As most educated people in the eighteenth century, Goethe knew the Bible very well,¹ and he was well informed about the theological discussions of his time.² He could, however, hardly foresee that by the time Faust II was posthumously published the general knowledge of biblical texts had drastically decreased so that for readers of the nineteenth century it became more and more difficult if not impossible to perceive Goethe’s biblical allusions and to understand his play with biblical intertextuality. For readers of the twenty-first century the situation has not much improved. Of course we all know (even those who have not read the Bible) that Goethe in his Prologue in Heaven referred to the prologue of the book of Job. As in the story of the biblical book it is the Lord who, surrounded by his angels, provokes Mephisto: «Kennst Du den Faust? […] Meinen Knecht!» (299)³ and allows him to «drag» Faust «along [his] downward path» (325f.) – though only, as long as Faust «is still alive on earth» (315).⁴ This condition makes Mephisto a loser, right from the beginning, and in accordance with the book of Job but in contrast to the popular Faust tradition, the protagonist is rescued in the end. As in the biblical book there is no further encounter between the Lord and Mephisto.

The status of the Prologue in Heaven is defined by the Prelude on the Stage, where the director, after having stressed the fictional and entertaining character of the play about to be performed, gives the following guidelines to the Poet and the Player:

Drum schonet mir an diesem Tag
Prospekte nicht und nicht Maschinen.
Gebraucht das groß’ und kleine Himmelslicht,
Die Sterne dürfet ihr verschwenden;
An Wasser, Feuer, Felsenwänden,
An Tier und Vögeln fehlt es nicht.
So schreitet in dem engen Bretterhaus
Den ganzen Kreis der Schöpfung aus,
Und wandelt mit bedächt’ger Schnelle
Vom Himmel durch die Welt zur Hölle. (233–42)
Obviously, the *Prologue* is not meant as a serious attempt to stage a religious opening which mirrors the creed of the author; it is rather a playful entertaining opening – closer to Brecht than to a mystery play –, a play that also plays with biblical traditions and literary models, and it is this play with intertextuality that my paper will focus on.

To grasp the full impact of Goethe’s technique of intertextuality one must realize that the *Prologue in Heaven* not only refers to the prologue of the book of Job but also differs from it. The most striking difference is the angels’ praise of the creation which may remind us of the imperatives of Psalm 148, 1f.:

Lobt den Herrn von den Himmeln her! Lobt ihn in den Höhen!
Lobt ihn, alle Engel! Lobt ihn alle seine Heerscharen!

Such praise cannot be found in the prologue of the book of Job, but it can be read as a reference to Calderon’s *Great Theatre of the World*, not only, as Albrecht Schöne remarks in his commentary, as a «Struktur-Zitat,» but also with respect to the themes of the four stanzas. Moreover, as far as these themes are concerned, there is an important relation to the book of Job, although not to its prologue but rather to the last chapters in which the Lord finally condescends to answer Job. Referring to his creation and to the creatures, he demonstrates his absolute power as well as the insignificance of Job and man in general. Job will have to concede that he is not able to understand the «Ordnungen des Himmels» (Hiob 38, 31–33). Precisely these «Ordnungen des Himmels» – which, as in Psalm 148, are described as unchangeable – are the theme of archangel Raphael’s opening of the *Prologue*. He praises the harmony of the spheres – which, by the way, is not a biblical concept – and in the last line alludes to Genesis:

Die Sonne tönt nach alter Weise
In Brudersphären Wettgesang,
Und ihre vorgeschrieb’ne Reise
Vollendet sie mit Donnergang.

Ihr Anblick gibt den Engeln Stärke,
Wenn keiner sie ergründen mag;
Die unbegreiflich hohen Werke
Sind herrlich wie am ersten Tag. (243–50)

In chapter 38 of the book of Job the Lord demonstrates his superiority also by pointing out that it is he who created day and night, light and darkness. «Hast du einmal in deinem Leben dem Morgen geboten?», he asks Job, adding disdainfully: «Wo ist denn der Weg dahin, wo das Licht wohnt? Und die Finsternis – wo ist denn ihre Stätte?» (Hiob 38, 19). It is this aspect of the creation which is thematized in the first four verses of archangel Gabriel:
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Und schnell und unbegreiflich schnelle
Dreht sich umher der Erde Pracht;
Es wechselt Paradieses-Helle
Mit tiefer schauervoller Nacht;
[… ] (251–54)

