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*Peter Lorre: Face Maker; Constructing Stardom and
Performance in Hollywood and Europe* by Sarah Thomas (review)

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friend from his youth, whom he has not seen in eleven years, can provide a continuity that compensates somewhat for the loss of family and friends, books, manuscripts, photographs, and *Heimat*. Now, with Steiner in Oxford, Adler's letters from London (August 1949 to November 1952) almost always begin by advising Steiner not to work so hard. London is not kind to Bettina's health either, and we never read anything about his son Jeremy. Despite his slow recovery, Steiner shows high spirits from his relationship with Iris Murdoch, from his new lectureship in Oxford, and from grand plans for ethnological tours. In one remarkably long and upbeat letter from a tour of Spain, Steiner raves about his suntan and how refreshing Spaniards are.

The two men are constructive critics for each other. Adler is enthralled with Steiner's *Eroberungen* poems, pressing Steiner to finish them for publication: "Sie haben in der deutschen Dichtung nicht Ihresgleichen" (140). There is admiration for Kafka's works, and Adler borrows every volume of Schelling he can find from Steiner. We witness the start of the Adorno-Adler correspondence on musical aesthetics. Increasingly, Adler comments on BBC music recordings, while he himself procures radio lectures slowly as his English improves. Besides comments on frequent house guests such as Susan (Sattler) Tieze, there is talk of Elias and Veza Canetti, Wilhelm Unger, Charles Odo, Hans Oplatka, Hermann Grab, Emil Vogl, Hermann Broch, and Max Brod.

This volume is indispensable because it addresses unflinchingly the hardships of Central European exiles in the years leading up to, during, and after the war. Specifically, it introduces readers to two multitalented intellectuals who find their refuge in books while generating a testimony through their thoughtful letters and the enormous literary output to which the letters refer.

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Sarah Thomas, *Peter Lorre: Face Maker; Constructing Stardom and Performance in Hollywood and Europe*. New York: Berghahn Books, 2012. 238 pp.

For most celebrities, fame is ephemeral. For a brief time one individual may capture the attention of the public, but this is generally fleeting, and years later they are largely forgotten. For some though, notoriety can be lasting, and Peter Lorre certainly falls into that category. Although he is thought of today

primarily as a character actor, Lorre captured the imaginations of audiences on both sides of the Atlantic, and his screen persona or, perhaps more accurately, a caricature of that image persists in popular culture to this day. But, as Sarah Thomas convincingly argues in her book *Peter Lorre: Face Maker*, this identity did not spring directly from his film appearances. Thomas observes that, in reality, Lorre played diverse roles and that he brought a strong training and immense understanding of psychology to his performances. Consequently, his characters are more deeply nuanced than we might think. This thought is at the heart of Thomas's examination of Lorre's work. From her perspective Lorre was an immensely talented actor who put great care and ability into all of his performances, whether in prestige projects or B movies.

Thomas is particularly interested in the various schools of acting that influenced Lorre. Specifically, she looks at the impact of Brechtian theater and Jacob Moreno's school of Psychodrama on Lorre's acting technique, and she draws the conclusion that Lorre was heavily influenced by both. This assertion stands in contrast with much of the previous scholarship, much of which credits Bertolt Brecht with developing Lorre's acting skills. Thomas looks closely at Lorre's performances to determine that he clearly had a deep understanding of psychology and that his grasp of the human condition is what makes him such an intuitive actor. She further suggests that the emphasis on the Lorre/Brecht relationship in other works reflects the interests of contemporary scholars more than it illuminates the work of Peter Lorre.

In general, the strength of Thomas's work is that she is familiar with the previous scholarship but also feels free to critique the conclusions of those earlier authors. She focuses much less on biography and gives more attention to theories of drama, which allows her to explore new and interesting aspects of Lorre's performances. She also takes a gentler view of the studio system and its effects on Lorre's work. Like most of the authors who came before her, she notes that Lorre felt constrained by the system and that he was relegated to supporting roles, but she defends the system as economically sound. It allowed studios to take risks with their productions because they were paying their stars the same amount of money, regardless of the film. More importantly, Thomas posits that, while Lorre may have been unhappy with his roles, this discontent did not translate into poor performances. She rightly suggests that—regardless of the circumstances and material—Lorre was a well-trained professional who brought all of his skill to every project he worked on.

Generally, this is an excellent text that adds tremendously to our understanding of the works of Peter Lorre and, by extension, émigré artists in general, but there is one aspect of Lorre's life and work that I would have liked to see explored in greater detail. Thomas, like most of the scholars who came before her, spends little time examining the impact of the Holocaust on Lorre's postwar work. In her defense, she tried to stay away from the biographical model—that territory is largely covered by Stephen Youngkin's *The Lost One: A Life of Peter Lorre* (2011)—but neither author directly addresses how Lorre reacted, either privately or professionally, to the murder of six million European Jews. It seems clear that many of the challenges Lorre faced later in his life related directly or indirectly to his semi-forced expulsion from Europe and the failure of his planned remigration. Today scholars recognize that the victims of Nazi persecution, a group to which Peter Lorre certainly belongs, faced tremendous challenges in the post war era and that many experienced depression, particularly as it became clear that 1945 did not represent a clean break with all aspects of Nazism. Peter Lorre, who faced many personal challenges at the best of times, went into a decline in his later years. His struggles with morphine addiction increased. His second marriage failed and was followed by a hasty marriage that seems to have been unhappy nearly from the beginning. Perhaps most revealingly, his one and only attempt at directing was deemed largely unsuccessful, even though the film, *Der Verlorene* (1951), is well made. Thomas rightly notes that Lorre continued to make the most of his skills and training, even when he was cast in somewhat ridiculous roles, but the unraveling of his personal life in the wake of the Holocaust is certainly a topic worthy of attention. I hope that someone soon tackles the lingering effects of the Nazi era on émigré artists.

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Ingrid Schramm und Michael Hansel, Hrsg., *Hilde Spiel und der literarische Salon*. Innsbruck: Studienverlag 2011. 175 S.

Der vorliegende Sammelband erschien zum 100. Geburtstag der Schriftstellerin Hilde Spiel, die Bernhard Fetz in seiner Einleitung auch als "Netzwerkerin" und "Übersetzerin in eine andere Kultur" vorstellt. 1936 nach London emigriert, gelang es Spiel auch in der neuen Sprache als Erzählerin, Essayis-