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The Neoclassical *Grand Tour* of Sicily and Goethe's *Italienische Reise*

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(ABSTRACT ENGLISH)

The *Grand Tour* tradition is a very important phenomenon of the eighteenth-century Europe. During this period, English, French and German aristocrats traveled in Italy for educational purposes. At the same time, in the eighteenth century, Greek ancient culture, art and literature attracted the attention of European intellectuals under the influence of the new aesthetic ideas of the German art historian Winckelmann. For this reason – although the eighteen-century Italian journey generally ended in Naples – some courageous travelers went to Sicily and traveled in this remote and unknown island to discover the remaining ruins of classical Greek civilization. In this period there was a serious increase in travel to Sicily, the center of Greek culture in Italy in ancient times. One of the most important foreign writers who traveled to Sicily and described their travel experience is certainly the German poet and writer Johann W. Goethe. The purpose of this article is to analyse the image of Sicily present in the *Italienische Reise* by Goethe.

Keywords: Goethe, *Italienische Reise*, Italian journey, Neoclassicism, Antiquity, Sicily.

Die neoklassizistische Grand Tour Sizilien und Goethes italienische Reise

(ABSTRACT DEUTSCH)

Die Grand Tour-Tradition ist ein sehr bedeutendes Phänomen im Europa des achtzehnten Jahrhunderts. Während dieser Epoche unternahmen englische, französische und deutsche Aristokraten Bildungsreisen in Italien. In dieser Zeit entstand, durch den großen Einfluss der ästhetischen Ideen des deutschen Kunsthistorikers Winkelmann, unter den europäischen Intellektuellen ein reges Interesse für die griechische Kultur, Kunst und Literatur. Aus diesem Grunde gingen einige Mutige Reisenden – obwohl die italienische Reise des achtzehnten Jahrhunderts in der Regel in Neapel endete – bis nach Sizilien und unternahmen Reisen auf dieser abgelegenen und unbekannten Insel, um die verbleibenden

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Ruinen der klassischen griechischen Zivilisation zu entdecken. Die Anzahl der Reisen nach Sizilien, dem Zentrum der antiken griechischen Kultur in Italien (der *Magna Grecia*), nahm ernsthaft zu. Einer der bedeutendsten ausländischen Schriftsteller, die nach Sizilien reisten und ihre Reiseerfahrungen beschreiben, war der deutsche Dichter und Schriftsteller Johann W. von Goethe. In diesem Artikel soll das Sizilien-Bild in der *Italienischen Reise* von Goethe aus verschiedenen Blickwinkeln analysiert werden.

Schlüsselwörter: Goethe, *Italienische Reise*, Neoklassizismus, Antike, Sizilien

Sicilya'nın Neoklasik *Grand Tour*'u ve Goethe'nin *Italienische Reise* Eseri

(ÖZ TÜRKÇE)

Grand Tour geleneği, on sekizinci yüzyılın Avrupa'sında görülen en önemli ve özel olgudur. Bu dönemde İngiliz, Fransız ve Alman genç aristokratları, eğitim amacıyla İtalya'yı gezmek ve tanımak için yola çıkarlardı. Genel olarak İtalya Seyahati Napoli'de son bulurdu.Zamanla bazı cesur seyyahlar Sicilya'ya ulaşmaya ve klasik uygarlığın kalıntılarını keşfederek bu uzak ve bilinmeyen adada seyahat etmeye çalışmışlardı.On sekizinci yüzyılda Alman sanat tarihçisi Winckelmann'ın yeni estetik fikirleri doğrultusunda Yunan antik kültürü, sanatı ve edebiyatı yeniden Avrupa aydınlarının ilgisini çekmeye başlamıştır.Bu nedenle, eski çağdan beri *Magna Grecia* (*Büyük Yunanistan*) olarak adlandırılan ve İtalya'daki Yunan kültürünün beşiği olarak bilinen Sicilya'ya doğru yapılan seyahatlerde ciddi bir artış yaşanmıştır. Bu dönemde İtalya seyahatleri sırasında Sicilya'ya kadar giden seyyahları arasında Goethe de bulunmuştur. Bu makalenin esas amacı, Alman yazarı ve şair Goethe'nin *İtalienische Reise* eserinde rastlanan Sicilya imgesini incelemektir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Goethe, *Italienische Reise*, İtalya Seyahati, Neoklasisizm, Antikite, Sicilya.

Introduction

The *Grand Tour* tradition had a great importance for eighteenth-century European culture. In this period, especially North-European young aristocrats traveled to prepare themselves to assume leadership positions in their countries. The main destination of this aristocratic "educational travel" was certainly Italy, which was seen as the center of European culture. This territory was also considered to be the place that maintained an indissoluble relationship with Antiquity and the Roman Empire[1]. In this context, the "Italian journey" became

[1] In particular, in the eighteenth century, antiquity is identified with the empire of Rome, more than with Greece. Moreover, British people, founders of a vast colonial empire, made a parallelism between their empire and the Roman Empire (Buzard 2002: 39).

an essential experience that attracted young aristocrats who were eager to discover the ancient beauties of the Italian peninsula.

At the end of the eighteenth century, with the re-discovery of antiquity getting stronger – especially with the influence of the neoclassical ideas theorized by the German archaeologist and art historian Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717-1768) – many writers, poets, and intellectuals from Northern Europe decided to travel in Italy, searching for an irretrievably lost past. In particular, Sicily became a quite extraordinary destination, where eighteenth-century travelers had the opportunity to visit the remaining monuments of the civilization of *Magna Graecia*. Thus, Sicily became the reflection of ancient Greek culture in Italy. The superiority of Greek culture over the Roman, suggested by Winckelmann, stimulated the neoclassical travelers to visit this region, instead of the difficult and impracticable *Grand Tour* in Greece, part of the Ottoman Empire.

The *Italienische Reise* (1816/1817/1829) by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832) has a prominent place in the European travel literature of the late eighteenth century. In this work published about thirty years after the completion of his travel, the German poet and writer dedicated a long section to his Sicilian journey: these pages can be considered to be the most genuine and most suggestive of the entire book.

