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Hermann und Dorothea and Luise: a comparative analysis

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MERCENE LEE LORIE, AND  LUISA
A COHABITATION ANALYSIS

by
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INTRODUCTION

Critics have not yet come to an agreement as to how much Goethe took from Voss's Luise for his Hermann und Dorothea; and how much credit we are justified in giving to Goethe's originality for his production. When Hermann und Dorothea first appeared, it was scorned by a great many readers as being a rather poor imitation of Luise. Now it is undoubtedly regarded as the better production of the two. However, many critics still consider it to be an imitation of Voss, although perhaps an improvement. Certainly, Goethe was inspired to the use of the hexameter, in the telling of his story, by Voss's work; there is not a doubt of this, as Goethe himself admits the fact without hesitation. But I feel sure that in making an honest comparison of the two poems one can easily see that the younger poet is entirely original except, as I have said, in the matter of the verse-form. Goethe's poem contains many subtleties of character and really wonderful philosophies of life, that when one studies the two poems for comparative purposes, Luise becomes weak and colorless besides the masterpiece, Hermann und Dorothea.
CHAPTER I
LIFE OF GOETHE AND VOSS
OUTLINE OF THEIR ACTIVITIES

At noon on the twenty-eighth of August, 1749, Elisabeth Textor Goethe, daughter of the Burgomaster of Frankfurt-on-the-Main, and her husband, the State Councillor, greeted the arrival of their first child who was named Johann Wolfgang after his maternal grandfather. Just a year preceding this date Elizabeth had married a stern middle-aged bachelor and had left her happy home. Since then she had lived with her husband and his old mother. It had not been a happy year for her, for under her husband's strict regime she had been forced into a study of those things which he deemed necessary that she should know. And her quick imagination and sensitive nature had met with a complete lack of understanding. So one can realize with what joy Elizabeth greeted the coming of her first child. Five others followed, but four of them died young, and one alone survived, a daughter, Cornelia, a year younger than Johann Wolfgang. On these two the mother lavished all her affection, and because of this tenderness the poet's childhood is a period of enchantment.

For the young Goethe and his sister the mother and grandmother were the chief sources of companionship. It was the grandmother who gave him the puppet theater which fired his imagination and through which he was enabled to reenact all of the stories his mother had told him.
His early education was very methodical. It was administered by his father who loved to impart knowledge and who forgot nothing in his zeal. However, in his tenth year, the instruction was interrupted by the arrival of five thousand French soldiers from Darmstadt. The occupation of the peaceful city by these foreign troops lasted for nearly four years. The Lieutenant, François de Théas, came to live with the Goethe family, and the house, once so quiet, was filled with the sound of men's voices. At about this same time Goethe became interested in the theater, an interest which was encouraged by the Burgomaster, Herr Textor.

At the age of fifteen he was involved in an escapade with some of his friends which caused him to give up the object of his first love, Marguerite. He decided to study, and in 1765 his father sent him to the law school at the University of Leipzig. While at that institution he led a life which was very natural for a boy newly released from the constraint of his father's influence, and free to abandon himself to the pleasures of German university life. He confesses to having neglected, not only his family's ambitions for him, but even his own scholastic desires.

Destined by his father for the law, he not only failed to prepare himself thoroughly for his profession, but so far lost sight of his own ideals of self-cultivation that the literary studies which he had proposed for himself degenerated into a somewhat aimless dilettantism.  

1 F.W. Felkin, Goethe, A Century After, 43.
His studies in Leipzig were interrupted by a serious illness. During these months, there came a definite change in his character. It was a period of introspection. He began to look upon life in a more serious manner. A friend of his mother's, Susanne Katharine von Klettenberg, who belonged to pietist circles in Frankfurt, turned the boy's thoughts to religious mysticism. On his recovery his father resolved that he should complete his legal studies at Strasbourg. The months spent in that city were marked by his meeting with Herder who taught him the significance of Gothic architecture, helped him to a realization of the charm of nature, and gave impetus to his enthusiasm for Shakespeare. Another factor of importance in Goethe's Strasbourg life was his love for Friederike Brion. A change in the type of his work is brought about through his love for her, and he begins now to do more serious work.

Having completed his studies, he went to Wetzlar, where the Imperial Court of Justice was located, to study the practice of law in its practical application. It was at this time that he became acquainted and fell in love with Lotte Buff, who was already engaged to marry Albert Kestner. Both Lotte and Kestner were very friendly toward him, but Goethe could not be contented with friendship, and after three months of unhappiness his friend Merck persuaded him to leave. He departed suddenly, leaving only a letter of farewell for Lotte. In respect to literature, the next few years of Goethe's life were the most productive. These were spent
In 1774 Charles Augustus came in contact with the poet and invited him to visit Weimar when, in the following year, he took up the reins of government. The invitation was accepted and soon Goethe became part of the gay court life at Weimar. Much stress has been laid on the frivolity of these early years of manhood, but through them all is discernible the steady purpose which revealed itself in his later work. In a year's time he was created Chevry Councillor. And so the visitor became a resident. In the succeeding years he accepted other commissions.

But his political career did not completely fill his life. He could never live without love and a love nobler than any he had ever known now lifted him above his passionate egoism, made a greater man of him and taught him the harsh beauty of sacrifice and submission. She who inspired it was possessed of a pure, motherly spirit which soothed and disturbed him and made him supremely happy and unhappy at the same time... Her name was Charlotte, Baroness von Stein... He was blissfully happy for a while, and felt that for the first time he could be completely himself and confide his every thought to an eager, receptive mind. She was not only his nearest friend, but the first woman with whom he had ever found a real intellectual companionship.

Except for occasional visits to other parts, notable among which is the visit to Italy, Goethe remained in Weimar the rest of his life.

The French campaign, where he came into such close contact with the ugly side of life was another interruption to his peaceful life in Weimar. But when he returned there was a friendship awaiting him which had a very great

1 M. C. Crawford, Goethe and His Women Friends, 51.
influence on his life and work; that with Frederick Schiller.

In 1816, his wife, Christiane, died. He wrote the following as her funeral oration:

Their married life had been very happy and Goethe always felt a great deal of pride in the son that she gave him.

Goethe's death followed that of his wife in 1832.

Thomas Carlyle says of Goethe:

To Goethe a higher destiny was appointed than to Schiller. Through all the changes of man's life, onwards to its extreme verge he was to go; and through them all nobly. In youth, flatterings of fortune, uninterrupted outward prosperity cannot corrupt him; through manhood, in the most complex relation, as poet, courtier, politician, man of business, man of speculation; in the midst of revolutions and counter-revolutions, outward and spiritual; with the world loudly for him, with the world loudly or silently against him; in all seasons and situations, he held equally his own. Old age itself, which is called dark and feeble he was to render lovely. Such was Goethe's life.¹

Voss led a very different kind of life, and, in my opinion, a much less interesting one. He was born at Sommersdorf in Mecklenburg-Strelitz on the twentieth of February, 1751, two and a half years after Goethe. He was the son of a farmer and the grandson of an emancipated serf, so he saw with his own eyes the evils of serfdom, and his poems against tyrants, exaggerated though they may seem rest on deeply-rooted convictions. Although his childhood was one of poverty and neglect, he did attend the gymnasium at

¹ Wilhelm Bernharot, comp., Einführung in Goethe's Meisterwerke, 103.
Neubrandenburg for three years. At the end of this period, 1769, he was obliged to accept a private tutorship in order to earn money to enable him to study at a university. While struggling along in poverty as a private tutor he sent some poems to Göttinger Musenalmanach and thus began a correspondence with the editor, Boie, by whose invitation he went to Göttingen in 1772, where he studied philology. He and some associates of similar bent of mind founded the well-known Göttinger Dichterbund (Hainbund), a group of writers who stood somewhat apart from the main stream and who had an important part in the history of German literature. In 1775 Boie made over to him the editorship of the Musenalmanach, which he continued to edit for several years and in which most of his idylls first appeared. He married Boie's sister, Erneatine, and the following year was appointed rector at the school at Ottendorf in Hanover. In 1782 he accepted the rectorship at Eutin where he remained until 1802.

These years were the happiest and most productive years of his life: now he wrote his idylls, carried on his classical studies, especially in Homer, and produced his incomparable translation of the Odyssey (1780). When he retired, with a salary of six hundred thalers, he moved to Jena where he was in close intercourse with the Weimar circle, especially with Goethe. But three years later, although Goethe used his utmost endeavors to persuade him to stay, he accepted a call to a professorship at Heidelberg. Here he devoted himself entirely to his literary labors, translations and
research, and the collecting and filing of his earlier poems until his death on the twenty-ninth of March in the year 1826.

Following is a brief summary of the life of Voss as given by Robertson, when speaking of him in connection with the Göttinger Lichterbund:

Johann Heinrich Voss (1751-1826) was not the most gifted of its members, but he was its representative poet. After a youth of extreme privation—he was a native of Mecklenburg—he attracted Boile's (founder of the Göttinger Musenalmanach) attention by some verses sent to the "Almanach," and the latter made it possible for him in 1772 to study at the University of Göttingen. Here Voss devoted himself zealously to classical philology and to poetry. In 1776 he retired to Wanslecke where he lived a couple of years on the scanty income brought in by literary work. From 1782 to 1802 he was a schoolmaster in Eutin, in 1802 we find him in Jena, and in 1805 he was appointed professor in Heidelberg, where he died in 1826... In later years, the essentially unpoetic side of his nature, combined with a boorishness of manner which he never lost, brought him into conflict with the younger Heidelberg Romantics.

Let us look at the work Goethe and Voss produced. In any enumeration of Goethe's work one is surprised to find a peculiar mixture of classical material and experimental material. Most of the works which may be classed as of the former type were written in the earlier part of his life. Goethe had at that time not yet developed clearly his own manner of writing, so it was perfectly natural for him to follow the trend of the times. It was after he had been writing for a number of years that he began to branch out and try his hand at other types of literary production. Goethe began his writing even before he left Frankfurt.

1 J. G. Robertson, A History of German Literature, 302.
We hear of a novel in the form of letters, in which the characters carried on their correspondence in different languages; there was a prose epic concerning Joseph; and various religious poems of which one, Die Hölenschacht Christi found its way in a revised form into the poet's complete works. After he left Frankfurt for Leipzig, he learned, under the guidance of E. W. Behrisch, the art of writing those light anacreontic lyrics which harmonized in tone with the polite society of Leipzig. Artificial as these poems are, Goethe was inspired in writing them by a passion for Anna Katharine Schönkopf. To his days spent in Leipzig belong also two plays in Alexandrine verse, Die Laune des Verliebten, a light pastoral, and Die Mitschuldigen, a more somber picture with an odd mixture of comedy and tragedy.

