

A Dual-Language Book

103 Meistergedichte

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

Edited and Translated by Stanley Appelbaum

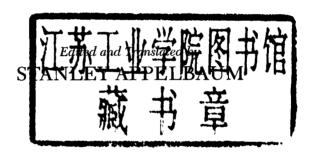




103 Great Poems 103 Meistergedichte

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Introduction and Commentary

I. Goethe's Life and Poetry

Johann Wolfgang Goethe, generally considered Germany's greatest literary figure, enjoyed such a long and productive life that, for the present purposes, only the barest outline must suffice. He was born in Frankfurt am Main in 1749. His paternal grandfather had made so much money as a master tailor and hotelkeeper that his son, the poet's father, could get along doing nothing in particular, and the poet, though ashamed of the source of his comforts, never suffered any privations in childhood and youth (after which he had his Weimar salary to live on).

Wolfgang wrote verse as a young boy, and continued to compose poems in the light, amorous style of the day ("Anacreontic style") while studying law in Leipzig from 1765 to 1768. It was only while completing his studies in Strasbourg in 1770–71 that he began speaking with a personal voice and breaking new ground in his poetry. This phenomenon is associated both with the influence of the literary historian Johann Gottfried Herder and with Goethe's love for a local parson's daughter, Friederike Brion, the first of his world-famous affairs. He now turned his hand to ballads and poetry in a folk vein, among other genres.

Goethe's law practice never amounted to much, but his literary reputation began to grow. In 1772 he began his series of "great hymns" in free verse, and soon found himself the chief spokesman for the "Sturm und Drang" (Storm and Stress) movement of rebellious young antiestablishment "geniuses." In 1774 he achieved instant and lasting fame with his novel *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers* (The Sorrows of Young Werther) and his boisterous historical drama *Götz von Berlichingen*.

The decisive turning point in the poet's life came in 1775, when the young Duke of Weimar, one of the dozens of independent sovereigns of the Germany of that time, invited Goethe to his court, where the poet was to remain (except for his two-year Italian escapade in 1786–88) for the remainder of his days, at first as a statesman-of-all-use; after Italy, chiefly as a sort of "minister of culture." The first version of (Part One of) Faust, the so-called Urfaust, was complete before the actual move to Weimar.

That important year, 1775, had also seen Goethe's attachment and brief engagement to another important inspirer of poems, Lili Schönemann.

During Goethe's first eleven years in Weimar, up to 1786, he wrote: the first draft of the novel Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre (Wilhelm Meister's Years of Apprenticeship), with its famous Mignon and Harpist poems; many poems inspired by his love for the lady-in-waiting Charlotte von Stein; and his play Egmont. In these years of maturing and of public responsibilities, he increasingly turned away from an attitude of rebellion to one of settled wisdom and enthusiasm for the "classical" achievements of the ancient Greeks and Romans. Largely in connection with mineral prospecting for the duke, he also formed his lifelong interest in natural history and scientific questions. In 1782 Goethe was created a nobleman, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe.

Aching for greater independence, and eager to see whether his talent for sketching really promised a career as a painter, in 1786 Goethe escaped to Italy without taking formal leave. He remained there, chiefly in Rome, for two years, happier, perhaps, than ever before. On his return in 1788 (the duke, who genuinely liked him, bore no grudge), Goethe began writing his famous *Römische Elegien* and began his liaison with Christiane Vulpius, whom he eventually married in 1806, touched by her brave defense of their home against French invaders after Napoleon's victory at Jena (she died in 1816). The late 1780s also saw the composition of Goethe's two greatest verse plays, *Iphigenie auf Tauris* and *Torquato Tasso*.

The 1790s were characterized for Goethe chiefly by his fruitful association ("friendship" is too strong a word) with the poet, playwright, historian, and literary theorist Friedrich Schiller; direct participation, as an observer, in battles against revolutionary France; the definitive version of Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre; the great "year of ballads," 1797; and the resumption of work on Part One of Faust, eventually published in 1808.

The last thirty years of the poet's life need not be recounted in detail. More and more he was the elder statesman, the guardian of tradition (somewhat unjust to newer talents in all the arts); a visit to his Weimar home, already a museum, was de rigueur for every cultured traveler to Germany; his pontificating "conversations" were duly recorded for publication; his correspondence with scholars and well-wishers was truly international. But he also continued to write novels, stories, and great poetry, both independent lyric poems and material that would ultimately be included in Part Two of Faust (published posthumously in 1833). And great surprises were still in store.