Raphael has already mentioned «Donnergang.» Lightning and thunderstorms are now, in the third stanza, the theme of archangel Michael:

Und Stürme brausen um die Wette,
Vom Meer auf’s Land, vom Land auf’s Meer,
Und bilden wütend eine Kette
Der tiefsten Wirkung rings umher.
Da flammt ein blitzendes Verheeren
Dem Pfade vor des Donnerschlags;
Doch deine Boten, Herr, verehren
Das sanfte Wandeln deines Tags. (259–61)

Why does Michael, who obviously prefers the «sanfte Wandeln» in heavenly fields to a life on earth where «blitzendes Verheeren» is dominant, praise the splendor of the «hohen Werke» of the Lord by thematizing lightning and thunderstorms? The answer comes again from the book of Job. It is Elihu who first establishes the majesty of the Lord by referring to thunder and lightning (Hiob 36, 29; 36, 32f.; 37, 2–6). It may be more important, however, that the Lord speaks «aus dem Sturm» and that he demonstrates his power and Job’s insignificance by stressing that he and only he governs thunder and lightning:

Wer furchte […] einen Weg der donnernden Gewitterwolke […]? (Hiob 38, 25)
Entsendest du Blitze, so dass sie hinfahren […]? (Hiob 38, 35)
[H]ast du einen Arm wie Gott, und donnerst du mit einer Stimme wie er? (Hiob 40, 9)

And consequently the Lord finally confronts Job with the rhetorical question: «Und wer ist es, der vor mir bestehen könnte?» (Hiob 41, 2).

Gabriel invokes not only the change of day and night but also the opposition of water and land:

Es schäumt das Meer in breiten Flüssen
Am tiefsten Grund der Felsen auf,
Und Fels und Meer wird fortgerissen
In ewig schnellem Sphärenlauf. (255–58)

And it is Michael’s turn to carry on:

Und Stürme brausen um die Wette,
Vom Meer auf’s Land, vom Land auf’s Meer[.] (259f.)
Of course these verses are again a reference to the book of Job and to the Lord’s demonstration of his power as he points out that he not only created or rather ‘founded’ the earth – «die Erde gegründet» (Hiob 38, 4) –, but that he also bounded in the sea:

Wer hat das Meer mit Türen verschlossen, als es hervorbrach, dem Mutterschoß entquoll, als ich […] ihm meine Grenze zog und Riegel und Türen einsetzte und sprach: Bis hierher kommst du und nicht weiter, und hier soll aufhören der Stolz deiner Wellen? (Hiob 38, 8–11)

The praise of the angels in the *Prologue in Heaven* is, however, not only a repetition of the arguments with which the Lord demonstrates to Job his power and his sovereignty. Raphael and Gabriel both have a distinct world view. While Raphael’s conception is obviously influenced by Pythagoras, Gabriel, on the other hand, seems to admire the universe in terms that remind us of the heliocentric system as it was described by Copernicus. Thus the two conflicting stanzas evoke the history of science and of scientific progress and posit that man *can* indeed, contrary to the speech of the Lord in the book of Job, though only step by step, learn to understand the change of day and night and the cosmic order. Gabriel’s and Michael’s verses refer to the words of the Lord who presents himself to Job as the only one who can contain the sea within fixed boundaries. Goethe’s tragedy, however, shows that, in contrast to Job, Faust is able to redesign and change the borderlines between land and sea and that in his almost Promethean creativity he transgresses exactly the order which according to the book of Job as well as Psalm 148, 6 cannot be transgressed. And finally it is Mephisto who undermines the praise of the angels by confronting it with the reality on earth: «Ich sehe nur wie sich die Menschen plagen» (280).

Thus, what at first seems to be a wonderful praise of both the creator and the creation, and what – in a kind of biographical interpretation – has often been (mis-)understood as Goethe’s personal praise of the universe, is, once the intertextual echoes have been perceived, revealed as a half-hidden critique of biblical statements. The stanzas of the angels recall the book of Job but only to refute its dominant religious concept. The angels’ praise is an ironic text in that it conveys another meaning than what it literally seems to say.

