

Featured Essay

Depiction of the Anchorites in Mahler's Eighth Symphony

by Salvatore Calomino

"Goethe selbst bringt hier, je weiter gegen den Schluß, immer deutlicher eine unendliche Stufenleiter dieser Gleichnisse zur Darstellung: das leidenschaftliche Suchen Faust's nach Helena – immer weiter in der Walpurgisnacht vom Homunculus – dem noch Ungewordenen – über die mannigfaltigen Entelechieen niederer und höherer Ordnung, immer bewußter und reiner dargestellt und ausgesprochen, bis zur Mater gloriosa – dies ist die Personification des Ewig Weiblichen! ..."

Gustav Mahler to his wife Alma, June 1909¹

("With ever increasing clarity, Goethe himself presents an endless hierarchy of such allegories, and towards the close he intensifies them still further: Faust's impassioned search for Helena, the Walpurgis-Night, the inchoate Homunculus, the numerous entelechies of lower and higher degree, all presented with conviction and transparency. Mater Gloriosa, the personification of Eternal Femininity, is the culmination.")²

Gustav Mahler's interpretive discussion of the concluding scene of *Faust II* – in his response to Alma's own considerations on Goethe's work – sheds light on his understanding of *Faust* and the placement of its final panorama within the overall conception of his Eighth Symphony. Mahler's description of the inevitable return of the character Faust through a series of allegorical representations is rendered by a multi-level depiction of upward movement. The hierarchy, indicated by

Mahler through the metaphor of a step-ladder ("Stufenleiter") suggests vertical progression upward through a series of demarcations. This effect is clearly achieved in the vivid opening of the scene depicting holy anchorites located within vertically staggered clefts of a mountainous gorge. In the encouraging letter to his wife Mahler further uses the metaphor of a pyramid to describe the whole of *Faust*. He comments directly on the culmination of stages through which the protagonist must pass in order to reach a summit, which he felt strongly to be part of Goethe's conception of the cosmos.

"... als Spitze der ungeheuren Pyramide des ganzen Werkes, welches uns eine Welt in Gestalten, Situationen, Entwicklungen vorgeführt hat."

("... as the peak of that vast pyramid which constitutes the work as a whole and which expounds a world of characters, situations and developments.")³

Mahler's interpretation of the concluding scene of *Faust* thus imitates the vertical progression evident in the depiction of the anchorites in Goethe's text. His explication here shows him to be a great admirer of Goethe, whom he was clearly eager to discuss among his intellectual peers.⁴ Given this intellectual and spiritual kinship which Mahler felt with Goethe's opus, it will be advantageous to develop a closer understanding of those elements – literary, visual, and philosophical – which contributed to Goethe's eventual synthesis in this last scene of *Faust*. Our examination of such a fusion of elements will help us to appreciate both Mahler's understanding of Goethe's final cosmic depiction and Mahler's transfer of this scene into the massive cosmos of the Eighth Symphony.

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's plans for the conclusion of *Faust II* were subject to varying influences over an extended period of his intellectual and artistic development. Until reasonably late in the

