

## **BETWEEN FEAR OF LOSS AND MANAGED LOSS: GOETHE SHAPES HIS LEGACY (in German)**

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The Klassik Stiftung Weimar – as it exists today – can trace its earliest beginnings back to Goethe and the task of preserving his estate. The poet might not have been the first to invent the concept of ›legacy awareness‹ (*Nachlassbewusstsein*) (Kai Sina/Carlos Spoerhase), but as numerous academic papers in recent years have shown (e.g. by Steffen Martus, Dirk Werle, Carsten Rohde), his efforts to ›make himself historical‹ in his elder years resulted in an exceedingly deliberate and multifaceted treatment of his literary and material estate. These included authorised versions of his texts, as manifested in the complete and final authoritative version published by Cotta (1827–1830). The editorial review of his biographies such as *Poetry and Truth* (1811–33) and the *Italian Journey* (1816–29) provided the biographical circumstances of the origins of the works and a ›correct‹ interpretation of the same. Starting around 1820 and aided by the librarian and secretary Friedrich Theodor Kräuter, Goethe began systematically reviewing and indexing his paper-based estate and library. And finally, following the death of his son August, he added explicit instructions to his testament which would ensure the integrity and professional management of his entire estate.

My central thesis is that this ›estate policy‹ can be regarded as an interplay between the fear of loss and controlled and intentionally instigated losses. On one hand, there was the concern that Goethe’s estate would be scattered and lost, along with the interpretative authority over his texts. On the other hand, Goethe’s method also entailed creating deliberate losses. By burning his manuscripts, destroying correspondence en masse (such as his entire collection of letters from Charlotte von Stein), sorting out books from his library, and removing or rearranging details of his biography. All this can be described as an ensemble of material practices and textual strategies.

What is significant here is that Goethe not only performed a complex manoeuvre – historically speaking – one that transitioned his estate from mere ›remains‹ to a ›preserved collection‹, but also that he planned ahead for the transformation of his private estate to a public one, even in anticipation of state ownership. Based on selected texts by Goethe, this presentation aims to illustrate the processes described above, how Goethe prospectively inscribed himself into an official commemorative culture, the contours of which began taking shape in this phase of the 19th century. It proceeds to describe how these actions led to conflicts following Goethe’s death, the roots of which were already planted in his contradictory texts and dispositions – between personal, familial

remembrance and state actors who staged public commemorative events in the context of collective memory (Jan and Aleida Assmann) through institutions like archives, libraries and museums.