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GOETHE AND SCHILLER ABOUT GERMAN EPIC POETRY**

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CONNECTING ANCIENT AND MODERN: THE MEDIEVAL PLOT ABOUT THE FOX AND THE DISCUSSION BETWEEN GOETHE AND SCHILLER ABOUT GERMAN EPIC POETRY²

The article presents an attempt to examine Goethe's poem "*Reineke Fox*" in connection with the discussion between Goethe and Schiller about the nature of epic poetry and the principles of its renewal within the poetics of "Weimar Classicism". Goethe's innovations in interpreting the medieval plot of the Fox, corresponding to the principles of construction of ancient epic poems due to the fame of the plot, the balance of retardations and predictions and the renewal of the German hexameter, etc., will be discussed in the correspondence between Goethe and Schiller. It substantiates the principles of constructing the German epic with the tasks of forming a new literature.

JEL Classification: Z.

Key words: medieval epic, Weimar Classicism, Goethe and Schiller's theory of epic poetry, "*Reineke Fox*", hexameter.

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Introduction

Many studies have been devoted to the perception of antiquity as a cultural utopia in Goethe's era (Jacobs, 2006, Kaiser, 1992, Riedel, 2002, 2010, Friedland, 2020). A number of works analyze the specificity of Goethe's hexameter, which is interpreted as a reinterpretation not only the Homeric form, but also of contemporary German translations of the ancient epic, in particular, F. Klopstock and J. Voss (Egloff, 2022, Schweizer, 2008) and describe ways to integrate hexameters that contradict the German prosodic system into German poetry (Chisholm, 1995, Noel, 2006, Friedland, 2020). In this case, the poem "*Hermann and Dorothea*" ("*Hermann und Dorothea*") is most often used for the analysis of Goethe's epic poetry, and much less often "*Reineke Fox*" ("*Reineke Fuchs: In zwölf Gesängen*").

In the latter, a number of aspects remain undeveloped, in particular, those techniques of the Homeric epic that Goethe organically applied in his interpretation of the plot about the Fox. In addition, the discussion between Goethe and Schiller about the nature of epic poetry, as well as Goethe's article "*On Epic and Dramatic Poetry*" ("*Über epische und dramatische Dichtung*"), appeared later and, it would seem, had no direct relation to the work on the poem. Nevertheless, as we are trying to show, they are an organic continuation of Goethe's reflections on the tasks of modern German culture, which are based on the modernization of the ancient form as a cultural ideal in Germany at the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries.

The story of the Fox, which is the oldest extant example of medieval animal epic, became the source of numerous branches of the "*Roman de Renard*" concept in France. In Germany, it acquired the status of a folk book that has endured countless editions and has been repeatedly translated into German.

The source of Goethe's poem "*Reineke Fox*", which, according to his notes made in 1793 occupied a position "half in the way of translation and half of recastment" ("*zwischen Uebersetzung und Umarbeitung*"), was the poem in medieval Low German "*Reinke de vos*", translated by J. Gottsched in 1752 (Goethe, 1900, P. 195; Goethe, 1960, S. 20). Goethe significantly reworked the text, focusing on the theory of the German epic, which he developed together with Schiller within the framework of the utopia of creating a single national culture through the renewal of art.

In the correspondence between Goethe and Schiller, as well as in Goethe's article "*On Epic and Dramatic Poetry*", the basic principles of the new doctrine of epic poetry are set out, which, as we have found out, are consistently embodied in the "*Reineke Fox*". The main elements of this new genre of Weimar Classicism include the independence of the parts of the epic poem, concentration on every essential moment of the narrative, and the use of a familiar

plot, predictions, and explanations. These are aimed at reducing reader's curiosity and focus on artistic techniques and artistic expressive means, which distinguish Goethe's epic from other German renderings of the plot about the Fox. Goethe, following Homer, used the law of retardation, considering it as the main property of epic poetry, and also rethought the results obtained by other German authors in the process of constructing the German hexameter. This allows us to consider the poem in the light of current translation studies discussions at the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries.

The story of the Fox was first published anonymously in Germany in 1498 in Lübeck. Later, its various versions were repeatedly reprinted during the 16th-18th centuries in various adaptations and translations, becoming one of the most popular books for home reading in northern Germany (Scheffler, 1972: 86). Goethe became interested in this subject in the 1780s, when he purchased an edition of J. Gottsched's translation with magnificent copper engravings by the Dutch artist A. Everdingen at a book fair. However, work on Goethe's own version of the Fox story began only a decade later, in the era of the French Revolution, when news of the execution of Louis XVI reached Weimar, and the story of the rogue fox who outwitted the king and all his subjects and gained state power acquired new relevance. In "*Campaign in France*" ("*Kampagne in Frankreich*"), Goethe describes his oppressed state when the world appeared to him "bloodier and bloodthirstier than ever" ("*die Welt erschien mir blutiger und blutdürstiger als jemals*") and "*Reineke Fox*" turned out to be the "most congenial subject for treating" ("*wünschenswertester Gegenstand für ... Behandlung*") (Goethe, 1849, P. 292, Goethe, 1948, S. 359, Goethe, 1900, P. 195, Goethe, 1960, S. 20).

