

## THE PLAYS ARE THE THING

### *Textual Politics and the German Drama*

In addition to being the subject of important art theoretical and literary-historical debates during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Baroque texts were crucial as material objects to the enterprise undertaken during these same years to define and celebrate the period as something other than a foreign Renaissance's poor cousin. It is to these print objects, and to the multiple editorial ideologies, anthologization practices, and translation projects that constructed the Baroque as an object of the national imagination in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, that I now turn. It is well known that Benjamin was himself a book collector and bibliophile; the claims he makes about the ways that history can be captured in print in his famous essay "Ich packe meine Bibliothek aus" (Unpacking My Library) of 1931 are examined below.<sup>1</sup> Less well illuminated is the relation of his lively interest in the physical book to the question of how he was able to identify any specific volume he held in his hands as part of a specifically German "Baroque." The question is not an abstract one. In his review of Gabriele Eckehard's *Das deutsche Buch im Zeitalter des Barock* (The German Book in the Age of

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1. On Benjamin as a collector, see Köhn, who argues that a new, nearly affective relation to collecting began in the late nineteenth century in Germany (697). Benjamin's book collecting and selling belonged to this trend, although it was also often pragmatic—that is, an investment practice and a mode of survival.

the Baroque) (1930), which appeared in the well-known periodical *Die literarische Welt* (The Literary World) that same year, he wrote, for example: "For the true collector of books, there are few objects that speak to him as aptly as the books of the era of the German Baroque" (*Gesammelte Schriften* 3: 237). Benjamin would have known, as he was himself a collector of Baroque books.

Benjamin had owned a volume of Baroque tragic dramas since 1917, when, as he remarks to Ernst Schoen in July of that year, he received a copy of the plays of the Silesian playwright Andreas Gryphius in a "beautiful old edition" for his birthday (*Briefe* 1: 140). The description is somewhat misleading, since both the inventory of books that Benjamin read and the notes to the *Tragic Drama* book indicate that it was not a "Baroque" (i.e., seventeenth-century) book that he received as a gift, but rather the Hermann Palm edition of Gryphius's plays, published in 1882. Clearly not as "old" as the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century editions in which Benjamin read the plays of the other members of the Second Silesian school, Hallmann and Lohenstein (*Gesammelte Schriften* 7: 438 and 452–54), for example, the scholarly, yet also exceedingly nationalist Palm Gryphius may nevertheless have been somewhat "older" than the other "old edition of the works" of a different Baroque writer, Hofmann von Hofmannswaldau (1616–79), that Benjamin indicates he purchased as something of an extravagance at an auction in January 1924, when he was in the middle of work on his thesis (*Briefe* 1: 328). Two texts by Hofmannswaldau are cited in the *Tragic Drama* book: one, a 1680 edition of Hofmannswaldau's *Helden-Briefe* (Heroic Letters) (G: 1.1: 247; E: 66); the other, the anti- or at least non-academic selection of Hofmannswaldau poems put together by Felix Paul Greve in 1907 (234; 54). The former would indeed have been an extravagance; three years later, it sold for seventy-five marks at a famous auction of Baroque books. The volatile currency markets in 1924, together with the precariousness of Benjamin's financial situation at the time, make it difficult to believe this was the volume he bought. The slim Greve volume would have been more affordable. In addition to these books, Benjamin appears, finally, to have owned some very special and genuinely "old" texts, namely two collections of Baroque emblems that he mentions in a letter to Gershom Scholem (*Briefe* 1: 340). This selection of volumes makes it clear that the Baroque was available in as many different editorial "generations" and material versions of itself as there were consuming publics for it at the time. Of "origin" (*Ursprung*), Benjamin writes: "The category of origin is thus not, as Cohen asserts, a purely logical one, but, rather, historical." Taken in their historical "totality," these books testified to the "origin" of the German Baroque as the sum of its "pre- and post-histories" in material form (G: 1.1: 226; E: 45–46).<sup>2</sup>

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2. Benjamin continued to be fascinated with collecting the Baroque even after he withdrew his *Habilitation* from consideration at Frankfurt. Indeed, his work on his thesis appears to have increased his taste for its books. He writes to Scholem in September 1926: "If I come to Berlin, one of the first things I plan to do is to undertake a general inspection and sorting out of my library . . . I want to throw out a