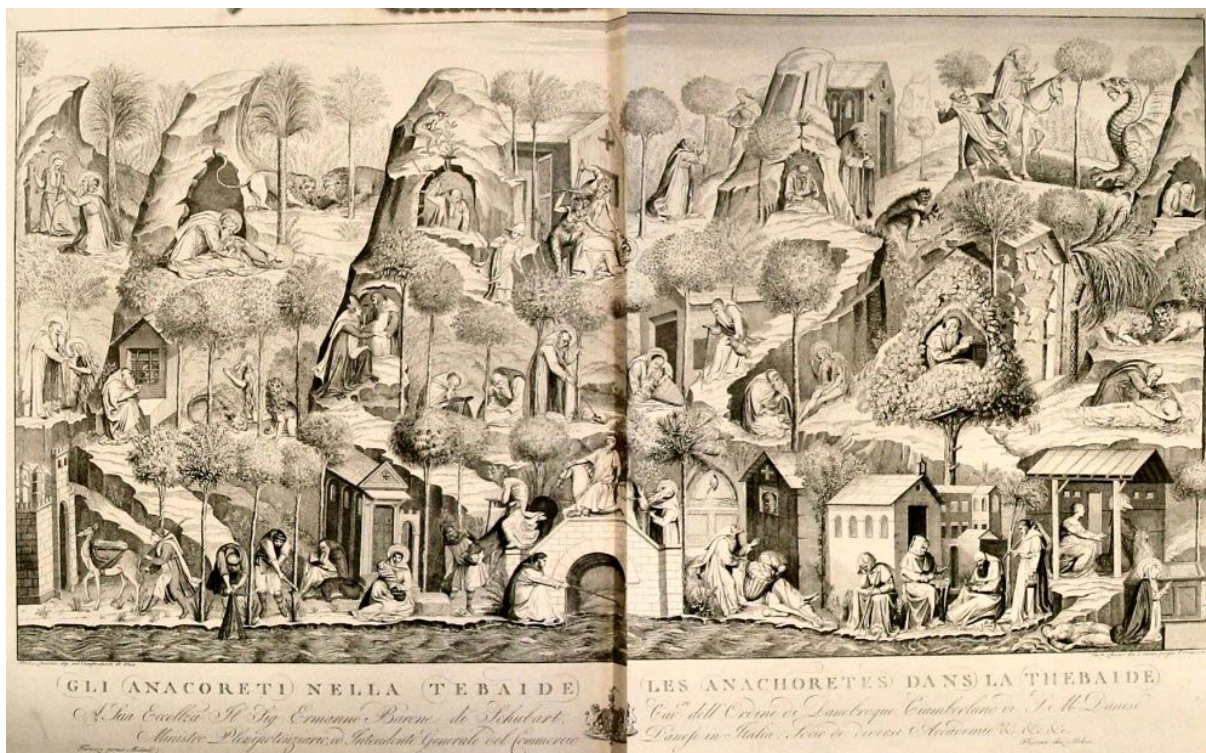


Figure 1 "Gli Anacoreti nella Tebaide" (Engraving based on Fresco in Pisa)

¹ Henry-Louis de La Grange and Günther Weiß, ed. *Ein Glück ohne Ruh'. Die Briefe Gustav Mahlers an Alma. Erste Gesamtausgabe* (Berlin: Siedler, 1995), p. 389.

² Anthony Beaumont, trans. *Gustav Mahler: Letters to his Wife*, ed. Henry-Louis de La Grange and Günther Weiß (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004), p. 327.

³ De La Grange and Weiß, *Ein Glück ohne Ruh'*, p. 388; Beaumont, *Gustav Mahler: Letters*, p. 326.

⁴ For commentary on Mahler's regular study of Goethe and his discussions with Siegfried Lipiner, see Henry-Louis de La Grange, *Gustav Mahler. Vol. 3. Vienna: Triumph and Disillusion* (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), esp. pp. 929-33.

genesis of the final act of his *Faust*, Goethe had planned to conclude the drama with a scene of judgment. Surviving evidence from Goethe's notes and sketches suggest that he had envisioned this final judgment to take place in heaven as a parallel to the "Prologue in Heaven" at the start of the drama.⁵ Critical debate on the decision to alter this concept – and instead to feature the "Erlösung" or return of Faust through the stages of holy anchorites – favors a time-frame of late 1830. According to this perspective not only was the final scene beginning with the anchorites finished in 1830/31, but also much of the last two acts of *Faust* were written or revised during what has been characterized as an intense period of work in the last years of Goethe's life.⁶ While examining possible elements that contributed to the altered final scene, scholarly attention has focused on theological, philosophical, and literary as well as visual and artistic influences which guided and contributed to Goethe's final synthesis. Possibilities for textual influence include the correspondence between Goethe and Wilhelm von Humboldt, in which the latter's travel reports feature a visit to hermits' cells in Spain; Goethe's reading of early Christian theology, especially the writings of Origen, in compendia which summarized such concepts as a return to the original state. For visual influences associated with Goethe's conglomerate in the last scene scholars have considered the copperplate engravings based on frescoes in the Campo Santo at Pisa. The engraving derived from a fresco depicting early medieval anchorites in the Egyptian desert was accessible to Goethe already in the mid-1820s. Also from this period are Goethe's responses to contemporary theories on cloud formation and his own meteorological studies and attempts to diagram the development and hierarchy of nebular forms. We cannot point to a single textual or iconographic moment from a specific period which alone determined Goethe's final conception of the conclusion to *Faust*. Rather, it is more fruitful to view this last scene from *Faust II* – and, as the focus of this essay, the first part of that scene dealing with the depiction of anchorites and Faust's return – as a synthesis of manifold influences. Such a conglomeration then clearly led to those allegorical hierarchies of which Mahler himself spoke while interpreting that final scene from Goethe's *Faust* in his letter to Alma.