Goethe and Schiller's Discussion on Epic Poetry and Drama

In 1797, Goethe and Schiller began to discuss the similarities and differences between epic and drama in a correspondence. Goethe summarized this discussion in "*On Epic and Dramatic Poetry*", which centered on the key thesis that epic and tragedy obey to common artistic laws, i.e. the unity of a developing action aimed at depicting similar objects that must be "purely human, important, and pathetic" ("*rein menschlich, bedeutend und pathetisch*") (Schiller, Goethe, 1845, P. 380, Schiller, Goethe, 1905, S. 504). According to Goethe and Schiller, the authors of such narratives can be represented equally as poets and can use any motive. However, a rhapsode, who works with the heroic-historical material, is provided with a calmly listening audience unlike the mime, who stage-presents satirical and everyday subjects to the public and is surrounded by an impatient crowd (Schiller, Goethe, 1905, P. 504).

Schiller viewed the independence of the text's parts as one of the most important features of epic poetry. Schiller wrote in a letter dated April 21, 1797:

Naked truth, drawn out of the inmost sources, is the object of the epic poet: he depicts to us merely the tranquil existence and working of things according to their natures (translated by George H. Calvert) (Goethe, Schiller, 1845, P. 244).

Die bloße, aus dem Innersten herausgeholte *Wahrheit* ist der Zweck des epischen Dichters: er schildert uns bloß das ruhige Dasein und Wirken der Dinge nach ihren Naturen) (Goethe, Schiller, 1905, S. 349).

This goal can be found in every moment of the text's movement, which allows it to move forward without haste, "with affection" lingering at each of its steps, and maintaining the highest freedom of spirit (Goethe, Schiller, 1845, P. 244). Such an epic approach differs from the task facing the tragedian, who is forced to direct activity in a single direction, concentrating it, and depriving readers of spiritual freedom. Goethe formulated his vision of this rule in a letter to Schiller, noting that the denouement of a good poem should be known to readers in advance, i.e. the reader's attention should be focused on the ways of depicting the narrative. Therefore, curiosity should not be burdened with such a text, the purpose of which can be concentrated in every moment of movement (Goethe, Schiller, 1905, S. 350). This is also evidenced by W. Humboldt's remark in a letter to Schiller dated February 27, 1796 on the similarity between Goethe's text and its sources:

He has changed almost nothing in detail, often left the same words, but nevertheless the whole thing has become something completely different because of him. That which is actually poetic form in it, that which speaks to the reader's imagination and stirs his aesthetic sense, belongs entirely and utterly to him. [...] How Goethe achieved this is difficult to determine, and I have pondered over it in vain in some places. The main thing lies in the language, in the structure of periods, and finally and especially in the way genius is treated, which cannot be defined individually and in words.

Im Einzelnen hat er fast nichts abgeändert, oft dieselben Worte gelassen, aber dennoch ist das Ganze durch ihn schlechterdings etwas anderes geworden. Dasjenige nemlich, was eigentlich poetische Form daran ist, dasjenige, wodurch es zu der Phantasie des Lesers spricht und seinen ästhetischen Sinn rührt, gehört ihm ganz und ganz allein. [...] Wodurch Göthe dieß bewirkt hat, ist schwer zu bestimmen, und ich habe an einzelnen Stellen vergeblich darüber gegrübelt. Die Hauptsache liegt wohl in der Sprache, in dem Periodenbau, endlich und vorzüglich in der Behandlungsart des Genies, die sich nicht einzeln und mit Worten bestimmen läßt (Humboldt, 1911, S. 44-45).

The Legend of Reynard the Fox in Germany and its German Translations

In addition to the Low German text about the Fox, Goethe probably got acquainted with the medieval Dutch poem "*Die Historie van reyanert de vos*" (published by G. Leeu in the second half of the 15th century; the translation was republished in 1783). Presumably, the similar Lübeck and Dutch versions of the Fox story derive their origin from a common early lost example, or the Dutch text is the direct source of the Low German poem (Summerfield, 2009, pp. 87-88, Sands, 1953, P. 400). The source of "*Die Hystorie van Reynaert die Vos*" is an earlier Dutch poem "*Van den vos Reynaerde*" by Willem (Willem die Madoc maecte, the turn of the 13th and 14th centuries), which, in turn, goes back to Aesop's fable about a sick lion (in it, the Fox also takes revenge on the Wolf). Willem was clearly familiar with some of the Old French texts about the Fox when writing the text ("*Roman de Renard*"; the end of the 12th and 14th centuries) (Summerfield, 2009, P. 10). In turn, the authors of the early Old French tales of the Fox Renard used the Latin "Isengrim" (Ysengrimus), i.e. an epic in hexameters in Latin about the wolf Isengrim and the Fox (the middle of the 12th century) and "Ecbasis captivi" (the middle of the 10th century). Owing to these old French tales, the existing material, primarily Aesop's fables, was reinterpreted and expanded (both poems in Latin were discovered in the first half of the XIX century by J. Grimm) (Summerfield, 2009, P. 10).