Benjamin was not alone in expressing his interest in the Baroque by collecting it during the early twentieth century. Victor Manheimer, a close friend of Hugo von Hofmannsthal and Walter Brecht, owned the most famous private collection of Baroque literature in Germany at the time. It is Manheimer's earlier "positive," although "sentimental" relationship to the Baroque in his 1904 dissertation on Gryphius that was the premonition of "the artistic sensibility of today" to which Benjamin is referring when he writes of contemporary interest in the Baroque in the "Epistemo-Critical Prologue" (G: 1.1: 235; E: 54). Sold off at an auction in 1927, Manheimer's library, like Benjamin's, contained both the Palm Gryphius and a large number of contemporary anthologies, including Greve's (Wolfskehl 89, 90, and 86–96). The main strength of Manheimer's much more extensive collection lay in its inclusion of the *crème de la crème* of historical—that is, seventeenth-century—texts. The descriptions of these volumes given in the catalog for the auction indicate just how rare many of these genuinely old books were. Moreover, the list of prices paid for parts of the Manheimer collection indicates some very high sums for volumes like the 1680 Hofmannswaldau and suggests that Benjamin may indeed have been as restricted by his limited finances in his acquisitions as the 1926 letter to Scholem suggests.<sup>3</sup> Curt Faber du Faur, born in 1890, collected German Baroque books on the same grand scale as Manheimer in Germany throughout the 1920s; he began to form his own library while he was a book dealer, and took it with him when he left Germany for the United States in 1939, settling first in Cambridge, Massachusetts, but soon moving to New Haven, Connecticut, where he lived and worked until his death in 1966. Yale University now owns his collection.

While Benjamin does not appear to have known of Faber du Faur or to have enjoyed either his or Manheimer's means, the parallels between the ways all three men understood their collections are striking. In an article written in 1958, for example, Faber du Faur comments that book collecting occurs both "in the service of the past" and as a way to the future; in a university context, the collector collects in order to prepare a "new generation [of students] for the future" by opening up the past to them in the form of texts ("Eine Sammlung deutscher Literatur" 8). Manheimer's friend Karl Wolfskehl claims in 1927 that Manheimer understood "the magical and radiating power" of the volumes in his "Baroque library" (1) in

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great deal, and restrict myself primarily to German literature (recently, with a certain privileging of the Baroque, which my finances nevertheless make very difficult), French literature, the study of religion, fairy tales and children's books" (*Briefe* 1: 434).

3. See *Jahrbuch der Bücherpreise* (Yearbook of Book Prices) (1927), in which two of the texts Benjamin cites in the *Tragic Drama* book, a 1663 edition of Gryphius (*Trauerspiele auch Oden und Sonnette*) and a 1680 collection of Lohenstein's plays, are priced at 120 and 205 marks respectively (104 and 136). For comparison's sake: Benjamin laments to Scholem in 1925 that even if his *Habilitation* is accepted, he can expect no more than 180 marks a month in support (*Briefe* 1: 379). The compiler of the price list, Gertrud Hebbeler, mentions that the "interest for the art of the Baroque" that had emerged in the preceding two decades is "visible in the prices" (Vorwort, v–vi).

ways not unlike Faber du Faur. In 1930, finally, Benjamin writes that he considers Wolfskehl one of the best "collectors" of whom he knows, and finds it not at all curious that Wolfskehl was also an "enthusiast of the Baroque" (*Gesammelte Schriften* 3: 237). Benjamin's thoughts about collecting the Baroque were thus in line with those of these premier collectors of his day. That he nevertheless needed to rethink his own collecting habits in 1926 was the result of number of financial factors, not the least of which was the debacle of the *Habilitation*. Moreover, he had changed addresses repeatedly during the years just before beginning his thesis, as he was to continue to do throughout his life. As a result, he had to endure both temporary and permanent losses of his collection at various times. The situation had become acute by 1920, when much of his personal library lay packed away in "crates," as he writes to Scholem, and distributed among family and friends (*Briefe* 1: 240). Although in the winter and spring of 1920–21, he and Dora Benjamin finally had their own apartment in Berlin, and he was able to celebrate the "reunification" of his "libraries" there (*Briefe* 1: 254, 262), by 1923, he was to his own chagrin living again with his parents (*Briefe* 1: 297) and having to barter and sell books to support himself (307). After the withdrawal of his thesis from Frankfurt, questions about where to live, how to survive, and what to do with the books he could afford to purchase and keep became only more pressing.<sup>4</sup>

The combination of the high cost of historical Baroque books and the great interest on the part of more well-endowed contemporaries in collecting them, on the one hand, and the actual unavailability of his personal library, with its various Baroque volumes, on the other, poses the question of how else Benjamin might have had access during the years he was working on the tragic drama study to any of the myriad primary texts he quotes there. Benjamin indicates one important answer to this question in a letter to Florens Christian Rang on 24 October 1923, when he writes: "By the way, my study of the Baroque is allowing me to become acquainted almost daily with bibliographic curiosities" (*Briefe* 1: 307). The bibliographic novelties to which he refers could have been ones he discovered in auction catalogs like that for the Manheimer collection or in Berlin's famously abundant secondhand bookstores. But it is just as likely that here Benjamin is referring to the books he had begun to come across while working in the main reading room of the Prussian State Library on Unter den Linden in Berlin, where he did much of the preliminary research for his thesis during the fall and winter of 1923–24. There he would have been confronted with a considerably more extensive collection of Baroque texts than those he himself and even any other of the private collectors owned—and one that