One of the earliest inspirations for Goethe's depiction of monks or hermits inhabiting cells in a mountainous gorge was Wilhelm von Humboldt's description of his travels to Montserrat in northeastern Spain. Humboldt's report – fashioned first as a letter to Goethe and later published separately in 1803 – included an account of holy fathers following an abstemious existence in cells and caves on the Montserrat outside of Barcelona.⁷ In Humboldt's epistolary essay we note both the inquisitive and disciplined reporting of a practiced traveler and the intellectual dedication of his association with Goethe. When he first approaches the mountain, Humboldt remarks from a distance on its characteristic steepness. His eye catches further the "weisse Punkte" ("white flecks") which he later discovered to be "Einsiedeleien" ("hermits' cells") distributed on the sides of the precipitous slopes.⁸ The ascent to inspect the living quarters and religious devotion of the inhabitants is marked by a vertical investigation in stages. After leaving the village of Colbaton near the base of the mountain, Humboldt's first goal is the central monastic building ("Kloster"), the project entailing a climb of two hours without mule or pack-horse: "Man steigt etwa zwei Stunden von hier bis zum Kloster auf. Der Fussessteig ist in Schlangenlinien um die Seite des Berges herumgeführt, aber dennoch stellenweise sehr steil ... Man behält auf diesem Wege immer die Höhe des Berges zur Linken, zur Rechten aber den Abgrund." ("From here it

is approximately a two-hour climb up to the monastery. The foot-path proceeds around the side of the mountain in wavy, but at times very steep, progression ... In this way, while ascending one always has the summit of the mountain on one's left, and at the same time the abyss on one's right.")⁹ A second and more challenging terminus is Humboldt's subsequent visit to a selection of the individual cells inhabited by hermits living in solitary devotion.

The steep path on the Montserrat increases in difficulty of access as Humboldt passes upward, initially through the community of the "Kloster," then toward the domestic caves or cells named for individual patron saints. As something of a midway point on his journey, the "Kloster" – or Benedictine community – proves to be for Humboldt a transitional sojourn permitting both reflection and preparation for his continuing ascent. At the same time, the assortment of structures belonging to the monastery marks a division between the two major types of devotional existence. Religious fervor will be demonstrated either in a communal atmosphere of shared belief or by withdrawal into a voluntary solitude. The latter alternative is traditionally accepted as the original form of monastic existence in the early Christian Church. Exemplary figures, Paul of Thebes and Saint Anthony of Egypt ranking as foremost among these, took up a life of solitude and self-deprivation in the Egyptian desert starting in the first half of the fourth century.¹⁰ In their attempts to seek out and follow the simplest form of human existence while remaining steeped in spiritual contemplation, these early hermits are designated formally as anchorites. The extremes of their chosen life developed over time into a group or communal gathering of holy men. In Richard P. McBrien's formulation, "Gradually the hermits were joined by others, and a transition was made from the solitary form of monastic existence (*anchoritism*) to a modified community existence (*cenobitism*)." [McBrien's emphasis]¹¹ In his reminiscences as a traveler, Humboldt then progresses by stages on this peak, encountering first the devotional group, then passing simultaneously upward and in reverse sophistication toward a purer form of monastic dedication.

Humboldt's initial approach toward the devotional community on the mountain establishes early an intellectual and spiritual bond with Goethe's poetic genius. As he climbs toward the monastery, Humboldt recalls the figure of "Bruder Markus" (Brother Markus) from Goethe's epic fragment, "Die Geheimnisse" (rendered as "The Mysteries,")¹² Humboldt identifies with Brother Markus – whom he defines, like himself, as a "Pilgrimm" – in undertaking an extensive hike in search of a spiritual community on a mountainous landscape.¹³ After such an introductory corroboration of shared sentiment and better understanding of Goethe's intent in "Die Geheimnisse," Humboldt as traveler delivers an objective description of the buildings belonging to the monastery and those individuals residing in the community. Here distinctions are established between various groups that make up the collective nature of the "Kloster." Of the 250 odd inhabitants at this cenobitic level approximately seventy are monks with the remaining participants divided among lay brothers, choir boys, and those fulfilling domestic and mundane tasks. In the spirit of a model, enlightened educator Humboldt collects and categorizes his observations on the physical layout of the buildings and their interiors. He then relates information that he has uncovered on the early history of the abbey contributing further to an understanding of its present state of devotion.¹⁴ From the visual perspective of the monastery Humboldt

⁵ For commentary on these plans see Goethe, *Faust*, ed. Erich Trunz (München: C.H. Beck, 1972), pp. 626-28, and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Faust: Kommentare*, ed. Albrecht Schöne (Frankfurt: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1999), pp. 781-83; sketches may be found in Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Faust: Texte*, ed. Albrecht Schöne (Frankfurt: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1999), p. 731 ff.

⁶ For a useful recent discussion on composition and revision of the latter part of *Faust*, see Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Faust: Part Two*, trans. David Luke (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. xlix ff.

⁷ Wilhelm von Humboldt, "Der Montserrat bei Barcelona," in *Wilhelm von Humboldts Werke, Band III, 1799-1818*, ed. Albert Leitzmann (Berlin: B. Behr's Verlag, 1904), pp. 30-59.