The purpose of this article is to analyse the image of Sicily present in this part of the Goethe's travelogue. To carry out this analysis, we will start by presenting the neoclassical *Grand Tour* and the Italian journey tradition, followed by the image of Sicily in the accounts of the eighteenth-century foreign travelers. Then we will focus on Goethe's *Italienische Reise* and analyze the most important themes in the section about Sicily. This analysis aims to emphasize the correlation between the German writer and the classical art and literature, the influence the aesthetic ideas of Winckelmann had in his poetry (in particular, in relation to the unfinished drama *Nausikaa*) and the fascination that the wild nature of the island and the ruins of Greek antiquities had on his imagination.

1. Travel Writing, *Grand Tour*'s Tradition and Italy

We can define travel writing as all those literary expressions that describe a writer's experience during a visit, for pleasure, work, or any other purposes, in a city, country, or continent other than where he/she resides. This type of writing has always existed in all cultures since the birth of literary expression: The Epic of *Gilgamesh*, Homer's *Odyssey*, Marco Polo's *Million*, various explorers'

diaries, and the reportages of the Modern era, these are all examples of the desire to tell and describe one's experiences of encounters with different cultures and people. These narratives/accounts have become a literary genre with its well defined features.

In the oldest literature the travel writing was, above all, a description of a strange, terrible or wonderful world, populated by monstrous creatures, and by savage and uncivilized men. With the Enlightenment, travel literature tends to be more objective, with faithful travel accounts in which the fantastic element has been set aside (Clerici, 2008, IX-X). Particularly in the eighteenth century, European travel writing, which had precise features and was governed by precise aesthetic and conceptual rules, was composed of travelogues written by noble travelers who have experienced the *Grand Tour*, the aristocratic journey in Europe.

The historical evolution of the Grand Tour starts under Queen Elizabeth I, when English aristocrats began traveling to Europe. In this period, we can notice the first European excursions made by young aristocrats, who were moved by the desire of knowing other countries and other cultures. In this sense, the *Grand Tour* originated as a very important personal event, especially in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. During the Renaissance, the idea of travel as evasion and in the pursuit of scientific discovery was born in the minds of the British, French and German aristocrats. This new idea denoted a new sensitivity for classical culture, a new scientific approach based on the Baconian "new science" and a new historical consciousness (Brilli 1995: 11-12). In particular, Francis Bacon emphasized the importance of direct observation to increase knowledge in his essay *Of Travel* and encouraged the reader to see things with one's own eyes and to witness them in person (Ricorda 2012: 30).
Thus, in the sixteenth century Europeans traveled to the Old Continent to know it better. In fact, as Cesare de Seta maintains, during the Renaissance people knew each other very badly and imprecisely: for this reason, it seems fair to say that in that century a common desire pushed some travelers to discover the New World and others to re-discover Europe (De Seta 1992: 10).

In the eighteenth century, the phenomenon of the *Grand Tour* reached its peak and assumed the characteristics of a didactic custom. It became the expected conclusion of a good education: in fact, it was assumed that, while traveling in Europe, the young aristocrat would acquire enthusiasm, courage, command attitude, decision-making ability, and knowledge of good manners and of

foreign languages. These were essential traits for the future ruling class of their country. As James Buzard states about English grand tourists,

> The Grand Tour was, from start to finish, an ideological exercise. Its leading purpose was to round out the education of young men of the ruling classes by exposing them to the treasured artifacts and ennobling society of the Continent. […] The Tour was a social ritual intended to prepare these young men to assume the leadership positions preordained for them at home. […] Touring might also prepare the young Englishman for his future rôle by offering him the opportunity not only to cultivate his historical consciousness and artistic taste but actually to acquire works of art and antiquities that displayed at home, would testify to the quality of his taste and surround him with objective confirmations of his self-worth. (Buzard 2002: 38-40)

The grand tourist was a collector who used to bring home a cultural treasure of immense value. These collector-travelers, driven by a great scientific, cultural and antiquarian fervor, were the promoters of a specific type of writing related to the *Grand Tour*.

In fact, the obligation to keep a diary during the journey spreads the custom of writing and publishing travel books. Thus, as the *Grand Tour* became more fashionable, a new genre of travel writing appeared: these travelogues aimed to categorize and keep a record of the nature, landscapes and artworks that the travelers encountered on their journey. The travelers of the seventeenth and eighteenth century were connoisseurs of classical culture and Italian art, and they were interested in studying natural phenomena. They aspired to achieve an accomplished experience and a complete knowledge of the world through traveling. They also strived to provide objective and accurate accounts of their education experience.

In the eighteenth century relationship between self and world became a central concern of travel writing. In fact, as Casey Blanton states,

> Travel assured constant panoply of new stimuli, hence the necessity for the Grand Tour as a kind of finishing school for university students and writers. One should add to this assessment the effects of the empiricism of Newton and this emphasis on experience and deduction as valid modes of knowing. […] His ideas about the separation of mind and matter and the ability to think of oneself as a reasoning entity […] created a climate in which travel writing could come in age. […] This shift has two consequences for the travel writing: the emotions, thoughts, and personal quirks of the narrator become more accessible and more dominant within

> the narrative and the world itself; its plants, animals, and people also become a source of knowledge for their own sake. (Blanton 2002: 11-12)

The real writing process of the eighteenth-century travel books started when authors returned from the *Grand Tour*: then they began to rework the collected material during the journey. It is in rare instances that the notes and diaries of the authors were kept and saved, as in the case of the Goethe *Italienische Reise,* and it is usually hard to track the writing process of these books (Kanceff 2006: 23). In an elaborate drafting process, the most important thing that the author had to do was choosing what kind of a style to give to the work (Clerici, 2008: CII). After selecting the style and reworking the material collected during the trip, the manuscript could be given to the press.

The eighteenth-century "travelers' society" is not only made up of the noble grand tourists committed to carrying out their cultural education by visiting Europe, but also figures of different rank, funded by various institutions, and in particular scientists and writers who were the major promoters of the travel literature of that period (Ricorda 2012: 32-33). As far as the profile of the seventeenth and eighteenth-century travelers concerned, especially in Italy, Antoni Maczak divided them into two groups: the "enthusiastic" and the "dissatisfied". The first group was the most curious and tolerant; the latter group, on the other hand, was convinced that they could not be happy and satisfied away from their nation (Maczak 1992: 71-72). It is also important to remember that travelers are fundamentally full of prejudices and stereotypes they derived from travel diaries written by previous travelers (De Seta 1992: 35).

