

My talk reconstructs and evaluates a contentious moment in the history of late 18th century Homeric philology in which F.A. Wolf, C.G. Heyne, and J.G. Herder made and responded to accusations of plagiarism regarding the originality of Wolf's *Prolegomena ad Homerum*.

Perhaps no conjunction in the 1790s would have been more suggestive for the study of Homeric poetry than that of F.A. Wolf, whose *Prolegomena* (1795) would dominate Homeric philology for a century to come, and Johann Gottfried Herder, champion of folk poetry from the 1770s onward. But it was not to be. In the same year that Wolf's *Prolegomena* appeared, Herder published an article in Schiller's journal, *Die Horen*, that discussed the rhapsodic transmission of Homer, the perceived lack of unity in the poems, and Villoison's scholia, which Herder had recently viewed while in Italy—all in terms of a Herderian view of literary history and with special attention paid to a particular axis: the relationship of folksong transmission to the structural totality of the poetic *Kunstwerk*, and the relationship of ancient epic poetry to modern epic, formulated in terms of Homer and Ossian.

Though praised by Goethe and Schiller, Herder's article received a bitter response from Wolf in the *Intelligenzblatt der Allgemeinen Literatur-Zeitung*, who claimed among other things plagiarism on the part of Herder. Heyne, after a failed appeal from Wolf, in turn accused Wolf of adopting his *own* ideas concerning Homeric transmission. The controversy took place in journals, newspapers, and letters, and so must be reconstructed, which I do first, before moving next to provide an analysis of the terms and misprisions of the debate. My presentation lays out the chronology, isolates the essential nature of the dispute, and opens a window onto a cross-section of Homeric philology, German Romanticism, and folklore research that remains relevant and in some cases still active today (I argue). In conclusion, and for the purpose of re-calibrating our historical and conceptual comprehension of the period, I offer a piece of evidence hitherto unknown to Homeric scholarship: in 1819, one of the Austrian Empire's most accomplished Slavic language scholars suggested in a letter to Wolf that the closest approximation to the 'Homerids' of Wolf's *Prolegomena* could be found still living and singing in Bosnia and Serbia. The consequences of this (apparently ignored) suggestion for the history of Homeric philology as well as for debates concerning the relevance of South Slavic oral epic poetry are briefly discussed.