In 1814–15 Goethe's romance with Marianne von Willemer produced one of the most remarkable books of verse of all time, the West-östlicher

Divan (Occidental-Oriental Divan), amazingly bold, vigorous, fresh, and beautiful for a sexagenarian. And then the final great love, for Ulrike von Levetzow, 1821–23, found immortality in the Marienbad *Elegie*.

Mentally active to the last, Goethe died at eighty-two in 1832. (Further biographical details, as they specifically illuminate the poems in this anthology, will be found in the Commentary.)

*

Goethe wrote a vast amount: poems, novels, stories, plays both in prose and in verse, an autobiography, travel accounts, reminiscences of specific experiences, and scientific treatises, not to mention the journals, the voluminous correspondence, and the extensive recorded conversations. His poetic gift was the constant, unfailing element throughout this long and varied career; for his whole life, lyric verse was the chosen vessel into which he poured his soul-searching, his yearning for experimentation, and his wide-ranging speculation. Today the lyric poetry and Faust are seen as probably his most valuable legacy. His novels were crucial to the development of the form in Germany, but are not really of the same "world class" as those of, say, Cervantes and Tolstoy. His plays, though full of beauties, are not nearly as stageworthy as Schiller's. His scientific writings, of which he was so proud, and which claimed so much of his time, are just about totally superseded: without mathematical grounding, he literally attempted to be a Renaissance man in a period already characterized by specialized research; and scientific objectivity was altogether alien to his nature.

But the corpus of lyric poems, ballads, and elegies is possibly unique in world literature in extent, scope, and value, one of the most priceless possessions of German speakers, and worthy of close attention by all other lovers of literature. If an understanding of the basic meaning of a poem on its merely verbal level can be an aid to a deeper understanding—and it surely can—the present volume, with its representative selection of good, great, and very great Goethe poems, may play its humble part.

II. The Nature of This Anthology

This volume contains a new selection of 103 poems, each absolutely complete, ranging over Goethe's entire career. The earliest included was written when he was eighteen; the latest, when he was eighty. Only a very few of the (relatively trivial) pre-1771 poems are given as a sampling of promising juvenilia; on the other hand, his late work, now appreciated more than ever, is generously represented. Here will be found many, if

not most, of the lyric poems on which his reputation is based; and readers acquainted with famous Goethe quotations will find their sources and contexts here in numerous instances. The selection includes great variety and many contrasts in mood, technique, and style. There are very long and very short lyrics; poems festive, philosophical, carefree, contemplative, narrative, didactic; and some of the world's greatest love poetry.

In two respects, sequence and criteria for inclusion, one very special edition of the complete poems has been followed here: Goethes Gedichte in zeitlicher Folge (Goethe's Poems in Chronological Order), first published by the Insel Verlag in 1916 and often reprinted since. With regard to sequence: this Dover edition does not deviate from that chronological sequence, even though the dates of some poems are in dispute (most poems are securely dated by journal entries, mentions in letters, or attendant circumstances); the Commentary, section III of this Introduction, discusses problematic dates.

With regard to inclusion: this volume uses the same standards as the chronological German edition. Poems from the West-östlicher Divan are included, although that cycle is normally printed separately from the Gedichte in complete-works editions. Poems embedded in other works—such as Faust, the novel Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre, the story Novelle, and various minor stage works—are included here if Goethe himself (or, occasionally, a later editor) included them in the Gedichte. No new excerpting has been done! Thus, from Faust, only "Der König in Thule" will be found here. There are no excerpts from such verse plays as Iphigenie auf Tauris or Torquato Tasso, no excerpts from such epic poems as Hermann und Dorothea or other nonlyric poetic productions.

The poems are printed here in their final, definitive forms, even though the dating used for their sequence is that of the earliest version. (In later life, Goethe did not do much rewriting, but, when preparing the 1789 edition of his works, he revised many of his poems of the 1760s and 1770s extensively—usually for the better, though a critic will now and then complain of a "loss of freshness.") It is impossible in a volume of this introductory nature to tabulate the successive versions of a poem. Also intentionally disregarded here is the sometimes very complicated publication history of the poems (many were not published until decades after they were written, some not at all in Goethe's lifetime).

