property, and life by the war,⁷⁶ while, according to the sources and his autobiography, he lived on for well over thirty years after the end of the Peasants' War and managed his extensive estates with vigor.⁷⁷ Historiography does not convey a uniform picture of the knight Götz as a symbol of a man who '*... never hesitated to fight for freedom and justice. ...*' (Schröder 1994, p. 32); he is neither in the play nor as a historical figure a clearly transparent character! Goethe's Egmont, on the other hand, leads the cause of the Dutch from the very beginning without any doubt as to its legitimacy. The reader is carried away by his fire for the cause of freedom in the fight against tyranny. There is no question that Alba also leads a reign of terror in Goethe's tragedy. Since the Spanish duke has been in Brussels, the burghers, who had just been free and independent, have, in fact, only been walking the streets in fear, with Spanish mercenaries or soldiers lurking around every corner.⁷⁸ In *Götz*, the peasants' affairs are not portrayed as completely gratuitous violence, but they do not only appear once as senselessly murdering and plundering mobs; chaos, terror, and the pure desire for destruction, not a new, better order is what society can expect from their appearance. The danger to the state also comes from them because the oppressed peasants it is not an entity worth protecting. The extent to which the visionless nobility, entangled in feuds, can be held responsible for this remains a hidden main question of the play. In *Egmont*, a beautiful republican structure promoting a free civic spirit is suppressed by dark forces from outside, for they fear that the people could once again break loose in blind terror as they did before during the times of iconoclasm.⁷⁹ Whether the regent assumes that Egmont wants to take over power himself through open rebellion remains to be seen, but her statement in the conversation with Machiavelli does not make this view appear completely unfounded. '*... He often looks as if he lives in the complete conviction that he is master and does not want [...] to chase us out of the country, ...*'⁸⁰ But Egmont does not act in this sense in the tragedy. He sees himself as a subject of Philip II. The revolutionary act, with the open call for resistance against the Spanish oppressors, historically came later from Wilhelm I of Orange. Nevertheless, Egmont is feared to want to exchange the role of king for his own. It does not occur to us that such views would be expressed about Götz in the play, where the peasants' twelve articles, which endanger the corporative state, are not mentioned, and Götz does not give the impression that he is resolutely doing the right thing when he joins them.

5. Linguistic Aspects

A further developmental step emerges when observing the use of language in these dramas. Both Götz and Egmont, as battle-hardened war heroes, are not advocates of the word; action is regarded as decisive, but Egmont is clearly already using language at a different level of reflection than Götz. When Götz betroths Maria to Weislingen, he says, as already mentioned, '*... Shake hands, and so I say Amen!*'⁸¹ This settles the matter for Götz once and for all. Broken words play no role in Götz's world. They are completely out of the

question. The very introduction of the character of Machiavelli in the first act makes it clear that the treatment of language and law in *Egmont* takes place on a completely different level, as the historical model Machiavelli writes in his main work, '*a wise ruler cannot and should not keep his word if this is to his detriment, . . .*' (Machiavelli 1941a, p. 87). So, should the educated reader not expect a completely different approach to words from this work from the outset than from the characters in *Götz*? After all, Weisling's breach of his word in *Götz* and his marital union with Adelheid⁸² can still be interpreted as a moral inadequacy and weakness of character. In *Egmont*, the boundary between right and wrong is far less clear and is dependent on the political reasons of the state. Even Alba's reign of terror can be interpreted in part as an attempt to return the Dutch to the old 'rightful' faith. We never get to know Alba as a weak, private person like Weislingen. Indeed, he also defines himself as a private person and family man through his role as a statesman by assigning his son Ferdinand a significant role in the process of Egmont's capture! When Brother Martin explains to Götz in the third scene of the first act with scholastic sophistry why drinking wine is against his vow, Götz is unable to follow him, and Martin immediately drops down a linguistic level to chat with the knight about the importance of eating.⁸³ However, Martin still has admiration for Götz because while he realizes that his educated language must be a herald of his weakness to the enemy, he is convinced that Götz's voice overpowers the enemy. Götz's use of language in Goethe's play is powerful, dependent on immediate feeling, and usually linked to direct instructions for action. It is a poor match for Martin's reflective consciousness, yet the monk envies him for his vocal power. There are indeed clear similarities here between Götz and Egmont, but Egmont's relationship to language is much more nuanced. Egmont says '*. . . of many hated things, writing is the most hated to me*'.⁸⁴ He leaves this activity to his secretary because it tempts him to reason and discourages him from acting. Nevertheless, Egmont discusses with the secretary questions of state welfare and the treatment of misdeeds and criminals.⁸⁵ Götz's relationship with other people in the play is even more primal, based on direct confrontation or appropriation. The written word as a decision-maker does not yet play a role. The choice is between friend or foe; one could simplify. Decisions about the wealth and woe of absent third parties are directly linked to one's own actions. The fact that the knight's right hand is made of iron and does not allow Götz to write can also be interpreted as a symbolic exaggeration of the direct connection between word and deed. Brother Martin deliberately shakes Götz's right hand of iron, perhaps precisely because it is only suitable for the craft of war.⁸⁶ Egmont at least uses language to decide legal cases of absentees by means of written explanations in a moderating and often pardoning manner. He may leave the writing to his secretary as a hated activity⁸⁷, but he is much more aware of the power of the written word than Götz. It is precisely this—when Egmont negotiates the cases of some soldiers with his secretary and proceeds in a measured and merciful manner—that makes it clear that Schiller's above-mentioned and often quoted criticism of Goethe's hero Egmont is not justified in other respects either, or at least we can assume a certain moral attitude behind it. Schiller writes, '*. . . that is precisely the misfortune that we know his merits from hearsay and are forced to accept them in good faith—but see his weaknesses with our eyes. . .*'⁸⁸ Of course, we do not see Egmont carry out his deeds at the Battle of Gravelingen and St. Quintin, we only know them from hearsay of the citizens; but is his judgment not much more meritorious in a moral sense if he does not have iconoclasts executed and condemns two of his soldiers as rapists, and does Egmont not pronounce these orders before our eyes in the presence of his secretary?⁸⁹ Do we not have enough insight into his emotional life to be able to judge Egmont as a positive figure without good faith but on the basis of our own view? Or are these weaknesses in Schiller's moral understanding? We must probably relate Schiller's criticism more to the Klärchen plot, but while Schiller may condemn this relationship as morally reprehensible 'libidinousness', as unlawful immorality,⁹⁰ we could also judge it in the Goethean sense as heroic and natural because the bourgeois girl and Count Egmont love each other with such mutual devotion even without a marriage certificate! *Götz* is a play that focuses

on unbroken family relationships and judges them positively, and in part, attempts to orient itself on the life descriptions of the knight. For example, Götz asks his wife for help when he is captured in Heilbronn and sends her to Sickingen and Fundsberg to help him against the townspeople. ‘...*That is what my wife did.*’ (von Berlichingen 1998, p. 58). In the play, family matters are placed even more clearly at the center. After Weislingen, who is already engaged to Maria, breaks his word, Franz von Sickingen asks Götz for the hand of his sister Maria.⁹¹ In the play, Götz is indeed the caring family man who tries to find his sister a loving husband in order to steer family life in a duly consolidated, legal direction. Egmont is different; be it youthful carefreeness, be it forward-charging heroism, he has other ‘higher’ things in mind, such as the good of the State; in this drama, private family relationships are not mentioned or are so broken that they are reminiscent of the bourgeois tragedy. The relations between Egmont and Klärchen are strikingly reminiscent of the relationship between Ferdinand and Luise in Schiller’s *Kabale und Liebe*?⁹²—Is the outcome to be expected, and will it be similar? We should not shrink back from the thought that the barriers of status would prevent a legal union even without Egmont’s violent end. Indeed, the Regent, Machiavelli, Egmont, Orange, and Alba all argue at a much higher level of political abstraction than the characters in *Götz*, but the society that Goethe presents to us here is even more fragile; established family relationships no longer exist as points of escape from a harsh world. When analyzing *Egmont*, we can no longer speak of the counter-image of a corrupt political world and an intact family world. Does Alba not use his own son Ferdinand in the murderous intrigue to capture Egmont and lead him to his death?⁹³

