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Goethe in seiner Lebendmaske (review)

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contains little that a young man might not have imagined, with a little help from some literary models. I could go on.

The problem with taking Goethe's own utterances at face value can be seen in the 1993 study by Kurt Eissler, who concluded, on the basis of the letters to Behrisch from Leipzig: that Goethe's "psychic crises" were psychotic episodes; that his close friendships with men show homosexual tendencies; and that his relationship with Cornelia was incestuous. Holm-Hadulla rejects Eissler's analysis (241–50) and draws a much more positive picture, judging Goethe to have suffered from "leichten bis mittelschweren depressiven Schwankungen . . . , die ihn Antrieb und Inhalt für künstlerische Aktivitäten gaben" (243). Thus, Goethe's case is of interest for what it reveals about the contribution of creativity to mental health. All it takes is natural gifts (linguistic and intellectual); a phenomenal memory enriched by wide, early reading; motivation (inborn curiosity, interest, ambition) as well as certain personality traits (flexibility, originality, self-confidence, persistence, personal authenticity, and other-directedness). Plus, a supportive family network early on and a supportive intellectual network in adulthood. There you have it. From the beginning to the end of his life Goethe was thus able to balance "Angst und Verzweiflung" with "Hoffnung und Versöhnung" (190).

This is the third book I have reviewed in the last five years on Goethe's "Lebenskunst," which certainly indicates some kind of trend. The others were Katharina Mommsen's *Goethe's Art of Living* and John Armstrong's *Love, Life, Goethe: Lessons of the Imagination from the Great German Poet* (*Goethe Yearbook*, vols. 13 and 15, respectively). Like those authors, Holm-Hadulla says little about "passion," despite this book's title. True each chapter title is followed, in parentheses, by the name of a woman (starting with Goethe's mother, "Catharina Elisabeth," and ending with "Ulrike"), but Goethe's passion, if one can call it that, turns out to concern his own work, which includes his own self-actualizing. Thus, the problem with Lili Schönemann: "Seine Kreativität sowie sein Selbst- und Kohärenzgefühl währte Goethe durch Lili ernsthaft bedroht" (104). Indeed, a very contemporary way of looking at things.

To return to my initial objection about reading the present into the past: it is odd that Holm-Hadulla pays no attention to the widespread awareness of mental aberrations in the eighteenth century or, more to the point, to Goethe's own awareness of such phenomena as vapors, spleen, hysteria, hypochondria, melancholy, outright lunacy or madness, and so on. Wilhelm Meister, Holm-Hadulla's test case for Goethe's "kreative Selbstverwirklichung" (193), is one of the duller major characters in literature. One gets the lesson, but does one identify with him? What they tell us about his own mental condition I am uncertain, but it is the unbalanced, the fragile, the narcissistic characters—Werther, Faust, Eduard, Otilie, Mignon and the Harper, and so on—for which as readers we must be grateful to Goethe.

New York, New York

Elizabeth Powers

Michael Hertl, *Goethe in seiner Lebendmaske*. Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2008. 140pp.

No death mask of Goethe's exists, in keeping with his explicit wishes. Death, he told Johannes David Falk in 1813 shortly after Wieland's death, "ist ein sehr mittelmäßiger Porträtmaler." Although one occasionally finds mention of a death mask of Goethe in various collections, the masks which exist are life masks.

Indeed, it has often been assumed that two life masks were made of Goethe, one in 1807 by Carl Gottlob Weißer and one in 1816 by Johann Gottfried Schadow. Only one mask and its copies have survived, however. One of the goals of Michael Hertl in his book is to argue that the surviving mask is clearly the one from 1807; there never was a mask made by Schadow. This discussion, however, comprises only one part of *Goethe in seiner Lebendmaske*, since Hertl also places the discussion of the authenticity of Goethe's life mask in the larger context of the history of life and death mask production in the Goethezeit.

Hertl, a professor of pediatrics and author of previous books on death masks in general and Nietzsche's in particular, uses modern medical technology to determine that the copies of Goethe's life mask all originate from the same mask, the one made by Weißer in 1807. Exact measurements from CT scans allow Hertl to demonstrate that not only are the copies of the masks all from the same original, but that Weißer also used Goethe's life mask in the creation of his bust of Goethe. At the same time that he discusses Weißer's life mask and the minute changes that were made to the original as copies were made, Hertl explains how it came to be that so many people assumed Schadow made a life mask of Goethe in 1816. Closely reading accounts of Schadow's visit to Goethe, Hertl notes that Schadow asked for and was granted permission to make a copy of the 1807 mask, an exemplar of which Goethe possessed. Thus, Schadow's work is a mask of a mask.