Numerous editions of the texts from the 13th-15th centuries, their adaptations, renderings, and translations were published almost every few years (1539, 1544, 1549, 1550, 1562, 1592 1604, 1660, 1732, 1740 etc.). One of these editions, the Frankfurt High German version of the fox story (1539), which is a version of the earlier Low German text "*Reynke Vosz de olde*", abridged by a third, with glosses borrowed from the Rostock edition, was widely known among Frankfurt printers of the the 16th-18th centuries and went through twenty-one editions in the period from 1544 to 1617. In 1564, it was adorned with a series of woodcuts, some of which were originally intended to decorate the Frankfurt edition of Aesop's Fables. However, due to the similarity of some images of the fables and the text about the Fox, they were included in the list of illustrations for the latter edition. The engravings certainly contributed to the high sales of the edition during the heyday of the Frankfurt Book Fair, whose sales covered the entire book market, and the Latin editions were distributed throughout Europe. A Latin translation of the High German text "*Reynke Fuchs*" was published in 1567 by Feyrabend specifically for educated visitors of the Frankfurt Book Fair (Scheffler 1972, S. 94-100).

Moreover, the incredible popularity of the story of the Fox is also evidenced by the information about the poem becoming a folk book in Germany. Simrock includes the translation of this 15th century poem into modern German in the first volume of "German Folk Books; Collected

and Restored to Their Authentic State" ("*Die deutschen Volksbücher; gesammelt und in ihrer ursprünglichen Echtheit wiederhergestellt*"), noting that the attempts to satisfy the high demand for the books he selected led to the emergence of inexpensive editions, which were first offered for sale in bookstores. Gradually, as the needs of the bourgeoisie and peasants grew, they were also sold in stalls, department stores, fairs and markets, which made it possible to set a more affordable price for their sale (Simrock, 1845: 8). J. Grimm points to the phenomenon of the spread of another folk book about the Fox in the middle of the 17th century, which was a High German prose text based on a poem published in Rostock. He is probably referring to the later publication of the second edition of the Lübeck "*Reynke de Vos*" of 1498, published in Rostock in 1517, and containing many quotations from popular works of classical authors (Scheffler, 1792, S. 89-94).

This medieval plot was well known to Goethe from his youth. First of all, this could have been facilitated by the practice of reading folk compositions in Frankfurt, which clearly included different versions of this plot (Lange, 1888, S. 3). Decades later after writing the poem, Goethe recalled his acquaintance with numerous fairy tales and myths from the encyclopedia of ancient culture "*Acerra philologica*" and Ovid's "*Metamorphoses*". This is of considerable interest to us, since the image of Reineke has many similarities with one of the vivid images of Ovid's poem, i.e. the elusive Teumessian Fox. To hunt this Fox, which regularly demanded human sacrifices, a Dog was called in, capable of catching any prey pursued. Numerous attempts to bring Reineke to justice could not be implemented.

In addition, the main opponent of the Fox in Goethe's poem is also a representative of the canine family, the wolf Isengrim, which is interesting, given that many medieval authors of the Fox's texts focused the attention of readers precisely on the confrontation between the Wolf and the Fox (for example, the poem "*Ysengrimus*" was named after a Wolf).

These evidences of the extraordinary popularity of the Fox story in Germany of the Middle Ages and in Goethe's time undoubtedly allow us to conclude that the rules of the epic work given by Goethe and Schiller correspond to the denouement of Goethe's poem. Its plot is not capable of arousing curiosity or participation in the reader, i.e. we can say that Goethe allowed readers to more clearly focus their attention on how the author achieves the poem's correspondence to the spirit of ancient works.

Retardation technique

In addition to choosing a plot whose outcome is known to readers in advance, according to Goethe, numerous predictions and explanations should also anticipate the denouement of an epic work. This rule also applies to the text of Goethe's "*Reineke Fox*", although he still refuses the small

annotations briefly explaining the content of each section in Gottsched's text and the poem of the 15th century. We give an example of one such explanation from the texts of Gottsched and Simrock:

How Reineke apparently reprimands and lies to his own father and his other friends, so that he can also blacken his enemies in this way, and how he was thereby redeemed.

Wie Reineke seinen eigenen Vater, und seine andern Freunde offenbar rüget, und belüget, damit er dergestalt auch seine Feinde anschwärzen könne, und wie er dadurch erlöset ward (Gottsched, 1886, S. 46).

How Reineke continues <speech> about his treacherous father, and what he came to, how he completes his lie.

