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*Die Entstehung von Goethes Werken in Dokumenten. Band IV.
Entstehen—Farbenlehre (review)*

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This book enables students of Goethe and those interested in music history to see a little-studied aspect of the adaptation of one country's light operatic production to the needs and tastes of a small German court, one in which no less a figure than Goethe played a leading role, lending his expertise not simply to translation but to cooperation with a man of lesser ability who nonetheless possessed great industry and assiduousness. This attractive volume will appeal to a wide spectrum of readers and can be highly recommended.

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Katharina Mommsen, ed., *Die Entstehung von Goethes Werken in Dokumenten. Band IV. Entstehen—Farbenlehre*. Founded by Momme Mommsen. With the assistance of Peter Ludwig und Uwe Hentschel. Berlin und New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2008. XIX + 998 pp., 12 illustrations.

Of the thousand-plus Goethe works (excluding the lyrical poetry, business and official papers, and aphoristic writings) projected as articles for the complete, alphabetically arranged, EGW, volume 4 contains about fifty (nos. 276–326) between the key words *Entstehen* and *Farbenlehre*. Many of Goethe's smaller, or incomplete, works and independent drafts are categorized under the rubrics *Entstehen*, *Entwurf*, *Epoche*, and *Erklärung*—two or three pages of discoverable documents here, two or three there. Momme Mommsen's originally stated aspiration deserves repeating in light of this exhaustive plan: “der ganze Goethe” shall be accounted for in the EGW. Even for many a specialist the idea of “the entire Goethe” will acquire impressive new meaning between these covers. Are any documents missing here? No doubt, though in their effort to make a comprehensive survey the editors have drawn from some two hundred printed and manuscript sources (in a sense, to own the EGW, in which all documents relevant to the genesis of Goethe's works have been extracted, is to own that entire resource library). Included among the larger writings—more accurately, works having a lengthier genesis and consequently commanding greater numbers of documentary pages—are *Des Epimenides Erwachen* (90 pp.), *Ueber epische und dramatische Dichtung von Goethe und Schiller* (22 pp.), and *Erwin und Elmire* (19 pp.). By far the lion's share of volume 4, however, belongs to the final article, *Zur Farbenlehre* (726 pp., which accounts for the exceptional length of this volume, nearly double that of each of the previous three). Goethe's *Farbenlehre* is a huge work, after all, spanning a lifetime of his attention from the first observations on color as a child in 1755 to a letter written only a week before his death to *Polizeirat* Joseph Grüner, in which he discusses a recent university dissertation by one H. Lövy that deals in its twelfth chapter with Goethe's concept of polarity in color theory.

The richness of the EGW manifests itself not only diachronically but also, and most palpably, in the kaleidoscopic minutiae in letters from or to Goethe or between other correspondents—many of them obscure enough not to be mentioned in the *Goethe Handbuch*—concerning the respective work. To wander through the often day-by-day entries is to share the pleasure of Schubert's miller. Documentation *qua* tool proves to be a good read in itself, having beginning, middle, and end; enriched with local color, historical detail, and personal conflicts; above all, chronicling the processes of production and reception in a totalizing view that embraces author, collaborators, publishers, and critics. The EGW demonstrates that documentation, in epistolary form, may assume features of a

unique literary genre. Certain series of entries are so tightly sequenced, so well told, so critically revealing, that they would seem to lack only a controlling narrator, an Erich Trunz, say, to become functional episodes, or chapters, within an overarching story or theme.

Some of these series are only brief, if fascinating, sidebars. For example, a person commonly associated with Goethe in an entirely different context may unexpectedly enter the field of the given work and leave behind little gems of commentary. In the article on *Farbenlehre*, two letters from Bettina Brentano in the fall of 1809 (1 September; 19 October), sent to Goethe from Munich and Landshut, show off her acclaimed powers of description in relating an encounter with the rather obsessive, to hear her tell it, royal Bavarian *Hofmaler* and, Goethe-inspired, color theorist M. Klotz, “von Farben verfolgt, gepeinigt, gezwickt, gemartert.”

More importantly, tracking the documentation carefully may persuade us to emend certain commonplaces that have been passed down in literary history. For example, it is widely believed that Napoleon’s shocking escape from Elba on 26 February 1815, one month before the opening of *Epimenides* in Berlin, was an embarrassment to the intended triumphant return of Friedrich Wilhelm III and prevented the success of Goethe’s *Gelegenheitsgedicht* (as he called this festive piece). While this later turned out to be partially true (resulting in the restaging in Weimar), there is little in the documentation to support this position during the stagings in Berlin, or in general. What we do discover is that in the final month the production was apparently modified to diminish its original occasionality and to refocus its purpose on the future as a “Probe des Exempels” and a “prophetische Vision” (letter from Zelter to Goethe, 31 March/1 April). All evidence suggests that *Epimenides* continued to be hailed as a success in Berlin.