6. Trends

Finally, the favor of the people mentioned above also becomes a theme in *Egmont*. Klärchen, completely convinced that the people will free Egmont, who has been imprisoned by Alba and his Spanish henchmen because they have cheered him so often in the streets, does not realize that as soon as he is no longer the powerful Count of Ghent, the citizens will turn away and remain silent so as not to endanger their own lives and possessions.⁹⁴ In *Götz*, there is not yet such a distance between the citizens and the knight. Although the monk Martin, as mentioned above, speaks of being inspired by the perception of a great man, the citizens of Heilbronn want to compel Götz—if necessary by force of arms—to swear an oath of truce and submit to their conditions: ‘*Citizens enter, staves in hand, weapons at their side.*’⁹⁵ The distance between the bourgeoisie and the nobility is not as significant here as in *Egmont*; the bourgeoisie is able to defend itself. With Egmont, who is revered by the burghers as a hero from afar, the violent conflict is left to the nobility and professional soldiers and mercenaries. In this drama, Goethe creates a warlike, worldly, well-fortified aristocracy entangled in ideological and philosophical disputes, while the bourgeoisie admires Egmont exclusively from afar and may well argue when it is safe to do so, but as soon as life and limb are at stake, they immediately abandon their bold flight of thought, their free spirit, in order not to endanger themselves. This certainly has something to do with the fact that the historical Götz kidnaps and imprisons merchants in times of peace if he thinks that this is necessary for his undertakings (von Berlichingen 1998, p. 36) and they have little choice but to defend themselves. Although this is neither explicitly stated nor shown in the play nor in Götz’s autobiography, the relationship with the townspeople, who have had their own town charter since the Middle Ages, is more than strained. Egmont, on the other hand, is an admired hero of the people, capable in the eyes of many citizens of granting them their freedom and a constitution even against Spanish oppressors. The admiration for him is almost boundless in the first scene. This is why Egmont believes until almost the end of the drama that the people, Wilhelm I of Orange, even Klärchen if she were a man, would come to bring him freedom and prevent the tyrannicide against him. This fallacy is tragic, but the merciless execution also makes it clear to us that the Spanish state is an oppressive and repressive system.⁹⁶ How differently Egmont himself acted, sparing the imprisoned iconoclasts the death sentence or letting Protestant clergymen go free.⁹⁷ In

this drama, Goethe focuses more on the general than on *Götz*. Questions of constitutional law and religious issues concerning the common good take center stage. Goethe, who had matured as a privy councilor in state affairs, had studied the classics in depth while in Italy (Figure 1), now addresses problems that are clearly different from those of individual freedom. The poetic freedom that Goethe allows himself, which Schiller criticized so harshly in his review of the work, by transforming Egmont from a multiple family man into a boyish hero, serves the misunderstood purpose of making clear the difference between a free, independent spirit that is not tormented by fears and the repressive system of Philip II of Spain. The Dutchman should not be forced to serve but should be allowed to act voluntarily and independently, the play suggests. To realize this idea skillfully, it is more than legitimate for Goethe to abandon historical facts and instead portray Egmont as a youthful hero reaching for the stars.

7. The Opponent

Clearly, the antagonists of the heroes *Götz* and Egmont have also been given very different character traits. Weislingen is a fictional character, so Goethe can allow himself any poetic license in his creation, while Alba is a historical figure whose characterization must at least adhere to a biographical framework so as not to deprive the play of any historical credibility.⁹⁸ Weislingen becomes engaged to Marie in the good faith that he will also marry her, but as soon as he sees Adelheid, he falls for her. It is inconceivable that Alba would succumb to his amorous desires in this way. In fact, he only appears as a bringer of order to calm the agitated country; private feelings play no role whatsoever. As stated, he even involves his son Ferdinand in the political affairs of the state and avoids making any private statements, apart from the one that Ferdinand is too soft and too much like his mother.⁹⁹ Nevertheless, Alba has to struggle much more with Goethe's positive portrayal of Egmont than Weislingen does with *Götz*. The rebellious tendencies, such as those illustrated by William of Orange's appeal to the Netherlands in 1568, are not presented in the drama.¹⁰⁰ In the play, Alba appears exclusively as a tyrant servant endowed with unlimited power. But even under these circumstances, Goethe allows him to express some quite reasonable views. When Egmont alludes to the fact that the Dutch citizen naturally wants to be ruled by his aristocratic brother, Alba immediately sows doubt about this apparent right by cleverly remarking, '*... And yet the nobility has shared very unequally with these his brothers*'.¹⁰¹ It would be going too far to immediately infer Rousseau's social contract from this one fact and turn Alba into a secret admirer of natural law, but this remark, even if it does not yet directly point to reservations about absolutism, does at least reveal a semblance of doubt about its legitimacy and points to a clever mind. What a critical distance from his own social and political position and function! It is another question whether Alba is expressing these reservations purely rhetorically in order to sense Egmont's attitude, whether Goethe wants the spectator or reader of his tragedy to reflect on the order of the corporative state himself, or whether one can even take these statements as an opportunity to insinuate that Alba himself is only acting unlawfully because he considers the entire social order to be unlawful. In any case, Egmont's response makes it clear once again that Goethe had a very fractured relationship with his hero. Egmont says, '*... This was done centuries ago and is now tolerated without envy*'.¹⁰² This can lead us to understand Egmont either as a frivolous, carefree character who does not give much thought to the legality of established social conditions or we can take the word tolerated at the end of his sentence quite seriously and assume that Egmont is well aware of the temporality of any constitutional order. But again, a difference between the plays *Götz* and *Egmont* becomes clear through this analysis of the two antagonists. Weislingen acts solely out of personal interest and is only concerned with his own advantage, or, to put it another way, is subject to his sensual desires. Leaving aside the conversation with the emperor, in which certain issues of State are aired but as already indicated, it is not too far-fetched to interpret that Weislingen advises the emperor to persecute Sickingen, Selbitz, and Berlichingen because of his guilty conscience,¹⁰³ after all, he has broken his word to Maria, his fiancée, and sister of *Götz*. In this way, he gets

rid of an adversary who could ruin his reputation. Weislingen's character is such that one can hardly help but suspect that such personal feelings influence all his statements on state theory.¹⁰⁴ Alba, on the other hand, has the good of the state in mind; we may not like the manner, and we may brand it as tyrannical, but Alba's intention as such is of a different moral caliber than that of Weislingen.¹⁰⁵ The mind, the intellect governs Alba! Even if he is inhumanly cold and cruel, he shows himself to be the ruler of his emotional life. Weislingen is guided by his feelings or is even dependent on them.¹⁰⁶ For the young Goethe, the private feelings of his characters are still of much greater importance in the creation of his characters, and in *Egmont*, he increasingly detaches himself from this attitude. In 1782, he finally wrote to Charlotte von Stein himself. '... I only want to try to eradicate the overly buttoned-up, student-like manner that contradicts the dignity of the subject matter.' (Goethe 1951, p. 647). This is why the characters in *Egmont*, when they are decision-makers on the political stage, always appear as reflective figures who assess every position, including their own, with detachment. As already mentioned, how differently the regent Margaret of Parma acts in *Egmont* compared to Adelheid in *Götz*. Both are certainly ladies-in-waiting, but one can hardly avoid describing Adelheid in *Urgötz* as a gruesomely exaggerated image of a scheming, man-killing lady-in-waiting¹⁰⁷. Any life at court will hardly survive the onslaught of such a lady for too long, and the castle will soon outlast only as a ruin. How different and how much more realistic is the regent in *Egmont*, and how measured and deliberate is her behavior in conversation with her advisor¹⁰⁸. In this respect, Goethe was certainly interested and succeeded in creating a much more historically realistic picture of court life than in *Urgötz*.