Let me add at this point that my purpose is not to study influences of which Goethe may or may not have been aware. My concern is rather Goethe’s deliberate use of intertextual references – Genet’s well known term «palimpsest» may be called to mind –, references to the book of Job and of course to other texts as an artistic means to contour the tragedy. It is, above all, this kind of intertextuality which constitutes the modernity of *Faust II*, a mo-
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dernity, however, which readers of the nineteenth century, even if they were able to perceive the intertextual play, could hardly appreciate or understand because it contradicted the traditional concepts of «Werk» and «Autor-schaft» – concepts which half a century earlier had indeed been reinforced by Goethe himself.7

II

It is, I think, generally taken for granted that Goethe’s reference to the book of Job ends with the truly parodistic climax in the second but last scene of the tragedy, in Grablegung, when – what a reversal of roles! – Mephisto utters his complaints precisely as does Job (Hiob 16, 16–22; 23, 2–9):

Bei wem soll ich mich nun beklagen?
Wer schafft mir mein erworbnes Recht? (11832f.)

The roses, strewn by the angels, make him feel «hiobsartig» (11809), «like Job a mass of boils from head to toe, a horror to myself» (11809f.).8 But I do not share the view that this is the last of the references to Job; I think that the reference to Job is also fundamental to the last scene, Bergschluchten.

We have to remember that there is not only the one book of Job we all know. Even if we concentrate on Hebrew and Greek literature and leave aside the Arabic, there are numerous texts which convey the story of Job in different ways and with a different impact.9 And accordingly there are many different traditions of interpreting the story of Job, either referring to different texts or to different versions of a text, and of course there are also different ways of looking at one and the same text. Several of the diverse stories and interpretations were obviously widespread, due not so much to literary but rather to oral traditions which were closely connected with traditions within the visual arts. For centuries only very few people read the Bible or variations of biblical texts and commentaries on them. The stories were orally communicated and people saw them depicted in churches, in illuminated manuscripts and illustrated religious books, above all in the so-called Heilspiegel and Book of Hours. Sculptors and painters illustrated the stories they had been told, and people retold the stories they had seen. A convincing proof of the vitality of different and even contradictory traditions of the story of Job throughout the centuries can be found in religious art, and the most impressive example may be the coexistence of different representations of the part of Job’s wife.10

As you know, in the canonical book of Job, Job’s (unnamed) wife has only a few words to say: «Willst du auch jetzt noch schuldlos bleiben? Lästere Gott
It is therefore rather astonishing that we can find a great number of paintings displaying Job together with his wife. According to her short but aggressive speech, Job’s wife is often represented as influenced by Satan, and many paintings throughout the centuries show Job’s wife as a wicked woman not only cursing but even beating Job with a whip, quite often with the help of Satan. Artists and theologians who interpreted the behaviour of Job’s wife as influenced by Satan have therefore compared her typologically with Eve.

On the other hand, however – and this is crucial to my argument –, one can find paintings of a very different kind: Job’s wife, caring for her husband, offering him bread or even bread and wine and thus bringing him comfort. In this tradition Job’s sufferings are often paralleled with Christ’s Passion and Job’s wife with the woman from Samaria, with Maria Magdalena or even the Virgin Mary – like her she may have a halo or wear garments of the same kind and colour, or she may be depicted with gestures that are typical of the Virgin Mary. One of the best-known paintings showing Job’s wife as caring and sympathetic may be Albrecht Dürer’s altar painting of Jabach. This painting has for a long time been wrongly titled *Hiob von seiner Frau verhöhnt*. It is however obvious that Job’s wife, pouring water on his back, tries to ease his sufferings. Another example of this tradition and also often wrongly titled is Georges de La Tour’s famous work which shows Job’s wife as lovingly consolatory. The existence of paintings of this kind – the tradition can be traced back almost two thousand years – can easily be explained: in the *Septuagint*, the Greek Bible, the story of Job is told in a slightly different way. The author not only focuses on the male protagonist, as is the case in the Hebrew version of the book, but Job’s wife has more and better things to say, and she is characterized differently; she does not push her husband to «curse God» but only wants him to «speak unto the Lord,» and the *Vulgate*, the Latin version of the Bible, which for many centuries was much more influential than the Hebrew and the Greek Bible, gives a literal translation of the Hebrew «barekh» («seg-nen») which, however, is no longer understood as euphemistic. Instead of the imperative «curse!» the *Vulgate* reads: «benedic deo!» The positive view of Job’s wife may also be traced back to a Jewish text, written, however, not in Hebrew but in Greek, probably sometime in the two centuries before and after Christ, called *Testament of Job*. In this text Job’s wife not only has a name, Sitidos, but is also presented as a sympathetic and pleasant figure.

