

The revolution that occurred within German literature in the years between 1773 and 1783, commonly referred to as the period of the 'Sturm und Drang' (Storm and Stress), gained in credibility and importance through its association with two of the greatest poets that German literature has produced: Friedrich Schiller and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. Although, at the time, both poets were only in the beginning stages of their illustrious careers, their early creative efforts nevertheless qualitatively enhance the literary output of an era known more for its ideological and philosophical innovations than for the works that emerged from it: with the exception of Schiller and Goethe no 'Sturm und Drang' writer has received universal recognition. Emerging as one of the more notable works of the period is Goethe's Goetz von Berlichingen¹, a tragedy based on the historical exploits of the German knight Gottfried von Berlichingen (1480-1562) whose autobiography titled Lebensbeschreibung des Herrn Goetz von Berlichingen appeared in 1731 and was extensively studied by the young Goethe². Although some scholars

have emphasized the epigonal nature of the play, noting its resemblance to the works of

¹The edition used for this essay is the one found in Walter Metzger ed., Zweimal Goetz von Berlichingen (Luebeck: Verlag Schmidt-Roemhild, 1980). Subsequent referral to play will be indicated by page numbers only.

²The facts surrounding the biographical background that led to the creation of the play have been extracted from Ronald Peacock's Goethe's Major Plays (Manchester: Manchester Press, 1959), pp. 12-13.

Shakespeare³, this particular route will not be followed here. Instead, this essay will consist of a straightforward analysis of 'Storm and Stress' elements within the play, thereby justifying the place that it has been accorded by literary historians. Special emphasis will be laid on the play's incorporation of the concepts of the 'ganze Kerl' and 'Weltschmerz'.

A good starting point when discussing the Weltanschauung of the 'Sturm und Drang' poets is the concept of the original genius, with which the idea of the 'ganze Kerl' is closely related (some scholars actually use both terms interchangeably). The original, or natural, Genius was a revolutionary figure for, as Peacock notes, he was a man "greatly human and free", emotional rather than rational, residing "proudly in the bosom of mother nature", and endowed with a fundamental sense for justice⁴. In short, he was anti-enlightenment, anti-Rococo, and anti-establishment. It is important to note that the term 'natural genius', unlike the 'ganze Kerl', is

³Following Leasing's direction, Herder, considered to be a major influence on the young Goethe, pointed towards Shakespeare and England in his Fragmente ueber die neuere deutsche Literatur (1766). Yet, upon reading the first draft of Goetz, he wrote to the young poet, stating that "Shakespeare has ruined you completely", indicating that Goethe had perhaps followed his advice with more fervour than the philosopher liked to see. Anecdotes, such as this one fuel the 'epigone argument', as witnessed in Henry Hatfield's Goethe - A Critical Introduction (Cambridge, Mas.: Harvard University Press) 19-32.

⁴For a more comprehensive examination of the idea of natural genius, especially as it applies to the character of Goetz, turn to Peacock 13-17

equally applicable to the creatively unrestrained poet as well as to the characters he has created; yet, when it is applied to the creator rather than to the created it entails a number of additional meanings, namely a Shakespeare-like escape from the Aristotelian guidelines for the drama, as well as a fundamental rejection of anything resembling the french neo-classicistic tradition which had dominated german literature up to that point in time.

Exactly how the concept of the 'ganze Kerl' was incorporated into the play can best be exemplified by extracting those passages which best portray Goetz's free-spirited, independent nature; for, as mentioned, it is there that the essence of the natural genius lies. What follows, then, is a chronological, systematic search for these passages.

When we first encounter Goetz he is in the process of kidnapping the knight Weislingen⁵, an action necessitated by his ongoing feud with the bishop of Bamberg. In a subsequent discussion with the captured knight, which revealed that the two of them had been close friends during childhood, Goetz urges the former to leave the court at Bamberg and return to his knightly principles. He states:

⁵Weislings character serves as an antithesis to Goetz and is at times viewed as incorporating biographical traits of Goethe. Although not essential to a discussion of the 'Sturm und Drang' elements in the works, a brief analysis of the character will follow later.