The dates given are always those of composition, unless otherwise stated. Although every statistic is welcome to a true Goethe enthusiast, the Commentary only occasionally refers to the place where a given poem was written; on the other hand, more is said about the women who inspired certain poems. There are various textual traditions in Goethe

scholarship, and so, even though this volume contains "final" texts, the alert reader may still find small discrepancies between this text and other editions in such matters as punctuation (which Goethe himself never troubled with), word forms, and, in one or two places, even word choices.

Since most readers are likely to have access to Goethe's lyrics, ballads, and elegies (aside from anthologies) in the *Gedichte* section of complete-works editions, the Commentary section of this Introduction indicates for each appropriate poem the subdivision of the *Gedichte* into which Goethe himself placed it in the last edition (1827) that he personally supervised (known in German as the *Ausgabe letzter Hand*). Some of these placements strike us as strange; poems of exactly the same nature or origin are put into widely separated subdivisions. In doing so, Goethe was sometimes deliberately throwing people off the track with regard to the women he was addressing, and sometimes he was filling out emptier sections or yielding to some other such publishing exigency; nevertheless, there is some degree of arbitrariness.

The 1827 subdivisions are as follows: "I. Lieder" (Songs). "II. Gesellige Lieder" (Convivial Songs). "III. Balladen" (Ballads). "IV. Elegien" (Elegies). "V. Episteln" (Epistles). "VI. Epigramme" (Epigrams). "VII. Weissagungen des Bakis" (Predictions of Bakis). "VIII. Vier Jahreszeiten" (Four Seasons). "IX. Sonette" (Sonnets). "X. Kantaten" (Cantatas). "XI. Vermischte Gedichte" (Miscellaneous Poems). "XII. Aus Wilhelm Meister" (From Wilhelm Meister). "XIII. Antiker Form sich nähernd" (Imitative of Greco-Roman Meters). "XIV. An Personen" (To Individuals). "XV. Kunst" (Art). "XVI. Parabolisch" (Parables). "XVII. Gott, Gemüt und Welt" (God, Mind, and World). "XVIII. Sprichwörtlich" (Proverbs). "XIX. Epigrammatisch" (Epigrams). "XX. Lyrisches" (Lyrics). "XXI. Loge" (Masonic). "XXII. Gott und Welt" (God and World). "XXIII. Aus Fremden Sprachen" (Translations). "XXIV. Zahme Xenien" (Tame Xenia [Gifts to Guests]). "XXV. Inschriften, Denk- und Sende-Blätter" (Inscriptions and Commemorative Poems).

This anthology has drawn only from subdivisions I, II, III, IV, XI, XII, XIII, XV, XX, and XXII. The vast amount of epigrams, polemics, occasional verse, album entries, poems to individuals on subjects of immediate interest, and the like, has been purposely omitted here (invaluable though it is to Goethe specialists) because of the ensuing necessity for endless, boring annotation and because of the relative lack of poetic merit. Only poems of manifestly universal interest and verbal beauty have been included, not poems that are chiefly of importance to German cultural history specifically. (Nevertheless, the serious student of Goethe cannot afford to overlook the rest if pursuing further study.)

This translation, in prose, following the German line for line to the extent that the differences between the languages allow, is meant to be as complete and accurate as possible, while conveying the mood and tone of the original in each case; often, in very idiomatic situations, the translation has had to be "idea for idea" rather than word for word, but no idea has been omitted or gratuitously introduced. The intention throughout was to provide the actual meaning of the German text (or at least one acceptable meaning; some of these "polyvalent" texts have caused experts to disagree on interpretation and even on their syntax!); this literal meaning can serve as a basis for appreciation of the intense beauty of the poems and the other qualities that elevate them to the highest literary plane.

Much attention has been paid to the special difficulties inherent in understanding Goethe's poetry. Not only has there been a fair amount of semantic change since his day; in addition, any interpretation must take into account his bold coinage of new words and compounds; such personal practices as the use of simple verbs in meanings they usually have only when a specific prefix is added (e.g., eignen for aneignen in the next-to-last line of the poem "Siebenschläfer"); and the specific connotations given to many words connected with the poet's scientific or philosophical ideas (often, only a knowledge of other writings of his can provide the key). The task of the present translator would have been considerably more difficult, if not impossible, without the commentary in Goethe • Gedichte / Herausgegeben und kommentiert von Erich Trunz (C. H. Beck, Munich, 1981) and the specialized dictionary Goethe-Wortschatz, by Paul Fischer (Emil Rohmkopf, Leipzig, 1921)—though many other works were consulted.