Clearly the two contradictory traditions have a lot to do with different concepts of the role of women. I think that there are good reasons to assume that in the eighteenth century the two opposing concepts of Job’s wife still mirror the fundamental conflict concerning the role or status of women.
And in *Bergschluchten* Goethe obviously upholds the concept of the loving, sympathetic and helpful woman as opposed to the reckless man of action, represented by Faust. I will, however, not go into the question whether or not Goethe was deliberately alluding to the conflicting representations and interpretations of Job’s wife (which I strongly surmise14). Instead I will talk about another reference to the Job tradition which could be fundamental to an understanding of *Bergschluchten* and Faust’s so-called redemption.

III

This last scene has always been a stumbling block for commentators and interpreters: In many ways Faust’s redemption or ascension seems to have been and still is an irritation. Many of those who stuck to the thesis that the tragedy showed «eine immer höhere und reinere Tätigkeit bis ans Ende»15 (which is obviously wrong) disliked the «catholic» stage set. And for those who realize that Faust’s (and Mephisto’s) activities are criminal, his redemption is scandalous. When it comes to the explanation of the last scene, most commentaries therefore make a methodological turn: The arguments become biographical. Goethe, we are told, read about Origen and believed in Origen’s concept of *apokatastasis panton* (return of all and everything). This, of course, may be true.16 However, if we neither want to know what Goethe’s personal beliefs were nor what influenced him but instead ask for the meaning of the astonishing ending of his tragedy, if we ask what Goethe wanted to allude to and why, and if we try to describe the construction of the last scene and its impact, it may be more important that Goethe here again referred – to the story of Job.

As mentioned above, one can find in Christian art numerous representations of Job which show him in a typological connection with Christ. In the context of *Bergschluchten* it is of course not the parallels between Job’s sufferings and Christ’s passion but the close connection between Job and the theme of redemption: if Job is typologically paralleled with Christ, he too will be awoken after death, and in a well-documented variation of the theme Job is raised from the dead by Jesus.17

Astonishingly the affirmation that Job was redeemed is not necessarily connected with what one might call a Christian interpretation of the book of Job. The theme is already there in early Judaism. One might mention the *Testament of Job* in which, as Gabrielle Oberhansli-Widmer observes,18 Job fights for charity and the belief in eternal life and redemption. What makes Job steadfast is, in contrast to the Hebrew version, his belief in an otherworldly realm where he will find his true place:
And there is a fascinating parallel between the Testament of Job and Bergschluchten: When Job dies, angels come down to the earth to receive his soul which then is led towards heaven.

The Testament of Job seems to have had a considerable influence on religious art although the text itself was obviously forgotten for centuries; it was first published in 1833. However, as to the theme of Job’s redemption or ascension we do not have to refer to the Testament of Job. The well-known book of Job will quite suffice – though not in its Hebrew version but in the somewhat longer text of the Septuagint which not only gives more weight to Job’s wife, as mentioned before, but also adds a sentence with respect to Job’s death. This one sentence has become crucial for the representation of Job in art and for his theological or religious significance. It reads: «It is written that he will be awoken together with those who will be awoken by the Lord.»

The Septuagint was well known in the eighteenth century, mainly through the so-called polyglots, which made the differences between the Hebrew and the Greek version of the book of Job quite obvious. But to me it seems much more important that in the eighteenth century the aspect of Job’s redemption was still part of the story of Job (or, to be more precise, part of one of the stories of Job), made known to a great many people through religious art, by oral tradition as well as by Christian theology. One of the most important sources of this version was the Vulgate which obviously had been influenced by the Septuagint. Following the Vulgate the verses 19, 25f. were, until the nineteenth century, interpreted as describing redemption or resurrection. The Vulgate translates the verses 19, 25f. as follows:

scio enim quod redemptor meus vivat et in novissimo de terra surrecturus sim
et rursum circumdabor pelle mea et in carne mea videbo Deum
quem visurus sum ego ipse et oculi mei conspecturi sunt et non alius.