A few years later, in Strassburg, Goethe became acquainted with Herder, and under his influence was inspired with enthusiasm for Shakespeare and the Volkslied. Also, while in Strassburg, he fell in love with Friederike Brion, and he realized how artificial had been his work of earlier days. He saw in Friederike a simple girl, the daughter of a village pastor. He no longer felt himself forced to write in that manner which was the style of the time or to conform to rules dictated by society. From this period we have such lyrics as Kleine Blumen, kleine Blätter and Wie herrlich Leuchtet mir die Natur. However, from the first, Goethe realized that he could not marry Friederike, and his unhappiness is reflected in Wanderers Sturmlied and Clavigo.
He also wrote his first drama at this time, Geschichte Gottfriedens von Berlichingen dramatisiert, which was later published under the title of Götz von Berlichingen.

Werthers Leiden is a result of his life in Wetzlar, and is the story of his love for Charlotte Buff. With this work Goethe succeeded in attracting the attention of Europe. It was soon followed by Stella, another drama in which he reflects his love affairs. He also at this time wrote a group of dramatic satires, and a number of unfinished dramas, greatest among which is Faust. Another important work was the drama of Egmont, which may, to a certain extent, be considered as supplementary to Faust.

The literary works of his first years in Weimar cannot be compared to those of the preceding years. There are lyrics, such as Wanderers Nachtlied and Gesang der Geister über den Wassern; the famous ballad, Der Erlkönig; and a number of that type which is characterized by Die Fischerin and Jery und Pätsel. But greater works were in preparation. A religious epic, Die Geheimnisse, and Elpenor, a tragedy, were never finished, but in 1777 under the influence of the theatrical experiments at Weimar, Goethe wrote a piece which was to have had the title Wilhelm Meisters theatralische Sendung, and two years later he himself took part in a presentation of his drama Iphigenie auf Tauris. This was, however, written in prose, and it was not until he went to Rome that the drama finally received the form in which we know it.
Torquato Tasso was also written during his Italian journey. The tragedy Ermione was finished in Italy in 1768, while Faust was brought a step nearer completion.

In 1792 Goethe accompanied his master, the prince, on the campaign against France which ended so ingloriously for the German armies at Valmy. Of the Revolution Scherer says:

Both Goethe and his princely master were hostile to the French Revolution, which was everywhere asserting its power, and troubling men's minds in Germany as elsewhere. (His objections, however, were not those of the French Royalist group, for he was in sympathy with the basic ideas of the revolt. That which he did not favor was the abuses which were not necessary to obtain the desired goal.) To uphold the national literature in despite of revolutionary influences, and to retain the public sympathy for it, was a matter of vital interest for Goethe, Schiller, and many like-minded friends. The publication of the 'Horen', as we have seen, was meant to serve this purpose, but the gigantic phenomenon of the Revolution also forced itself on Goethe's mind in the light of poetic material for his hand to shape.

He gave voice to his antagonism to the new democratic principles in the dramas Der Grosskopfe, Der Bürgergeneral and in the unfinished fragments Die Aufregetten and Das Mädchen von Oberkirch.

In 1790 he published his important Versuch, die Metamorphose der Flämiggen zu erklären, which was an achievement for the new science of comparative morphology.

In the meanwhile, however, Goethe had completed Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre and his famous friendship with Schiller had begun. It was Schiller who induced him to undertake those studies of the nature of epic and dramatic poetry

1 W. Scherer, A History of German Literature, II, 189.
which resulted in the epic of Hermann und Dorothea and the fragment of the Achilleis, and it was also the younger poet who induced Goethe to again take up Faust and bring the first part of it to a conclusion. Hermann und Dorothea appeared in 1798.

A group of poems including Der Zauberkohl, Der Gott und die Bayern, Die Braut von Korinth, Alexis und Irom, Der neue Faust, and Die schöne Müllerin are those which he wrote in friendly rivalry with Schiller. Goethe's classic principles were doomed to failure when taken to the German stage. Some of these are Die Natürliche Tochter and Baldachon und Neoteje.

The last period in Goethe's life is marked with Epilog zu Schillers Glocke, a tribute to his friend, the completion of Faust and the publication of Die Wahlverwandtschaften, and Aus meinem Leben, Dichtung und Wahrheit, his autobiography.

Although we cannot perhaps call Hermann und Dorothea Goethe's most important work, we can say it is one of his most perfect poems. It shows a cumulation of the knowledge gained through the writing of some of the finest work of the century.

Only through the new impulse given by the Sturm und Drang movement to the observation of everyday life, through the new insight afforded by Hamann and Herder into the actual conditions of primitive peoples, through the new light shed by Winckelmann and his successors on the moral forces underlying the ideal of Greek simplicity, above all, through the masterly reproduction of the Homeric world in Voss's translation of the Odyssey, the elements were given for an idyllic poem which without leaving the firm soil of familiar reality,
should at the same time open up a far-reaching ideal perspective. In the union of these elements there lies the peculiar charm of Goethe's *Hermann und Dorothea*.

So as if to escape for a while from his perplexing problems, Goethe, fresh from *Wilhelm Meister*, turned to the representation of a life limited in its aspirations, wedged in to a certain extent by tradition, but sure of itself and complete in all its outward simplicity. *Hermann und Dorothea* is the highest outcome of the idyllic undercurrent of the eighteenth century.

In *Werther*, Goethe had already furnished a picture of middle-class family life, but with much sentimental adornment. In *Faust* and *Lemont* he drew a succession of pictures of small town life. In his oreciati *Jery und Pötel* he used real Swiss peasants, such as he had known on his journey in Switzerland. It is true, in *Wilhelm Meister* he made the middle classes contrast unfavorably with the aristocracy; but immediately after he had concluded this novel, he produced in *Hermann und Dorothea* a truthful picture of the life in a small German town. He wanted to show that both classes have their strong and weak points. The great incidents of the outside world had heretofore been introduced only incidentally, but in *Hermann und Dorothea* this is an essential element.

As Schiller said in writing to Meyer:

You will admit that it is the culmination of all his and

our modern art. I have watched the work in its growth, and have been almost as much astounded at the mode of growth as at the finished work itself. While we others must collect painfully and stop to examine, producing only slowly and only something that is tolerable, he has but to shake the tree gently and down fall into his arms the fairest fruit, heavy and ripe.

The work of Voss is unlike that of Goethe in that the type does not vary so much. His principal interest is in the idyll and in translations. In his younger days he did not dare to experiment with different types of literature as the threat of poverty was always at hand. His literary work does not cover a wide range and it does not rise above a homely mediocrity. He seemed to have difficulty in detaching his genius from his native soil and the prosaic realities of everyday life. It has been said that Voss was the best of the many who vied with one another in creating a German Homer. He recognized the value of German syllables for metrical and rhythmic purposes. This quality combined with that of rural homeliness was the most important item in the creation of his idylls, of which he made a specialty. He brought the idyll down to earth by depicting scenes and characters from the Low German life that he shared as a schoolmaster at Eutin. He sometimes uses dialect to increase the effect of realism.

And when have domestic joys, rural simplicity, the holiday pleasures and workaday affairs of a contented, comfortable, and respectable people been more pleasantly and truthfully

1 Johann Wolfgang Goethe, Hermann und Dorothea, Hart ed., 12, of introduction.

2 W. Scherer, A History of German Literature, II, 121.
portrayed than in... the scenes from Hannoverian and Holstein country life by... Johann Heinrich Voss... Such works as Voss's Luise or The Seventeenth Birthday... are classic examples of the unspeakable charm with which the faithful representation of an existence hedged in by uncorrupted sentiment, simple decorum, and a chaste popular tradition cannot fail to exert.

He was not an inspired poet, but his work, with that of his Göttingen conferees, is historically important because of its self-reliant, home-staying plebeianism.

The most important work among his translations was Homer's Odyssey, originally published in 1761. He also translated Hesiod, Theocritus, Bion and Moschus, Vergil, Horace, Tibullus, Propertius, and other classical poets, and he prepared a critical edition of Tibullus. Toward the end of his life he published a translation of Shakespeare's plays, in nine volumes, which he had completed with the help of his sons, Heinrich and Abraham, both of whom were scholars and writers of considerable ability. His translations indicate not only sound scholarship but also a thorough mastery of the laws of German poetry and prose. Of his translation of the Odyssey Andreen says:

Not only did the translation charm all Germany with its beauty and freshness, so that Schiller could say: "die die Homer siehe, sie lächelt such uns", but the Odyssey also set its stamp upon the later icylls of Voss. In fact the he employs altogether the epic form, no lyrical elements are introduced and the conversation is drawn into the epic narrative. Furthermore the minute descriptions of household furniture, of preparations for meals and other duties, joint to similar descriptions in the Odyssey as the model.

1 Kuno Francke, A History of German Literature as Determined by Social Forces, 303-318.

2 O. A. Andreen, Studies in the Idyl in German Literature, 63.
When he was just completing his Homer work he wrote *Der Siebzigste Geburtstag* which was followed three years later by *Des Bräutigams Besuch* and in 1784 by *Luise*, each in its brevity and conciseness giving a charming picture of the calm idyllic life in a German country parsonage.

There is a long list of Voss's idylls which are seldom read. Among these are *Der Morgen* and *Selmas Geburtstag*, but these are marked by an immature style, especially in the introduction of the "seraphic" element of Klopstock's *Messias*. With *Die Leibeigenschaft* Voss begins a long series of idylls which have been called *Tendenz-Stücke*. As he wrote these idylls with the express purpose of instituting social reform by holding up to view certain social wrongs of the period, he placed in them a great deal of bitterness and satire. He had seen much of the curse of serfdom as it still existed in parts of Northern Germany and it had filled him with hatred and indignation against the tyranny of the nobility. This prompted a reformatory desire which showed itself in the two idylls *Die Jerdknechte* and *Der Ehrenkranz*. *Der Bettler* declaims against intolerance. It is based on an incident which had come under his immediate observation.

Some of his idylls may be compared to the modern social novel which preaches some special social reform. So in *Die Geldhälser* he declaims against avarice, in *Der Riesenhügel* against superstition, in *Das Stätchen* against bachelorhood, and in *Der Abendschmaus* against gluttony.

The most perfect of all the idylls in which Voss used
the dramatic form combined with lyrical elements, is Die Kirschenpflückerin. The whole idyll is pervaded by the calm atmosphere of the orchard on a summer's day.