The Commentary that follows treats each poem individually, though it indicates various formal and informal groupings. It supplies the dates of original composition and the subdivision of the *Gedichte* (or *West-östlicher Divan*) in which each poem is located. In addition, there is information on addressees, on Goethe's original intentions for the poems (inclusion in a play, commissioned festival piece, etc.), the places of the poems within his œuvre, special metrical or stanza forms, and all sorts of background information (references to mythology, current events, etc.). No footnotes have been placed on the text pages; all explanatory material is in the Commentary.

III. Commentary on the Individual Poems

In this Commentary (but nowhere else in the volume) the poems selected are numbered from 1 to 103 for convenience and conciseness in cross-

referencing. The dates given are those of first composition (the basis for the sequence adopted here). The information beginning "In 1827 ed.:" indicates the specific subdivision of the section *Gedichte* in which Goethe placed the poem in question in the complete-works edition of 1827, the last one he personally supervised (the 1827 arrangement is the basis of almost all later editions of the complete poems).

- 1. "An den Schlaf." 1767. Not in 1827 ed. Goethe wrote this while a law student in Leipzig and included it in a small manuscript collection he called *Annette*, probably named for Anna Katharina Schönkopf, one of his Leipzig flames.
- 2. "Die schöne Nacht." 1768. In 1827 ed.: "I. Lieder." First title: "Die Nacht." Luna is the moon; Zephyr, the west wind.
- 3. "Am Flusse." Ca. 1768–69. In 1827 ed.: "I. Lieder." In 1798 Goethe sent the manuscript to Schiller for publication in one of his literary year-books, saying it was about thirty years old and the earliest piece he had available.
- 4. "Willkommen und Abschied." 1771. In 1827 ed.: "I. Lieder." Poems 4–6 were all addressed to Friederike Brion, a pastor's daughter in a village near Strasbourg, where Goethe was working toward his law degree. This group of poems marks the first major turning point in the poet's literary career; he was now speaking with his own voice, breaking new ground, and beginning to act as the spokesman for his generation.

 5. "Mit einem gemalten Band." 1771. In 1827 ed.: "I. Lieder." Another
- 5. "Mit einem gemalten Band." 1771. In 1827 ed.: "I. Lieder." Another Friederike poem (see No. 4). Hand-painted ribbons were frequently given as gifts to girlfriends. Zephyr: see No. 2.
 6. "Mailied." 1771. In 1827 ed.: "I. Lieder." Another Friederike poem
- 6. "Mailied." 1771. In 1827 ed.: "I. Lieder." Another Friederike poem (see No. 4). First title: "Maifest." This has been called Goethe's best poem up to that time.
- 7. "Heidenröslein." 1771. In 1827 ed.: "I. Lieder." First title: "Fabelliedchen." This was Goethe's first important poem in folk-song style. Johann Gottfried Herder introduced him to the genre in Strasbourg. There is a specific flower called *Heiderose*, equivalent to sun rose or rock rose (*Cistus* and *Helianthemum* spp.).
- 8. "Wanderers Sturmlied." 1772. In 1827 ed.: "XI. Vermischte Gedichte." This was the first of Goethe's "great hymns" of the "Sturm und Drang" period (Storm and Stress; named for a 1776 play by Friedrich Maximilian von Klinger; for other "hymns" in the group, see Nos. 10, 14, 15, and 16). The "Sturm und Drang" movement, led by Goethe, was a youthful, hotheaded reaction against the generally placid and playful literature prevailing at the time (late Baroque and Rococo). The Wanderer

in Goethe's poems usually refers to himself; a great hiker, he had earned that nickname in real life. The term Genius, here interpretively translated as "inborn ability" (its special connotation in this poem), is based on the ancient Roman belief in a personal guardian spirit born along with the individual; the "Sturm und Drang" writers were sarcastically called "geniuses" by their opponents, and the period is often referred to as the Geniezeit. Deucalion's flood, in Greek mythology, was roughly the equivalent of Noah's in the Bible. Apollo gained the title Pythius after slaying the dragon Pytho near Delphi. The "son of water and earth" is mud. Bromius is a title of Dionysus, god of wine. The ancient Greek poet Pindar, composer of odes honoring victors in athletic games, was the chief inspiration for this kind of poem by Goethe; at the time it was still incorrectly thought that Pindar had written in free, untrammeled, short lines like Goethe's here. Phoebus Apollo is the sun; the evergreen cedar does not have to await the sun's springtime strength in order to be green. Jupiter Pluvius is the god of rain. The Castalian spring on Mount Parnassus was cited as the source of literary inspiration. Pindar, the poem says, will now be Goethe's model instead of the gentle love lyricist Anacreon or the writer of bucolic idylls Theocritus (all ancient Greek poets; for Anacreon, see also No. 40). Sybaris was a Greek town in southern Italy.