In this cultural context, the most important destination was certainly Italy, especially Rome, Florence and Venice (Buzard 2002: 39). The Italian journey became an indispensable element of the *Grand Tour*. Often, European travelers would choose to limit their visit to the Italian peninsula, which was regarded as the center of European culture. For most European travelers, Italy was a metaphor, an idealised concept. In the European travelers' mind, Italy was perceived as a spiritual and cultural unit, a destination to be reached and understood, and a fountain from which they had to draw knowledge (De Seta 1992: 17).

The itineraries of the Italian journey are generally quite varied, so it is often difficult to establish precisely the stages in which the travel was composed. There are some cities that, according to the grand tourists, should be visited at a specific time of the year: for example, Venice during the last days of Carnival and Rome during the Holy Week (Brilli 1995: 65). Additionally, the itinerary

varies according to the place from which travelers entered Italy. However, it should be noted that if some places like Venice and Florence attract the curiosity of the grand tourists, Rome is the indispensable destination of the journey. Rome is the city where travelers stop in the winter months and are busy visiting museums, villas and ancient ruins. They were also attracted by religious festivals that became a *topos* of the eighteenth-century travel literature. But even the archaeological beauties of Rome attracted the attention of these noble travelers: this feeling comes from a renewed interest in classical antiquity visible throughout the century of Enlightenment.

After Rome, the second most visited southern city was Naples. The rest of southern Italy was not the favoured destination of the *Grand Tour*, although some adventurers did go as far as Sicily in the eighteenth century. So we must recognize that Sicily at that time was a remote and distant area, difficult to reach and that only a few travelers were able to visit.

2. Foreign Travelers in Sicily in the Eighteen Century

Generally the *Grand Tour*'s Italy ended in Naples: only a few people ventured to Paestum to see the ruins of its Greek temples. For this reason, the land beyond Naples was perceived as confusing and endless land that only the most daring travelers had the courage to venture. The discovery of southern regions such as Apulia, Calabria and, above all, Sicily is part of another cultural trend, similar in many aspects to the rediscovery of Greece, North African and other Mediterranean coasts. For a long time, these lands of southern Italy were the other face of Italy, the one that for at least two centuries the grand tourists had regarded as the country of the unknown, dominated by brigands, full of forests and plagued by terrible epidemics (De Seta 1992: 203).

In particular, Sicily, locked off in its geographic and historical isolation, remained for a long time far from the *Grand Tour* routes, hence was almost unkown. In the imagination of the eighteenth-century travelers, this Italian region reminded catastrophes which came in to view because of Etna, earthquakes, devils and brigands, and the grandeur of temples in ruins and deserted amphitheaters (Sommariva 1973: 41). By the middle of the eighteenth-century, however, the desire to discover this island which had remained remote and unknown for so long revitalized: European grand tourists committed to land in Sicily with the desire to get to know the monuments of ancient civilizations, its wild landscapes and its ancestral traditions. So, as of this date there was a radical inversion of trend. A large number of travelers from every country arrived in Sicily, visiting the island, going to the most remote places,

rediscovering archaeological evidence, analyzing natural phenomena and studying its institutions and its economy. And most importantly, these visitors recorded those observations in diaries, letters, descriptions, treaties, sketches, watercolors, and engravings (Tuzet 1988).

The desire to know southern Italy, its history and the archeological monuments of *Magna Grecia* developed, in particular, with the rediscovery of the Antiquity by Winckelmann[2] in the eighteenth-century. A proof of the importance the German archeologist and historian of art attached to this region is his desire to organize a journey to Calabria and Sicily, and another to Greece and Egypt[3] with Baron Johann Hermann von Riedesel (1740-1785) (De Seta 1992: 201). While Winckelmann never made it to Sicily, Riedesel visited the island and immortalized this travel, realized in 1766, by writing the *Reisedurch Sicilien und Grossgriechenland* (1771). This text, written in epistolary form[4], transmits a world seen through the eyes of an expert on the "classic culture" and centered on Winckelmann's aesthetic ideas. The milestones of this "pilgrimage" of discovery of the Antiquity were Agrigento and Syracuse.

The safest port to Sicily was Palermo, the largest city on the island. Under the Spanish government (1410-1712), there were ordinary navigations to Barcelona or to other ports of the Iberian Peninsula; under the Bourbons (1734-1860), however, travels to/from Naples started. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the most popular route to Sicily was to take a ship departing from Naples. Travelers of this time pointed out the practical difficulties of land travel in southern Italy: the state of the roads and the lack of inns (Brizzi 1998: 76). A royal "packet-boat" used to connect the island and the continent about every ten or fifteen days. The journey from Naples was quite dangerous[5] and used to take about four days. On arrival, other problems awaited the grand tourist. Traveling around the island districts was a difficult and pioneering business: the absolute lack of guest-houses, inns and taverns and the difficulty of finding a place in the

[2] Winckelmann may be considered to be the founder of modern history of art. In his works the study of antiquity exceeds the erudite aridity of the Enlightenment archeology. In his essay *Geschichte der Kunst des Alterthums* (1764), artworks of antiquity cease to be united in a single indistinct group and are inserted in a historical dimension, articulated in different phases that follow from the origins of Greek art to the centuries of the Roman Empire. In particular, in Greek art Winckelmann seeks out the rules of universal beauty, the rules to propose to contemporary artists so that through the imitation of the ancients they could create perfect and inimitable artworks (Bairati, Finocchi 1984: 276).

[3] It was a wide geographical and cultural area that has centered on the myth of Ancient Greece.

[4] The letters were sent to Winckelmann

[5] The stretch of sea between Naples and Sicily was infested with barbarian corsairs. Travelers ran the risk of dying during this past or being captured by pirates and sold as slaves in the markets of Tunis or Algiers (Sommariva 1973: 42).

convents were tragic problems and, at the same time, picturesque experiences about which many travelers wrote[6]. The vehicles were rudimentary: travelers traveled on the back of a mule or, more often, used uncomfortable litters (Sommariva 1973: 44-45).

In addition to Riedesel, one of the first travelers to Sicily was Patrick Brydone (1736-1818), whose travelogue *A Tour around Sicily and Malta* (1773) became a classic in eighteenth-century travel literature. Brydone was a disenchanted, witty and outspoken traveler, able to make the travel experience of Sicily attractive. Through the publication of his travel memories, Sicily became fashionable due to its archaeological and natural beauties: for example, a very interesting part of Brydone's Sicilian travelogue is the narration of his ascent to Etna, with which he began the tradition of this kind of excursion (Brilli 1995: 77).