8. Conclusions

So, do the dramas *Götz* and *Egmont* both equally symbolize genuine humanity that is subject to corruption, and are both protagonists, indeed, very much alike? This article has proven otherwise. Yes, Goethe's *Götz* is a knight who is forced by circumstances to become captain of the peasants in order to prevent far greater chaos and terror; misjudged and betrayed by his own class, he perishes. But he has no political foresight or good knowledge of human nature. *Egmont*, on the other hand, sees himself as the leader of "his" people in rebellion and supported in his liberal endeavors. Yes, this fallacy proves to be just as deadly, and indeed, both are subject to a far superior opponent—but are they both not acting out of completely different motives? Goethe's *Götz* is forced in his position. Fighting for the peasants' freedom is not *Götz*'s concern. It is imposed on him from the outside. Without nobles experienced in battle as leaders, the peasants must fear being completely helpless at the mercy of an opponent who is already militarily superior. *Egmont*, in contrast, fights for the people of his own free will, but in this tragedy, freedom is not a good so worthy of protection for the citizens of the Netherlands that they would defend him at the risk of their own lives.

Goethe's *Götz* is still a family man; family feuds, individual matters—his own happiness—concern him and his thinking for the most part. Feuding is an end in itself for him as a knight and sometimes only a marauding or robber knight. *Egmont*, in difference, actively takes part in the political decision-making of his time. His aim is to work for the common good of his people and country. Despite all his flaws and misjudgments, he is a *zoon politikon*, acts responsibly as a leader, and is determined to free his country from his oppressors. In clear difference to *Götz*, the quest for political legality and freedom from political despotism is at the heart of the play *Egmont*. *Götz*, with his iron hand that makes him almost invincible and invulnerable in battle—is indeed, in difference, the typical colossal figure of the *Storm and Stress* period, lacking a well-developed capacity for reflection.

Goethe's *Egmont* is not a reworking of *Götz* or latecomer, which repeats the same theme with variations; rather, it focuses on the dependence of the individual's happiness on a just State. *Götz* is merely the individual, increasingly broken by circumstances and betrayal, struggling for personal and, at best, familial happiness, for whom the State only

means something as long as it guarantees him his rights to personal freedom. Egmont tries to reach far beyond his personal fate and aristocratic freedom to serve liberty and religious independence in his country.¹⁰⁹ The tragedy evokes questions of a different social, political, and moral scope in the reader. There are enough good and transparent reasons not to classify the work as just classic because Egmont is indeed far too impulsive and reckless for that and puts his life on the line all too youthfully and daringly—still, to an extent indeed, in accordance with *Storm and Stress* ideas—despite the warnings of Orange.¹¹⁰ But he does it for the idea of a humane, liberal State, and that is a classical ideal. So, it seems to be time to introduce the concept of *Early Classicism* or *Preclassical period* as a defining term for *Egmont* in difference to the *Storm and Stress* play *Götz* with its larger-than-life protagonist of colossal size. *Götz* and *Egmont* are very different characters this examination has shown. Indeed, we need to develop a more subtle set of instruments so that the all too sweepingly clear classification of *Götz* and *Egmont*—either both to *Storm and Stress* or *Egmont* only to *Classicism*¹¹¹—can finally give way to more differentiated assessments.

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Notes

- ¹ An exact date for the beginning of the work is not discernible. The statements diverge; either 1874 or 1875 are offered without providing convincing evidence. Georg-Michael Schulz: *Egmont*. In (Buck 1997, pp. 154–72, here: Heinrich Henel: *Auf den Spuren des Uregmont*). In (Henel 1980, pp. 102–29, here: p. 102), Staiger suggests ‘. . . perhaps even as early as 1773, . . .’. (Staiger 1964, p. 289).
- ² Böckmann’s interpretation is a classic example of both dramas being referred to in the same breath. He begins his analysis of *Egmont* with reference to the fact that both works are often mentioned together, then puts forward some dubious theses, such as that, in contrast to *Götz*, there is no development of the political plot in *Egmont*, without substantiating it with passages from the text, and then let it fizzle out. Are not the constitutional discussions of the citizens of Brussels, which will be dealt with in detail later in this essay, highly political, and is this not precisely what distinguishes the work from *Götz*? Paul Böckmann: *Goethe Egmont*. In (von Wiese 1958, pp. 147–68, here, p. 147), Keller also equates the two works, speaks of the great individual, and clearly assigns *Egmont* to the *Sturm und Drang* period. Werner Keller: *Das Drama Goethes*. In (Hinck 1980, pp. 133–56, here, p. 137).
- ³ GSA 78/610 Henel points out that, unlike in the cases of *Götz*, *Werther*, *Faust*, *Wilhelm Meister*, and *Iphigenia*, there was never a *Uregmont*, and because Goethe left the work lying around for many years and only worked on it sporadically, an exact reconstruction is almost impossible. Although Goethe had sent the first version to Möser in 1782, this could not be considered a *Uregmont* because he had continually added and changed further scenes to the work in Weimar, but unfortunately the original Frankfurt version was never found. Heinrich Henel: *Auf den Spuren des Uregmont*. In (Henel 1980, pp. 102–29, here, p. 102 ff). The question remains as to whether there was an original Frankfurt version at all. The thesis that it is a fragment at least until 1782 remains unchallenged because even the handwritten version from that year, which was sent to Möser, has not survived. Georg-Michael Schulz: *Egmont*. In (Buck 1997, pp. 154–72, here, p. 155).
- ⁴ Staiger, also referring to Schiller, sees *Egmont* as a latecomer to *Götz von Berlichingen*. In Goethe’s case, after completing a work with similar content, his creative energy pushed on without being sufficient for a second success. Such generalizing criticism, which uses Schiller’s review of *Egmont* as a model, completely overlooks the subtle differences in character design and choice of themes, to which this essay aims to offer a counterproposal, which will not least also examine Schiller’s criticism itself (Staiger 1964). Schröder also does not differentiate enough when he reads and understands *Egmont* as an enhanced *Götz*. Jürgen Schröder: *Poetische Erlösung der Geschichte—Goethes Egmont*. In (Hinck 2006, pp. 101–15, here, p. 101). Compare also (Steinfeld 2024, pp. 63, 274).
- ⁵ See the lecture by Hans-Jürgen Schings. Schings makes it clear that Schiller’s *Posa* is influenced by the ideas of the Enlightenment philosopher Rousseau, while Goethe’s *Egmont* is actually a Dutch hero of the 16th century: Hans-Jürgen Schings: *Freiheit in der Geschichte. Egmont and Marquis de Posa, in comparison*. In (Keller 1993, pp. 61–76, here, p. 70).