All of this is interesting medical detective work, but the book's interest to Goethe scholars lies more in the discussion of the significance of life and death masks in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Goethe was intrigued by the new science of phrenology being advocated by Franz Joseph Gall (though it was Gall's assistant who coined the term). Even more so, Goethe found in Gall's description of the "Gehirn entwicklungsgeschichtlich als eine Fortentwicklung aus der einfacheren Rückenmarksanlage" a parallel to his theory of plant metamorphosis (31). Goethe went so far as to date a version of one chapter of his *Versuch in der vergleichenden Anatomie* as having been edited "in der Gallischen Epoche 1806" (22). Hertl is correct in reading this note as referring to Franz Joseph Gall and his influence and not simply to Napoleon and the Battle of Jena and Auerstedt.

Before there was Gall's phrenology, there was Lavater's physiognomy. As Hertl writes, "In gleichem Maße, wie Lavaters Wissenschaftssterne im Sinken war, stieg die Bewertung der Gallschen Lehre kometenhaft auf" (27). Of course, Goethe's involvement with Lavater and his later distancing from physiognomy is a more than twice-told tale. Although Hertl briefly sums up this relationship, he does not contribute to any new knowledge about it.

Less useful are Hertl's attempts to read meaning into the differences between death and life masks. Yes, one's expressions are fixed at the time a death mask is made, but that does not automatically make a life mask more lifelike. Rather, much will depend on the skill of the person making the mask, a fact Hertl neglects. Similarly, Hertl's forays into mood/personality interpretation on the basis of appearance must, of necessity, fail to convince.

Goethe in seiner Lebendmaske ends with an excursus on Goethe's facial asymmetry, something upon which many contemporaries of Goethe remarked, and which he himself pointed out (121). Using CT imaging, Hertl does indeed show that Goethe's face was asymmetrical, with one eye slightly lower than the other. The book is nicely illustrated, both with the medical images of Goethe's life

mask and with contemporary engravings showing the prevalence of phrenology in the early nineteenth century. *Goethe in seiner Lebendmaske* is at its best when Hertl contextualizes the creation of Goethe's life mask. The medical imaging is interesting to look at and read about, but it is unclear what we truly gain by knowing Goethe's face was asymmetrical. Nevertheless, one can say this book provides a new way to look at Goethe.

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Henrik Boëtius, Marie Lousie Lauridsen, and Marie Louise Lefèvre. *Light, Darkness and Colours*. Brooklyn, NY: Icarus Films, 2000.

The focus of the video "Light, Darkness and Colours" is Goethe's *Farbenlehre*. Although the video in no way examines Goethe's theories in a systemic way, it does replicate many of his experiments and situates them within the context of Newton's experiments, theories of objectivity/subjectivity, and aesthetics, broadly understood. I received the video a week before I was to teach the *Farbenlehre* in a mixed graduate/advanced undergraduate class and was therefore able to try it out in the classroom. While the video has much to recommend it, I would only show parts of it in future classes. In some ways, an academic assessment of this video may be unfair. It was created for a broad European audience and not specifically for the classroom.

In the preface to his treatise on colors, Goethe tells us that ideally we would experience his work on color as a staged play: we would not content ourselves with merely reading it, but we would do the experiments and view the phenomena within nature so that we could experience the book from multiple perspectives. In many ways, the video provides such a staging. It replicates for the viewer a number of Goethe's experiments, including many of the technically more difficult ones. When I teach the *Farbenlehre*, I always have my students replicate experiments, but some are simply impossible to do without particular pieces of hard-to-get equipment or in some cases, replicas of the instruments that Goethe used. By showing us the more complex experiments, the video thus provides a much more complete view of Goethe's theory than would otherwise be possible in the normal classroom setting. For example, the various experiments that were done with a *camera obscura* were excellent and demonstrate to students the power and the functioning of this device. Similarly, the juxtaposition of Goethe's interpretation of several prism experiments against those of Newton visually displays how different the two men's approaches were to color and what was at stake for both. Newton wanted to have an objective understanding of light and color and Goethe a subjective one. These examples are an excellent way for students visually to experience what sorts of issues are at stake in Newtonian versus Goethean or quantitative versus qualitative science.

I thought the video was also very successful in its treatment of complementary colors, especially those created by colored shadows. By replicating many of Goethe's experiments that create optical illusions (e.g., the creation of complementary colors that arise in the shadows when a light shines through colored glass), the creators of the video were able to discuss issues of subjectivity and objectivity in science. Newton and his followers, for example, would dismiss these shadows as illusions and hence unworthy of discussion. These colors do, however, appear to the viewer and do so according to set principles. For Goethe, they were thus as real as other colors. Similarly, in showing the difference in