However Voss also wrote other types. In his Mythologische Briefe, in which he attacked the ideas of Christian Gottlob Heyne, and in his Antisymbolik, written in opposition to Georg Friedrich Creuzer, and in other writings he made important contributions to the study of mythology. He was also a strong advocate of the right of free judgment in religion. Sophronizon is an article on his friend Friedrich von Stolberg's repudiation of Protestantism. He left a short autobiography, Abriss meines Lebens.

Luise is without a doubt the finest of Voss's idylls. It shows clearly how for a long time he groled about seeking for proper idyllic material. The idylls show a gradual improvement in choice and treatment of the subject-matter, until he finally found the type of poetry in which he accomplished his best work. Most of his idylls are based on real life, such as had come within his own experience. This realism reaches its highest expression in Luise. The peasant life of the North offered a rather unyielding material for poetic treatment, and besides was too remote from the sympathy of his readers. Not until Voss described scenes and conditions in which the simplicity of the country, and the culture of the city were combined did he fully charm his audience.

It is interesting to note just what there is in the
way of religious material in *Hermann und Dorothea* and *Luise*. The eighteenth century is a time when there is a throwing off of restraint in the church by the people of Germany, as well as of the other countries of Western Europe. This interest in matters pertaining to religion is reflected very definitely in both of the poems.

In each of them we find the character of a person who plays an important role in the development of the plot. But rather than making the two poems alike, a dissimilarity arises as the characters are analyzed. In *Hermann und Dorothea*, the pastor is the embodiment of open-mindedness. He is the one to whom the others turn when they are in trouble. They ask for his advice and opinion in matters of politics and social life as well as religion; they look to him as one of the educated men of the community. Goethe calls him noble, sensible, and well-versed in the ways of man and of the world, as well as in the Scriptures, and the best secular literature. Doubtless the fact that this man is brought into special prominence sprang from the poet’s desire that the abundance of worldly wisdom put into his mouth should command close attention.¹ He is that type of man who would not care to which church you belong, for he is truly Christian, truly a MAN.

The other minister, the father of Luise, reflects religion in a different manner. He is rather proud of the

¹ W. Bernhardt, comp., *Einführung in Goethe’s Meisterwerke*, 283.
fact that he takes no interest in anything outside of his family and his church. He is very happy and contented without knowing anything of the outside world, if only those around him are always sweet-tempered and kind.

In Hermann und Dorothea the religious atmosphere is emphasized through the peaceful and quiet tone of the whole poem.

In reading it we feel as if we were looking at a modern... counterpart to one of those wonderful religious paintings in which a Van Eyck or a Memling embodied the idyllic side of medieval Christianity... But in Goethe's Hermann und Dorothea there is no admixture of the supernatural, no heavenly figures mingle here with men. Yet here also we gain a calming sense of the kinship and essential oneness of all life.1

In Luise, since the hero as well as the mother is a country person, the deism of the poet makes itself felt in ever-recurring prayers of gratitude and incessant praise of God's dominant, fatherly goodness toward his many creatures. There are children who have never done any individual thinking, but are contented to follow the easiest path.

There is a great difference in the breadth of the two poems. In Luise we see the family, with Luise as the central figure, and the young minister whom she is to marry. We become fairly well acquainted with the type of life each leads, and how he reacts to certain situations, but we know nothing of the life of the larger world of that time, or even of their neighbors and friends. There is not the smallest

1 Kuno Francke, History of German Literature as Determined by Social Forces.
echo penetrating from the outside world. In his idylls Voss, like Homer, describes family life, furniture, the kitchen utensils and household duties. The portrayal of nature also occupies a prominent place, not because it plays a role but because the actors only happen to play in it.

Goethe is like Voss in that he united the Homeric world with the German love of domesticity. But unlike Goethe, Voss did not always succeed in raising the everyday life which he chose as this theme into the sphere of pure poetry, because he did not make it immortal.

Hermann und Dorothea is very different from Luise in respect to breadth of interest. We get to know the life of the country town quite thoroughly. There is an effective union of the peaceful serenity of the town and the strenuous, warlike atmosphere of the nation. Take, for example, the beginning. Everything is so quiet that it seems we might almost hear the humming of the insects; it is as though the whole world were enjoying heavenly peace. But from the conversation we immediately get a glimpse of the opposite picture; the hurrying train of the emigrants, sad mishaps, screams and lamentations, war and revolution, all catch our eye and ear. The scene is the little world of a provincial town, with the roar of the great world heard in the distance.

And yet Goethe has done both very completely. To the American who has never lived in a provincial German town Hermann und Dorothea will be a difficult poem by reason of its very simplicity, and its nature so intensely German.
The characters, their sentiments, their way of expressing themselves and acting, everything, even the architecture of the houses and the tillage of the ground, is distinctly German. It was Goethe's purpose to have it so, for he has made the following admission: "I have endeavored to separate in the epic crucible the purely human element (das Reinmenschliche) of the life in a country town from the cross, and at the same time to reflect in a small mirror the great movements and shiftings of the world-stage."

Yet on this account Hermann und Dorothea is all the more deserving of careful study. Better than any other poem in the language, it makes us acquainted with the existence of the great producing classes, as they appeared to the eye of the thinker and artist. What others have sketched vaguely, confusedly, imperfectly, is here given in the clearest form and color, and with scrupulous fidelity of detail. One who has mastered the poem can truthfully assert that he knows something of German life, that he has possessed himself of the measuring-rod of German descriptive literature. 1

In order to preserve the idyllic character of the epic the poet was obliged to introduce us to a simple background. He might have laid the scene of the poem in a village as Voss had done, without in any way changing the probability of the action. But fortunately he kept the small town. This afforded the simplicity of a village, especially the common pursuit of agriculture, and at the same time made possible the variety of traces and types found in a town. Here the apothecary and the merchant could appear along with the parson and the landlord, yet the social life and the interest in town government could play their parts.

Although the scenes and incidents of Hermann und Dorothea are provincial, we are never allowed to forget the wide issues behind them. Thus we get a picture of German still life, painted against the background of the

1 Johann Wolfgang Goethe, Hermann und Dorothea, Part edition, 19-20, of Introduction.
great revolutionary upheaval. We hear of the terrible goings in France as they effect the lives of the common folk in the immediate present. Much of this reflection of the outside world is given through conversations. The landlord contends that peace must be near at hand, because the combatants are weary of fighting and their strength is waning. To be accurate, the preliminary negotiations for peace between France and Prussia were begun in the autumn of 1794, and the treaty of Basel was concluded in April, 1795. We can give the landlord, then, their full significance only by taking them as the general expression of the hopes that were possible in August, 1794. For in August of 1796, Prussia and France were at peace, and Austria and France were involved in hostilities that gave no promise of peace. The lines which Goethe dedicates to the Revolution give the main idea of what he thought about it. In the sixth canto he pours forth all that he had ever thought about the Revolution. The words are spoken by the Judge:

Not recent are our sorrows;
For we have drunk the bitterness of entire years,
More terrible, because even our most beautiful hope was destroyed.
For who denies it, that his heart swelled high in his bosom,
That his freer breast with purer pulses was beating
As the first rays of the new sun appear,
Then we hear of the rights of men, that should be common to all,
Of the righteous freedom and of the praiseworthy equality!
Then hoped everyone that he should live his own life; and appeared
To loosen the bond, that held many lands,
Fetters that had been in idle and self-seeking hands.
Tid not all peoples look in those distressing days
Toward the capital of the world, for so it had long been
And now more than ever deserved the glorious name?
Were not the names of those men, who first delivered the
message,
Names to compare with the highest that are mentioned under
the heavens?
Did there not grow in every man courage and spirit and
language?²

Here the judge shows, in striking phrases, how the
first joy over liberty and the original faith in popular
brotherhood was followed by a succession of disappointments,
each worse than the preceding. And after describing the
avenging wrath of the German people, he points out:

May I never again see men carried away by such
Awful passion! The raging animal is a better sight.
Let man not yet speak of freedom, as if he could govern
himself!
As soon as the bands are loosened, then is let loose
All of the evil, that law had driven back into the
corners.

We have the reflection of the outside world through
Hermann, too. Despairing of winning the girl he loves,
he turns his thoughts to the distress of his Fatherland,
and thinks of entering military service, to defend his
native soil against the foreign intrusion. And when he has
won Dorothea, in exchanging rings with her, he utters a
solemn vow to live after the example of those nations who
fought for God and law, for parents, wives, and children,
and offered a united resistance to the enemy.³

The typical contrast, which is the basis of the whole
poem, is further brought out in the reference to Dorothea's
first lover, a man of weak character who had been swallowed
up in the chaos of the French Revolution. In striking

¹ Johann Wolfgang Goethe, Hermann und Dorothea, Canto IV, 3
² Ibid, IV, 76.
³ Ibid, IX, 299.
contrast to the enthusiasm which led him to Paris, we have Hermann's sober reflection, "The man who in a tottering age is unsteady in character only increases the evil and spreads it further and further; but the man of firm principles shapes the world to his will. It is not for the Germans to carry on the terrible revolution, and to waver hither and thither."

So we see that although the poem holds itself in the narrow circle of family experiences and village society, it nevertheless reflects in this narrow circle the great movements of the world's history, the eternal round of stability and progress. The little village near the Rhine, with its peaceful streets and neat little houses, surrounded by its vineyards and wheatfields appears to us as a reminder of those forces which connect our own life with that of the past. The distant thunder of the French Revolution, the commotion caused by the passage of the emigrants, the striking individualities standing out among this wandering community remind us to the equally ensuring forces of change and development. There is the character of Hermann. He is a steady, serious-minded boy and he appreciates his home and is perfectly satisfied with it. He has always led a peaceful life and hopes he always will, and yet when his will is crossed, there is no one who would be quicker to fight for what he considers his own rights. To be sure, he says that it is his country for which he threatens to fight, but one knows that it is his own life for which he is anxious to battle if necessary.

1 W. Scherer, A History of German Literature, 192.
Voss's poem is divided into three very distinct parts. The first of the three idylls describes a picnic in the woods given by the pastor in honor of his daughter's eighteenth birthday. In the second we have a visit to Luise's house by her lover, and in the third, her wedding. Originally, each of these three idylls was written as a separate unit and are in some respects three complete poems. Goethe, on the other hand, divided *Hermann und Dorothea* into nine sections, each of which is an integral part of the whole. The poem is divided into nine cantos which bear the names of the nine Muses. The tone of each canto is in appropriate relation to the name which it bears, and thus all the various branches of poetry are brought before us.