Wie Reineke fortfährt von seinem untreuen Vater, und welch Ende der nahm, womit er feine Lügen beschließt (Simrock, 1845, S. 100).

Such brief plot explanations certainly remind the reader in advance of the further course of the plot, but it seems to us that they probably refer to the slowing motifs that delay the action and can be used in both genres (Goethe, Schiller, 1905, S. 504). However, it seems to us that the use of annotations together with retarding moments can upset the balance, which will be discussed in more detail below.

However, Goethe still retained a fragment of the narrator's speech that serves as a kind of prediction. So Reineke, accused of causing great harm to almost all animals, concocts a legend about access to the treasures of King Emmerich and tells it to the King and Queen, trying to escape from the death penalty:

...I will right willingly tell you, // For I must certainly die; I see no means of escaping. // If at the end of my life I should farther burden my conscience, // Pain eternal to earn, that were a foolish proceeding! // Better it is to confess; and if, alas! it is needful // Some of my own relations and dearest friends to complain of. // How can I help it? alas! the pains of hell are before me (translated by A. Rogers) (Goethe, 1890, P. 57).

...Freilich bin ich ein sündiger Mensch; doch red ich die Wahrheit. // Könnt es mir nutzen, wenn ich Euch löge! Da würd ich mich selber // Ewig verdammen. Ihr wißt ja nun wohl, so ist es beschlossen: // Sterben muß ich, ich sehe den Tod und werde nicht lügen; // Denn es kann mir nicht Böses noch Gutes zur Hilfe gedeihen. // Lebend sagte Reineke das und schien zu verzagen (Goethe, 1960, S. 483).

Before this scene, the narrator briefly explains to us the main point of his speech:

Hearken now to the fox's craft, and to how he manœuvred // His transgressions again to conceal by injuring others. // Groundless lies he invented, reviling even his father,

// Dead in his grave, and with gross slander loaded the badger... (translated by A. Rogers)
(Goethe, 1890, P. 59).

*Nun vernehmet die List, und wie der Fuchs sich gewendet, // Seine Frevel wieder
zu decken und andern zu schaden. // Bodenlose Lügen ersann er, beschimpfte den Vater
// Jenseit der Grube, beschwerte den Dachs mit großer Verleumdung, // Seinen
redlichsten Freund, der ihm beständig gedienet...* (Goethe, 1960, S. 485).

Other predictions that perform the same functions can be found in the "*Reineke Fox*". Thus, they most often appear in fragments describing how the animals sent by the King to Reineke's castle to accompany him to trial are deceived by him. The first to agree to go to Malepartus is bear Brown, to whom Reineke promised to show the place where countless quantities of honey are stored. Before information appears in the text that he will fall into a trap (Reineke certainly implies it), the narrator notes that:

... the bear was delighted; Vainly, however, as fools with hopes are often deluded...
(translated by A. Rogers) (Goethe, 1890, P. 17).

... freute den Bären, // Aber vergebens, wie Toren sich oft mit Hoffnung betrügen... (Goethe, 1860, S. 453).

The description of the fragment of the bird's meeting with Hintze the cat before his attempt to convince Reineke to come to the royal court is also interesting. The image of a bird perched on a tree to the left of the cat is interpreted by him as a sign of the unfortunate outcome of the journey to Reineke's castle and can be perceived not only as a detail anticipating further events, but also as an example of retardation. It should be noted that Goethe connects the rule of concentration on how a work is performed with the law of retardation. An example of the synthesis of the two rules is Homer's "*Odyssey*", in which retardation is evident in almost every part, but the reader is assured and encouraged that everything will come to a successful result ("Die Odyssee ist in ihren kleinsten Theilen beinahe retardierend, dafür wird aber auch vielleicht funfzigmal versichert und betheuert daß die Sache einen glücklichen Ausgang haben werde") (Goethe, Schiller, 1905, S. 350). The author, by supplying the work with predictions and explanations that anticipate the denouement, restores the balance that is constantly disturbed by retardation. Goethe calls the ability to constantly move forward and retreat back the main property of epic poetry, i.e. he considers retardation moments to be epic ("Eine Haupteigenschaft des epischen Gedichts ist das es immer vor und zurück geht, daher sind alle retardierende Motive episch") (ibid., S. 348). At the same time, the characters should not encounter any downright obstacles that relate to dramatic works (ibid.). This requirement of retardation, observed by Homer in the "*Iliad*" and the "*Odyssey*", is also used by Goethe in the poem "*Hermann*

and Dorothea", in which, for example, the motif of Dorothea stumbling at a crucial moment before her first arrival at Hermann's parents' house is introduced, which is resolved successfully.