- 9. "Zigeunerlied." 1771. In 1827 ed.: "II. Gesellige Lieder." Inserted at the opening of Act Five of the first version of Goethe's play $G\ddot{o}tz\ von\ Berlichingen$, where one of the female characters, riding through a forest to rejoin her husband, gets lost and falls in with the Gypsy women who sing the song. In the play, the first four lines of each stanza are performed by one old woman; the next two lines, imitating the wolves' howling ($wau\ wau\ =$ bowwow), by the whole group; and the last line, imitating the owls' calls ($wito\ hu\ =$ to-whoo), by a different soloist. This is an early example of Goethe's affinity for the macabre and uncanny.
- 10. "Mahomets Gesang." 1772–73. In 1827 ed.: "XI. Vermischte Gedichte." Another of the "great hymns" of the "Sturm und Drang" (see No. 8), this was originally intended to be spoken by Mohammed's daughter Fatima and her husband Ali in the unfinished play *Mahomet*. The poem, which refers to the Prophet's meteoric career, anthropomorphizes the river (the *er* in German is, naturally, much less obtrusive than the "he" that a translator is almost compelled to use). The "cedar houses" are, of course, ships.
- 11. "Das Veilchen." 1773–74. In 1827 ed.: "III. Balladen." Goethe inserted this poem into his Singspiel (play with songs) *Erwin und Elmire*, in which Elmire, who has driven away Erwin by her indifference, recalls

it as a song that Erwin used to serenade her with. She performs it with two of her friends, a man and a woman.

- 12. "Der untreue Knabe." Ca. 1774. In 1827 ed.: "III. Balladen." The abrupt ending is intentional. Goethe inserted this poem into a Singspiel called *Claudine von Villa Bella*, where it is sung by a high-minded bandit chieftain who is visiting a noble home in disguise; his performance is interrupted by the arrival of other characters bringing important news.
- 13. "Der König in Thule." 1774. In 1827 ed.: "III. Balladen." This song, sung by Margarete (Gretchen) in the First Part of *Faust* as she is undressing just before she finds the casket of jewels Faust has left for her, already appeared in the same position in the early version of the play known as the *Urfaust* (completed by 1775). In Greco-Roman geography, Thule was a country in the northwestern corner of the world (perhaps Iceland).
- 14. "Ganymed." 1774. In 1827 ed.: "XI. Vermischte Gedichte." Another of the "great hymns" of the "Sturm und Drang" period (see No. 8). Ganymede was a handsome Trojan boy abducted by Zeus's eagle; on Olympus, Ganymede served as a cupbearer to the gods and a lover of Zeus. The "your" in the fifth line from the end is plural and refers to the clouds.
- 15. "An Schwager Kronos." 1774. In 1827 ed.: "XI Vermischte Gedichte." Another "great hymn" (see No. 8). As so frequently, Kronos (the father of Zeus and other Olympians) is here confused with Chronos (time), who is really intended. Orcus is another name for Hades, or hell.
- 16. "Prometheus." 1774. In 1827 ed.: "XI. Vermischte Gedichte." Another "great hymn" (see No. 8). Originally a speech by Prometheus in an unfinished play.
- 17. "Neue Liebe neues Leben." 1775. In 1827 ed.: "I. Lieder." One of the poems (the first?) written during Goethe's brief romance and engagement with Lili (Anna Elizabeth) Schönemann, daughter of a Frankfurt banker.
- 18. "Auf dem See." 1775. In 1827 ed.: "I. Lieder." The lake is the Lake of Zurich; the poem was written on an outing to Switzerland. The unusual opening—the "Und" is like a deep breath preliminary to a vigorous oar stroke—is due to one of the many felicitous revisions of earlier poems that Goethe undertook for a 1789 edition; the original wording was truly grotesque."
- 19. "Bundeslied." 1775. In 1827 ed.: "II. Gesellige Lieder." This "eternal" alliance was very small and very brief. The poem was written to celebrate a wedding that Goethe and Lili attended.
 - 20. "Wonne der Wehmut." 1775. In 1827 ed.: "I. Lieder."
 - 21. "Jägers Abendlied." Winter 1775–76. In 1827 ed.: "I. Lieder."