⁸ Wilhelm von Humboldt, "Der Montserrat," p. 37

⁹ Wilhelm von Humboldt, "Der Montserrat," p. 38.

¹⁰ Carolinne White, ed./trans. *Early Christian Lives* (London: Penguin Books, 1998), pp. xi-xxxviii; Richard P. McBrien, *Lives of the Saints: From Mary and St. Francis of Assisi to John XXIII and Mother Teresa* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 2001), pp. 76-77, 79-80.

¹¹ McBrien, *Lives of the Saints*, p. 21.

¹² For a succinct discussion of this epic fragment within Goethe's poetic oeuvre see Nicholas Boyle, *Goethe, The Poet and the Age. Vol I: The Poetry of Desire (1749-1790)* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), esp. pp. 397-99.

¹³ Wilhelm von Humboldt, "Der Montserrat," p. 33.

¹⁴ Wilhelm von Humboldt, "Der Montserrat," pp. 38-44.

casts his glance toward the steep cliffs that rise up above the level community on various sides:

“... hier ist vor den Gebäuden ein länglicht schmaler Platz, den vorn und zu beiden Seiten ungeheure Felsen einschliessen. Neugierig späht das Auge des Reisenden an ihren glatten und senkrechten Wänden umher, und sucht vergebens nach einem Zugange zu den Einsiedeleien, deren er einige unmittelbar über sich im eigentlichen Sinne des Wortes in den Lüften schwebend erblickt.”

(“... here in front of the buildings [of the monastery] is an elongated, narrow space which is surrounded by enormous cliffs to the fore and on both sides. The eye of the traveler gazes curiously on their smooth and steep walls; in vain he searches for a point of access to the hermits' cells, several of which he sees directly above himself and – in the true sense of the word – floating in the air”¹⁵)

Already from this succinct relation of details – involving both the physical, geographic description and the enumeration of members in the community – we may trace a thread to Goethe's depiction at the start of the closing scene to *Faust*. The arrangement of scenery as well as movement among the Patres in Goethe's text shows an emphasis on vertical images reminiscent of Humboldt's impressions. The first of Goethe's holy fathers, Pater Ecstasticus, levitates throughout the period of his address. In the stage direction to his speech in the drama (“auf- und abschwabend” / “floating up and down”) we note a designation recalling Humboldt's report of the hermits' cells nearly floating in the air. A further connection can be established between this early part of Humboldt's essay and Goethe's personnel established for the hierarchical climb toward heaven. The various groups of Goethe's “blessed boys” and “angels” (“Chor seliger Knaben,” “Engel”) – when taken together with the anchorite fathers, between whose speeches their choral parts alternate – illustrate a mix of inhabitants similar to that found in Humboldt's enumeration for the monastery. To be sure, the solitary ascetics are located outside and above the grounds of the “Kloster” in Humboldt's presentation. In Goethe's transformation for his scene in the drama, he has effected a conflation of individual types within successive levels reaching heavenward. From these two points of similarity we may establish a reciprocal relation – literary, philosophical, and spiritual – between Humboldt and Goethe, which contributed to the portrayal of devotional fervor in Goethe's final scene of *Faust*. Just as Humboldt claimed, in this essay, a lasting interest in the poet's “Geheimnisse,” Goethe declared his admiration for Humboldt's extensive and colorful report as a witness to spirituality. The dramatic intensification of individual facets from Humboldt's recollection – when coupled especially with the traveler's description of ascending cloud formations – gives evidence to Goethe's enthusiastic reading of the report and his admission that he could not banish the impressions created by Humboldt from his own imagination (“aus der Einbildungskraft nicht los werden”).¹⁶

The actual connection between devotional solitude of the eremites on Montserrat and the sainted lives of anchorite fathers in the early Christian Church is made during the visitor's progressive climb upward past the monastery. After relating details on the interior of both this community and its church, Humboldt continues in the next major section of his report with a description of the ascent to visit individual hermitages. Among these sanctified retreats are cells dedicated to Saints Anne and Jerome. On the way to the cell of Saint Anne shortly after daybreak Humboldt and his companions encounter an elderly hermit who has descended from his dwelling for several weeks' convalescence. The appearance resulting from self-deprivation is shocking to the observer, and Humboldt consequently equates its effects on the elderly hermit with the life of a saint:

“Es war ein kleiner, stämmiger Mann mit fester und entschlossener Mine, und seine graue härene Kutte, sein Stab, und sein langer ungekämmtter Bart gaben ihm zwischen diesen rauhen Felsen ein Ansehen von Wildheit, das mich überraschte.

Nothwendig aber gränzt das Einseidler- und Heiligenleben, das immerfort mit allem Ungemache der Natur ringt, an den Zustand der Naturwildheit.”¹⁷

(“He was a short, burly man with an air or determination, and his gray cowl made of hair, his staff and his long, uncombed beard gave him – especially between these rough cliffs – an appearance of wildness which startled me. But of course the life of a hermit and a saint, who must struggle unceasingly with all the discomforts of nature, borders on the condition of primitive wildness in nature.”)