Here is another example of the synthesis of these two motifs in "*Reineke Fox*". Thus, the readers' expectation of learning the terrible fate of the bear during the description of his beating is slowed down by a satirical description of the peasants' tribal position in relation to each other, which in this situation seems insignificant:

Küchelrei made the most noise, he thought himself of importance, // Abel Quack and Talke Lorden Quacks are women's names. // For Frau Willigetrud, on the seamy side of the blanket, // Was his mother, they knew, but no one knew of his father; // Yet the peasants surmised that black Sander, the mower of stubble, Might very well be the man, they said (translated by A. Rogers) (Goethe, 1890, pp. 20-21).

Küchelrei machte das meiste Geschrei, er dünkte sich vornehm: // Denn Frau Willigetrud am hinteren Tore (man wußt es) // War die Mutter, bekannt war nie sein Vater geworden. // Doch es meinten die Bauern, der Stoppelmäher, der schwarze // Sander, sagten sie, möcht es wohl sein, ein stolzer Geselle (Goethe 1960, S. 455).

Moreover, the anticipation of the outcome of the bear's fate is interrupted not only by the description of the composition of the priest's family who attacked him, but also by a remark about his cook:

...Even the pastor and sexton, each with his own apparatus // Came; and the parson's cook, Frau Jutte, skilled as no other // In the preparing and cooking of groats, remain'd not behindhand (translated by A. Rogers) (Goethe, 1890, P. 19).

Auch die Köchin des Pfaffen (sie hieß Frau Jutte, sie konnte // Grütze bereiten und kochen wie keine) (Goethe, 1960, S. 454).

An example of the use of the retardation technique can also be found in the scene of the priest being bitten by the cat, which is interrupted by a description of the emotions of the priest's wife:

...and doubly and trebly // Did she swear that if to her lord had not happened the evil, // She would gladly have lost her trifle of worldly possessions. // Nay, she even swore, she would gladly have yielded a treasure... (translated by A. Rogers) (Goethe, 1890, P. 155).

Und doppelt, // Dreifach schwur sie: wie gern verlöre sie, wäre das Unglück // Nicht dem Herren begegnet, ihr bißchen Habe zusammen. // Ja, sie schwur: ein Schatz von Golde, wenn sie ihn hätte, // Sollte sie wahrlich nicht reuen, sie wollt ihn missen. (Goethe, 1960, S. 464).

The readers' recognition of the fate of Hintze, who bit the priest, is also interrupted by the narrator's reasoning that

Plunder, adultery, murder, deceit, he held none of them sinful (translated by A. Rogers) (Goethe, 1890, P. 80).

Ehbruch, Rauben und Mord und Verrat, er hielt es nicht sündlich (Goethe, 1960, S. 462).

Considering that this side of Reineke was already known to readers, this remark serves only a retarding function. Then the poem introduces a retardation plot line of Reineke's insult to the wolf cubs Isegrim and Gieremund, as well as the Fox's deprivation of her honor when Gieremund attempts to avenge the insult to her family:

Gieremund fair with a double intent to visit. // The first was // This, to hear from her what Isegrim's special complaint was; // Secondly, his old sins the rascal thought of renewing (translated by A. Rogers) (Goethe, 1890, P. 30).

Gieremund wollt er besuchen in doppelter Absicht: fürs erste // Hoffte' er von ihr zu erfahren, was eigentlich Isegrim klagte; // Zweitens wollte der Schalk die alten Sünden erneuern (Goethe, 1960, S. 462).

Only after describing this rather voluminous fragment does the narrator return to the scene of the brutal beating of the cat by the priest and his family and tells readers about how Hintze managed to bite through the rope and escape: "Let us, however, go back and look after Hintze, poor creature" ("*...Lasset uns aber zurück nach Hinzen sehen...*") (Goethe, 1890, P. 32, Goethe 1960, S. 464).

In Goethe's poem one can find many small retardation moments that allow the epic poet to find "his account more in a loitering gait" ("bei einem zögernden Gange seine Rechnung besserfin") (Goethe, Schiller, 1845, P. 246, Goethe, Schiller, 1905, S. 353). However, at the same time, they do not occupy a significant volume of the work, creating a real obstacle to the course of the plot, as happens in an ancient Greek dramatic work (ibid.). The introduction of such retarding elements into the text of the poem allowed Goethe not to violate the integrity of the poem. Thus, in "*Hermann and Dorothea*" everything seems resolved and finished, despite the retrograde movement seems to bring to life a new poem, which happens, as we believe, as a result of a sufficient number of retardation moments in "*Reineke Fox*" (Goethe, Schiller, 1905, S. 350).

Language and style

All of Goethe's epic poems, including the unfinished ones, were written in hexameter, as was the epic poem "*Luise*" in three idylls by J. Voss, which had by this time gained considerable fame; his hexameters attracted Goethe's attention.

In a letter to Goethe dated February 23, 1798, Schiller reports that Voss fears that:

Hermann would cause his Louise to be forgotten. Further, that this had indeed now proved not to be the case, but that nevertheless it contained some passages for which he would give the whole of his Louise. That your not being able to stand a comparison with him in hexameters, was no fault of yours, as in fact this was his strong point; but that he nevertheless thought your latest hexameters were very much more perfect. It is evident that he has not the very remotest idea and consequently cannot have any idea of of the *inner spirit of the poem, the spirit of poetry generally...* (translated by L. D. Schmitz) (Schiller, Goethe, 1890, II, P. 54).