Written very early in Goethe's Weimar sojourn, this poem has been seen by some as a reminiscence of Lili, by others as a homage to the new Weimar love, Charlotte von Stein.

- 22. "Hoffnung." 1776. In 1827 ed.: "I. Lieder."
- 23. "Wandrers Nachtlied." 1776. In 1827 ed.: "I. Lieder." On Goethe as Wanderer, see comments on No. 8.
- 24. "An Charlotte von Stein." 1776, in a letter to her. Not in 1827 edition. On his arrival in Weimar, Goethe, like many "geniuses" of the "Sturm und Drang," was still to some extent uncouth and a roughneck. Frau von Stein, a lady-in-waiting at the ducal court, took him in hand and smoothed away the rough edges, readying him for court life. Eventually Goethe addressed some 1,700 letters to her.
- 25. "Rastlose Liebe." 1776. In 1827 ed.: "I. Lieder." Written during a mission for the Weimar court. *Rastlos* can also be translated as "incessant" or "tireless."
- 26. "Alles geben die Götter, die unendlichen." 1777, in a letter to Countess Auguste Stolberg, with whom Goethe corresponded until 1823 without ever meeting her in person (she was the sister of close friends). Not in 1827 edition. The letter containing the poem also mentions the death of Goethe's sister Cornelia, of whom he was intensely fond. Other editions give the first words as "Alles geben Götter" or "Alles gaben Götter."
- 27. "An den Mond." 1778. In 1827 ed.: "I. Lieder." Goethe's definitive version. This poem was addressed to Frau von Stein, who wrote a parody of it after Goethe left her.
- 28. "Harzreise im Winter." Winter 1777–78, written immediately after the journey to the Harz mountain range. In 1827 ed.: "XI. Vermischte Gedichte." Goethe's own commentary is helpful, because the difficulty of the poem lies in the omission of background data, that is, in the poet's symbolic selection of disparate parts of his actual experiences on the journey. The Harz mountains lay within the territories belonging to the Duchy of Weimar, and Goethe was sent there to investigate the possibility of mining silver; he had the secondary, personal purpose of visiting a correspondent who was very downcast. Meanwhile, the duke and other courtiers were hunting wild boars. The poet is protected from all ills by his love (for Frau von Stein). Individual remarks: It was believed that certain birds, such as reed warblers (*Rohrsperlinge*) wintered in swamps. The "dreaded peak" is that of the Brocken, the highest summit in the Harz range and the legendary site of the witches' sabbath on Walpurgisnacht (the eve of May Day). The peak is said to have an "unexplored

bosom" because it had not been prospected for mining, though the veins (of metal) of its "brothers" had been.

- 29. "Der Fischer." 1778. In 1827 ed.: "III. Balladen." Possibly inspired by a recent suicide by drowning.
- 30. "Grenzen der Menschheit." Between 1778 and 1781. In 1827 ed.: "XI. Vermischte Gedichte." Although similar in form to "Prometheus" (No. 16), and intended as a pendant to it, this poem differs vastly in its philosophy, relegating man from supremacy to subordinacy, and preaching reserve and modesty. It can be seen as a portal to Goethe's Classical period, which corresponded in time to his increasing interest in Greco-Roman ideals and his settling into his position as a leading statesman.
- 31. "Gesang der Geister über den Wassern." 1779. In 1827 ed.: "XI. Vermischte Gedichte." Inspired by the sight of the Staubbach falls at Lauterbrunnen, Switzerland, the poem was conceived as a chant for two voices in alternation.
- 32. "Liebhaber in allen Gestalten." Before 1786; the chronological edition puts it in a 1779 or 1780 position. In 1827 ed.: "I. Lieder."
- 33. "Wandrers Nachtlied [Ein gleiches]." 1780. In 1827 ed.: "I. Lieder." Called "Ein gleiches" in complete-works editions, where it appears immediately after the first "Wandrers Nachtlied" (No. 23). Goethe wrote this on the wall of a wooden hut. Later this odd "manuscript" was protected by glass, and Goethe was able to revisit and authenticate it fifty-one years after writing it.
- 34. "Erlkönig." 1782. In 1827 ed.: "III. Balladen." Goethe included this ballad in his Singspiel *Die Fischerin. Erlkönig* literally is "alder king," but the *Erl* is based on a mistaken eighteenth-century translation from a Danish source; the meaning is clearly "elf king."
- 35. "Der Sänger." 1783. In 1827 ed.: "III. Balladen." This poem was included in the first draft of a novel that Goethe worked on in the early 1780s; this first draft, which he never published, was called Wilhelm Meisters theatralische Sendung (Wilhelm Meister's Theatrical Vocation). In the 1790s Goethe revised it heavily, eventually publishing it as Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre (Wilhelm Meister's Years of Apprenticeship); he retained poems from the first draft, such as this one, and added new ones. This song is performed in the novel by a mysterious, melancholy itinerant harpist. For other Wilhelm Meister poems, see Nos. 36, 38, 41, 54, 55, and 58.
- 36. "Harfenspieler" ["Wer nie . . ."]. 1783. In 1827 ed.: "XII. Aus Wilhelm Meister." Another poem included in both the *Theatralische Sendung* and the *Lehrjahre* (see No. 35). In the poems with headings