- 6 Michelsen even speaks of a mistake, a fault of the hero. It is not necessary to go that far, but it is easy to see that both Götz and Weislingen, for example, are often guided by personal interests—interests that can be described as selfish—which rob them of their heroic selflessness and cast a dark shadow over their actions. Peter Michelsen: Goethe's 'Götz': History dramatized? In (Keller 1993, pp. 41–60, here, p. 51).
- 7 WA I, 28, p. 205. This passage can be found in the same wording in MA 16, p. 608 and GA10, p. 628.
- 8 WA I, 33, p. 269, also in: Johann Wolfgang von Goethe: Campagne in Frankreich. In: Werke Band 10. Autobiographische Schriften Band II. München 1998, p. 361 (Goethe 1998).
- 9 WA IV, 2, p. 7.
- 10 WA I, 8, p. 169.
- 11 WA I, 8, p. 109. Neuhaus notes that his main source was the autobiography of the knight Götz but that the work offered hardly any clues for Goethe to form such a personal relationship between Götz and the emperor. Volker Neuhaus: Götz von Berlichingen. In (Hinck 2006, pp. 82–101, here p. 90). However, there are passages in the autobiography in which the emperor is quoted directly and through which he reveals an admiring attitude towards the knight (von Berlichingen 1998, p. 50); see Note 45.
- 12 Jürgen Schröder: Geschichte als Lebensraum Goethes "Gottfried" and "Götz". In (Hamacher and Nutt-Kofoth 2007, pp. 146–70, here: p. 153; also in Schröder 1994, p. 26).
- 13 The 12 articles of the peasants from 1525 seem very modern and anticipate the German constitution of 1848 to some extent. Article three, for example, demands the abolition of serfdom because it is unchristian. See Hermann Barge: Die zwölf Artikel der Bauernschaft. In (Barge 1918, p. 141).
- 14 Goethe is far more romantic in this respect, as he has the affable Götz attend a peasant wedding in the second version of his work. WA I, 8, p. 76. His treatment of the gypsies, who do not appear at all in Götz's own descriptions of his life, is much less romanticizing. It is only with the portrayal of Mignon in Wilhelm Meister that gypsy life takes on something sentimental and mysterious in Goethe's work. See Wilhelm Solms: Goethe und die Zigeuner. In (Frick et al. 2003, pp. 262–76, here, p. 262).
- 15 WA I, 8, p. 16.
- 16 The original reads: '*...the people of Cölln betrayed him and would not give him any money...*'. Although Müller's translation can be described here as relatively free (auszahlen für geben), the content is reproduced so closely to the original that Müller's translation can easily be used as the basis for this treatise. Berlichingen's language is also so close to Modern German that the translation would not have presented Müller with too many difficulties (von Berlichingen 1980, p. 97).
- 17 WA I, 8, p. 21.
- 18 Volker Press: Götz von Berlichingen (ca. 1480–1562)—vom "Raubritter" zum Reichsritter. In (Magistrat der Stadt Wetzlar 1999, pp. 15–42, here, p. 24).
- 19 Ilse A. Graham's view that the robber baron consumed his life in numerous feuds, thereby confirming his role as an outsider in history and society, is only partially valid. It can only refer to the play; the descriptions of the knight's life convey a completely different impression. Ilse A. Graham: Vom Urgötz zum Götz. Neufassung oder Neuschöpfung. In (Martini et al. 1965, pp. 245–82, here, p. 248).
- 20 Although this scene is based on the biographies of the knight Götz, in the play, only the merchants present their version of events to the emperor, insisting that they had been badly robbed by Götz and Selbitz, the knight states in his biographies that he had not been able to take their best goods from the Nurembergers'. Compare WA I, 8, p. 81, WA I, 39, p. 82 and (von Berlichingen 1998, p. 50).
- 21 Volker Press: Götz von Berlichingen (ca. 1480–1562)—vom "Raubritter" zum Reichsritter. In (Magistrat der Stadt Wetzlar 1999, pp. 15–42, here, p. 23).
- 22 Compare Volker Press: Götz von Berlichingen (ca. 1480–1562) vom "Raubritter" zum Reichsritter. In (Magistrat der Stadt Wetzlar 1999, pp. 15–42, here, p. 18).
- 23 WA I, 8, p. 83.
- 24 Winfried Woesler's essay deals with the legal texts that Goethe studied while researching his drama. Winfried Woesler: Rechts- und Staatsauffassungen in Goethes Götz von Berlichingen. In (Magistrat der Stadt Wetzlar 1999, pp. 79–94, here, p. 79).
- 25 Justus Möser: Von dem Faustrechte. In (Möser 2001, p. 330).
- 26 This prompted Meyer-Benfey in 1929 not to describe Götz—according to Goethe—as a historical drama under any circumstances because otherwise, we would be dealing with a falsification of history. The hidden symbolism revealed in the death of Götz can be interpreted as a reference to the historical end of feuding, thereby characterizing the spirit of a historical epoch coming to an end much more precisely than an exact reproduction of the facts can do, is not perceived by Meyer-Benfey. Historical drama has to be based on the facts otherwise it is not a drama, Meyer-Benfey thinks. Fortunately, such a close orientation to the facts—through postmodern thinking—is no longer required of historical drama today (Meyer-Benfey 1929, p. 95). For Goethe himself, the orientation towards facts in writing poetry was of no importance at all, as he writes: '*...For the poet, no person is historical, he likes to portray his moral world, and to this end he does certain persons from history the honor of lending their names to his creatures.*' WA I, 41 I, p. 206.

- 27 Compare, among others, (Ulmschneider 1980, p. 22).
- 28 Volker Press: Götz von Berlichingen (ca. 1480–1562)—vom “Raubritter” zum Reichsritter. In (Magistrat der Stadt Wetzlar 1999, pp. 15–42, here, p. 24): Goethe’s free handling of the biographical details of his characters is clearly demonstrated by the figure of Franz von Sickingen. Franz von Sickingen does indeed appear to have been Götz’s brother-in-law, judging by his own account (von Berlichingen 1980, p. 239). But this was only a form of address at the time for someone who was dear to you, like a brother and did not necessarily imply a family connection. Even in Götz’s autobiography, some characters are addressed as brother-in-law or sister-in-law who are not. Therefore, one cannot be sure that Neuhaus is right when he says that Goethe can closely associate Franz von Sickingen with his hero as a brother-in-law due to a possible misunderstanding of the source. Neuhaus refrains from explaining the reason for his statement. The question remains as to whether Goethe did not make Sickingen Berlichingen’s brother-in-law for dramaturgical reasons and deliberately allowed himself a further deviation from the story. Volker Neuhaus: Götz von Berlichingen. In (Hinck 2006, p. 90). This thesis is supported by historical sources that prove that Sickingen died before the outbreak of the Peasants’ War in 1523, embroiled in feuds for the sake of the old knighthood (Kilb 1943). In the play, he is still alive during the Peasants’ War and, according to his ‘wife Maria’, is surrounded by a fighting nobleman, but one can assume that he is still fighting, WA I, 8, p. 167. Although it is not quite clear what he is fighting for, whether on the side of the peasants or against them, this is precisely how Sickingen symbolizes the old, decaying chivalry in the play, which was mutually fighting in feuds against the peace of the land offered by Emperor Frederick as early as 1485. It does not matter what you are fighting for; fighting is an end in itself for the knight (Braun 1925, p. 11).
- 29 WA I, 8, p. 45.
- 30 WA I, 8, p. 266.
- 31 An often-underestimated antagonist. It has been criticized by various positions and scholars, and certainly not without justification that Schiller completely omitted the role of Machiavelli in his stage version of Götz. Theo Buck: Zur Dramaturgie des Schlusses in Goethes Egmont. In (Heidelberg-Leonard and Tabah 2000, pp. 35–45, here, p. 42).
- 32 WA I, 8, p. 189.
- 33 Pasquale Memmolo comprehensibly characterizes the figure of Alba as a Machiavellian politician but without referring to passages from the text. It is significant, however, that Machiavelli’s work ‘*Il Principe*’ (*The Prince*), which is not only about the prince’s exploitation of power by almost any means, is not in Goethe’s library, but instead *the Discorsi*, the treatise on the Republic. The complete equation between Alba in the tragedy and the historical Machiavelli is problematic for this reason. In fact, Goethe’s Machiavelli turns out to be exclusively a republican advisor to the regent, who, unlike Alba, cannot be denied a liberal attitude. His behavior corresponds to the *Discorsi*. In this book, Machiavelli debates the conditions for maintaining the republican order. It remains to be asked whether Goethe wanted to show the contrast in Machiavelli’s own thinking through Alba and Machiavelli? Memmolo does not address Machiavelli’s role in Goethe’s drama at all, and even ‘*Il Principe*’ is often interpreted so cautiously by scholars that one does not necessarily have to equate Alba’s behavior in the tragedy with the political calculations of the historical Machiavelli. ‘*Il Principe*’ is not a guide to tyranny and despotism but to political prudence, which is precisely what Alba lacks in the play due to his unyielding harshness in comparison with Machiavelli of the play and the historical Machiavelli (Memmolo 1995, p. 226; see also (Machiavelli 1941a, p. 89)). Wolfgang Kersting provides a good overview of the two treatises by the historical Machiavelli. Although he emphasizes the willingness to use violence to maintain power in ‘*Il Principe*’, which is comparable to Alba’s behavior, he insists that one of Machiavelli’s aims in this work is to make it clear that agency has nothing to do with chance. Wolfgang Kersting: Niccolò Machiavelli. München 1998, p. 109 (Kersting 1998).
- 34 WA I, 8, p. 186.
- 35 The only thing Weislingen and Machiavelli have in common is that they are both characters added to the historical events in the play. Weislingen is an opportunist, while Machiavelli is a philosophical mind like Goethe’s real-life role model for this character. In Goethe’s source, however, there is no advisor to the regent with the quality of Machiavelli; although President Viglius brings news to the regent, there is no serious discussion on the level of State theory between her and Viglius as to what should now happen, as in the tragedy between the regent and Machiavelli, at least according to this historical source (von Meteren 1603, p. 72).
- 36 WA I, 8, p. 82.
- 37 WA I, 8, p. 206.
- 38 WA I, 8, p. 17. In his extraordinarily enthusiastic English-language biography, Boyle comprehensibly equates the brother Martin in Goethe’s Götz with Martin Luther. Nevertheless, although he quite rightly compares Larse from Götz with Goethe’s childhood friend in Strasbourg of the same name ‘(the most loyal of Götz’s companions-in-arms goes by the name of Goethe’s Strasbourg acquaintance, Larse)’, he also treats Adelbert von Weislingen as if he were a historical character, although he is not regarded as a historical figure either in the biographical treatise of the knight himself or otherwise by scholars (Boyle 1992, p. 117). Michelsen was one of many who pointed out, for example, during a lecture at the 73rd Annual General Meeting of the Goethe Society in 1993, that Weislingen was not a figure taken from history. Peter Michelsen: Goethes “Götz”: Geschichte dramatisiert? In (Keller 1993, pp. 41–60, here, p. 50): See also Volker Neuhaus: Götz von Berlichingen. In (Hinck 2006, pp. 82–100, here, p. 91. et al.).
- 39 WA I, 8, p. 207.