... Was hast du von dem Bischof? Weil er dein Nachbar ist , dich necken
koennte? Hast du nicht Arme und Freunde, ihn wieder zu necken? Verkennst
den Wert eines freien Rittersmanns, der nur abhaengt von Gott, seinem Kaiser
und sich selbst! p.60

This deeply entrenched sense of knightly duty, an integral part of what Hans Voser calls his
"ritterliche Ich"⁶, also propels Goetz into the role of the 'original genius' for, it is the belief in the
traditionally independent and just lifestyle of the medieval 'Rittertum' that distinguishes him from
the corrupt society around him: Goetz's fight to keep up the chivalrous tradition is as
revolutionary as the poets' fight for creative individualism. Goetz's advice to Weislingen, then,
roughly outlines the essentials of what constitutes the make-up of Goethe's 'ganzer Kerl'.

The scene in the Herberge in the second act is notable for a number of reasons. First and
foremost, it reinforces the idea of independence, so essential to the make-up of the 'original
genius': by freely associating and aiding members of the lower class, in this case the wronged
groom and father of the bride, Goetz demonstrates that he has removed himself from the
confines of traditional class division. Yet a second, more subtle, argument can be made which
essentially states that Goetz's association with the common people reflects the resurgence of
literary interest in the 'Volk and the voelkische'. Stimulated by Herder's Ossian und die lieder

⁶For a comprehensive study of individualism in Goetz turn to Hans Ulrich Vogel's Individualitaet
und Tragik in Goethes Dramen (Zuerich: Artemis Verlag, 1949) 21-62

alter Voelker⁷ and Stimmen der Voelker in Liedern the poets of the 'Sturm und Drang' advocated and emulated (i.e. Goethe's "das Heidenroeslein") the 'Urpoesie' extracted from folk culture. Goethe's use of german history in the work under discussion should be viewed as part of this movement. Subsequently it can be hypothesized that the actions of the 'natural genius' Goetz mirror the attitudes of the literary epoch out of which he emerges.

Having strayed a little, let us once more return to some passages which epitomize those qualities in Goetz that allow us to classify him as the 'ganze Kerl'. Upon hearing, in Act III, that the emperor has sent troops against him and that he will likely be outnumbered, Goetz states defiantly: " Ein Wolf ist einer ganzen Herde Schafe zuviel" (117). He follows this remark with an anecdote about a past experience where he found himself in similar circumstances:

So kamen sie mir auch einmal, wie ich dem Pfalzgrafen zugesagt hatte, gegen Konrad Schotten zu dienen; da legt er mir einen Zettel aus der Kanzlei vor, wie ich reiten und mich halten sollt; da warf ich den Raeten das Papier wieder dar und sagt, ich wuesst nicht darnach zu handeln,... (117).

An almost naive self confidence and open defiance of authority, especially when this authority is perceived to be in the wrong, are the marks of the 'natural Genius'. The latter of these two

⁷Herder mistook Macpherson's creation for 'Urpoesie'. For a more detailed summary of Herder's philosophy and its influence on the poets of the 'Sturm and Drang' turn to Werner Friedrich's An Outline History of German Literature (New York: Barnes & Noble Inc, 1970) 81-92.

qualities is of special importance for, any revolutionary action automatically necessitates and incorporates defiance of the authority, being that it is the upholder of the status quo; Goetz's stand against the emperor is as essential as the young "Sturm and Drang" poets' defiance of traditional literary authorities: both are integral parts of the make-up of a philosophy out of which the 'original genius' may emerge⁸. Thus, when Goetz makes his by now legendary remark: "Er aber, sag's ihm, er kann mich ---" (138), he not only demonstrates his contempt in a rather vulgar manner, but at the same time, speaks for a whole generation of young poets.⁹

It should be noted, however, that Goetz's defiance of authority is limited to his equals for, as witnessed in Act IV, he readily accepts the emperor as his superior:

Truegst du nicht das Ebenbild des Kaisers, das ich in dem gesudelsten Konterfei verehere, du solltest mir den Raeuber fressen und dran erwuergen. (154)

Remarks such as these, in which Goetz honours his 'Kaiser', can be detected throughout the