Why did Goethe put the story of *Hermann und Dorothea* into verse rather than into prose? To be sure, his model, *Luise*, had been done in verse. But Voss's poem would have had very little value if it had been in prose, because there is only a slight plot. It is particularly valuable because of the use of the hexameter, showing the development of the Homeric form. Goethe's poem is different. There is a real plot with a definite climax. Would not this tale have been just as effective and charming if it had not been written in verse?

It was Goethe's first intention to give the poem the
form of a drama, and this original dramatic conception still shows in the completed work. However, he finally decided in favor of the epic form which he believed was better suited to the material.

Since the time of Homer, the use of the hexameter has always been connected with that kind of a plot which tells the story of great and heroic deeds. It is a stately metre which for a long time was not deemed suitable to apply to ordinary every-day happenings. It was regarded as a special metre to be reserved for special events.

Just why did Goethe employ this poetic form? Was it the fact that he recognized in the story material suitable for an epic? Or was there some other reason? Bielschowsky thinks it was the result of personal experience which he not only observed with interest, but which he seized upon with his inmost being, and which stirred his deepest emotions. For this reason the writing of poetry meant to him an act of liberation and the termination of a definite experience.

G.H. Lewes says of him:

Poetry was the melodic voice breathing from his entire manhood, not a profession, not an act of duty. It was an impulse: the sounding chorus of his poetic nature vibrated to every touch, grave and stately, sweet and impassioned, delicate and humorous. He wrote not for fame. He wrote not for hire. He wrote poetry because he had lived it; and sang as the bird sings on its bough...

One reason why the Ioyll attracted Voss was the sense

1 Albert Bielschowsky, Goethe, sein Leben und seine Werke, 5.
of his poetic limitations. He felt that he did not possess the originality and creative power to produce great masterpieces in epic or dramatic poetry. But if any of these forms by itself was beyond his poetic powers, might he not accomplish something of value and of lasting value in the less pretentious idyll, into which he might introduce elements from all these forms of poetry? As to Goethe's meter, since his work was to be a German poem, rooted in German life and meant to speak to the German heart, he would have his rhythm as little exotic as possible. He would discard the strict rules on which Voss insisted, be the master rather than the slave of his longs and shorts, and so make a sort of German hexameter for his German poem.

We will now see just what the meter is. The hexameter was first employed by the Greeks, as far as we know, by whom its rules were fixed and whose versification was based primarily upon the quantity of syllables. With them the word-accent played no part in the writing of poetry, while with us it is of primary importance. Hence in using the hexameter for our modern verse the question always arises as to how far the ancient rules of quantity should be followed. To follow them strictly at all times is highly impracticable as it results in an artificial line which hardly sounds like verse at all. On the other hand, to pay no attention to them results in a verse which may be easy and natural in its movement, but does not produce on the trained ear the effect of the ancient hexameter. Therefore, in adapting this measure,
it was soon found that certain concessions were necessary. The first of these, in importance, was to abandon the principle of length by position; the second, to make stress substitute for length. It was upon this principle that Klopstock composed his Messias, a poem which Goethe had read in his boyhood with a great deal of enthusiasm, and which still occupies a respectable place in German literature.

The new rule, then, was that accented syllables be treated as metrically long, unaccented ones as short. However, this rule produced difficulties, the first of which related to the spondee. If this had always to consist of two accented syllables its use would be confined within very narrow limits, since no single word in the language could serve as a spondee. The nearest approach to it would be in compounds having a secondary accent on the last syllable, such as Gasthaus or Schauspiel. The easiest thing to do to relieve the situation was to allow in place of the spondee a trochee, but this put a foot of three beats in place of one of four.

A second difficulty was furnished by the monosyllables, consisting mostly of articles, pronouns, and prepositions, which in speech have a variable accent. It was a perfectly natural result of the new rule to treat these words as either long or short, leaving it to the reader to give them their proper weight. But there is another class of monosyllables, made up for the most part of nouns, pronouns, verbs and adverbs, which never lose their accent in speech, and there
was a strong temptation to extend the rule of variable accent to this class of words which cannot be slurred without producing awkwardness.

And then there is the case of compound words having a secondary accent. To refuse to admit these as dactylic or as the first and second syllables of dactylic was to hamper the poet, since the German language is full of such compounds.

In all of these cases Goethe chose to follow the looser ways of Klopstock rather than the stricter ones of Voss. He realised that the resulting verse would be more in harmony with the spirit of the German language.

Brandes says of Voss's poem:

Luise is a vicarage idyll which makes its appeal because the verses are excellently built up with correct, weighty spondees and lightly moving dactylics in a set scheme, where not one accent is false; and which repels because of the bland way in which all family emotions are sugar-coated with sentimentality and saturated with emotional weeping.

The metre of Voss's poem is no doubt much more correct than that of Goethe's, but then, how much more lovely and smoother are the latter's lines than the tamer and somewhat dry idyll of Voss. Luise is full of quaint and rare words which even a German reader may not know, but for all this, the language itself is most correct, and there is scarcely a deviation from the accepted standard. There is no doubt in our minds that we could ever prefer Voss's tamer letter of the law to Goethe's superb spirit of the law.

The plots of these two poems do have their similarities, but on the whole, and as regards most of the details they are really quite different. The subject of Voss's poem is the courtship and wedding of Luise and a young pastor, but this forms only the thread which holds the various scenes together. The first lines of the poem show the utter contentment and peace which is enjoyed by Luise's family. The occasion is the anniversary of her eighteenth birthday, and the father speaks in honeyed tones of how fortunate they are and of how good the dear Lord has been to them. He wants to do everything in his power to make this holiday a happy one for his daughter, so he has planned a picnic for her in the woods. The whole first part of the poem is a description of this picnic. It is at this time that the one discordant note is struck. The unique disharmony arises when the young person, about to drink a toast proposed by Luise's father to his beloved daughter, takes hold of his glass so high that it does not quite clink as it should. At this time, Voss's rivals, who did not write such excellent hexameters, receive this gentle reproval:

Tausendmal hab' ich ihn, Sohn, an die Erzügense erinnert!
Klappt nicht immer sein Glas wie ein spaltiger Töpf und das neuerne
Dichterschwarms ungeschliffner Hexameter, welcher daherplumpt
Ohne Takt und Musik, zum Ärgernis? Kann er nicht anders?

This is the only part of Luise that does not ring true and there can hardly be a difference of opinion as to its insignificance. Otherwise everything is ideal; fortune
means good fortune; in so far as there is feeling it is that of joy and goodness.

The second part of the poem is a description of a visit which Luise's lover makes to the family. It describes the high expectation held by every member of the family. Then we have the young pastor's arrival, and what each person says and how he acts and feels.

The third is a very detailed description of the wedding and the accompanying merriment.

The theme of Hermann und Dorothea is also the courtship and marriage of the heroine. It is told from the point of view of the lover and his family. The scene is a German village on the bank of the Rhine, and the fugitives come presumably from the Palatinate. The beginning is very dramatic. There is no description of time or place, and not even a formal introduction of the speaker. It begins immediately with the words of the innkeeper, and these words contain enough to make us understand and visualize the situation.

The weather is very hot, without a cloud in the sky. The town is deserted, for everyone has gone out to the causeway, about an hour's walk from the town, in order to see the procession of their fellow-countrymen from across the Rhine fleeing before the French. The innkeeper and his wife have remained at home, but they have sent their son Hermann with a carriageful of food and clothing, in this way striking a compromise between their duty to their neighbors and their enjoyment of quiet comfort.
Hermann arrives at the scene of sorrow in time to find Dorothea leading a cart, in which lies a woman who has just given birth to a child. She awakens his interest and admiration, and he places his provisions in her hands, confident that she will distribute them wisely.

In the meantime, the town-people who have gone out to see the fugitives gradually return to their homes, the rich merchant among them. He drives in with his daughters in a fine carriage. The apothecary follows, then the parson. Both being good friends of the innkeeper and his wife, they sit down on the bench beside them. The apothecary begins at once to argue against the curiosity and frivolity which have led people out to the causeway, although we have a suspicion that he had no other motive for going himself. The parson, however, defends these impulses, and proceeds at once to denounce the doctrine of the sinful nature of man. However, he does not succeed in obtaining the undivided attention of the landlady who begs the men to tell her what they have seen among the emigrants. The apothecary who, perhaps, has been waiting for a chance to impart his knowledge, plunges into a detailed description of all he has seen. The landlord is easily satisfied and after a short time he breaks into the recital and invites the men to step into the house where it is cooler and they can talk over a glass of wine.

Joyously rang at once the glasses of host and pastor; But the third held his motionless, thinking.

The apothecary is thoughtful because he sees in the passing through the country of the unfortunate emigrants a forecast of what might happen to him at some future date. The person realizes why his friend takes such a serious view of the incident and tries to cheer him up and ease his mind. About this time Hermann drives thundering up to the inn. He is more lively than usual and tells of his experiences with the emigrant girl. Hermann's father now finds him no longer unwilling to think of marriage, and searches in his mind for a daughter-in-law with a dowry, or at least one of higher station than a peasant's. This is naturally a blow to the young man's hopes of winning Irothea, but annoyed as he must have been at his father's words, his respect for his parent holds him within bounds. He does, however, say that he has made up his mind he will never marry one of the merchant's daughters. This angers the father and he accuses Hermann of not wishing to rise above his present situation. Sorrowfully, Hermann leaves the room.

The mother scolds her husband for his harsh words and goes out to seek her boy. She looks for him in all of his favorite places and finally discovers him under a pear tree, on the highest part of the hill behind the garden. He tries to conceal the cause of his sadness from his mother by telling her that he feels unhappy because of the plight of the emigrants. He says that the sight of them has inspired him with the determination to enter the army. However, in answer to her insistent request, he tells her the real
cause of his sorrow:

But when I look at the dwelling behind, where on the pable
The window is seen that marks my room in the attic;
I look back on the times, how many nights I have spent there
Awaiting the moon and many mornings the sun,
When the healthful sleep of only a few hours satisfied me;
Ah! So lonely they seem to me then like the room of the
court and
Garden, the Glorius field, that stretches over the hill,
Everything lies so deserted before me: A wife is what I
need.

The mother immediately surmises that Hermann's longing
for a wife began with the sight of the exiled maiden. Hermann
does not deny this, but, in view of his father's declarations, he is wholly without hope, and so begs his mother to
let him go where despair is driving him. She is unwilling to
consent to such a step and begs him to go down with her and
say a kind word to his father, who has a right to expect
this of him. Toward evening, when the effect of the wine is
gone, the father will be more gentle and the parson will
know how to help them.

Just as the mother supposed, the parson and the apothecary
are still sitting with her husband, engaged in a spirited
conversation. The parson now comes more into the foreground.
He had been struck at the first by a change in Hermann's
manner, but has seen clearly just what is the matter. He
now frames his words cleverly, so as to support Hermann. He
says, it is well for a man to strive after new things, but
the inclination to cling to the old is also good.