- 40 WA I, 8, p. 208. Schröder proves that Vansen is more than a strange, half-educated, unscrupulous agitator but stands out for his objectivity and intelligent assessment of the situation. Jürgen Schröder: Poetische Erlösung der Geschichte—Goethes Egmont. In (Hinck 2006, pp. 101–15, here, p. 111).
- 41 WA I, 8, p. 206.
- 42 There are several books on constitutional law in Goethe's library in Weimar. For example, Achenwall's work from 1785, which not only describes the history of the Netherlands, its inhabitants, and countries, but also explains constitutional law and the constitution of government with particular emphasis on the independent rights of the seven provinces of the Netherlands (Achenwall 1785, p. 410).
- 43 WA I, 8, p. 206: Vansen can indeed refer to the constitution (see Note 42). An interpretation that, like Staiger, therefore subscribes to the view that Vansen is the bad guy that the carpenter describes him as, therefore, remains superficially immanent to the work (Staiger 1964, p. 296). Borchmeyer's approach, which assumes that Goethe's depiction of Philip II's politics in the Netherlands contains a critique of the contemporary expansionist policies and absolutism of Joseph II in the Austrian Netherlands in 1787, is able to place the popular scenes and the citizens' rebellion against despotism in Egmont much better and with appropriate weight. Even if the revolt only became a reality twelve years after the Brussels scene was written, Goethe's commentary makes it clear that this is what made his Egmont interesting to him; the significance of the people's revolt for the tragedy should not be underestimated (Borchmeyer 1994, p. 160).
- 44 Later Gerhart Hauptmann praises Hippler as an intelligent peasant leader who is writing a constitution for the modification of the twelve articles of the peasants and contrasts him as a positive figure with other peasants such as Kohl, who also in Hauptmann's play primarily only wants to drink and murder. Kohl only starts listening to Geyer when it is too late (Hauptmann 1966, p. 656).
- 45 WA I, 8; p. 81 (von Berlichingen 1998, p. 50).
- 46 WA I, 8, p. 97 (von Berlichingen 1980, pp. 33, 45, 50, 69, 72).
- 47 In this respect, Neuhaus' view that Goethe concentrates on social, legal, and constitutional history, among other things, can only refer to the deliberate omission of the twelve articles of the peasants because the discussions about Roman law and the Femegericht have hardly any influence on the main plot in *Götz*, while the constitutional question, the question of despotism or political freedom and legality, is at the center of *Egmont*. Volker Neuhaus: *Götz von Berlichingen*. In (Buck 1997, pp. 78–99, here, p. 89).
- 48 WA I, 8, p. 77. This is also due to historical reasons, because in the class state of the 16th century, literacy was not a given and depended on belonging to a certain class; literate peasants were extremely rare.
- 49 Keller's view that the peasants' wedding provides an insight into the perverted legal situation and illuminates *Götz's* righteousness is based on the beliefs of Goethe's unbroken relationship with his hero, but does *Götz* not use this unlawfulness in the play to point out that he himself has ridden out for less. Instead of actively trying to establish a positive relationship between the peasants and the law, he only uses the situation to celebrate his own acts of violence as just. Does not Goethe thereby deliberately present his hero in an unfavorable light? Werner Keller: *Das Drama Goethes*. In (Hinck 1980, pp. 133–56, here, p. 136): WA I, 8, p. 79.
- 50 WA I, 8, p. 35. Olearius in *Götz* is a doctor of both rights, while Vansen in *Egmont* is described only as a scribe, but some citizens defend Vansen as a scholar. WA I, 8, p. 209.
- 51 Compare Walter Hinderer, who emphasizes the enthusiasm of the time when *Götz* was written for a man of 'colossal size'. Walter Hinderer: *Götz von Berlichingen*. In (Hinderer 1992, pp. 13–65, here p. 14). Gundolf, therefore, speaks of both *Götz* and *Faust* having been conceived by Goethe out of titanic and patriotic pathos (Gundolf 1922, p. 123). A hollow pathos? The question remains: isn't Martini quite right to say that *Götz* is not an autonomous subject but a driven, oppressed object constricted on all sides? Fritz Martini: *Goethe's Götz von Berlichingen. Charakterdrama und Gesellschaftsdrama*. In (Martini 1979, pp. 104–28, here, p. 114), Hinderer's and Gundolf's remarks do not question the author's relationship to his hero clearly enough; they presuppose the perhaps unconscious but hardly unqualified approval of the protagonist's actions. That remains questionable to me. In his speech on Shakespeare Day, Goethe himself speaks admiringly of the fact that Shakespeare created people of cosmic greatness, but does this immediately mean that the writer must have an unreservedly positive attitude towards them? I find nothing of this in the Shakespeare treatise. Only the creation of these dramatic figures is admired, not their character. WA I, 37, p. 133.
- 52 WA I, 8, p. 211.
- 53 '... I seem to be coming closer and closer to the goal of dramatic being since I am now more and more interested in how the great play with men and the gods with the great,' Goethe wrote to Charlotte von Stein in Berlin as early as 1778 about his journey with Duke Carl August (Goethe 1951, p. 393; see also Hartmann 1988, p. 27).
- 54 Schiller: WA 22, p. 204.
- 55 Goethe WA I, 8, p. 263 In this context, one may perhaps once again refer to the justified point of criticism of Schiller's adaptation of *Egmont*, which Goethe is said to have expressed to Eckermann in a conversation on Thursday, February 19, 1829, because many scholars have agreed with Schiller's point of view without contradiction. It was claimed that it is not good that the regent is missing, not only because she gives the play a more noble character but also because the political circumstances, especially in