One of the most important foreign writers who traveled to Sicily and described their travel experience is certainly the German poet and writer Johann W. Goethe. He was driven to discover Sicily after reading the records of Riedesel and Brydone[7].

3. Goethe's *Italienische Reise* and the image of Sicily

3.1. German travelers in Italy in the era of Neoclassicism

Goethe came from a long grand touristic tradition of German travelers who, like the English and French aristocrats, ventured to discover southern Europe and, in particular, Italy.

Grand Tour was called *Kavalierstour* by the German aristocracy (De Seta 1992: 199-203). Already in the 1700s, Italy attracted the attention of many young aristocrats from various German states. In this century, travelers' accounts are mainly in Latin, although between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries German literature goes through a period of great vitality. The choice of Latin language, certainly, came from the desire of the writer to reach a wider audience.

The *Kavalierstour* was adopting many characteristics typical of the English and French aristocratic voyage during the eighteenth century. Also, the language in

[6] Cf. The "picturesque travels" of Patrick Brydone (1736-1818), Richard Payne Knight (1750-1824) and Dominique Vivant Denon (1747-1825).
[7] Brydone's text was translated into German in 1774 (Sommariva 1973: 47, note 6).

which grand tourists write their travelogues changed. Indeed, while the *Reiseliteratur* was first written in Latin, in the eighteenth-century German travelers wrote their travelogues in his own language. Furthermore, the idea of traveling to Italy changed: The Italian peninsula is not just the country of Antiquity. Although classic tradition continued to play a prominent role in the interests of many travelers, Italy became the country of "gentle" climate, sunny landscapes, seascapes and, of course, art. This proto-romantic component was a factor that emerged in the literary works that prevailed the *Sturm und Drang*. It is interesting to note that German travelers were influenced above all by the French literary tradition of the *Grand Tour*: French travelogues written by travelers such as Maximilien François Misson (1650-1722) and Joseph-Jérome de Lalande (1732-1807) were fundamentally used as tourist guides by the German travelers (De Seta 1992: 200).

In the eighteenth century, in addition to Reidesel, other young German aristocrats like Joachim Christoph Nemeitz (1679-1753) and Johann Georg Keyßler (1693-1743) traveled to Italy – and wrote diaries/travelogues of their stay. Johann Caspar Goethe (1710-1782), father of the famous writer, used the texts written by these scholars for both his own travel in 1739-1740 and the travelogue he wrote and published in Italian in 1740. But the essential guide of young German travelers was the book written by Johann Volkmann, a guide also used by Goethe Jr.– along with Reidesel's book – during his stay in Italy. Finally, we must not forget that the influence of Winckelmann's aesthetic thought was of fundamental importance for the eighteenth-century German travelers.

3.2. Goethe's Italian Journey: Sentimentality and Neoclassical Aesthetic Sense

Goethe traveled to Italy between 1786 and 1788 but published the first of the three parts of *Italienische Reise* only thirty years later, in 1816, using the diaries and letters destined to Lady von Stein, to Herder and to his friends in Weimar. The Goethe's travelogue was based on the *Tagebücher* – appeared posthumously –, which consisted of his own notebooks of his experiences and impressions which were not intended for publication. The first edition of the *Tagebücher und Briefe Goethes aus Italien* appeared in 1886 and was published by the philologist Erich Schmidt. This work contained most of what remained of a larger material. In fact, Goethe had destroyed almost all the documentation of the second (1817) and the third part (1829) of his *Italienische Reise* (Fertonani 2011: XI).

The fact that the poet of Weimar decided to narrate his Italian travel experience denotes the importance he gave to Italy in his literary and personal training. The value of this text - apart from the diaries and the letters written during the journey - is very evident in the work of Goethe: it is in fact within an intellectual experience that, with the journey to Italy, undergoes a substantial turning towards a renewed poetic condition and a new balance. At the very beginning of his travelogue, Goethe expresses his irrefutable desire to leave his friends in Weimar and to start this long-awaited experience:

> Früh drei Uhr stahl ich mich aus Karlsbad, weil man mich sonst nicht fortgelassen hätte. Die Gesellschaft, die den achtundzwanzigsten August, meinen Geburtstag, auf eine sehr freundliche Weise feiern mochte, erwarb sich wohl dadurch ein Recht, mich festzuhalten; allein hier war nicht länger zu säumen. Ich warf mich ganz allein, nur einen Mantelsack und Dachsranzen aufpackend, in eine Postchaise und gelangte halb acht Uhr nach Zwota, an einem schönen stillen Nebelmorgen (kapitel 2).[8]

Goethe presents himself as the undisputed hero[9] of this journey of poetic education: at the center of the narration, in fact, there is the figure of the poet who expresses his emotions as if it was a sentimental journey. This is apparent in the exciting and solemn description of his arrival in Venice:

> So stand es denn im Buche des Schicksals auf meinem Blatte geschrieben, daß ich 1786 den achtundzwanzigsten September, abends, nach unserer Uhr um fünfe, Venedig zum erstenmal, aus der Brenta in die Lagunen einfahrend, erblicken und bald darauf diese wunderbare Inselstadt, diese Biberrepublik betreten und besuchen sollte. So ist denn auch, Gott sei Dank, Venedig mir kein bloßes Wort mehr, kein hohler Name, der mich so oft, mich, den Todfeind von Wortschällen, geängstiget hat. Als die erste Gondel an das Schiff anfuhr […], erinnerte ich mich eines frühen Kinderspielzeuges, an das ich vielleicht seit zwanzig Jahren nicht mehr gedacht hatte. Mein Vater besaß ein schönes mitgebrachtes Gondelmodell; er hielt es sehr wert, und mir ward es hoch angerechnet, wenn ich einmal damit spielen durfte. Die ersten Schnäbel von blankem Eisenblech, die schwarzen Gondelkäfige, alles grüßte mich wie eine alte Bekanntschaft, ich genoß einen langentbehrten freundlichen Jugendeindruck (kapitel 11).[10]

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[8] "I slipped out of Carlsbad at three in the morning; otherwise, I would not have been allowed to leave. Perhaps my friends, who had so kindly celebrated my birthday on 28 August, had thereby acquired the right to detain me, but I could wait no long" (Goethe 1970: 23).