The parson has just finished speaking when the mother

1 J.W. Goethe, Hermann und Dorothea, Canto IV, line 190.
enters, with Hermann, and reminds the father how they have often spoken of Hermann's marriage and now they have wished he might choose for himself a girl whom he should love. Now he has chosen, and his choice has fallen on the strange girl whom he met on the causeway. The mother adds that the son is determined to have this girl or never to marry.

Undecided and resentful, the father is silent, and continues so, even after Hermann has supported his mother's words with his own conviction:

Give her to me, Father.' My heart has chosen clearly and safely, to you she will be the most worthy daughter.

The pastor intervenes in favor of Hermann, but the innkeeper remains silent. The decision is hard for him. The apothecary suggests that he and the pastor should make inquiries about Dorothea. Hermann's father agrees to place no obstacle in the way of a marriage should the two friends be satisfied with what they hear. Hermann himself drives the two friends of the family to the village where the emigrants have stopped to rest. After giving the men an exact description of Dorothea he waits with the carriage at the edge of the village. The pastor and his companion learn of the fine character of the girl, and learn, too, that she has been betrothed and that her lover was put to death in Paris. But this last piece of news they leave for Hermann to find out.

1 J.W. Goethe, Hermann und Dorothea, Canto V, line 54.
for himself rather than telling him. They suggest that he go and try his luck with the girl.

Being very willing to woo Dorothea for himself, and to hear from her lips the words which are to decide his fate, Hermann sends the two fatherly friends home with the carriage, saying that he will return afoot. Here by the well he meets Dorothea. But he cannot yet bring himself to speak of love, for, Goethe says:

"love did not shine from her eyes;"
But bright understanding, and requested intelligent answer.

He tells her that his mother wishes to have a maid-servant to take the place of a daughter she has lost. He tells her how he has praised her to his parents, and that he has come to communicate their wishes to her. The homeless girl is glad to become, as she believes, a helper in the Golden Lion.

Hermann and Dorothea return to the village where there is a touching scene of parting between Dorothea and the family of the new mother, and her other friends and acquaintances. Finally, however, they feel that they must leave, and so amid the crying of the children, they start on the homeward path. This eighth canto which is concerned with the walk toward the girl's future home, leaves upon one the impression of an ardent love song, without a word having been said about love. At the end we feel perfectly clear in our minds that both Hermann and Dorothea are sure

of their feelings for each other. Hermann's filial affection is here shown by the way in which he answers the girl's questions about his parents. It seems queer that even in this scene where there was plentiful opportunity, Goethe did not allow Dorothea to betray the fact that she is, essentially, a peasant girl. She does not show in either word or action in any part of the poem that she is not an aristocrat.

On the homeward walk, Dorothea sprains her foot, and while she is busy bandaging it, the poet takes us into the parlor of the inn, where the friends have meanwhile made their report to the father, and where the mother is very nervously awaiting the arrival of the young couple. When they appear Hermann introduces the girl to his parents and then quickly whispers to the parson to help him out of his embarrassment. But before the parson has an opportunity to use his skill the father brings on a crisis. He praises his son's taste and remarks to the girl that it was doubtless not very hard for her to follow his son. Dorothea is deeply offended and it is left for the parson to make the matter clear to everyone. After he has done this and Dorothea has been accepted by the mother and father, she kisses her new parents and explains to them and their friends about the ring she is wearing. And here Goethe adds a final masterful touch by not allowing her to say a word in disparagement of her former lover.
CHAPTER III

DRAMATIC CONSIDERATIONS

One can easily see why Voss wrote his Luise. He was interested in this particular type of poetry and to him it was probably just one more poem in hexameters. But Goethe's reason for writing Hermann und Dorothea is quite different. To be sure, he had a more complete background for his story, but does this account for the origin of the poem? Was the fact that Goethe read the story and recognised in it material for an effective epic enough in itself to inspire him to write that lovely idyll which has and will delight men for generations? I wonder if he was that type of poet to whom the existence of a motive is sufficient ground for using it in his writing. Or was he a poet of personal experience—experience which he not only observed with interest, but which he seized upon and made his own and which stirred his deepest emotions? He himself has said of his works, in a letter of 1775, that they were always but the treasured up joys and sorrows of his life.1

Robertson says:

If the trilogy of Wallenstein was Schiller's solution to the problem of how the literary art of the Greeks might be reconciled with that of the modern world, Goethe's was Hermann und Dorothea... While Schiller endeavored to combine Greek tragedy with Shakespeare's, Goethe, in Hermann und Dorothea, would bring back the spirit of Homer into the modern epic.2

1 Albert Bielschowsky, Goethe, sein Leben und seine Werke, 371.
2 J.G. Robertson, Goethe, 374.
It must have been shortly after Goethe's return from the unsuccessful campaign in France that he came across the Salzburg story. Of actual progress on the poem, however, we do not hear until the fall of 1796. On August sixteenth of that same year he had finished the last book of Wilhelm Meister. Two days later he left Weimar for Jena, and there shortly afterwards he commenced work on his Iliad.

The main sources from which Goethe drew his material are four. In the first place, the theme was taken by him out of an anecdote of the flight of Protestant refugees from Salzburg. On the basis of this story he drew the original outlines of the meeting and union of the lovers. Secondly, as a consequence of the French Revolution, Germans were forced to flee from German territory west of the Rhine. In 1792, Goethe was with Prussian troops, and in 1793 observed the siege of Mainz. Hence his knowledge of war and exile, with attendant cruelties and suffering. Thirdly, the personal experiences of his own life contributed to his portrayal of the life of the German people shown in the Iliad. The fourth source is literary tradition, which may be traced back through the verse idyll of Voss to the great Greek creators of the Iliad and of the epic.

The plot of Goethe's Iliad is founded upon an incident reported to have happened more than sixty years before the poet's time at Altmühl in Pavia, where the son of a prosperous family found his bride among a party of Protestant exiles. Goethe made use of the anecdote in its general outlines
modernised it, and gave it, as a background, the unrest of the French Revolution. This is the story of an immigrant girl, who while traveling with a company of refugees found favor in the eyes of a rich man's son. The young man had long been pressed to choose a wife for himself, so now, with sudden resolution, after having with some difficulty won the approval of his father, his father's friends, and the village clergyman, wooed the girl and brought her temporarily home. In this story we recognize at least four, possibly five of Goethe's characters. He transformed the burgher's son into his torment while from the emigrant maiden he created the character of Dorothea. He kept the characters of the father and the clergyman and made an apothecary represent the friends.

The historical background of the flight of the peasants from Salzburg is very interesting. The Lutheran Protestants residing in the Catholic Archbishopric of Salzburg enjoyed protection under the Westphalian Treaty of Peace until 1731. The Archbishops were broad-minded men. But with the accession of Count Leopold Anton Firmian to the chair, evil days came upon his protestant subjects. In time, the archbishop resolved to clear his land of all suggestion of heresy. His protestant subjects were suddenly confronted with this alternative: Give up their faith, or leave. The majority refused the first alternative, and in the course of two years about thirty thousand of them abandoned their homes. Among these so-called Salzburger Emigranten were the most prosperous and industrious burghers and farmers of that diocese.
The story which Goethe probably read is a contemporary chronicle of the emigration. *Das liebhaftige Gehe gen Die Salzburgischen Emigranten.* Following is the account as given by James Morgan Part:

In Alt-Mühl, a town in the Gettlingen district (Bavaria) there was a goodly and well-to-do burgher, who had a son whom he had often exhorted to marriage, yet without success. But when now the Salzburg emigrants were passing through this town, there was among their number a young woman, who pleased the young man, wherefore he resolved in his heart to marry the same, so it were possible. He inquired, therefore, of the other Salzburger concerning the maiden's conduct and family, and learned, in answer that she came of good, honest people, and had ever conducted herself discreetly, but had separated from her parents for religion's sake, and had left them. Thereupon the young man went to his father, saying that he has chosen him a woman, if the father would permit him to take her. Then now the father would know who she was, he said, it was a woman of Salzburg who pleased him, and so he would not let him have her, he could never marry. Thereupon the father was dismayed, and thought to dissuade him; also he called in some friends and the person, that their mediation might turn him from his bent. But it was all in vain. Thereupon the person at last declared it might be the wonderful providence of God in the matter to work great good both to the son and to the emigrant woman. Thereupon they gave at last their consent, and left it to the son to do as he saw fit.

The young man went straightway to his woman of Salzburg and asked her, how it pleased her here in the land. She replied: Sir, right well. He asked further, would she be willing to become a servant in his father's house? She said: Right willing, and should he be minded to take her, she thought to serve him diligently and with all fidelity, and thereupon she recounted to him all her gifts, how she could feed the cattle, milk the cows, till the fields, make hay, and the like. Thereupon the son took her with him and brought her before his father. And the father asked the maiden, if indeed his son had found favor with her and she would consent to marry him. But she, knowing nothing of all this, believed that he would tease her, and answered: Oho, he should not make fun of her; his son had desired for his father a servant, and if her were minded to have her, she thought to serve him faithfully and to earn well her bread. But when now the father insisted upon it, and also the son manifested his earnest desire for her, she declared: If they were in earnest, she would be right well content, and should cherish him as the apple of her eye. Then now the son reached her a marriage-pledge, she thrust her hand into her bosom, saying that she too must surely give him a wedding portion; therewith she reached over to him a little purse in
which were two hundred ducats.\footnote{Johann Wolfgang Goethe, \textit{Hermann und Dorothea}, Hart edition, 7, of introduction.}

Then and where Goethe first read this story cannot be accurately ascertained. It is possible that he was familiar with it, in some form, in his childhood. There are several places in which he may have found it, one of which is the pamphlet from which I have just quoted. It may have been from an \textit{Ausführliche Historie derer Emigranten} which appeared in Leipzig in 1734, or in Göcking's \textit{Vollkommene Emigrationsgeschichte of the year 1734.} It is possible, too, that he never saw the narrative in his earlier years. However, the answer to the question as to when the first read the account is of comparatively little importance.

The first thing Goethe did was to remove the subject of his poem from the narrow scene, on which the original event was said to have occurred. His emigrants were not to be men driven away by narrow-minded intolerance of a Roman Catholic bishop, but they were more closely connected with the stirring events of the poet's own time. French emigrants had about this time appeared in the territory of the bishop of Fürth, and finally reached Weimar. Then it was that Goethe saw in reality what he afterwards described in his poem, all the bustle and worry of a train of emigrants. Besides changing the Salzburg Protestants into Alsatian Germans who had been uprooted from their homes by the Revolution and driven to seek refuge on the east side of the Rhine, Goethe changed the end of the
narrative. In the story as the poet received it, it turns out that Dorothea, who is supposed to be very poor, has really a considerable portion to offer. Goethe omitted this incident entirely, as savoring too much of the melodramatic.