This vision and its accompanying associations establish for Humboldt a preliminary bond between the present life of the eremite and its analogue among the sainted desert fathers of early Christianity. After a brief visit with the recluse in the cell dedicated to Saint Anne – serving also as a gathering place for individual hermits to meet collectively under ecclesiastical supervision for the sacrament – Humboldt proceeds upward toward the hermitage named for Saint Jerome. During the climb he emphasizes the multiple levels on the mountainside and the restricted accessibility of these by means of narrow paths and stepways.¹⁸ Since this vertical picture situates those cells dedicated to fathers of the early Church and desert fathers close to the peaks, the reader retains an impression of hierarchy relating especially to potential inhabitants of these cells. Elements of this vertical geography predominate then in Goethe's description of anchorite fathers at various levels in the final scene of *Faust*. A further parallel reading of Humboldt's text and Goethe's scenic description will show similar tendencies in the uppermost regions of both hierarchies. Humboldt reports that the dwelling reserved for a hermit in dedication to Saint Jerome is at present empty, yet its superior location establishes additional links to model figures in the early Church. The cell is found, in Humboldt's observation, at the most attractive and romantic site of the entire Montserrat. From this perspective of Saint Jerome's niche the view both into the depths and heavenward leaves an unforgettable impression. The vision of clouds “in steter Bewegung”¹⁹ (“in constant motion”) provides the only movement between the craggy peaks. Located at the summit of the mountain, and just above this highest cell of Jerome, the traveler reaches a chapel dedicated to the Virgin Mary. The idealized image of an eremite in devotional retreat at the tallest point in a hierarchy can be related directly to the figure of Dr. Marianus in Goethe's vertical arrangement of the anchorite fathers. Just as the eremite in Humboldt's cell of Saint Jerome would maintain contact with and responsibility for the chapel of Mary, Goethe's intensification of this figure in Dr. Marianus (“in der höchsten, reinlichsten Zelle” / “in the highest, purest cell”) is positioned so that he might gaze upward at the Queen of Heaven.

The link established by Humboldt between the cell at this highest point of the mountain and the figure of Jerome, learned doctor of the early Christian Church, is expanded into a direct association with an anchorite father during a subsequent point of the visit. Humboldt wanders through an almost magical concentration of clouds toward additional cells, among these the hermitage dedicated to Saint Onouphrios. Although the traveler has descended somewhat from the peak of Jerome, a further challenging climb is necessitated to reach the cell of Onouphrios, described along with the cave of Saint John as “appearing like eagles' nests hanging from the cliffs” (“hängen gleich Adlernestern am Felsen”).²⁰ With the introduction of a retreat named for Saint Onouphrios we come to the specific designation in Humboldt's report of a life devoted to solitude in the desert. Onouphrios gave up a monastic, communal existence during the fourth century in the Thebaid in order to pursue the self-abnegation of a hermit in the Egyptian desert. Toward the close of his long life he was found by the monk Paphnoutios, who was himself searching for spiritual guidance in his own choice of future devotional commitment. Paphnoutios subsequently composed a *vita* of Onouphrios in which he detailed sixty years during which the hermit had lived alone in the desert and received communion

¹⁷ Wilhelm von Humboldt, “Der Montserrat,” p. 45.

¹⁸ Wilhelm von Humboldt, “Der Montserrat,” pp. 47-49.

¹⁹ Wilhelm von Humboldt, “Der Montserrat,” p. 48.

²⁰ Wilhelm von Humboldt, “Der Montserrat,” p. 51.

¹⁵ Wilhelm von Humboldt, “Der Montserrat,” p. 39.

¹⁶ Quoted in Goethe, *Faust: Kommentare*, ed. Schöne, p. 779.

regularly from an angel. After further sustenance brought for these two by angelic mission, Paphnoutios claims to have been instructed through a vision from God that he should – upon the death of Onouphrios – bury the holy eremite in an opening on the mountain. Once this was indeed accomplished, the burial site vanished; and Paphnoutios understood that he should continue his own blessed life elsewhere.²¹ In the context of his travel report, when Humboldt visits a cell on the Montserrat dedicated to the anchoritic life of Saint Onouphrios, he evokes for the reader multiple associations: a solitary existence of self-denial; the location of the Thebaid in Egypt and the withdrawal as an eremite into the desert; the image of a mountainside cave as either a dwelling or a place of final burial; divine sanction through either an intermediary or as a direct message. These associations function as a bridge between the present descriptive observations on a hermit's life in Montserrat and the traditions of anchoritic existence in Egypt – and specifically the Thebaid – surviving since the early days of the Church.