Such examples of the pleasure and the usefulness of EGW 4 abound. Certainly the complicated genesis of the *Farbenlehre* contains many. After the publication of the complete edition in 1810 we can witness, for instance, its changing reception from the initially scathing attacks by physicists and mathematicians as “romantisch,” or “confessional,” as mere “Tollhäuslergeschwätz” (*Oberdeutsche allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung*, 5 July 1810)—among Goethe’s fiercest defenders was none other than M. Klotz (e.g., 28 July–18 August 1810)—to the rather sudden shift in opinion after Hegel joined the fray some ten years later. It was under Hegel’s authority that the hold of “Newton und die ganze Physikerschaft ihm nach” began to be undermined as a hidden theology: “Physik, hüte dich vor Metaphysik!” (Hegel to Goethe, 24 February 1821).

Measured against the nearly fifty years it took to bring volume 3 of the EGW into existence (the first two volumes appeared in Berlin in 1958 during Mommsen’s lifetime; they were reprinted and published together with volume 3 in 2006), the speed with which volume 4 has been produced dazzles, though this is deceptive. The hidden part of this immense iceberg lies in the years between the fall of the Wall and the publication of volume 3, during which time Katharina Mommsen painstakingly restarted the enterprise by establishing the Mommsen Foundation for the Advancement of Goethe Research, recruiting staff and collaborators, and restoring work relations with the great Goethe repositories in Berlin and Weimar. But what accounts above all for the rapid preparation of this volume, and ensures that the remaining ones in the massive positivistic undertaking should appear in uniform succession, is the equally massive search and storage capacity of the computer, whose advent as a research tool paralleled the end of the Cold War. Mommsen announces in her “Vorwort” to the present volume that

Uwe Hentschel has meanwhile also created the databank, promised in volume 3, from which the project's *index nominarum* will be generated. It may be viewed in progress at www.egw.unc.edu.

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Manfred Zittel, *Erste Lieb' und Freundschaft: Goethes Leipziger Jahre*. Halle: Mitteldeutscher Verlag, 2007. 247 pp.

In 1865 already, Woldemar von Biedermann wrote a two-volume study of the period, from October 1765 to August 1768, that Goethe spent in Leipzig ostensibly studying law. Among others, Wilhelm Bode devoted over one hundred pages to this period in *Goethes Leben: Lebrjahre 1749–1771* (1920). Gustav Roethe (1932), Stuart Atkins (1949), Heinrich Meyer (1951), and Ernst Beutler (1957) have written essays on Goethe's Leipzig letters, while individual letters have been treated by Albrecht Schöne (1967) and recently by me (*Goethe Yearbook* 8 [1996]). Still, Goethe in Leipzig remains a neglected field of scholarship, although the surviving documents—thirty-eight letters written by Goethe in Leipzig and another twenty to Leipzig after his return to Frankfurt, plus two collections of poems—are a rich resource compared to the evidence of his stay in Strassburg from April 1770 to August 1771, of which there is no end of scholarship. Of the “real” Goethe in Leipzig, however, one might think that all the evidence has been evaluated. It was therefore with some interest that I read of Manfred Zittel's promise to bring to light “erstaunlich viel inhaltlich Neues über die Studentenjahre Goethes in Leipzig” (9).

In the event, like the rest of us Zittel relies for his interpretation mainly on two sets of letters by Goethe, one written to his sister Cornelia, the other to Ernst Wolfgang Behrisch, the thirty-year-old tutor of Count Lindenau, son of the chief equerry in Dresden, whom Goethe met in 1766 at the Schönkopf “Mittagstisch” and to whom he quickly became attached. The thirteen letters to Cornelia, many in French, date from Goethe's earliest days in Leipzig. Besides confirming the close relationship between brother and sister, they correspond to a familiar picture of Goethe: his fondness for female company, his pedantic side, his linguistic inventiveness, his considerable memory for literary texts, his independence of mind and selectiveness when it came to criticism. They give a strong impression of the influence of reading on self-conception in the eighteenth century. They are chatty, and Goethe seems to experience all the ups and downs of a young man on his own in a setting for which he is not altogether unprepared, socially, intellectually, or otherwise.

They are also highly performative (“Ich habe eben jetzo Lust mich mit dir zu unterreden . . . Neige dich für diese Ehre die ich dir anthue, tief, noch tiefer, ich sehe gern wenn du artig bist, noch ein wenig! Genug! Gehorsamer Diener,” DjG I:88). This aspect is more striking in the letters to Behrisch, beginning in October 1766, which stage the relationship between Goethe and “Annette,” as he called Käthchen Schönkopf, the titular muse of his poems from this period. I say “stage,” since such is their profound scenic character, while the emotions on display also take place in connection with theatrical events. The earliest letters are also in French and concern the happy days when Goethe felt triumphant over other rivals to Käthchen's affections. Those from a year later are in German and describe his terrible fits of jealousy, with the most famous of these the one beginning November 10 (but which Goethe misdated). Goethe never went back to writing