In August, 1792, Goethe joined the staff of the Duke of Weimar in order to accompany the expedition which the Emperor of Austria and the Russian king had promoted. As it turned out, the affair had not been well managed. The allied army, eighty thousand strong, advanced into eastern France, captured a number of cities and towns, and then was forced back across the Rhine. About thirty years later Goethe gathered together his notes and wrote that narrative which he called Campaign in France. This work, which is largely an account of the hardships that he witnessed, gives one a vivid picture of the miseries of war, especially of the distress which went with the retreat of the German army. Goethe's observations were exceedingly valuable to him when he came to write Hermann und Dorothea, several incidents in the poem being based on what the author had seen in his brief experience of soldiering. Many of the incidents and characters in this poem are to be found in his journal of the campaign. In October, the following incident is recorded:

All at once there was loud knocking on the house-door, which had been securely locked (he was billeted in a house in Sivry and the rain was falling in torrents). He gave no heed to it, for he had no desire to let in any more guests. The knocking continued, and in between cried a plaintive woman's voice, beseeching piteously in very good German--to be admitted.
At last, relenting, we unlocked the door. An old vivandière (Markstrümpferin) pressed in, carrying in her arms something wrapped in a cloth; at her heels followed a young woman, not bad looking, but pale and exhausted, scarcely able to keep on her feet. In brief, energetic words the old woman explained the situation, displaying a naked infant, of which the young woman had just been delivered on her flight. Delayed by this event, and maltreated by peasants, they had at last, in the night, reached our door. The mother had not been able to give her child any nourishment since it had drawn its first breath. Thereupon the old woman called loudly for flour, milk, a chafing-dish, also linen, for swaddling the infant. As she knew no French, we had to translate her orders; but her authoritative manner, her vehemence gave to our words plenty of pantomimic weight and impressiveness. We could not execute her orders any too promptly nor was what she obtained a bit too good for her. It was also worth the while to see with what promptness she set to work. We were pushed back from the fire, the best place given to the Mächerin, and she herself acted as if she had the house all to herself. In a trice the infant was bathed and swaddled, then the mother, scarcely thinking of herself, and then she demanded a change of dress for the Mächerin, while the old dress might be drying. We watched her with astonishment; she understood the business of levying contributions.  

This is the original of Dorothea and the Mächerin in the poem.

The campaign in France not only furnished incidents and characterizations with which to enrich his poem, it led him to change the story, and to transfer the scene to his own day. Instead of religious persecution, we have political intolerance. The political intolerance, if such it may be called, in earlier days had been caused by the desire for more land, and when that had been acquired it was organized so that it could be assimilated. After which civilization would advance of its own imetus. The warfare and conquests in the background of this poem, however, have a different

1 Johann Wolfgang Goethe, Hermann und Dorothea, part edition, 12-13, of introduction.
purpose. The idea here was first to conquer, second to colonize and third to organize as a necessity to any further civilization and progress. In other words, the state is an end in itself. By making this change, Goethe not only obtained for his story a broader and a deeper background, but he succeeded in bringing it home to his readers. As he wrote it, the idyll could be understood and felt by every German man or woman.

That a world of difference there is between the two poems in the matter of characterization: Voss's characters are all of the ideal type. The men as well as the women all have perfectly beautiful souls. Goethe's characters are real humans. He has presented genuine, living humans, each with his individual distinctions. Each of them is a definite type. Goethe has chosen, in each case, a true representative from German middle-class family life. If he had chosen these men and women from the aristocracy, he would not have been able to produce anything of such general and permanent significance. Not so general, because the sphere would have been too narrow, and not so permanent, because the position of the aristocrat is even today very much changed, while that of the independent citizen, as we see him in the idyle, will probably never change to any great extent. He just pictures the German peasant as he is.

Goethe has divided his cast into two very distinct groups; one represented by Dorothea and one, by Hermann. Through the characterization of the girl is shown all the
misery of an uprooted existence. She is poor, an orphan, with no immediate family, and her lover has been put to death in laris by the same forces which have caused her misery. But one knows all the time that he is sympathizing with her, that it is not only Dorothea who has this sorrow to bear, but the whole band of emigrants. She merely represents that group of people whose comfortable and happy existence has been destroyed. In contrast to Dorothea, Hermann represents settled conditions of life; he has all that she lacks: wealth, parents, a home, and around him he sees all the normal conditions and developments of life. To be sure, they both have shown themselves persistent and trustworthy, but she has a background, the troubles of war, while for him it is a life of comfort and peace. We can see this even in the end when the last obstacle to their life together has been removed. Dorothea's past experience makes her distrustful of her happiness even when it seems so certain. Hermann, on the other hand, draws confidence from his experience with the unchanging conditions of life.

It will not be necessary to make individual studies of Voss's characters, because they are all more or less alike, and all very colorless. But each of Goethe's characters is an individual. First we have Hermann. Concerning this young man, critics seem to agree that he is an autobiographical character. Not a few of the traits in Hermann's character existed in Goethe himself, when a young man. If the little attic room out of which Hermann looks so
longingly for the rising of the sun and moon, reminds one of the poet’s own life, how much more so at the age at which he is here supposed to have arrived. According to other facts mentioned in the poem he cannot be more than nineteen. As to the name Hermann, it is thought that he must have had in mind the national hero by that name who destroyed the Roman legions in the Teutoburg forest.  

Hermann is shown as having inherited the excellent traits of both his father and his mother.

He is at once sturdy and affectionate. He is also patriotically inspired as no other of Goethe’s young heroes; he bewails the fact that, as an only son, he was not called to the colors; he grieves over the fact that Germany is not united and makes this while speech:

Fähnlich wäre die Kraft der deutschen Jugend heimkehren, An der Grenze verbündet, nicht nachzugeben dem Trenzen, O, sie sollten uns nicht den herrlichen Polen betreten, Und vor unseren Augen die Früchte des Landes verzehren, Nicht den Männern gebieten und rauben Freiheit und Mützen.  

He has little culture of social talent and does not dress fashionably, but he is strong and loves to work. He understands horses and agriculture; he hates wrong and protects the weak, and has a fine, strong nature, though somewhat distrustful of himself, as may be seen in his wooing. He is filled with patriotic feeling, with the instinct of protection of his country against foreigners, but at home he wishes for nothing more than to peacefully pursue his own way of life. This boy shows the results of a strict training combined with a rather obstinate disposition given him by


2 Georg Brandes, "Gliedern Goethe, II, 137."
nature. For some time now his parents have been trying to persuade him to choose a wife, preferably from one of the best families of the town. But he has held out, as he does not want one of these girls for his wife, and when he does find the girl he wants, he knows he wants her and no amount of unpleasantness from his father will make him change his mind. The results of his strict rearing are shown in the fact that no matter how disturbed he is by what his father says, he always maintains a polite attitude toward his parent; never allows himself to show any impatience. He never gives his father much satisfaction, however, for he is one who does not wish to rise above his situation.

To sum up Hermann's character in a few words, he is a chaste, self-restrained youth, an exceedingly bashful lover, and a loyal son who performs quietly the given duties of each day.

If we can see the young Goethe in Hermann, we can assuredly distinguish the parents of Goethe in the father and mother in Hermann and Porothea. The way in which Hermann is misjudged by his father, while his mother thoroughly understands him and sympathizes with him is a true picture of Goethe's own home life. Goethe's father was the same good-hearted, but critical soul that we find in the host of the Golden Lion. Many likenesses between the two mothers are easily recognized. Each was named Elizabeth, and each was so many years younger than her husband that she was more of a companion to her children than to their father. This intimacy between mother and
son is vividly shown in his autobiography, *Leichtung und Wahrheit*. However, both the parents are blessed with a good head and a loving heart.

The father is that kind of a man who wants to make a show in the world. He wants to advance socially, and yet he is loath to accept new ideas of any kind. He would like to have the world stay where it is while he goes ahead for all who will to admire. He is a man who admires all good things in life. The landlord of the Golden Lion is selfish; he hates all cares and troubles and takes life easily; he loves show, wishes his son to be greater than he has been, and, as a step in this direction, to find a rich bride. The mother is a simple country woman who, nevertheless is very clever in attaining the goal she has set for herself. She is exceedingly sympathetic and kind when she is dealing with Hermann, and she knows just how to treat everyone to do her bidding without realizing they are doing exactly that which she has made them do.

Dorothea is another very interesting character. Brantjes describes her by saying that in clear fashion and unmistakable form Dorothea makes her first appearance before the reader, and before Hermann as well: She is guiding with her long staff the oxen before the heavily laden wagon. We see her walking with stately tread and womanly bearing; she makes the impression of some lofty, concealing power. She alone takes charge of the young mother who lies stretched out on the seat of the wagon. Dorothea appeals to us as the embodiment of
care and unselfish devotion, so much so and so strongly that we understand quite well Hermann's involuntary impulse, not merely to surrender to her the linen that the patient needs, but to entrust her with the distribution of all the food and drink given her by his mother for the needy emigrants.¹ She is pictured as the embodiment of all things good: a ready helper and a thrifty manager, a heroic maiden who has been tried in homelessness and adversity. Modest and restricted as are the surroundings in which Hermann and Dorothea live they move before us with the simple dignity of beings belonging to a higher order of existence, and in their final union we gain a glimpse of complete manhood and womanhood.²

The name Dorothea was a very appropriate one for Goethe to choose as it means "gift of God". We can see that this is truly what she was to Hermann.

When considering the character of Dorothea, one cannot fail to mention, at least, the figure of her former lover. His character is taken from an incident noted by Goethe and recorded on the eleventh of October. He is the son of well-to-do parents. He left for Paris and enrolled in the National Guards in the first burst of enthusiasm for the Revolution. When the country was invaded by the Austrians and Russians, the parents of the boy believed that the case was hopeless and begged him to return home. He did this, and arrived at the home of his parents only to find the invaders in flight,

his parents in danger, and himself a deserter.

This was the story which undoubtedly suggested to Goethe
the part of the former lover. He was a weak man, unable to
make his own decisions, but through his existence, Dorothea's
character is strengthened; especially at the very end where
she is telling Hermann's family and their friends about her
former betrothed, and she does not say a word against the
man.