And Luther follows the Vulgate, clearly against the Hebrew text, and translates Job’s words «Ich weiß, dass mein Erlöser lebt.» Accordingly this line has often been used as an inscription on gravestones, it has become well known as the text of cantatas by Bach and Schütz, and even nowadays one can find it in hymnbooks and in the Lutheran Perikopenbuch. Thus Job or the story of Job has become a paradigm for «Erlösung.»
This means that not only the *Prologue in Heaven* but also *Bergschluchten* can be understood as referring to the story of Job, and that Goethe could assume that his intertextual play – redemption is «heretically» transformed into individual ascension – would be perceived. Beginning and end, *Prologue in Heaven* and *Bergschluchten*, are bound together by their common basis: the story of Job is fundamental for the «frame» of the tragedy. As far as I can see, none of the commentaries mentions this connection of the *Prologue* and *Bergschluchten* although parallels, e.g., between the praise of the archangels in the *Prologue* and verses in *Bergschluchten*, have been perceived.\(^1\)

It follows that we do not have to look for biographical arguments that would explain why Goethe ends his tragedy with Faust’s ascension, and we do not have to read this last scene as a confession of the author. Instead we can appreciate it primarily as part of a deliberate intertextual play, as an artificial construction which imitates or cites and transforms the beginning as well as the end of the story of Job, thereby refuting the Faust tradition – instead of Faust’s descent into hell, as Goethe may have planned at an earlier stage,\(^2\) Faust’s ascension to heavenly regions – as well as the idea of a final judgement\(^3\) and also rejecting the confinement to earthly life as we find it in the Hebrew version of the story of Job.

Our awareness that the story of Job’s redemption informs the last scene does, however, not mean that we already understand its full impact or that one could ignore all the other allusions to images and texts which have been identified by general readers, by commentators and interpreters, such as allusions to Dante’s *Divina Commedia*, to legends of the saints, to Luke and John and to Benedetto Caliari’s painting, etc. All these allusions, which form a complex web of interwoven thematic staging, mirror in different ways, sometimes even in contradictory ways, the theme which distinguishes the story of Job in the *Septuagint*, in the *Vulgate* and in the *Testament* from the Hebrew version: like voices from different times, cultures or discourses united to a single choir they articulate not so much the conviction that redemption takes place but rather the fundamental wish that it might happen. Thus the last scene of the tragedy is primarily not a metaphysical statement or a confession but rather a representation of the human longing for redemption or, perhaps more precisely, the longing for a life after death which for centuries has been central to very different cultures.

The intertextuality of *Bergschluchten* has a second, perhaps even more important level. Full of images, of allusions to texts and traditions all dealing with redemption, this last scene shows the fundamental human need and endeavour to seize what cannot be seized and to understand what lies beyond the reach of human understanding. It can thus be interpreted as a representa-
tion of the importance of Semiosis, as a representation of representation or the need of representation, of the way in which human beings try to describe the «indescribable.» Not only in the praise of the archangels at the beginning of the Prologue but also in Bergschluchten the intertextual layers provide a varnish of irony: The scene tells us other things and more than what we under-stand if we read or hear it word for word.

Notes

5 FA I, 7/2: 162.
6 Quotations from the Bible according to the revised version of the Elberfelder Bibel (Wuppertal: R.Brockhaus. 1991).
8 Translation by Stuart Atkins.
10 See the important paper by Choon-Leong Seow, «Job’s Wife, with due Respect,» Das Buch Hiob und seine Interpretationen.
11 See e.g. Heilsspiegel. Speculum humanae salvationis (Darmstädter Heilsspiegel) (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2006).
12 See Ch.-L. Seow, «Job’s Wife, with due Respect.»
14 One could argue that Job’s sympathetic wife is often typologically related to the woman from Samaria, to Maria Magdalena or even the Virgin Mary. All three of them are connected with the concept of redemption and all three appear in Bergschluchten.
15 Johann Peter Eckermann, Gespräche mit Goethe (6.6.31), FA II, 12: 489.
16 Origen may have been important to Goethe insofar as he was looking for confirmations of his belief in a life after death – although what we know about this belief seems to be miles away from Origen. Apokatastasis panton is part of an eschatological theology con-
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trasting the biblical prophecy of Doomsday, saying that at the end of time everybody, even those who are evil and the devil, will be redeemed. For Goethe, however, the main question was whether there is an individual life after death; Doomsday was never an important topic to him. As to Faust II he obviously once thought of ending it with a trial scene, with a «Gericht über Faust» (Paralipomenon HP 195, FA I, 7/1: 723), but he dismissed the idea.

18 G. Oberhansli-Widmer, «Hiobtraditionen im Judentum.»
19 See A. Schöne, FA I, 7/2: 797.
20 See Paralipomenon HP 1, FA I, 7/1: 577.
21 See Paralipomenon HP 195, FA I, 7/1: 723.