relation to the Spanish court, become more apparent. This is understandable and may indeed be related to Schiller's penchant for polarization and violent confrontation, to which the tragedy is, in fact, reduced by the exclusive juxtaposition of Alba and Egmont (Eckermann 1987, p. 276). Although Henel complains that Goethe's cuts to the play in 'Uregmont' mean that the regent plays such an insignificant role in the tragedy before us that Schiller could simply have left her out, I cannot quite follow this argument. Heinrich Henel: Auf den Spuren des Uregmont. In (Henel 1980, pp. 102–29, here, p. 114): This would mean, for example, cutting the important characterization of other wiser, political minds at the Spanish court of Philip II; it is only through the regent's account that we learn how Alba differs from them. Schiller's cuts essentially make the tragedy far too one-sided in the present version and limit it too much to the conflict between Egmont and Alba. WA I, 8, p. 233.

56 As early as 1893, Huther spoke of the fact that Goethe had, according to his own statements, created the missing dramatic unity of the first version with the second version of *Götz*, without, however, going into detail in which way Goethe might have done that (Huther 1893, p. 4).

57 Herder had allegedly been so critical that Goethe undertook a revision, and only Merck was able to persuade him to publish the second version (Ebner 2002, p. 82). However, Neuhaus convincingly demonstrates that this view is based on the distorted account from *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, which arose from the later estrangement between Goethe and Herder. The impetus for the revision probably came from himself, for in his reply, Goethe had still assessed Herder's letter as a letter of consolation and expressed himself very self-critically. In support of this thesis, it can be added that elsewhere—in letters to friends—Herder praised the drama highly (Goethe 1951, p. 175). See also Volker Neuhaus: *Götz von Berlichingen*. In (Buck 1997, pp. 78–99), here, p. 82.

58 WA I, 39, p. 3.

59 WA I, 8, p. 5.

60 WA I, 37, p. 131.

61 WA I, 8, p. 58

62 WA I, 8, p. 226.

63 WA I, 8, p. 90.

64 WA I, 8, pp. 176–77.

65 WA I, 8, p. 214. Although Deiters describes Egmont's attitude in this scene as inconsistent and criticizes his inability to act, a close reading reveals that Egmont gives the secretary very specific instructions for action despite his reluctance. Franz-Josef Deiters: "Du bist nur Bild". Die Selbstbegründung des Geschichtsdramas in Goethes *Egmont*. In (Deiters and Cornelia 2000, pp. 65–88, here, p. 79).

66 WA I, 8, p. 9.

67 WA I, 8, p. 229.

68 WA I, 8, p. 273.

69 Hartmann's study provides an excellent general overview of the historical context. Egmont's execution, for example, is examined and historically comprehensibly categorized as an arbitrary judicial murder.

70 WA I, 8, p. 266.

71 Several times, people shout, high the great Egmont. WA I, 8, p. 178.

72 In the play, the reason for the peasants' trust in Götz is not immediately apparent. In his biography, however, Götz tells how he defends his peasants against the damage they have been willfully inflicted with (von Berlichingen 1998, p. 60). On the other hand, he describes the peasants during the peasant uprising as a tyrannical people to whom he had only committed himself in order to restore order. He considers their demands for freedom to be completely unjustified. As indicated, they are not given any consideration in Goethe's play either, unlike in Gerhart Hauptmann's aforementioned peasant war drama *Florian Geyer*, who deliberately makes the oppressive mechanisms of late medieval society the subject of his play and makes his Götz appear as a robber baron who breaks his word in the cause of the peasants—(von Berlichingen 1998, p. 80).

73 WA I, 8, p. 141, but Metzler also dies. According to a report by Lerse in the play, he is burned alive. Metzler is a historical character, but the historical sources only mention that he was considered missing after the last lost battle. Metzler, Kohl, Link, Hippler, and Stumpf are historical figures, some of whom appear in the knight's biography, while others are taken from other sources. Goethe treats them freely in the play. For example, it is only clear from the form of address that Stumpf belongs to the nobility because Götz treats him as an equal and asks why he does not want to become the captain of the peasants. Compare WA I, 8 p. 144, where Götz's autobiography is more detailed (von Berlichingen 1998, p. 79). On the Peasants' War in Franconia, see Rudolf Endres: *Franken*. In (Memmolo 1995, p. 134).

74 WA I, 8, p. 151.

75 Goethe adheres closely to the biographies here, as this position is also first offered to Max Stumpf, who rejects it. In the play, Stumpf describes himself as a servant of the Palatine Count; he would not be believed to be able to lead the peasants' cause and therefore proposes Götz. WA I, 8, p. 143. In Götz's own biography, one gets the impression that Stumpf suggests that Götz accept the role of captain, firstly because he could indeed prevent worse things from happening and secondly, because he only considers

himself a member of the common nobility and regards Götz's position to be more important (von Berlichingen 1980, p. 203). In this respect, Martini's interpretation that Goethe's Götz transcends his historical class affiliation and becomes a partisan of the social tendencies of the *stormer and stressor* does justice neither to the play nor to Götz's own life descriptions. In both cases, Götz is forced to act in order to prevent the worst from happening. Fritz Martini: Goethes Götz von Berlichingen. Charakterdrama und Gesellschaftsdrama. In (Martini 1979, p. 104–28, here, p. 112). Hinderer is also wrong when he divides the peasant clans into the Metzler and Stumpf parties; Stumpf belonged to an old noble Franconian family that was occasionally involved in feuds with Götz, so Götz encounters him on a different level than Metzler. Walter Hinderer: Götz von Berlichingen. In (Hinderer 1992, pp. 13–65, here, p. 26). Beyond this, however, Stumpf rejects the leadership of the peasants both in the biographies and in the play. WA I, 8, p. 143 (von Berlichingen 1998, pp. 40, 78). Furthermore, there are no entries in various books and sources about Stumpf's involvement in the Peasants' War. The only similarity between Stumpf and Metzler is that Metzler led the peasants' revolt in the Odenwald in a very moderate manner, while the noble Stumpf family was based in the Odenwald (Barge 1918, p. 33).

76 WA I, 8, pp. 165.

77 Götz was charged with a crime in 1528 and spent some time in the tower in Augsburg but did not have to pay a fine to the monastery in Mainz, he was even certified to have behaved impeccably towards Mainz in the Peasants' War (Ulmschneider 1980, p. 21).

78 WA I, 8, p. 252.

79 In Goethe's source, the closeness of Orange and others to Protestant princes in Germany is clearly worked out, but the author refrains from mentioning this in the tragedy (von Meteren 1603, p. 94). Religious motifs only become apparent in the drama through the conversation between Alba and Egmont. In his conversation with Egmont, Orange is only concerned with the republican freedom of the Netherlands. WA I, 8, p. 22.

80 WA I, 8, p. 191.

81 WA I, 8, p. 45.

82 Hinderer points out that Adelheid not only embodied the contemporary type of woman of power but also the lady of the world, gifted with political skill and a brilliant knowledge of human nature. Walter Hinderer: Götz von Berlichingen. In (Hinderer 1992, pp 13–65, here: p. 57): In contrast to Schiller's Marwood in *Kabale und Liebe* or Countess Orsina in Lessing's *Emilia Galotti*, however, Adelheid lacks heart. Life at court is characterized quite differently in *Egmont*, however, as long as the Regent of Parma is in charge of the affairs of the State. Goethe's condemnation of courtly life is only partially valid here and is dependent on the personalities.