The most striking visual image contributing to Goethe's synthesis of impressions based on Humboldt's contemporary report and the eremitic traditions of the ancient Church is a copper-plate engraving of early anchorites in the Thebaid (see Figure 1). The work was completed by the noted engraver Carlo Lasinio, whose sources were the late medieval frescoes by Pietro Laurati in the Campo Santo, Pisa; the engraving was published by Lasinio in a collective volume of such images and was known to Goethe in this format.²²

A first examination of this engraving of the anchorites confirms not only a vertical emphasis but one that is also arranged in progressive stages. We may differentiate three distinctive levels caught between natural images associated with earth and heaven. At the base, as seen in figure 1, the individuals on the first level have sporadic contact with the water shown in regular, repeating waves; the top of the engraving indicates clouds in horizontal formation into which the highest peaks extend. Between these parameters spindly trees reach upward and seem to conjoin individual levels, just as the narrow, snaking paths extend from close to the base up toward a summit. The geographical designation in the introductory choral utterance of Goethe's final scene in *Faust* incorporates a number of images from this engraving.

<p>Chor und Echo "Waldung, sie schwankt heran, Felsen, sie lasten dran, Wurzeln, sie klammern an, Stamm dicht an Stamm hinan. Woge nach Woge spritzt, Höhle, die tiefste, schützt."²³</p>	<p>Chorus and Echo "Forests are coming near, Towering rocks appear Clinging, the roots adhere, Tree trunks are crowded here. Wave splashes after wave, Shelter is found in the cave."²⁴</p>
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As Albrecht Schöne has argued, Goethe drew on elements from the reproduction and transformed these in order to suggest movement leading toward an upward resolution.²⁵ Indeed recent editions and translations of Goethe's *Faust* have emphasized the vertical progress in spirituality in both the engraving and the arrangement of Goethe's anchorites in the final scene. In his commentary David Luke has summarized: "Goethe again uses the 'salutary form and solidity' of human art ... 'Gli Anacoreti nella Tebaide' showed the holy men poised between earth and sky, sitting in their caves, some with wild beasts at their feet, at different heights in the mountainside as if arranged in ascending order of spirituality."²⁶ The representation of devotion increasing with upward movement may be examined through the

images used at each of the successive levels. On the lowest level, near the water's edge, physical labor is emphasized on the left whereas contemplation and prayer are indicated on the right. On either side at this level the concentration of individuals remains suggestive of a communal existence, one that has declared its devotional intent but is not exclusively solitary. Here we may appreciate a parallel to the varying levels on the mountain visited by Humboldt. During his stay at the mountain community – as he approached the monastery – the concept of a shared devotional commitment caused him to recall Goethe's earlier poem on "Die Geheimnisse." The continued progression to higher levels is not, however, accompanied for Humboldt by further thoughts of a similar community or society, but rather by an enhancement of solitary devotion.

The second and third levels of Lasinio's engraving – as seen in the illustration below – depict this greater spiritual dedication in considerable iconographic detail. It is also here that we detect additional images used by Goethe, in combination with those from the first level and with the impressions of sainted eremites from Humboldt's travel report. The second level shows an intensification of prayer, contemplation, or – where communication is indicated – the suggestion of sacramental participation. Individual eremites are located in cells or caves as dwellings, the image of one anchorite emerging centered in a tree. Also at this level in the reproduction wild animals are first shown not only as tame companions but also as participants in a tradition attached to a saint's *vita*. On the right at this second level two lions are depicted digging a grave; positioned before them an eremite stands in a grave already dug and is prepared to inter a body. In this simultaneous pictorial image of both preparing the grave and filling the grave – already prepared – the prototype is related of the eremites Paul of Thebes and Anthony of Egypt from the third and fourth centuries. Paul, regarded as the first Christian hermit, had fled to the desert and lived to be more than one hundred. He was visited by Saint Anthony, himself credited with the foundation of monasticism, as related in the life of Paul composed by Saint Jerome.²⁷ According to the latter account, coincident with Paul's death two lions appeared from the inner desert. After emitting howls of lament, they set to excavating a grave for the departed Paul into which Anthony could place the blessed body.²⁸ In Lasinio's engraving yet another, similar image is presented on the left side at the third or highest level of spiritual devotion. Here the anchorite kneels before his cave while two lions assist in preparing a grave behind it. We may interpret this part of the engraving as a mirror image of the saint's burial from the second level, or as a related legend transferred to another holy figure. Additional desert saints whose graves were reputedly prepared by wild beasts include Mary the Egyptian, and in some versions of the legend of Onouphrios lions appeared to dig a grave for the holy eremite.²⁹ In both levels on the engraving the legend of an early desert saint along with burial is invoked in order to strengthen the devotional import. A potential link can thus be established between traditions associated here with a desert father and a dedicated cell in Humboldt's travel report to Goethe. The additional depiction of a lion on the second level, left center, is further worthy of note: here the beast stands tamely behind a holy figure whose hands are outstretched, recalling portrayals of Jerome with a lion whom the saint had allegedly healed. The story of Jerome removing a thorn from a lion's paw – and the subsequent gratefulness of the animal – was indeed adapted from the *vita* of Saint Gerasimus, yet iconographic representation persists for Jerome based on this transfer of attributes.³⁰ In the conclusion of the introductory choral speech in Goethe's final scene friendly lions enhance the chosen nature of this place of devotion:

<p>"Löwen, sie schleichen stumm - Freundlich um uns herum, Ehren geweihten Ort, Heiligen Liebeshort." (11850-853)</p>	<p>"Lions are prowling dumb - Friendly wherever we come, Honor the sacred place, Treasure of love and grace." (Kaufmann, p. 487)</p>
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²¹ McBrien, *Lives of the Saints*, p. 238; see further Hiltgart L. Keller, *Reclams Lexikon der Heiligen und biblischen Gestalten: Legende und Darstellung in der bildenden Kunst*, 9. ed. (Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam, 2001), pp. 456-57.

²² For Goethe's familiarity with this engraving, see Goethe, *Faust: Kommentare*, ed. Schöne, pp. 779-80; Goethe, *Faust: Part Two*, trans. Luke, pp. lxxiii-lxxv.

²³ Goethe, *Faust: Texte*, ed. Schöne, p. 456, vv. 11844-849; further references to this edition will be indicated by verse number directly following the passage quoted.

²⁴ *Goethe's Faust*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Doubleday Anchor, 1990), p. 487; further translated passages from the final scene of Goethe's *Faust II* will be taken from this edition.

²⁵ Goethe, *Faust: Kommentare*, ed. Schöne, p. 780.

²⁶ Goethe, *Faust: Part Two*, trans. Luke, p. lxxv.

²⁷ McBrien, *Lives of the Saints*, pp. 76-77, 396-99; White, ed., *Early Christian Lives*, pp. xiv-xviii, 73-84.

²⁸ White, ed., *Early Christian Lives*, pp. 82-83.

²⁹ White, ed., *Early Christian Lives*, p. lii.

³⁰ White, ed., *Early Christian Lives*, pp. xxxviii-xxxix.

Here we may appreciate a further conflation of elements from varying sources for Goethe's final conception. In the case of Jerome and Onouphrios, both associated with a desert existence in the early Church, analogues of spiritual and natural images can be traced to Humboldt's report as well as Lasinio's rendering of early anchorites.

The uppermost reaches in the illustration from Lasinio represent a culmination of devotional achievement and salvation. On this third level we may again look to the significance of individual iconographic figures and how they suggest a continuation yet an expanded vision of the previous stages. The level closest to heaven is characterized by greater internal contrast when viewed comparatively with the lower stages on the cliff. As a possible response to the helpful beasts already discussed on the left in the illustration, the far right on this same level features the threat of a dragon causing fear because of its feral nature. This level also emphasizes most vividly the devotional commitment of individual anchorites in their proximity to heaven. On the right side closer to the central fold a holy father is shown in rapt contemplation and prayer directed toward the divine. The intensity of spiritual perfection required at this level is then underscored by the sporadic images of demons initiating further temptation or punishment. It is only at this level of spiritual achievement in the engraving that the demonic and wild confront so directly the anchorite persevering in intense devotion. Here a parallel may be drawn for individual images to the temptations of Saint Anthony, as a further association with the early desert fathers.³¹ The intensification of his resolve needed to combat those severe temptations in the desert would place the eremite at the greatest level of spirituality. Such a hierarchy corresponds to Goethe's progression of the anchorite fathers, as emphasized by Luke, from the Pater Profundus at the lowest level to Dr. Marianus at the summit.³² Just as Humboldt placed a chapel to Mary in the care of the eremite of Jerome near the peak – and a sole anchorite prays to the divinity in the engraving – Goethe's Dr. Marianus is privileged with a view of the Mater Gloriosa from his height of spiritual ascendancy.