[9] For a discussion of the figure of hero in literature cf. Karail 2015: 600-601.

[10] "It was written in the Book of Fate that at five in the afternoon of the twenty-eighth day of September in the year 1876, I should see Venice for the first time as I entered this beautiful

But Italy is not just the country of childhood memories, it is also a land whose language and culture the poet knows very well.[11] The Italian journey, and Italy in general, had been instilled since childhood, thanks to his father who had talked about this nation as a blessed oasis, filling his house with prints of Roman sites. On previous occasions Goethe had only just resisted the desire to descend towards the plain of Po when traveling to Switzerland at the Gotthard Pass (Chiusano 1988: 13-14). Once in the peninsula, he felt perfectly at home: "Ich lasse mir's gefallen, als wenn ich hier geboren und erzogen wäre und nun von einer Grönlandsfahrt, von einem Walfischfange zurückkäme (kapitel 4)."[12]

Though the stay in northern Italy is a moment of intense creative fervor – in this period Goethe writes the drama *Iphigenie auf Tauris* (1787) – Rome is the place he wishes ardently to reach:

> Morgen abend also in Rom. Ich glaube es noch jetzt kaum, und wenn dieser Wunsch erfüllt ist, was soll ich mir nachher wünschen? ich wüßte nichts, als daß ich mit meinem Fasanenkahn glücklich zu Hause landen und meine Freunde gesund, froh und wohlwollend antreffen möge (kapitel 20).[13]

The sentimentality that seems to appeal to a romantic tendency in many pages should not let the reader be mistaken: in his *Italienische Reise*, Goethe remained close to a tradition typical of the traditional *Grand Tour*, where the center of the journey is located on the desire to classify nature and on the study the rocks and plants present in the territory. Moreover, the framing of the aesthetic rules of beauty theorized by Winckelmann affected, undoubtedly, many of the images included in his travelogue (Birus 2001). At the basis of this aesthetics Goethe

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island-city, this beaver-republic. So now, thank God, Venice is no longer a mere word to me, an empty name, a state of mind which has so often alarmed me who am the mortal enemy of mere words. When the first gondola came alongside our boat […] I remember from early childhood a toy to which I had not given a thought for perhaps twenty years. My father had brought back from his journey to Italy a beautiful model of a gondola; he was very fond of it and, as a special treat, he sometime allowed me to play with it. When the gondolas appeared their shining steel-sheeted prows and black cages greed me like old friends" (Goethe 1970: 75).

[11] We must not forget that in his paternal home Goethe's tutor was an Apulian ex-monk named Domenico Giovinazzi, who taught him the Italian language. That is why it is not very surprising that he wanted to visit the "lemons land" since his youth (Fertonani 2011: XII).

[12] "I enjoy everything as if I had been born and bred here and had just returned from a whaling expedition to Greenland" (Goethe 1970: 39)

[13] "Well then, tomorrow evening Rome! Even now I can hardly believe it. When this wish has been fulfilled, what shall I wish for next? I can think of nothing better than safely landing at home in my pheasant-boat, finding my friends in good health, cheerful and happy to see me again" (Goethe 1970: 127).

recognizes the awareness that knowledge of the Classical man leads men to create better things:

> Es darf uns nicht niederschlagen, wenn sich uns die Bemerkung aufdringt, das Große sei vergänglich; vielmehr wenn wir finden, das Vergangene sei groß gewesen, muß es uns aufmuntern, selbst etwas von Bedeutung zu leisten, das fortan unsre Nachfolger, und wär' es auch schon in Trümmer zerfallen, zu edler Tätigkeit aufrege, woran es unsre Vorvordern niemals haben ermangeln lassen (kapitel 77).[14]

In general "Goethe flees to Italy determined to find traces of Homer in Magna Graecia and to train his new poetic voice in a classic soil. It is important to bear these factors in mind as they provide us the conceptual and existential frame motivating Goethe's initial approach to Southern Italy" (Spampinato 2012). But the description of the territory he visits does not come from a sentimental idealization of the grandeur of Antiquity. In Goethe's *Italienische Reise*, there are two main tendencies, one that leads to genuine and sincere sentimentality, and another that follows the aesthetic rules of Winckelmann's neoclassicism. As expressed by De Seta, Goethe was in constant balance between the new renditions of *Sturm und Drang* and the neoclassical aesthetics, between Ossian and Winckelmann. He turned to two distinct seasons of the eighteenth-century culture without preferring one to the other (De Seta 1992: 212).

These two trends will also be present in the pages concerning his trip to Sicily, which are discussed in the next chapter.

3.3. Goethe in Sicily: Images, Descriptions, and Impressions in the Rediscovery of Hellenic Classicism

Goethe stayed in Sicily between April and May 1787. Arriving at this remote area of Italy he traveled under the pseudonym of G. F. Moeller– only the viceroy of Sicily knew his true identity (Sommariva 1973: 56). In his journey, he was accompanied by the painter Christoph Heinrich Kniep (1755-1825), who reproduced with sketches and drawings the striking landscape. The fellowship with Kniepis was an important factor, because his presence alleviated the difficulties of the journey and, above all, spared him the task of reproducing the landscapes and the ancient ruins personally.