And lastly, there is the parson and the apothecary,
the former a friend, to be sure, but more than that, a guide
and a helper, the latter, a friend and a representative of all
the friends of the family.

The apothecary is a man who may well be compared to
Hermann's father in some respects, as in the enjoyment of
luxury and the love of and ambition for finer and better
things. He contemplates the great and stirring events of the
time as a selfish old bachelor, and actually rejoices in his
isolation. He is the type, too, that loves to criticize his
fellow men instead of being generous and trying to find excu-
ses for their faults, as does the parson.

The parson may be more readily compared to the mother of
Hermann. He is an educated man of wise, practical views,
who rules his flock judiciously. He is a man who is always
anxious to help in any way he possibly can. He wants everyone
to be happy. When the apothecary talks against the awful curi-
osity in the people that has led them to walk quite a distance
on a hot day, the clergyman protects the people by saying that
he does not believe it was all idle curiosity, but rather a feeling of sympathy which was given them by mother nature and which is a gift rather than a fault.

Then again when he sees Hermann has become distressed over the turn his affairs have taken, the man of the church is right on the spot to help him out of his difficulty. The people realize his ability and love and trust their spiritual leader. Then Hermann finds himself in a dilemma, and does not know how he can help himself out, we see him turning immediately to the parson. But he is not the kind of a person free with his advice but slow in action. Then the parson suggests to the father that he leave it to his friends to decide whether or not his son is to be allowed to marry the emigrant girl, the man of the church is ready at that moment to help with the project.

In order that the words of this wise man may at once command attention, the parson is introduced with special ceremony.

There the poet usually allows the persons to characterize themselves by what they do and say, in this instance he disregards the rules of art and gives us a full description of the character. He says of his age that he is "a youth, more nearly a man," and calls him noble, sensible, and well-versed in the ways of men and the world, as well as in the Scriptures, and the best secular literature.1

Thus we have each of Goethe's characters as an individual, but yet each is so like a large group of people of the same type that we feel we really know and understand each of

1 Wilhelm Pernhardt, comp., Einführung in Goethe's Meister-}

   werke, 483.
I have not yet found a single writer who does not agree that in **Hermann und Dorothea** there is a **simple charm** which runs through each line which is delightful and appealing. Goethe proves in this work that there is poetry in all things if only the poet is clever enough to know how to detect and express it. This is well illustrated, although much has been lost through translation, in the passage where the mother is looking for her son, and Goethe cleverly inserts a description of the place where Hermann has been reared:

The mother

Went in the meantime, to look for her son in front of the house,
On the stone bench, where he was accustomed to sit.
Then she did not find him there, she went to look in the stable
To see whether he was busying himself with the beautiful horses, the stallions,
Which he bought as colts and whose care he entrusted to no one.
And the stableboy said: he has gone into the garden,
Then she walked nimbly through the long, double court-yards,
Left the stalls and the well-built barns behind,
Entered the garden, that so far as the walls of the city
Extended, walked through it, and rejoiced in the growing things,
Righted the prods, on which rested the branches
Weighted with apples, and the heavy boughs of the pear tree,
Removed some caterpillars from a stout, growing cabbages,
For an industrious woman allows no step to be wasted.
So she came at last to the end of the large garden.
As far as the arbor covered with convolvine; but she did not find her son there,
As she had not in all her search throughout the garden.
But the gate was standing ajar, that out of the arbor,
Through particular favor through the walls of the city had been cut
By a forefather of hers, the worthy burgomaster.
Thus with the dried-up root which she now crossed with comfort,
There by the road the well-fenced vineyard
Rose with a steep ascent, its side exposed to the sun.
Up this also she went, and rejoiced in the fullness of the clusters
As she climbed, that were scarcely hidden under the foliage,
Shady and loitly covered was the middle path,
Which one ascended by means of unknown blocks.
And there were the Muscadel and Chasselas hanging, 
Reddish blue, and of marvelous size, hanging side by side.
All planted with care, in order to deck the guests’ table.
But the rest of the hill covered with single stocks,
Bearing small clusters, from which the costly wine comes.
There too she ascended, enjoying already the harvest
And the festive day, when the whole country rejoicing,
Flicks and tramples the grapes, and gathers the must into vessels:

Fireworks, in the evening, from every nook and corner
Blaze and crackle, and so the most beautiful of harvests
is honored.

Yet more disturbed she went, after having called the son
Two or three times, and only the echo answered,
That echoed from the towers of the city.
To look for him was so strange; he never went far
Away, without telling her, in order to keep worry
And that evil had befallen, from his loving mother.
But she still hoped to find him along the path:
For the doors, the lower as well as the upper, of the
vineyard
Were both standing open. So now she entered the field
That covered the ridge of the hill with its broad expanse.
Still she walked on her own soil, and rejoiced
That they were all hers, even the rye waving rye
That over the whole field was stirring.
Between the fields she went forward, along the ridges.
She had the great pear tree in mind, which stood on the
summit,
The sentinel of the fields, that belonged to her dwelling.
Who planted it, one could not know, it could be seen from a
great distance
By the neighboring people, and the fruit of the tree was
renowned.

Beneath it the reapers enjoyed their meal at noon,
And the shepherds watched their flocks in its shadow;
Benches, they found there, of rough stone and turf.
And she had not been wrong, for there sat her Hermann and
rested,
Sat with his head on his hand and seemed to gaze into the
distance.
Toward the mountains, his back was turned to his mother.

1 In the original German, this, as well as the rest of the

1 J.J. Goethe, Hermann und Dorothea, Canto IV, line 2.
poem is not only very clever, but exceedingly beautiful. Wagner says of the work:

...nor does it require much penetration to see that the mere prosaic framework is quite complete in this narrative; what was wanted was the hand of a poet who should introduce finer motives, and breathe poetical vitality into this tale, without however removing it from the scene of actual life altogether. It is this that Goethe has succeeded in doing.

The beauty shown in the character portrayal, I have already mentioned to a limited extent when speaking of the types of characters depicted. The actors in Luise are all supposed to be beautiful and charming and pious, but each does not lend any special charm all his own to the poem as do those in Hermann und Dorothea. In Luise the portrayal of each character goes one step farther toward showing that which seems to be Voss's principal theme: the happiness of ideal home-life. Thus we have "die rosenwange Jungfrau", "die freundliche schöne Luise", "der ehrwürdige Pfarrer von Grünau" and "die alte verständige Hausfrau". But although these people are good and virtuous in every respect, there nevertheless is a lack of psychological depth in them.

One of the reasons for the charm of Goethe's poem is that he seldom comes forward with his own comments, but acquaints us with the chief actors through the conversation of the less important characters. Hermann is introduced as a speaker in the second canto, while we do not meet Dorothea until the seventh, but Goethe manages that we should know all the time what the characters have been doing. Nowhere

in the poem does Goethe actually pause to describe one of its persons merely for the sake of the description, but when one has finished the poem, each stands out in the mind as an individual and it is hard to believe that they are not living beings. Each stands out as a clear profile; there is nothing about them which could be called shadowy or hazy. Of Dorothea we have a very vivid picture, and yet at the first meeting not a word is used to describe the girl as beautiful. But through the deep impression that she has made upon Hermann, and because of his determination to see her again, her figure stands out as a charming creation. At last, in the sixth canto we do have a description of her which is brought about in the most natural way.

The Apothecary has been looking for the girl among the crowd of furtives and has guessed her identity from the old calico and blue pillow-slip, which she has swathed about the new born child. Hermann's mother has sent her the clothing. He next recognizes her red stomacher which, prettily laced, supports her rounded bosom, the black bodice and the freshly ruffled frill which lies gracefully about her chin. Above this he notes the fine oval of her head and her braids wound about the silver pin. Though Dorothea is sitting down, we easily discover the symmetry of her tall form, and where the skirts stop we perceive her oval shaped ankles. Instinctively and from the text we feel that her figure is commendable in every detail.1

The fineness of the characters of Hermann and Dorothea lends a great deal of beauty to their courtship. Notwithstanding the haste with which Hermann forms and finds it necessary to carry his resolution, no doubt arises in our minds as to whether the two will suit each other. We feel

1 Georg Brandes, "Wolfgang Goethe," II, 139-140.
that no lasting opposition can arise between these two strong characters; she will respect and he will command only in so far as it is necessary for the welfare of them both.

In the same manner, the scene of the action is described so distinctly and vividly, that even the smallest details are brought out, and that it is quite possible to draw up a plan of the town and its vicinity, of the market place, and the tavern, of the gardens and walks. And in spite of all this minute description we are not offended by any mere prosaic statement concerning the setting, and yet all is explained in due time. It seems that the rather narrow landscape is merely incidentally described, so that in spite of the frequent change of scene, a clear and connected picture is presented.

There has been some controversy among critics as to just where Goethe's town is situated. He has given the background such an air of realism that it has trapped commentators into a fruitless search for the actual village. We know that the scene is laid in a small German village, not named, but evidently in the neighborhood of Frankfurt, and not far from the eastern bank of the Rhine. The emigrants are probably from Bavaria. However, the actual town in which the action takes place is, in all probability, a product of the author's imagination concocted from his memory of the past. By placing the events in August, Goethe was able to choose as the scene for his action a landscape in which vineyards and
with the rivers, hills, and mountain ranges to furnish a beautiful and most picturesque background. The more fascinating the environment, the more charming the scenes which occur in it. The more profound the peace and the richer the harvest, the stronger the contrast with the poor fugitives and the regions devastated by the war, and the more earnest our wish that this happy corner of the world may continue to escape the scourge of that relentless fury.\footnote{Wilhelm Bernhardt, comp., \textit{Einführung in Goethes Werke}, 261.}

But Goethe does not merely copy one item of nature after another, he studies the conditions around him and thus submerged his idyll in that element which is usually referred to as local color. Of this, the most predominant element is the calmness and peace which pervades every scene. For example, the passionate scene between mother and son takes place beneath the pear tree, while all around nature is slumbering gently in the late afternoon sun. The ripening fruit hangs from the boughs, and the golden grain is swayed by the breeze, while in the distance the mountains are dimly visible. Then again, at the well we are surrounded by a mysterious stillness, the wind hardly stirs the leaves of the old lindens glistening in the evening sunlight, but in the hearts of the young lovers there is a mighty surging, and we are forced to share in these concealed emotions.