⁸This point is supported by Peacock who argues that "they [the S&T poets] saw him [Goetz] as the champion of a temperament and way of life radically opposed to the conventional world of the Enlightenment and a society dominated by French taste and culture." Peacock p.15

⁹It is interesting to note that none of the scholars encountered while doing research for this paper saw it fit to include this famous remark in their analysis of the work; the nature of the quote, namely its vulgarity, probably caused this omission. Yet, by neglecting Goetz's vulgar outburst, they have forfeited a valuable piece of evidence, for in it, the defiance of a whole generation is splendidly exemplified.

play, indicating that he exists outside the realm of what is to be condemned. When, therefore, we talk of Goetz's struggle against a corrupt and immoral society, it would be fallacious to conclude that this involves a rebellion against the governmental system as such for, in Goetz's ideal world the emperor holds a legitimate position above the rest of the social order. The extent to which Goetz combines his utopian vision with the legitimate role of the emperor is defined earlier in the play when he states:

Waer uns das nicht genug..., gegen die Fuechse die Franzosen lagern und zugleich unsers teuren Kaisers sehr ausgesetzte Laender und die Ruhe des Reichs beschuetzen. Das waere ein Leben, Georg, wenn man seine Haut fuer die allgemeine Glueckseligkeit dran setzte. (143)

Freedom and happiness for Goetz exist in the "allgemeine Glueckseligkeit", the common good, symbolized by the emperor ruling over a unified german state, in which chivalry instead of intrigue are the order of the day¹⁰. Subsequently, Goetz's independence is limited by the authority of the 'Kaiser', a point that is reinforced in Act IV, when he submits to the emperor's will¹¹.

¹⁰This image of a just and benevolent emperor who would rule over a united germany survived well into the 19th century. Heine, for example, in his Wintermaerchen revives, although in a sarcastic way, the legend of the sleeping Barbarossa who one day would awake to re-unite his empire.

¹¹This statement involves a slight simplification: although it is true that for a while at least Goetz

To end off this discussion on Goetz as a 'ganzer Kerl' let us return to one of the reoccurring motives in the play, that is, the concept of freedom. In contrast to the monk Martin, whom we meet early in Act I, and who speaks of himself as living in a cage (p.45), unlike Weislingen who is trapped by his own emotions, Goetz is a character who cherishes freedom and for whom freedom is a quintessential part of existence. This freedom must also be expanded past the Rousseauian idea of breakage from the societal chains, for in the play it takes on an almost religious dimension.

Thus, while anticipating the battle with the numerically superior forces of the emperor in Act II,

Goetz's defiant question:

... Und wenn unser Blut anfaengt, auf die Neige zu gehen, wie der Wein in dieser Flasche erst schwach, dann tropfenweise rinnt, was soll unser letztes Wort sein?
(p.141)

is answered by a threefold repetition of the shout: "Es lebe die Freiheit!" (p.141). That this

'worship' of freedom is more than a minor aspect of Goetz's character is demonstrated by his

follows the emperor's orders by retiring to his castle, in act V he once again takes up arms to lead the peasant rebellion. On first glance it would seem that Goetz has forsaken his chivalrous duty and betrayed his own philosophy. Yet, as Voser argues, by not joining the rebellion he would have been equally guilty of betraying his knighthood, for it is in his nature to fight - inactivity would have been tantamount to spiritual death. For a detailed discussion on how Goetz overcomes this split, turn to Voser 39-41.

last words: " - Himmlische Luft- Freiheit! Freiheit!" (p. 197). Liberty, here closely entwined with nature (a common combination in 'Sturm und Drang' literature), is elevated to the realm of the gods. By doing so Goetz reemphasizes his position as a 'ganzer Kerl', while simultaneously pointing towards a crucial aspect of 'Sturm und Drang' philosophy.