After about four days of navigation, Goethe lands in Palermo. The Sicilian city aroused in the writer a great pleasure, attained by the view of a delightful and

[14] "On me, the ultimate effect of this tour was to strengthen my sense of really standing on classic soil and convince my senses and my spirit that here greatness was, is and ever will be" (Goethe 1970: 434).

idyllic landscape. In this Arab, Norman and Baroque city, he found nothing to remind him of classical antiquities. But the profile of the mountains beyond the city and the sea at the horizon was part of a charming panorama as well as the view of the ruins of a Greek temple:

> Die Stadt gegen Norden gekehrt, am Fuß hoher Berge liegend; über ihr, der Tageszeit gemäß, die Sonne herüberscheinend. Die klaren Schattenseiten aller Gebäude sahen uns an, vom Widerschein erleuchtet. Monte Pellegrino rechts, seine zierlichen Formen im vollkommensten Lichte, links das weit hingestreckte Ufer mit Buchten, Landzungen und Vorgebirgen. Was ferner eine allerliebste Wirkung hervorbrachte, war das junge Grün zierlicher Bäume, deren Gipfel, von hinten erleuchtet, wie große Massen vegetabilischer Johanniswürmer vor den dunkeln Gebäuden hin und wider wogten.Ein klarer Duft blaute alle Schatten (kapitel 38).[15]

As in the case of other previously visited Italian cities, Goethe focused on the description of the architecture of the palaces and churches in the center of Palermo, making a comparison with the monuments in other cities in the center and the south:

> Wir gingen die Stadt im besondern durch. Die Bauart gleicht meistens der von Neapel, doch stehen öffentliche Monumente [...] noch weiter entfernt vom guten Geschmack. Hier ist nicht wie in Rom ein Kunstgeist, welcher die Arbeit regelt; nur von Zufälligkeiten erhält das Bauwerk Gestalt und Dasein. [...] Etwas Ähnliches ist es mit den Kirchen, wo die Prachtliebe der Jesuiten noch überboten ward, aber nicht aus Grundsatz und Absicht, sondern zufällig, wie allenfalls ein gegenwärtiger Handwerker, Figuren- oder Laubschnitzer Vergolder, Lackierer und Marmorierer gerade das, was er vermochte, ohne Geschmack und Leitung an gewissen Stellen anbringen wollte (kapitel 39).[16]

[15] "The city faces north with high mountains rising behind it. The rays on the afternoon sun were shining across it, so that all the buildings facing us were in shadow but lit by reflected light. The delicate contours of Monte Pellegrino to the right were in full sunshine, and a shore with bays headlands and promontories stretched far away to the left. In front of the dark buildings, graceful trees of a tender green, their tops illuminated from behind, swayed like vegetal grow-worms. A faint haze tinted all the shadows blue" (Goethe 1970: 226).

[16] "The architecture is similar to that of Naples, but the public monuments […] are even further removed from the canons of good taste. There is no instinctive feeling for art here, as there is in Rome, to set a standard. The monuments owe their existence and their form to accidental circumstances. […] It is the same with the churches, which surpass even those of the Jesuit in splendor, but accidentally, not deliberately. It's as if artisan, a carver of figures or foliage, a gilder, a varnisher or a worker in marble, without taste and without guidance, had wished to show what he could do in a given spot" (Goethe 1970: 231).

Goethe remains mostly impressed by the dirtiness of the city streets: compared to other Italian cities, like Rome or Naples, where the writer had previously stayed, the streets of Palermo appeared to be full of all sorts of garbage: "»Bei allen Heiligen! sagt mir«, rief ich aus, »woher kommt die Unreinlichkeit eurer Stadt, und ist derselben denn nicht abzuhelfen?«(5. April 1787)"[17].

In the district of Bagheria Goethe has the opportunity to visit the villa of the eccentric Ferdinando Francesco II Gravina Cruylas and Alliata, Prince of Palagonia[18] (1722-1788), who had decorated the architectural complex with a set of absurd and monstrous statues. This is the description reflected by the writer to describe the personality of the prince:

> Der jetzige Besitzer aber, ohne jene allgemeinen Grundzüge zu verlassen, erlaubt seiner Lust und Leidenschaft zu mißgestaltetem, abgeschmacktem Gebilde den freisten Lauf, und man erzeigt ihm viel zuviel Ehre, wenn man ihm nur einen Funken Einbildungskraft zuschreibt (kapitel 41).[19]

The fame of the villa's wanderings had attracted other travelers before Goethe. The architectural complex awoke a strong sense of repulsion in the German writer, because it embodies an antithesis to the ideas of noble simplicity and tranquility that represented classical art for Winckelmann (Fertonani 2011: XXX-XXXI). In the garden of the villa, in particular, the presence of human and animal figures are united, enveloped and distorted by the taste for the most unthinkable invention. These figures seem to come out from a nightmare or from the fantasy of a madman.

> Daß wir aber die Elemente der Tollheit des Prinzen Pallagonia vollständig überliefern, geben wir nachstehendes Verzeichnis. Menschen: Bettler, Bettlerinnen, Spanier, Spanierinnen, Mohren, Türken, Buckelige, alle Arten Verwachsene, Zwerge, Musikanten, Pulcinelle, antik kostümierte Soldaten, Götter, Göttinnen, altfranzösisch Gekleidete, Soldaten mit

[17] "'By all saints' I cried when I went in, 'why is your city so filthy? Can nothing be done about it?'" (Goethe 1970: 232).
[18] Forfurther information about the figure of the Prince of Palagonia cf. Macchia 1978.
[19] Our entire day has been taken up with the madness of the Pince of Pallagonia. His follies turned out to be quite different from anything I had imagined after hearing and reading about them (Goethe 1970: 237).

> Patrontaschen und Gamaschen, Mythologie mit fratzenhaften Zutaten: Achill und Chiron mit Pulcinell. Tiere: nur Teile derselben, Pferd mit Menschenhänden, Pferdekopf auf Menschenkörper, entstellte Affen, viele Drachen und Schlangen, alle Arten von Pfoten an Figuren aller Art, Verdoppelungen, Verwechslungen der Köpfe. Vasen: alle Arten von Monstern und Schnörkeln, die unterwärts zu Vasenbäuchen und Untersätzen endigen (kapitel 41).[20]

Rather than the architectural aspect, the German poet was fascinated by the nature and tranquility of gardens and valleys outside the city walls. In this state of tranquility and peace, Goethe appeared annoyed even by the narration – made by a local guide – of historical events that occurred in those areas: these were classical memories that generally attracted the attention of grand tourists and antiquarians.