Goethe's conception of the anchorites positioned at progressive levels in a hierarchy corresponds to his considerations on the formation of clouds. Especially during the decade and a half prior to the final work and revision on *Faust II* Goethe remained intrigued by meteorological observation and frequently kept recordings of his impressions.³³ The scientific publications of the English researcher Luke Howard and his system of terms for describing the formations of clouds proved to be a decided influence on Goethe. He adopted Howard's terminology, executed his own sketches of clouds, and expanded these studies considerably during the 1820s.³⁴ The engraving on the right (Figure 2) was included by Goethe in his essay "Wolkengestalt nach Howard" ("Cloud Formation in keeping with Howard") and shows a progression of clouds in keeping with his own observations but using Howard's terms for description.³⁵ This system would place stratus clouds at the lowest level and further detail a gradual transformation upward into related but distinct nebular formations. As Goethe considered typically in his findings, "Stratus verwandelte sich in Kumulus, Kumulus in Zirrus."³⁶ ("Stratus metamorphosed into cumulus, cumulus into cirrus."). Those regions designated for the anchorites – the lowest, middle, and highest spheres for Pater Profundus, Pater Seraphicus, and Dr. Marianus – are indeed described by Goethe in this final scene using terms related to those that he applied in his scientific observations from this period.³⁷ The horizontal layers of stratus gave way to the billows of cumulus and are capped at the top level by the

wisps of cirrus clouds. Here we should recall Humboldt's imagery of clouds expressed in his report to Goethe, while the traveler climbed to the cell of Saint Jerome and proceeded on to that of Saint Onouphrios ("Wolkenschauspiel"³⁸ / "dramatic play of clouds"). We can thus appreciate a synthesis of elements and observations from various periods in Goethe's intellectual development and the fusion by which these contributed to a final scene of natural and spiritual hierarchy.

Since Mahler comments in his letter to Alma on the return of Faust, particularly in the second part of the drama and finally at the close of the work, it is natural for us to consider Goethe's decision on Faust's acceptance heavenward in the final scene. Rather than undergoing a final judgement, Faust passes through the various spheres of anchorites and clouds as he is transported upward. Perhaps no other aspect of influence for this final scene extends back so far in Goethe's development as his theological reading and speculation. Already as a young man he read extensively in the compendium of theology assembled by Gottfried Arnold, *Unpartheyische Kirchen- und Ketzer-Historie*.³⁹ In his autobiographical *Dichtung und Wahrheit* Goethe later recalls how, from his consideration of Arnold's summaries on individual theologians, he was able to formulate his own ideas on religion.⁴⁰ From Arnold's compendium Goethe would have encountered the philosophy of Origen, the third-century Greek theologian and mystic.⁴¹ Also here was outlined Origen's doctrine of *apocatastasis* which stipulated that all things – both good and evil – are returned to an original state deriving from their creation. In his summary of Origen's theology on the return of an individual soul to its point of origin, Arnold describes the gradual stages through which it must pass and be purified.⁴² In Mahler's understanding of Goethe's cosmos we can then appreciate the culmination of these stages as Faust is returned through the hierarchy of the anchorites.



Figure 2
"Wolkengestalt nach Howard"
(Engraving from Goethe's
meteorological essay)

³¹ McBrien, *Lives of the Saints*, pp. 79-80; White, ed., *Early Christian Lives*, pp. 7-70.

³² See, e.g., Goethe, *Faust: Part Two*, trans. Luke, p. lxxv.

³³ Johann Wolfgang Goethe, *Schriften zur allgemeinen Naturlehre, Geologie und Minerologie*, ed., Wolf von Engelhardt and Manfred Wenzel (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1989), pp. 1019-32; Goethe, *Faust: Kommentare*, ed., Schöne, pp. 793-94.

³⁴ Goethe, *Schriften zur allgemeinen Naturlehre*, pp. 1021-23.

³⁵ Goethe, *Schriften zur allgemeinen Naturlehre*, pp. 214-34.

³⁶ Quoted in Goethe, *Faust: Kommentare*, ed., Schöne, p. 794.

³⁷ Goethe, *Faust: Kommentare*, ed., Schöne, p. 793.

³⁸ Wilhelm von Humboldt, "Der Montserrat," p. 49.

³⁹ Gottfried Arnold, *Unpartheyische Kirchen- und Ketzer-Historie Vom Anfang des Neuen Testaments Bis auf das Jahr Christi 1688*, 2.ed. (Frankfurt am Main: Thomas Fritschens sel. Erben, 1729); for further discussion on Goethe's study of Origen, specifically in this ed. of Arnold's work, see Goethe, *Faust: Kommentare*, ed., Schöne, pp. 788-93.

⁴⁰ Johann Wolfgang Goethe, *Aus meinem Leben. Dichtung und Wahrheit. Zweiter Teil* (München: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1969), pp. 127-30.

⁴¹ For a discussion of the continued importance of the philosophy and theology of Origen in eighteenth-century thought and letters, see Dieter Breuer, "Origenes im 18. Jahrhundert in Deutschland," *Seminar*, 21 (1985), 1-30.

⁴² Arnold, *Unpartheyische Kirchen- und Ketzer-Historie, Dritter und Vierter Theil*, pp. 358-59.