Voss also drew his background from the life which he knew best, the sphere in which he himself lived, and in whose domestic interests and simple pleasures he took such delight. That is, the rustic life of the middle class. However, his
descriptions of common things are so filled with lonely idealism and honest tenderness of sentiment, that it is really lifted above the commonplace. Goethe adds a touch of realism in his setting. He uses the inn of a small town. At first one wonders why it is that in a place of this sort, and when everyone of the town is on the streets, people do not stop at the inn for refreshment. This, however, is very typical of German small-town life. The men take a habit of spending time at the inn on Sunday only.
It is true that Goethe took something from Voss's Luise for his Hermann und Dorothea, but except for the idea of writing the poem in hexameters, and a few minor details, the credit for the poem must be given entirely to its author. Although he greatly admired Luise, it seemed to him that idyllic description would gain very much in interest if connected with an epic element, containing dignity; an element which is utterly lacking in the earlier poem. Andreen claims that the Luise is not only a great poem in itself but that it rendered a service to German literature by suggesting Hermann und Dorothea. But then he goes on to say that Goethe seized upon the ideas and underlying principles in Voss's poem, and that they grew and developed into Hermann und Dorothea.¹ Voss should not be given so much credit.

Schiller painted a truer picture when he said

Goethe is now busy with a new poem, the greater part of which has already been completed. It is a kind of a bürgerliches Idyll not directly in imitation of Voss's Luise, but recently called into existence through it. It is, however, in a manner quite peculiar to Goethe, i.e. quite contrary to Voss.²

Goethe does, very plainly, show the influence of Voss in his use of the hexameter. In his treatment of both scenery and action, he shows in every line how carefully he

¹ C. A. Andreen, Studies in the Idyl in German Literature, 71.
² Johann Wolfgang Goethe, Hermann und Dorothea, Wagner ed., 9, of introduction.
he had studied the Vossian forms. At first he had thought of making of it a dramatic idyll, but on further reflection, having read Luise, he decided to make of it a series of connected idylls after the manner of Voss. Citing the addition of the Vossian form and to expedients in the interest of the meter, the language does acquire here and there a somewhat artificial character.

Another item which Goethe took from Voss is the use of epithets, though even here Goethe has shown more originality in striving to vary them to avoid monotony. For example, the host is called "der treffliche Hauswirth", "der gute Vater", and "der menschliche Hauswirth", while after the second canto he is designated merely as "der Vater". Another Homeric peculiarity is the use of the second person instead of the third, as if the poet were addressing his characters. In Hermann und Dorothea:

Aber Du zauckertest noch, vorsichtiger Nachbar, und sagtest...

And in Luise:

Du antwortest Du ehrwürdiger Pfarrer von Grünau.

So we can see that Luise was really was significant for Goethe's production, for immediately after the completion of Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre in September of 1796, he began work on his idyll, Hermann und Dorothea, which, despite its grandeur and value along other lines would never probably have come into existence if Voss's poem had not preceded it.
I think it is a sign of broad-mindedness when two contemporary poets can each admire the work of the other and will admit the fact. Both Goethe and Voss held the other in high esteem. Any criticism of Hermann und Dorothea as compared to Luise comes invariably from the friends of Voss rather than from the poet himself. When Hermann und Dorothea appeared, it was generally regarded favorably, though there was some criticism of it. This came mostly from Voss's friends or from those whom Goethe and Schiller had offended. They regarded Hermann und Dorothea as a mere imitation of Luise and of the two they referred the latter. Partial critics, however, soon recognized a permanent treasure in the new epic. Neither for enlightened contemporary opinion nor for posterity has there been the slightest doubt concerning the relative value of the two works. Goethe's superiority was undeniable and Voss was not the last to admit it. He even said that Hermann und Dorothea contained a few passages for which he would have gladly given the whole of his Luise.

Goethe, too, was not loth to admit and give due credit to the greatness of Voss. We are told that Goethe often read the poet's Idylls to his friends in Weimar, and that when he had been moved to tears by certain passages he would close the book with the words, "Eine heilige Stelle". That finer tribute could one man pay to another? Of his delight in Luise Goethe wrote to Schiller in February 1796: 

This proved to be much to my advantage, for this joy finally
became productive in me, it drew me into this form (the epic) best at my Hermann, and who knows what may yet come of it.

On the sixth of December Goethe sends to Schiller an "elegy", which he designed as a sort of an announcement of the coming epic. It, too, is entitled Hermann und Loretta. After paying his compliments to those who have criticized him for his classical leanings, it continues:

"Who would vie with the gods, or who contend with the only Homeric,
Though, to be called, e'en were't the latest, is good.
Hear, then, the newest of hymns, and bearing duly your glasses:
Time let beguile your hearts, friendship and love, your heart.
I, too, take you today to the peaceful home of the German,
Where, near Nature's heart, man to humanity grows.
Let the spirit go with us of him who made his Luise quickly, for our delight, one with her excellent friend.
Gloomy pictures, too, of the time I venture to show you.
But let the sturdy race still with courage prevail,
And so be it my song bring tears of joy to your eyelids,
Come and the singer close heartily close to your hearts.
"Is this, then, to be the talk; for wisdom the century waning.
Teaches us surely at last: Thine hath not destiny tried?
Calmer now look back at the woes that lately befell you,
Now when the elixir of wit teaches you how to renounce.
Men we have learned to know, have learned to know nations;
So let us,
Knowing our German heart, learn to rejoice in that."

Then Hermann und Loretta was about to appear, Goethe was the first to acknowledge his indebtedness to Voss. In a letter to him he wrote the following: "I will not try to hide how indebted I am through this work to our people and to you. You have shown me the way and it has given me courage." And the public acknowledgement did not fail to appear: it is contained in the prologue to Goethe's epos.

1 Johann Wolfgang Goethe, Hermann und Loretta, Thomas edition, 16, of introduction.
I have already mentioned some respects in which Herren- und Dorothea is superior to Luise. In the first place, Goethe's style is absolutely beyond the reach of any of the lesser poets. Thomas Carlyle says,

Goethe's style is perhaps to be reckoned the most excellent that our modern world, in any language, can exhibit. Even to a foreigner it is full of character and secondary meanings; polished yet vernacular and corcial, it sounds like the dialect of wise, antique-minded, true hearted men: in poetry, brief, sharp, simple and expressive; in prose perhaps still more pleasing, for it is at once concise and full, rich, clear, unpretending and melodious... Goethe is the clearest, most universal man of his time...

One great difference between the two poets is that Voss kept his readers confined within a circle of narrow interests and conversations of no importance. It is a colorless reproduction of everyday life, without any idealizing touch. Goethe, on the other hand, taught the German people to see their own life. His characters have a wide background, and they are made to interpret and express every sensation. He followed the epic method in that he made every incident, no matter how slight, bear some relation to the leading issue. I have already mentioned how clever Goethe is in his use of description, and how he brings it into the poem as an integral part.

One of the greatest differences between the two poems lies in the fact that when Goethe planned Herren- und Dorothea, taking Luise as a model, he realised that there was a disparity between the verse form and the trivial subject.

1 Wilhelm Bernhardt, comp., Einführung in Goethe's Meisterwerke, 20, of Introduction.
matter. Acknowledging this fact, Goethe tried to modify the fault by giving to his hero, Hermann, a kind of universal significance, by trying to make of him a type of German manhood.

It is really no wonder that *Hermann und Dorothea* won the popular favor that was so frequently withheld from Goethe's other works. Here was not the slightest detail that might give offense of any kind. Family and fatherland were glorified, and though every line was written with extreme dignity, nothing is tame or insipid.

The kind of language Goethe uses is unique in that it can please the great majority of people. On the surface, the language is very simple and easily understood. But it is one thing to understand the language of a literary work so far as to render the mere meaning of it into some other language, and another thoroughly to understand and appreciate it. Goethe is so absolute in his mastery over the language, that he frequently takes liberties with it, in many places imparting to the poem a deeper significance than is visible on the surface.

We can easily understand why Voss's poem has been neglected. In the first place, there is nothing to excuse the joining of somberous verse-form with a description of the trivial happenings of every day life. In the second place, there is too much description. It has no movement, no plot, but describes situations in minute detail for the sake, simply, of the picture they present. The result is that the total
effect is far from vivid. Luise is not really epic; it is without action, without unity. It is a series of minutely pictured idyllic scenes.

It is interesting to see just how these poems rank with other literary production. Compared with earlier German idylls the Luise seems very lifelike. Voss does away with the conventional shepherds and shepherdesses of the older pastorals and depicts real men and women such as we knew. The poem does mark a great advance and deepened in Voss’s contemporaries the appreciation for the worth of simple idyllic life such as we find here represented. However, the poem has a great many faults and is now seldom read.

The simple love story of Hermann und Dorothea, although not Goethe’s strongest work, certainly ranks among his most charming. Its reception in literary circles was at first disappointing. Most of the critics mistook it for an imitation of Luise. However, at the present day, public opinion is unanimous in pronouncing Hermann und Dorothea his most charming work. It is a short, simple story of German life, the portraiture of a few German characters. But the movement is so easy and natural that the reader follows it as a matter of course; the story tells itself.

H.H. Boyesen says:

It is difficult to overestimate the value of Goethe’s work to humanity. The bequest which he left to the world in his writings, and in the whole intellectual result of his life, is not as yet appreciated at its full worth; because, intellectually, the world has not as yet caught up with him. His influence to-day asserts itself in a hundred minute ways—even where no one suspects it. The century has received the
stamp and impress of his mighty personality. The intellectual currents of the age, swelled and amplified by later tributaries, flow to-day in the directions which Goethe indicated. Summing up all the varied phases of Goethe's existence, his errors as well as his virtues, it is safe to assert that he was the most complete type of man in modern history.

No poem of the classical period better illustrates the high achievement of German classicism. **Irrational und Formlos** may be called Germany's greatest purely classical poem.

But what do other great men say of Goethe's poetry? We find Schiller says:

It is absolutely perfect in its kind, it is powerful and pathetic, and yet charming in the highest degree, and altogether it is as beautiful as it is possible to call anything.

He hailed it as the pinnacle of Goethe's one of all modern art. A.J. Schlegel in 1797 judged it to be a finished work of art in the grand style, and at the same time intelligible, sympathetic, patriotic, popular, a book full of golden teachings of wisdom and virtue.

Two generations later one of the leading historians of German literature declared that there is no other poem that comes so near to the father of all poetry (Homer) as this, none in which Greek form and German content are so intimately blended, and that this is perhaps the only poem which without explanation and without embarrassment all the modern centuries could offer to an ancient Greek to enjoy. In the view of the end of the nineteenth century, expressed by a distinguished philosopher-critic, this work is a unique amalgam of the artistic spirit, objectivity, and contemplative clearness of Homer with the soul-life of the present, the heart-beat of the German people, the characteristic traits which mark the German nature.


2 Ibid., 16, of introduction.

3 Arthur F. Holmer, ed., *German Classics*, 1, 46.
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