> Die schönste Frühlingswitterung und eine hervorquellende Fruchtbarkeit verbreitete das Gefühl eines belebenden Friedens über das ganze Tal, welches mir der ungeschickte Führer durch seine Gelehrsamkeit verkümmerte, umständlich erzählend, wie Hannibal hier vormals eine Schlacht geliefert und was für ungeheure Kriegstaten an dieser Stelle geschehen. Unfreundlich verwies ich ihm das fatale Hervorrufen solcher abgeschiedenen Gespenster. Es sei schlimm genug, meinte ich, daß von Zeit zu Zeit die Saaten, wo nicht immer von Elefanten, doch von Pferden und Menschen zerstampft werden müßten. Man solle wenigstens die Einbildungskraft nicht mit solchem Nachgetümmel aus ihrem friedlichen Traume aufschrecken. Er verwunderte sich sehr, daß ich das klassische Andenken an so einer Stelle verschmähte, und ich konnte ihm freilich nicht deutlich machen, wie mir bei einer solchen Vermischung des Vergangenen und des Gegenwärtigen zumute sei (kapitel 39).[21]

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[20] "The following list may give you a better idea of what Prince Pallagonia has perpetrated in his madness. Human beings. Beggars of both sexes, men and women of Spain, Moors, Turks, hunchbacks, deformed persons of every kind, dwarfs, musicians, Pulcinellas, soldiers in antique uniforms, gods, and goddesses, persons dressed in French fashions of long ago, soldiers with ammunition pouches and leggings, mythological figures with grotesque accessories; for instance: Achilles and Chiron with Pulcinella. Animals. Only parts of them; a horse with human hands, the head of a horse on a human body, deformed monkeys, many dragons and snakes, every kind of paw attached to every kind of body, double heads and exchanged heads. Vases. Every kind of monster and scroll, emerging from their bellies or their bases (Goethe 1970: 239-240).

[21] "The fair spring weather and the luxuriant vegetation lent an air of grace and peace to the whole valley, which our stupid guide proceeded ruin with his erudition, for he started telling us in great detail how, long ago, Hannibal had given battle here and what stupendous feats of valour had taken place on this very spot. I angrily rebuked him for such an odious evocation of defunct ghosts. It was bad enough, I said, that from time to time crops have to be trampled down, if not always by elephants, still by horses and men, but at least one need not shock the imagination out of its peaceful dreams by recalling scenes of savage violence from the past. He was very

While the battles and the bloody events of the Roman past didn't impress Goethe, the tranquility and the composure of the aesthetic norms of Hellenist culture would give him new poetic suggestions. So, in the garden of Palermo – which "es ist der Wunderbarste Ort von der Welt"[22]–, the writer, immersed in the peace of nature, recalled the Homeric episode of Alcinoo's garden (*Odissey*, VII):

> Aber der Eindruck jenes Wundergartens war mir zu tief geblieben; die schwärzlichen Wellen am nördlichen Horizonte, ihr Anstreben an die Buchtkrümmungen, selbst der eigene Geruch des dünstenden Meeres, das alles rief mir die Insel der seligen Phäaken in die Sinne sowie ins Gedächtnis (kapitel 39).[23]

This experience reminded Goethe of Homer's *Odyssey* which inspired the poet for the composition of an incomplete drama called *Nausikaa*. The project of this work occupied Goethe's mind throughout his journey in Sicily. Only a short fragment of this literary work was composed: this fragment concentrated on all the emotions aroused in the writer by the viewpoint of the Sicilian landscape. This contact awakened the interest in archaic Greek poetry and the *Odyssey* in the traveler's mind. In fact, we have to remember that in 1790's Goethe translated some parts in Book VII of the poem containing the description of the garden of Alcinoo (Castellani 2011: 723). The reference to the *Nausikaa*'s project returns in the *Italienische Reise* towards the end of his stay in Sicily, when Goethe was in Taormina: "Und so saß ich, den Plan zu »Nausikaa« weiter denkend, eine dramatische Konzentration der »Odyssee«. Ich halte sie nicht für unmöglich, nur müßte man den Grundunterschied des Drama und der Epopöe recht ins Auge fassen (8. Mai 1787)".[24]

In the short chapter titled "Aus der Erinnerung" ("In retrospect") Goethe schematized the general design of the drama in this way:

> Der Hauptsinn war der: in der Nausikaa eine treffliche, von vielen umworbene Jungfrau darzustellen, die, sich keiner Neigung bewußt, alle Freier bisher ablehnend behandelt, durch einen seltsamen Fremdling aber

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astonished that I, on such a spot, should not want to hear anything about classical times, and, of course, I could not make him understand my objections to this mixing-up of the past and the present" (Goethe 1970: 229-230).

[22]"It is the most wonderful spot on earth" (Goethe 1970: 235).

[23] "The enchanted garden, the inky waves on the northern horizon, breaking on the curved beaches of bays, and a peculiar tang of the air, all conjured up images of the island of the blessed Phaeacians (Goethe 1970: 236).

[24]"There I was soon lost in fancy, thinking about a plot for my *Nausicaa*, a dramatic condensation of the *Odyssey*. I think this can be done, provided one never loses sight of the difference between a drama and an epic" (Goethe 1970: 287-288).

> gerührt, aus ihrem Zustand heraustritt und durch eine voreilige Äußerung ihrer Neigung sich kompromittiert, was die Situation vollkommen tragisch macht. Diese einfache Fabel sollte durch den Reichtum der subordinierten Motive und besonders durch das Meer- und Inselhafte der eigentlichen Ausführung und des besondern Tons erfreulich werden (kapitel 50)[25]

As expressed by Damian Valdez, the relationship between Nausicaa and Ulysses expresses the highest summit of Goethe's emotional conception of Greek antiquity. This idea, which can be related to the friendship between Achilles and Patroclus, so much appreciated by Winckelmann, is characterized by "a profound vulnerability" which "evoked expansive scenes and landscapes and complex of virtue and sin, an intense companionship and a painful separation" (Valdez 2014: 168). But the most important thing for the inspiration of poetic drama was certainly the idyllic and pastoral Sicilian landscapes, close to the ideals of the neoclassical picturesque aesthetics. Thus, Sicily suggested a basic Homeric landscape, which was formed through the reminiscence of classical literary ideas.

In Sicily, Goethe had the opportunity to have a direct view of the ruins of the ancient civilization of *Magna Grecia*. There were two important moments that certainly marked the peak of his Sicilian journey: the visit to the temple of Segesta and the excursion to the Valley of the Temples in Agrigento. Goethe arrived in Segesta on April 20, 1787. The German writer was in front of a melancholy landscape, surmounted by the structure of the temple placed on a "remarkable" site. The description of temple's ruins occupied most of the account.

> Der Tempel von Segesta ist nie fertig geworden, und man hat den Platz um denselben nie verglichen, man ebnete nur den Umkreis, worauf die Säulen gegründet werden sollten; denn noch jetzt stehen die Stufen an manchen Orten neun bis zehn Fuß in der Erde, und es ist kein Hügel in der Nähe, von dem Steine und Erdreich hätten herunterkommen können.