...der Hermann würde seine Luise in Vergessenheit bringen. Das sei nun zwar nicht der Fall, aber er enthalte doch einzelne Stellen, für die er seine ganze Luise hingeben würde. Daß Sie im Hexameter die Vergleichung mit ihm nicht aushalten könnten, sei Ihnen nicht zu verdenken, da dieß einmal seine Sache sei, aber doch finde er daß Ihre neuesten Hexameter viel vollkommener seien" – Man sieht, daß er auch keine entfernte Ahnung von dem innern *Geist des Gedichts* und folglich auch keine von dem *Geist der Poesie* überhaupt haben muß... (Goethe, Schiller, 1905, II, S. 58-59).

The letter clearly demonstrates Schiller's understanding of the metrical uniqueness of Goethe's poem as an integral part of the formation of the image of the spirit of Goethe's poetry and, accordingly, their vision of the poetry of the epoch as a whole.

Unresolved problems in the perception of his hexameters were a prerequisite for creating a faithful imitation (eine treue Nachbildung) of early texts about the Fox with hexameters (Goethe, 1948, P. 360).

In "*Campagne in France*" he recalls the situation around the question of the formation of the German hexameter (the essence of their disagreements is accurately conveyed by Klopstock's remark about Voss, his opponent in the tense discussion of the 1780s and 1790s about the methods of constructing the hexameter, which had developed by the 1790s: "Voss followed Homer with such voluptuousness, so that it is possible to reconstruct the Greek Homer from him" ("Voss habe sich dem Homer im Versbau mit einer Art von Wollust angeschmiegt, sodass man aus ihm den griechischen Homer wieder herstellen könnte") (Linckenheld, 1906, S. 29):

Following Klopstock's example, very tolerable hexameters had been written in Germany for many years past; Voss, whilst himself making use of them, occasionally

intimated that there was room for improvement in this department, nay he did not spare even his own works and translations, notwithstanding the favour with which they were received by the public. I had also a desire to learn this, but it did not succeed with me. Herder and Wieland werelatitudinarians in this point; and *Voss's textes, becoming gradually more strict and inflexible, were at last almost a forbidden subject*. The public themselves valued his earlier more than his later textes; but I had always a silent confidence in Voss, whose earnestness was not to be mistaken; and had I been younger, or had circumstances been different, I would have gone to Cutin, in order to learn his secret; for he, from an honourable regard for Klopstock, did not wish, in the lifetime of the worthy poet, whose renown filled the whole world, to tell him to his face, that a stricter observance of rules must be introduced into German rhyme, if any hope was to be held out of its ever being established on a sure basis. His utterances, meanwhile, were like *sibylline leaves* for me... (translated by R. Farie) (Goethe, 1849, P. 293-294).

Schon seit vielen Jahren schrieb man in Deutschland nach Klopstocks Einleitung sehr läßliche Hexameter; Voß, indem er sich wohl auch dergleichen bediente, ließ doch hie und da merken, daß man sie besser machen könne, ja er schonte sogar seine eigenen vom Publikum gut aufgenommenen Arbeiten und Übersetzungen nicht. Ich hätte das gar gern auch gelernt, allein es wollte mir nicht glücken. Herder und Wieland waren in diesem Punkte Latitudinarien, und man durfte der *Vossischen Bemühungen, wie sie nach und nach strenger und für den Augenblick un gelenk erschienen, kaum Erwähnung tun*. Das Publikum selbst schätzte längere Zeit die Vossischen früheren Arbeiten, als geläufiger, über die späteren; ich aber hatte zu Voß, dessen Ernst man nicht verkennen konnte, immer ein stilles Vertrauen und wäre, in jüngeren Tagen oder andern Verhältnissen, wohl einmal nach Eutin gereist, um das Geheimnis zu erfahren; denn er, aus einer zu ehrenden Pietät für Klopstock, wollte, solange der würdige, allgefeierte Dichter lebte, ihm nicht geradezu ins Gesicht sagen: daß man in der deutschen Rhythmik eine striktere Observanz einführen müsse, wenn sie irgend gegründet werden solle. Was er inzwischen äußerte, waren für mich *sibyllinische Blätter*... (Goethe, 1948, S. 360).

Researchers have analyzed some of the features of Voss's approach to constructing hexameters, noting that, following a meticulous search for ways to adapt the features of ancient versification to German texts, he used looped spondees (geschleifter Spondeus), which can be formed by introducing a strong stressed syllable into the thesis (weak part), and a weakly stressed syllable into the arsis (strong part) ("es erfolgt Schwachheit absterbenden Alters": for example, the stress in the word "Meerflut" is moved to a different position: "Braudemer steigt Meerflut" (Klopstock also used this

technique in the first songs of "*Messiah*"), created a heptameter (a verse with seven elevations) instead of a hexameter to lengthen the syllable, used the letter "e" in words ("wallete besänftiget") in which it was not used, etc. (Egloff, 2022, S. 207)³.