A discussion of the character of Weislingen, although not of primary value when examining the "Sturm und Drang" element within the work, nevertheless serves well in rounding off the 'original genius' argument. In his infidelity towards Marie¹² as well as in his betrayal of Goetz, Weislingen demonstrates some of his anti-heroic qualities, which have led some scholars to view him as the antithesis of Goetz. Taken to its logical completion one could then argue that by merely examining the weaknesses in the character of Weisling, including his indecisiveness and his penchant for submission, one could detect what an 'original genius' is not. Yet, no such claims will be made here. A more subtle approach to this line of argument would be to state that Weislingen serves to reemphasize the 'natural genius' qualities in Goetz: by making him into such a contrastive figure, Goethe heightens the image of Goetz as a 'ganzer Kerl'. Whether

¹²Although some scholars have pointed out the parallels between Weisling's betrayal of Marie and Goethe's own abandonment of Friederike Brion (i.e. Hatfield), one should, as Voser points out, treat this point with caution. For different views of this argument turn to Voser p. 54 and Hatfield p. 27-28.

this contrast was necessary, or whether the creation of Weisling adds to the inaccessibility of the play, as Peacock seems to suggest¹³, remains a point of contention.

The last part of this paper will deal with the idea of 'Weltschmerz' and its importance in the discussion of the 'Sturm und Drang' elements within the work. The term itself is considered mostly a romantic phenomenon and refers to the inability of an individual, especially a 'natural genius', to cope with the realities of the world; this inability to exist within the parameters of everyday existence usually leads to the individual's downfall.¹⁴ Although, as mentioned, the term is generally applied when discussing the German Romantic movement, it is also of importance when examining the works of the 'Sturm und Drang' poets -- Goethe's Werther, especially, comes to mind. Although not as predominant a theme as in the aforementioned work, the study of the 'Weltschmerz' as it is applicable to Goetz von Berlichingen, is nevertheless a worthwhile exercise.

A superficial examination of the plot is sufficient to reveal that Goetz is a man incapable of adjusting to the reality of his times. Thus, he searches for justice in places where intrigue rules and he demands loyalty from those incapable of delivering, as is seen in the case of Weislingen.

¹³Peacock p.22

¹⁴This definition is partially based on that of Friedrich 114-115.

As Hatfield puts it: " Goetz is fated to live in the age when the growing power of the princes, the adoption of Roman law, the whole regularization of society make his virtues increasingly untimely."¹⁵ Goetz's 'Weltschmerz' finds its origins in historical circumstances rather than in the isolation created by an overactive imagination, as was the case for many of the romantic poets.¹⁶ Nevertheless, it is a 'real' phenomenon that can readily be detected in specific passages of the text.

'Weltschmerz' is well defined in act III, where Goetz, describing the fate of the emperor, states:

Ich weiss, er wuescht sich manchmal lieber tot, als laenger die Seele eines so kruepplichen Koerpers zu sein. (141).

This soul/body conflict should be viewed as a primitive, yet effective, evocation of the

'Weltschmerz' motive for, it exemplifies the important aspect of division between the ideal, the soul, and the real, the "krueppliche Koerper". The concept of physical reality as a form of

imprisonment re-emerges at the end of the play where, upon Goetz's death, Elisabeth exclaims:

"Nur droben, droben bei dir. Die Welt ist ein Gefaengnis." (197). Whether Elisabeth actually expressed her own frame of mind or whether she had become an extension of Goetz's (and

¹⁵Hatfield p. 30

¹⁶It remains to be examined whether a hierarchy of 'Weltschmerz'- one that separates a more primitive, historical from a purely psychological one - does exist.

Goethe's) Weltschmerz is a point of little importance. What should be noted, however, is that her utterance indicates the existence of a dichotomy between the 'I' and the physical world, thereby supplying further evidence that the concept of 'Weltschmerz' has, indeed, been incorporated into the work.

Conclusion

That Goethe's Goetz von Berlichingen should be classified as a 'Sturm und Drang' play was clear from the onset of this paper. I hope that this examination of the aspects of the 'ganze Kerl' and the 'Weltschmerz', both important 'Sturm and Drang' elements, has reinforced that position to a degree that is deemed adequate for an undergraduate level. Still, further studies, especially in the realm of the Weltschmerz, are needed in order to do the topic full justice. This paper should, therefore, be viewed as a starting point for future endeavours.

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ELEMENTS OF THE 'STURM UND DRANG' IN GOETHE'S
GOETZ VON BERLICHINGEN

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