[25]"Its essence was this: to present Nausicaa as an admirable young woman with many suitors, but no inclination towards any one of them, so that she has refused them all. This indifference is overcome by a premature declaration of her love, a tragic situation in the highest sense. A wealth of secondary motive was to have added interest to this simple fable, and there was to have been a sea-island quality about the imagery and atmosphere to give a pervading tone to the whole play" (Goethe 1970: 289).

> Auch liegen die Steine in ihrer meist natürlichen Lage, und man findet keine Trümmer darunter (kapitel 45).[26]

At this point we can note the archaeological abilities of Goethe. His judgment was correct: the temple of the fifth century BC was probably unfinished because of the wars that took place in the city with Selinunte (Castellani 2011: 729). Similar descriptive rigor could be found on the pages concerning the Agrigento temples. He focused on the detailed analysis of the restoration of the Temple of Concord:

> Der Tempel der Konkordia hat so vielen Jahrhunderten widerstanden; seine schlanke Baukunst nähert ihn schon unserm Maßstabe des Schönen und Gefälligen, er verhält sich zu denen von Pästum wie Göttergestalt zum Riesenbilde. (kapitel 46).[27]

Goethe never reached Syracuse, one of the most famous cities in Magna Grecia that fascinated 19th-century travelers. Instead, he preferred to stay in Catania and from there he tried to climb the Etna. Unfortunately, climatic conditions did not allow him to climb the top of the volcano and therefore, he left the island on May 13, 1787 from Messina, embarking on a ship to Naples.

Certainly, writing his account after more than thirty years, the German writer considered his stay in Sicily to be an important period of his formation and his journey to Italy, so that he matures the idea that "Italien ohne Sizilien macht gar kein Bild in der Seele: hier ist erst der Schlüssel zu allem (kapitel 42)."[28]

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, the *Italienische Reise* by Johann W. Goethe was certainly one of the most interesting and complex texts about neoclassical *Grand Tour* tradition and Italy in the eighteenth and nineteenth-century European travel literature. Goethe, like the most noblemen and intellectuals of his time, decided to take the journey to the Italian peninsula with passion, going firstly in the major Italian cities such as Venice, Rome and Naples. However, if he had planned his travel

[26] "The Temple of Segesta was never completed. They never leveled the area around it, only the periphery on which the columns were to be set up. One can tell this from the fact that some places the steps are sunk nine or ten feet into the ground, though there is no hill nearby from which the stones and earth could have been washed down. Moreover, the stones are still lying in their natural places and there are no broken fragments among them" (Goethe 1970: 261).

[27] "The slender architecture of the Temple of Concord, which has withstood so many centuries already conforms more nearly to our standard of beauty and harmony than the style which preceded it – compared to Paestum, it is like the image of god as opposed to the image of a giant" (Goethe 1970: 267).

[28] "To have seen Italy without having seen Sicily is not to have seen Italy at all, For Sicily is the clue to everything" (Goethe 1970: 246).

mostly according to the traditional routes of the *Grand Tour*, he would have decided to reach Sicily, one of the most remote areas of Italy, which, at that time, had started to attract the attention of foreign travelers, thanks to new neoclassical ideas. In the eighteenth century, this island, like the rest of southern Italy, was an area where traveling was still very difficult: the roads were often impractical, weaker with brigands, and the inns only existed in Palermo and offered inadequate service. Despite these inconveniences, Goethe, influenced by the travelogues of Johann Hermann von Riedesel and Patrick Brydone, undertook his experience in Sicily, which deeply marked his poetry and his imagination.

Moreover, Goethe's Sicilian journey proves that The German writer went to Italy with the desire to know not only the Italian culture and art which he had learned to appreciate as a child, but also to approach the Greek-Roman classic tradition, which had inspired European artists and scholars through archaeological studies of Winckelman in the eighteenth century. From this point of view, Goethe's Sicily journey was a real initiative journey, which was an experience of the rediscovery of Antiquity. Sicily allowed him to come into close contact with nature, an experience that led to his artistic inspiration.[29] On the other hand, the sensation of ecstasy felt in front of the great architectural works of the classical era was a real phenomenon of cultural influence. Therefore, it is undoubted that Goethe was fascinated by the aesthetic ideas of the archaeologist and art historian Wilkenmann, who had proposed the art of classical Greek as an example of aesthetic perfection in ancient times.

Thus, as we said, the travel in Sicily was a fundamental experience in the formation of an intellectual like Goethe who was fascinated by the ancient and classic past of a land projected in an almost metaphysical sphere and recognized its central role in the historical and cultural development of Europe. The classic past, not the Norman and Baroque, was in the center of his Sicilian journey. Even though the Arabian past of the island never transpired, as René Michéa stressed, we have to remember that Goethe came in contact with the East of the *West-Oestlicher Divan* for the first time on this island (Michéa 1945: 349). At the end of the eighteenth century, Sicily was still the island of myth for the German writer. Among the enchantment of exotic scents and the suggestion aroused by the vision of the Etna and the Greek Temples, Goethe found the gestures of Ulisse, the *Odyssey*, Alcinoo and Nausicaa and consecrated it to a true imaginary homeland.

[29] Cf. Parodi Corradini 2008.

In addition to classical antiquity's images, the untouched nature of the island, its plants and rocks, and the beauty of the city gardens attracted Goethe's attention. He was attracted by the picturesque appearance of the landscapes that he encountered in his excursions out of the towns. Also monuments and palaces placed in big cities like Palermo and Catania were described in detail by the writer, but the fact remains that all these elements are useful for emphasizing the suggestion of Greek antiquity.

The contemplation of the ruins of antiquity and their beauty and of the unspoiled nature and picturesque landscapes of the island, the rediscovery of myth and the ancient epic poetry– in particular the Homer's *Odyssey* – and the interest to know the deeper features of this civilization, which were taken into consideration in many ambiguous and contradictory aspects, represented the most important elements that we can observe in Goethe's Sicilian journey. Only by considering these elements we can fully understand what the travel in the "Sun Island" represented for Goethe: it was a real human and cultural training laboratory for one of the most important representatives of *Weltliteratur*.

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