The prosodic and syntactic features of the ancient Greek language contribute to the rare use of two stressed syllables next to each other, forming spondees that create the effect of elevation and slowing down of the hexameter (different measures (*Zeitmaße*)). Accordingly, Klopstock and Goethe tried to avoid them, unlike Voss, in order to preserve the variety inherent in Homer's texts and to eliminate the monotonous effect created by the loudness of German syllables (Egloff, 2022, S. 202-203).

These changes in Goethe's poems were complemented by the introduction of endings in words with light syllables, creating flexible, "floating" transitions ("geschmeidige, schwebende Übergänge") between lines (Egloff, 2022, S. 213).

In "*Reineke Fox*" the first twenty verses end with words with one root (except for the verb with the pronoun "verschont' er", which form the sixth foot and part of the fifth): "blühten", "Hecken", "Vögel", "Gründen", etc. In the endings of the first lines of Klopstock's "*Messiah*" only one word with two roots can be found ("durchschauest"), and in "*Louise*" these indicators are exceeded ten times (not counting the verb with the pronoun "Geflüster dir's"), which complicate their reading: "Linden", "Bienengesurres", "Moosdach", "Gastmahl", etc.

When creating the poem about the Fox, Goethe almost halved Gottsched's text, making it more easily perceived by readers without harming its linguistic features, for example, in the example we have already noted, comparing the expositions of Goethe and Gottsched's texts, it is clear how Goethe achieved this:

Whitsuntude, loveable feast, was come: the plain // Broke forth in verdure anew on the hills, in the bushes and hedges, // Birds, as if newly awakened to life, sang their happiest ditties; // Every meadow was decked with flowers in sweet-scented valleys// Bright of hue was the earth, and the sky of brilliance festal (translated by A. Rogers) (Goethe, 1890, P. 1).

Pfingsten, das liebliche Fest, war gekommen! es grünt und blüht // Feld und Wald; auf Hügeln und Höhn, in Büschen und Hecken // Üben ein fröhliches Lied die neuermunterten Vögel; // Jede Wiese sproßt von Blumen in duftenden Gründen, // Festlich heiter glänzte der Himmel und farbig die Erde (Goethe, 1860, S. 443).

It was just one day of Pentecost, when one saw forests and fields adorned with leaves and grass; and many a bird in bushes and trees, joyfully testified with his capture. Herbs and

³ The strong stressed syllable is emphasized.

flowers were sprouting everywhere and gave off the loveliest fragrance. The day was serene, and the weather beautiful.

Es war eben an einem Pfingsttage, als man Wälder und Felder, mit Laub und Gras gezieret sah; und mancher Vogel sich in Gebüsch und auf Bäumen, mit seinem Gefange fröhlich bezeugete. Die Kräuter und Blumen sproseten überall hervor, und gaben den lieblichsten Duft von sich. Der Tag war heiter, und das Wetter schön (Gottsched, 1896, S. 1).

He substituted the word "everywhere" with the simpler "every meadow", the complex form of the word "Sprossen" (to sprout) with the easier one: "sproseten"/"sproßte". Gottsched conveyed the image of fragrant flowers as follows: the flowers "gave off the loveliest fragrance" ("Blümen <...> gaben den lieblichsten Duft von sich"), and Goethe replaced it with "Every meadow was decked with flowers in sweet-scented valleys" ("Blumen in duftenden Gründen"), shortening it and abandoning the reflexive verb. Any other fragment of Gottsched's text can be examined in the same way:

Isegrim, the wolf, brought the complaint to his friends, his family, and his closest relatives, all appear before the king; but he himself said thus: Most gracious King and Lord! Through your generosity, and for the sake of your honour, yes, both by right and by grace, have mercy on the great harm that Reineke, the Fox, has done to me: from whom I have very often suffered shame and great loss...

Isegrim, der Wolf, hub die Klage an seine Freunde, sein Geschlecht, und seine nächsten Anverwandten treten alle vor den König; er selbst aber sprach also: Gnädigste König und Herr! Durch euren Edelmuth, und um eurer Ehre willen, ja beydes, nach Recht und aus Gnaden, erbarmet euch doch des großen Schadens, den mir Reineke, der Fuchs, zugefüget hat: von welchem ich sehr oft Schande und großen Verlust erlitten habe... (Gottsched, 1896, S. 2).

This scene differs from the fragment from Goethe's "*Reineke Fox*":

Isegrim Wolf began the complaint; by all his well-wishers, // And by all of his cousins accompanied, and his companions, // Standing before the king, he spoke in accents forensic: // "Master, most gracious Sovereign! Hear my grievous affliction. // Noble are you and great and worshipful, showing to all men // Mercy and right; so now for the injury grant me compassion, // That suffered with great shame at the hands of Reineke Fox... (translated by A. Rogers) (Goethe, 1890, P. 2).