83 '... it is not against my vow to drink wine, but because wine is against my vow, I do not drink wine... ', says the monk Martin, and Götz demands an explanation, which he does not receive; instead, Martin simplifies his choice of words and themes in what follows. One can cautiously speak here of a hierarchization of the use of language in Goethe's work. There is no doubt that the learned monk is better at using words than the battle-hardened knight. WA I, 8, p. 12.

84 WA I, 8, p. 217. On the subject of language, see the excellent essay by (Bartl 2005, p. 106 ff). Bartl makes it clear that although Goethe could not have been aware of Derrida's and de Saussure's statements on language as an arbitrary system of signs, we can already read a clear linguistic skepticism from his works such as *Götz* and *Egmont*. Goethe was undoubtedly aware of Plato's and Aristotle's ideas on the idea of language, for example, as an 'ergon' tool, and was aware that language can serve to create a political worldview. Of course, Götz and Weislingen, Egmont and Orange, the Regent of Parma and Alba do not question the symbolic meaning of the signs; they just use them, but should they not? After all, they are acting in a political world in which the use of signs as symbols has a significance that should not be overestimated. The fact that Goethe does not reflect on language here has to do with the theme of the plays and his characters, who act in a political world. Nevertheless, the use of language in *Egmont* is far more reflective and less emotional than in *Götz*. Bartl refrains from going into these developmental tendencies and only deals generally, but convincingly, with the phenomenon of linguistic skepticism in both plays and other works by Goethe.

85 Jakob Minor tries to prove with convincing and comprehensible arguments how the scene with Egmont and the secretary must have been written in Weimar, not already in Frankfurt, and how it has partly autobiographical traits, because Goethe himself had a secretary in Phillip Seidel who was capable of forging his signatures. Jakob Minor: Entstehungsgeschichte und Stil des *Egmont*. In (Die Grenzboten 1883, pp. 361–70, here, p. 365).

86 WA I, 8, p. 16 For Peter Michelsen, the iron hand in the play symbolizes the fact that dependence, even physical mutilation, can be overcome by the spirit. Ilse Appelbaum Graham, on the other hand, interprets the iron hand as symbolizing Götz's deeply wounded and destroyed existence. Both seem doubtful to me because, for Götz, it has become a simple utensil in the play, which he can use excellently in battle but not for shaking hands. Peter Michelsen: Goethe's "Götz": Geschichte dramatisiert? In (Keller 1993, pp. 41–60, here, p. 51). Ilse A. Graham: Vom Urgötz zum Götz: Neufassung oder Neuschöpfung. In (Martini et al. 1965, pp. 245–82, here, p. 248 ff). Ilse Graham Appelbaum: Götz von Berlichingen's Right Hand. In (Boyd et al. 1963, pp. 212–28, here, p. 213). For Neuhaus, the iron hand is a symbol of protest against the mutilation of absolutism, which wants a subservient subject. Volker Neuhaus: Götz von Berlichingen. In (Buck 1997, pp. 78–99, here, p. 94): A position with which my interpretation is most likely to agree because the iron hand is an excellent tool for feud and war. At least at this point, it makes the fighter invulnerable, insensible, and painless, giving him superhuman strength in battle. However, Götz is not fighting against absolutism because absolutism does not yet exist, at least not at the time of the historical Götz. For him, the feud is a knightly right and an end in

itself. The play supports my thesis. As indicated below (see Note 95), the citizens of Heilbronn are not able to capture Götz in the play. Can the iron hand then still be a symbol of mutilation at all? I doubt it. Instead, it becomes a symbol of invulnerability, of almost superhuman strength, typical for the character of the colossal size of *the Storm and Stress* period!

87 WA I, 8, p. 217.

88 Schiller: WA, 22, p. 202 (Schiller 1958).

89 Of course, in the case of rape, the sentence can also be judged to be far too lenient from a modern legal perspective. What are a few strokes of the rod and the payment of a dowry against rape, but we are in the 16th century, a time when executions were still carried out and celebrated as public events in the middle of the marketplace. Furthermore, women were not treated as equal partners in German marriage law until well into the 20th century. WA I, 8, p. 214. In contrast to the prince in Lessing's *Emilia Galotti*—who is so driven by his sexual desires that he would immediately sign a death warrant for his secretary without thinking—Egmont acts in this performance with deliberation and prudence. Like Weislingen in *Götz*, the prince succumbs to his sexual wishes and sacrifices everything for them; we could interpret. Unless Weislingen's move is to be interpreted as political prudence in connecting with the powerful bishop of Bamberg through Adelheid, be that as it may, there are not enough comparative studies of characters in 18th-century dramas who succumb to their sexual desires and fail, such as Weislingen and the Prince (Lessing 2000, p. 307). Goethe was, of course, familiar with Lessing's *Emilia Galotti*, as can be seen from his reply to Herder's 'Critique' of *Urgötz*, in which Goethe complains that his *Urgötz*, like Emilia Galotti, is only a mind game and does not incorporate ties to reality (Goethe 1951, p. 175).

90 We must not forget that Schiller wrote this review before his studies of Kant and before his friendship with Goethe, both of which had a moderating effect on his unconditional demands in all moral questions. Here, however, the idea of unconditional loyalty, love, and devotion, as we encounter it in *Kabale und Liebe*, may still have been the only ideal in his mind.

91 WA I, 8, p. 84.

92 Friedrich Schiller: *Kabale und Liebe*, WA 5, pp. 13. The fact that Alba's son in Goethe's tragedy is also called Ferdinand proves that such an interpretation is not too bold. Egmont recommends Klärchen to him at the end. Can this be understood as an ironic allusion by Goethe to Schiller's *Kabale und Liebe*, especially as Alba's son was historically given the name Fabrique and Ferdinand?

93 Referring to Kayser and Herder, Martini speaks of *Götz* as a combination of character drama and social drama, but should we not also speak of this work as a family drama? In this play for *Götz*, the family is a point of escape from a violent world. This point of escape exists for Egmont in its most original and endangered form through his love affair with Klärchen. Fritz Martini: *Goethes Götz von Berlichingen. Charakterdrama und Gesellschaftsdrama*. In (Martini 1979, pp. 104–28, here, p. 114).

94 WA I, 8, p. 278.

95 WA I, 8, p. 125 This passage is also based on *Götz* autobiography. The citizens of Heilbronn try in vain to persuade Götz to swear an oath of allegiance. He refuses and prefers to be thrown into the tower; when his 'brother-in-law' Franz von Sickingen and Georg von Fundsberg even appear with horsemen at the gates of Heilbronn, the citizens give up, according to *Götz's* own account (von Berlichingen 1998, p. 58). A further minor but significant difference to the drama is that the citizens in Goethe's drama are unable to arrest Götz because he is clearly physically superior to them. Goethe endows his hero with extraordinary physical powers; Götz becomes a legendary Storm and Stress figure endowed almost with superpowers. WA I, 8, p. 126.

96 Theo Buck, who convincingly examines the dramaturgy of the ending of Goethe's *Egmont* in a fine essay, speaks of the divine freedom that appears at the end as a symbol of a general humane movement, yet he feels compelled to note that Goethe was certainly not a democrat, let alone a political revolutionary. Certainly, Goethe was not a revolutionary, but the question of democracy is hardly adequately answered by Buck's investigation because the question remains as to why Goethe presents us with a state system that focuses on an innocent hero struggling for freedom who is condemned to death if he does not want to criticize this absolutist, tyrannical state system and thus possibly implicitly replace it with another more liberal state system?—The idea of a liberal State at least as a hidden ideal in the play cannot be excluded. Theo Buck: *Zur Dramaturgie des Schlusses von Goethes Egmont*, In (Heidelberg-Leonard and Tabah 2000, pp. 35–45, here, p. 41).