"Harfenspieler" and "Mignon," those headings are not titles but indications of the respective speakers.

37. "Das Göttliche." 1783. In 1827 ed.: "XI. Vermischte Gedichte." A

famous example of Goethe's new "Classical" ideals.

- 38. "Mignon" ["Kennst du . . ."]. 1784. In 1827 ed.: "III. Balladen." In both versions of *Wilhelm Meister* named in the comments on No. 35 (see also comments on No. 36). Mignon is an odd, sad waif hopelessly in love with Wilhelm.
- 39. "Zueignung." 1784. Originally written as an introduction to the uncompleted epic poem "Die Geheimnisse" (The Mysteries); in the 1827 edition, placed in the first volume at the head of Goethe's complete works. The stanzas are in *ottava rima* (iambic pentameter with rhyme scheme ABABABCC).
- 40. "Anakreons Grab." 1784–85. In 1827 ed.: "XIII. Antiker Form sich nähernd." In this, his Classical period, Goethe not only treated Greco-Roman subjects (Anacreon was a Greek poet of the sixth century B.C.), but also began imitating Greco-Roman meters. This poem is written in elegiac couplets (the "elegiac" has no connotation of sadness!), a dactylic hexameter followed by a dactylic pentameter:

Every dactyl (—UU), except the last one in each line, can be replaced by a spondee (——). The last syllable in the hexameter lines can be short. Perfectly natural in languages such as ancient Greek and Latin, which had inherently long vowels and syllables, this meter is always strained in modern word-stress languages such as English and German; the reader must become a willing accomplice, first divining the poet's metrical intentions and then consciously placing the stresses in the "right" spots, even though different stresses may be possible—and even more congenial to the language!

41. "Mignon" ["Nur wer . . ."]. 1785. In 1827 ed.: "XII. Aus Wilhelm Meister." In Wilhelm Meisters theatralische Sendung (see No. 35) Mignon sings this by herself; in the Lehrjahre it is characterized as an irregular duo for her and the harpist. Tchaikovsky's song (known in English as "None but the Lonely Heart") is perhaps the best-known set-

ting worldwide of any Goethe poem.

42. "Cophtisches Lied." 1787. In 1827 ed.: "II. Gesellige Lieder." This song and the next were written for the verse play *Die Mystifizierten*, which Goethe rewrote in prose as *Der Groβ-Cophta* (completed 1791),

leaving out these poems. The "Great Cophta," a charlatan based on the real-life Cagliostro, is head of a Masonic-type lodge and involved in a scheme based on the real-life necklace affair of 1785 in which Marie-Antoinette was duped.

43. "Ein andres" [Cophtisches Lied II]. See comments on No. 42.

44. "Amor als Landschaftsmaler." 1787. In 1827 ed.: "XV. Kunst." Written during Goethe's stay in Italy, where he spent much of his time

painting.

45-49. "Römische Elegien." In 1827 ed.: "IV. Elegien." This cycle of twenty poems, written in elegiac couplets (see comments on No. 40), was composed between 1788 and 1790, after Goethe's return to Weimar from his two-year Italian escapade. It was very soon after his return that he began living with Christiane Vulpius, whom he married many years later; this new love inspired the poetic cycle, which also contains reminiscences of Italian romances. In No. 46: The Trojan prince Anchises was a lover of Aphrodite, who gave birth to his son Aeneas. The sleeper loved by the moon goddess was Endymion. Aurora (Eos), goddess of dawn, had numerous human lovers. Leander drowned while swimming across the Hellespont for a tryst with Hero. The sons of Mars and Rhea Sylvia were Romulus and Remus, legendary founders of Rome. In No. 47: The rolling wheel was the punishment in Hades of the sinner Ixion; the punishment on the crag may refer either to Prometheus' enchainment in the Caucasus range or Sisyphus' fate of eternally pushing a rock uphill. Proteus and Thetis were marine deities who could change shape at will. In No. 48: Cupid's triumvirs are the three Roman elegiac poets Catullus, Tibullus, and Propertius.