Isegrim aber, der Wolf, begann die Klage; von allen // Seinen Vettern und Gönnern, von allen Freunden begleitet, // Trat er vor den König und sprach die gerichtlichen Worte:

// Gnädigster König und Herr! vernehmet meine Beschwerden. // Edel seid Ihr und groß und ehrenvoll, jedem erzeigt Ihr // Recht und Gnade: so laßt Euch denn auch des Schadens erbarmen, // Den ich von Reineke Fuchs mit großer Schande gelitten... (Goethe, 1960, S. 443).

He substituted the word "anheben" (brought) with the much more commonly used synonym "begann" (began), and the part of the sentence "through your generosity, and for the sake of your honour" is replaced with the accessible "are you and great and worshipful..." without the preposition "durch" (through) and the repetition of the pronoun "your". Goethe also transformed nouns into adjectives "generosity" (Edelmuth)-"great" (Edel) in order to shorten the sentence, and part of the sentence "have mercy on the great harm that Reineke, the Fox, has done to me: from whom I have very often suffered shame and great loss" ("erbarmet euch doch des großen Schadens, den mir Reineke, der Fuchs, zugefüget hat: von welchem ich sehr oft Schande und großen Verlust erlitten habe..." to its abbreviated part "...so now for the injury grant me compassion, // That suffered with great shame at the hands of Reineke Fox" (" ...so laßt Euch denn auch des Schadens erbarmen, // Den ich von Reineke Fuchs mit großer Schande gelitten..."). Instead of two synonyms ("shame" and "loss" (Schande und Verlust)) he left only one, etc.

The "movable" hexameters and the easily perceived lexical aspect of Goethe's poem definitely correspond to its content, so it can be said that the effect of "naturalness" that arises in the poem can be compared with the effect created by Virgil in the "*Bucolics*". Even in Voss's translation of the "*Bucolics*" these features are visible:

Mopsus, warum, da wir als Kundige beyd' uns begegnet, // Du zu blasen auf leichtem Geröhr, ich Worte zu messen, // Sißen wir nicht hier unter den haseldurchwachsenen Ulmen?

Du bist älter; dir folgt der jüngere billig, Menalkas: // Ob wir unter die rege, von Zephyren wankende Schattung, // Ob zur Grotte vielmehr wir hineingehn. Schau, wie die Grotte // Dort von der waldigen Rebe mit seltenen Trauben bestreut wird.

Dir wetteifert allein in unseren Bergen Amyntas.

Der wetteifert ja wohl, im Gesang zu besiegen den Phöbus! (Translated by J. Voss) (Virgilius, 1824, S. 18).

Despite the fact that the text contains the unused word "overgrown with hazel" (haseldurchwachsen), the text is easier to perceive due to the simplification of its lexical features, including final words ("begegnet", "singen", "Ulmen", "Menalkas", "Schattung", "Grotte", "ist", "Amyntas", "Phöbus"), in which more than one root is missing. This provides a more dynamic reading of "*Bucolic*" than "*Luise*", which is interesting, given Kobb's metrical study of the texts we have

noted. According to him, the ratio between choric and dactylic verses and verses in which the feet are divided into two equal parts in "*Reineke Fox*" resembles the characteristics of Virgil's texts, differing from the indicators of "*Luise*" and the Voss translations of Homer's texts. The proportion of dactyls and spondees in the third foot resembles, first of all, Klopstock's "*Messiah*". In the third and fourth parts, "*Reineke Fox*" is again very close in the ratio of dactyls and spondees to the texts of Virgil (Cobb, 1910, P. 419-420). A study of the proportion of trimeter to bimeter syllables in these texts shows that Goethe followed Virgil's example, which is practically the opposite of Homer's texts (Minor, 1902, S. 418).

Thus, the poem "*Reineke Fox*" consistently embodies the main features of the epic work given by Goethe and Schiller in their correspondence and article of 1797. It can be said that Goethe chooses for his poem a medieval plot, which has retained extraordinary popularity in Germany for centuries both as a work for highly educated readers and as a folk book, published countless times, and performs a virtually literal translation of existing works about the Fox. This allows readers to focus their attention not on the details of the plot of "*Reineke Fox*", but on Goethe's methods of embodying the ideal of epic poetry using the material of medieval animal epics. Moreover, the retarding moments of the poem are subordinated to Goethe's "some higher law" by combining them with motives anticipating the denouement, which allows unity to manifest itself in the poem, the purpose of which is in every moment of movement (Goethe, 1905, S. 350). The embodiment of these rules of epic poetry in "*Reineke Fox*" allows us to talk about Goethe's reinterpretation of aspects of the ancient epic work long before their presentation in correspondence with Schiller.

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