97 The historical Egmont was Catholic. In Goethe's drama, however, he behaves like a Protestant. However, Goethe does not make Egmont's Catholicism the subject. Without historical knowledge, one would easily be tempted to think that when Egmont confronts Duke Alba in the fourth act, the new liberal, peaceful Protestant thinking is mercilessly destroyed by the old, repressive, inquisitorial, tyrannical, and Catholic despotism. WA I, 8, p. 266. This may also have led Jürgen Schröder to say that freedom and tolerance in the form of religious freedom are suppressed in the tragedy, but I think that religion is only a secondary aspect. It is about the form of government. Why else would Goethe have introduced Machiavelli, whose work on the republic he added to his library, as mentioned, and who had been so unappreciated and misunderstood since Schiller cut him from the play? (Schröder 1994, p. 53; also in Hinck 2006, pp. 101–15, here, p. 104).

98 Schulz points out that in terms of dramaturgy, Alba cannot be considered a fully-fledged antagonist for Egmont, as he only has one joint appearance with him. In terms of content, however, all the more can be added, as Alba is the most powerful character on stage. Georg Michael Schulz. *Egmont*. In (Buck 1997, pp. 154–72), here, p. 156.

99 WA I, 8, p. 258.

- 100 William of Orange: Appeal to the Dutch in 1568, in (Lindken 1996, p. 24). This may have something to do with the fact that Egmont was already arrested in 1567 and also appears in Goethe's earlier source more as a figure preventing further uprisings by the iconoclasts in Flanders than as a genuine revolutionary (von Meteren 1603, p. 76).
- 101 WA I, 8, p. 269.
- 102 WA I, 8, p. 269.
- 103 WA I, 8, p. 82.
- 104 In both *Götz* and *Urgötz*, there is a statement made by a young lady to Adelheid in which she says, upon seeing Weislingen's portrait, that Weislingen looks like the emperor's son. Such hidden references in the play can certainly be interpreted as a symbol that Weislingen is the emperor's mouthpiece and realizes his intentions. At the same time, however, it also illustrates a growing stark contrast between the emperor and the feud-loving Götz and makes his declaration of respect for the emperor (see Note 11) appear to be mere lip service. WA I, 8, p. 59 and WA I, 39, p. 59.
- 105 On this point, we can agree with Henel when he criticizes Jakob Minor's treatise of 1883 as inherently contradictory. Minor insisted that the relationship between Alba and Egmont could be compared with that between Weislingen and Götz and could still be clearly attributed to the Sturm und Drang (Storm and Stress) period, although Minor himself points out that Goethe first changed the Alba-Egmont scene in 1778 and even revised the fourth act again in Italy. Goethe's Machiavelli studies have long since taken him into a completely different area of state theory, and it is all too obvious that Weislingen cannot argue on such a political level as Alba. However, Henel makes no comments whatsoever on the significance of Goethe's Machiavelli studies for his *Egmont*. Jakob Minor: Entstehungsgeschichte und Stil des Egmont. In (Die Grenzboten 1883, pp. 361–70, here, p. 361, 370; Henel 1980, pp. 102–29, here, p. 104).
- 106 This insight can also lead to a differentiated view of the idea, often repeated since Wiese 1948, that Alba and Egmont are demonic characters. The demonic nature of the soul in the figure of Egmont contrasts with the demonic nature of the impersonal will to power in the figure of Alba, explains Wiese, but neither Alba nor Egmont shows any signs of demonic uncontrolled impulsiveness, which can be attributed much more to Weislingen. Alba and Egmont, in difference, present their positions with complete self-control (von Wiese 1983, p. 84). Wiese can refer to Goethe in his explanations, but he links the demonic with the great power emanating from certain characters; all united moral forces would be powerless against them. So, when we speak of the demonic in Goethe's sense, we must note that demonic possession has nothing to do with the control of a character by arbitrary and destructive spirits that take hold of a person but come from within. Wiese's explanations are not entirely clear. Although the Weimar edition, the memory edition, and the Munich edition all differ slightly in their rendering of the twentieth book in the fourth part of *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, which deals with Egmont and the demonic, since the careful modernizations of the later versions of *Dichtung und Wahrheit* are not important for this essay, we will rely on the oldest version, the Weimar edition. WA I, 29, p. 175. Böckmann still refers to the conversation between Alba and Egmont before Egmont's arrest as the demonic and the uncanny without explaining exactly what he means by this. In the case of the characters Machiavelli and Alba, however, demonic possession in the conventional sense of being controlled by an uncontrollable power that whispers destructive instructions to the possessed for no reason is completely incomprehensible because they think and act with foresight, just as Machiavelli demands of the statesmanlike politician. Even if Alba's actions are not morally justifiable from a modern point of view, they are still logically comprehensible. Paul Böckmann: Goethe Egmont. In (von Wiese 1958, pp. 147–68, here, pp. 156, 164). The thoughts on politics and governance by Machiavelli, found in Latin translation in Goethe's library, give advice on how to confront an ambitious citizen in a free state when the state's morals are corrupt, just as Alba does to Egmont in the tragedy. For Alba, the Protestant rebellion, the iconoclasm, is corruption, and, in his view, only he himself can lead the state back onto the right path. There is no doubt, then, that when we speak of Alba's demonic behavior here, we should by no means understand it as an uncontrolled outburst of violence out of pure self-indulgence (Machiavelli 1941b, p. 67) (Goethe 1985).
- 107 Nägele points out that there are different approaches to interpretation and that both Adelheid and Götz appear to some as genuine original natures, but their destructive effect is unmistakable, especially in the *Urgötz*; moderate behavior and judgment do not seem to be given either to Adelheid or to Götz. Rainer Nägele: Götz von Berlichingen. In (Hinderer 1980, pp. 65–77, here p. 73); Keller adds a nice observation by pointing out that Adelheid is playing chess, and this first appearance in the play anticipates how she deals with men. Werner Keller: Das Drama Goethes. In (Hinck 1980, pp. 133–56, here, p. 135): She plays chess in both versions of *Götz* and *Urgötz*. Is she playing chess out of a pure desire for destruction, one might ask, and how can this calculated behavior be reconciled with genuine, original naturalness?
- 108 WA I, 8, p. 187.
- 109 Can *Egmont* then still be described, like Keller suggests, as a Sturm und Drang drama (see Note 2), whose outstanding quality, according to Zenke, who cites many convincing examples, is a passionate urge for self-realization?—*Egmont* goes far beyond the narrow confines of Sturm und Drang, not only in its considerations of the theory of the State but also in the design of the individual character, as explained above. Jürgen Zenke: Das Drama des Sturm und Drang. In (Hinck 1980, pp. 120–32, here, p. 124).
- 110 WA I, 8, p. 224 (Sengle 1974).
- 111 Borchmeyer, for example, attributes *Egmont* to Weimar Classicism, albeit without distinguishing between the early and late phases of the era or even considering it (Borchmeyer 1994, p. 148). Reed deals with the problem in an allusive way by mentioning that

(‘... *Egmont* [...] did not befit a classicist’) but nevertheless attributes the work to the Weimar period (Reed 1980, p. 123). Sengle at least assigns the tragedy to the pre-classical period and writes in old-fashioned diction of the formal discipline of *Egmont*, which goes beyond *Götz*. However, he does not explain either term (Sengle 1974, p. 48). The problem of classifying *Egmont*’s epoch is very well addressed by Steffan Davis. Steffan Davies: Goethe’s ‘*Egmont*’ in Schiller’s adaptation. In (Frick et al. 2006, pp. 12–24, here p. 18).

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