50. "Der Rattenfänger." Ca. 1802? The chronological edition, followed here for sequence, places it in the late 1780s or early 1790s. In 1827 ed.: "III. Balladen." Possibly written for a children's ballet.

51. "Die Spinnerin." 1795? In 1827 ed.: "III. Balladen." Strictly speaking, Stein is one fifth of a metric hundredweight.

52 & 53. "Meeres Stille" & "Glückliche Fahrt." 1795 or earlier. In 1827 ed.: "I. Lieder." A diptych. Aeolus is the god of the winds.

- 54. "Mignon" ["Heiß mich . . ."]. 1795? At least two authoritative references assign the poem to that year; however, it is included, in an appropriate narrative context, in at least one modern edition of the *Theatralische Sendung* (see No. 35), which is supposed to have been completed in 1785. Included in the *Lehrjahre*. In 1827 ed.: "XII. Aus Wilhelm Meister." In both versions of the novel, Mignon is here reciting from a role in a play (which nevertheless suits her own situation).
 - 55. "Harfenspieler" ["An die Türen . . . "]. 1795? In 1827 ed.: "XII. Aus

Wilhelm Meister." Not in the *Sendung* (see No. 35). In the *Lehrjahre*, this is characterized as the final stanza of a song consoling one who is close to madness.

56. "Nähe des Geliebten." 1795. In 1827 ed.: "I. Lieder." A rewriting by Goethe of a poem by the poetess Friederike Brun, in which he saw possibilities, if improved.

57. "Wer kauft Liebesgötter?" 1795. In 1827 ed.: "I. Lieder." From a sequel to *Die Zauberflöte* (The Magic Flute); in this scene Papageno and

Papagena come in with cages containing winged children.

58. "Mignon" ["So laßt . . ."]. 1796. In 1827 ed.: "XII. Aus Wilhelm Meister." Not in *Sendung*, only in *Lehrjahre* (see No. 35). Near to death, Mignon here refuses to take off an angel's costume she has worn at a religious pageant.

59. "Der Schatzgräber." 1797. In 1827 ed.: "III. Balladen." Inspired by an illustration in an edition of Petrarch and the description of a magical rite in the autobiography of Cellini, which Goethe translated. In friendly rivalry, Goethe and Schiller wrote some of their greatest poems in ballad form during 1797, the *Balladenjahr*. (See also Nos. 60–62.)

60. "Die Braut von Korinth." 1797. In 1827 ed.: "III. Balladen." The gifts of Ceres and Bacchus are bread and wine, respectively. Hymen is the torch-bearing god of marriage. Salt and [holy] water: used at funerals.

- 61. "Der Gott und die Bajadere." 1797. In 1827 ed.: "III. Balladen." Bayadere: a dancer-prostitute in India; from the Portuguese bailadeira, "dancing girl." Mahadöh: Mahadev(a), "great god," a title of Shiva; Shiva is not known for incarnations (avatars), unlike the god Vishnu; at an early stage, Goethe called this poem "Ram und die Bajadere," and Ram(a) is one of the two most important avatars of Vishnu. The sixth line can also be rendered as: "allowing anything to happen to him." Bouquet: part of the dancing girl's reception ceremony.
- 62. "Der Zauberlehrling." 1797. In 1827 ed.: "III. Balladen." Made even more popular by Dukas's tone poem and Disney's use of the music in *Fantasia*. Based on a narrative by the ancient Greek satirist Lucian.
 - 63. "Der Musensohn." 1799. In 1827 ed.: "I. Lieder."
- 64. ["Sonett."] 1802. Not in 1827 edition. Originally part of the prologue for the opening of a Weimar ducal theater in the town of Bad Lauchstädt.
- 65. "Tischlied." 1802. In 1827 ed.: "II. Gesellige Lieder." For a banquet at an exclusive social club that was attended by the Duke of Weimar and his son.
- 66. "Schäfers Klagelied." 1802. In 1827 ed.: "I. Lieder." In folk-song style.