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4. Benjamin's interest in books was neither fetishistic nor antiquarian. Rather, in the years just before his work on the *Tragic Drama* book, he was being exceedingly pragmatic. He writes of the purchase of books as investments (*Briefe* 1: 270, in 1921; 290, in 1922), and contemplates with great seriousness and strategic foresight the opening of a secondhand bookstore (*Antiquariat*) as a solution to his financial woes (*Briefe* 1: 292–93, in 1922).

also included both Palm and Greve.<sup>5</sup> The depth and breadth of the State Library holdings, on which Benjamin based what he refers to in a letter to Scholem as his “study of the literature” of the Baroque (*Briefe* 1: 319), are testified to in the footnotes to the *Tragic Drama* book. It may well be the State Library’s Baroque collection to which Benjamin is referring at the end of the “Epistemo-Critical Prologue” when he writes of the “feeling of dizziness” that accompanies the reader when he confronts what, citing Arthur Hübscher, he calls the vast “panorama” of the period’s most “antithetical” texts (G: 1.1: 237; E: 56). Only by adopting what Benjamin calls an “ascetic attitude,” which refuses “to plunge from the heights of understanding into the monstrous depths of the Baroque mind,” can the scholar “steady himself” when confronted with such an abundance of texts. The State Library collection provided evidence of just such an abundant and variegated Baroque, a Baroque that was the result of what Benjamin elsewhere calls the “metamorphoses of poetry” that become visible in the physical embodiment of texts over time (*Gesammelte Schriften* 2.2: 649).

It was the diverse books in these “libraries,” understood as both Benjamin’s private collection and the holdings of the State Library, that constituted the archive that defined the Baroque for him at the time he wrote the *Tragic Drama* book. As abstract as something like the Rieglian “artistic will” of the period may have been, the “monstrous depths” and dangerous vortex of the Baroque of which Benjamin writes were thus not merely the property of an intangible “Baroque mind.” Rather, the period’s “will” came alive in the literal matter of the books that he read. In his famous essay on “the collector” Eduard Fuchs, published in 1937 in the *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung* (Journal for Social Research), Benjamin provides useful terms for describing how books, usually understood as static objects, can also be understood as being in motion, when he writes, with reference to a letter from Engels to Mehring: “For [the reader] committed to a historical-dialectical approach, these works contain both their pre- and post-history, by virtue of which their pre-history becomes visible as implicated in an ongoing process of change” (2.2: 467). A decade earlier, he had used these same terms to define the “natural history” (1.1: 227) of the works he analyzes in the *Tragic Drama* book. What is meant by the claim that a book has a “natural history” emerges with greatest clarity in Benjamin’s short essay of 1931, “Unpacking My Library.” There, he writes of the “dialectical conditions” of both book collecting and the collected volumes themselves. The work of the “collector” takes place, Benjamin writes, between the poles of “disorder” and “order” (*Gesammelte Schriften* 4.1: 389). On the shelf, books exist in a kind of precarious “balancing act” over the abyss of chaos from which they derive and which, in their very material survival and presence, they also represent. For the

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5. The Greve volume was sent directly to the State Library by the Insel publishing house in 1914. My thanks go to Robert Giel and especially Eva Rothkirch of the Abteilung Historische Drücke at the Prussian State Library for helping me with questions concerning the dating of library acquisitions.

"true collector," the book, now his "property," represents a kind of "magical encyclopedia" that contains all that has contributed to its "fate." Benjamin is not referring here to books in the abstract, but rather to individual "copies" (389). It is the purchase, procuring, even physical holding of a particular volume in one's hands that enables a kind of "rebirth" (*Wiedergeburt*), a Renaissance, he writes, of the object as Benjamin's famous "angel of history" has swept it forward in time. Feeling the "depths" of a Baroque book every time he picked it up could have created the sense of dizziness of which Benjamin writes in the "Prologue."

In this chapter, I discuss a selection of the books in Benjamin's libraries in terms of their "fate" at the hands of the editors, textual critics, anthologizers, translators, and literary historians, each of whom was responsible for a different Renaissance-like "restoration" (G: 1.1: 226; E: 45) of the Baroque contained in the books Benjamin cites.<sup>6</sup> Burkhardt Lindner's claim that Benjamin's thesis was much more than just a "monograph about Baroque drama" ("Habilitationsakte Benjamin" 163) notwithstanding, it was the plays of the Second Silesian school in particular that were one of his central concerns there. My focus here is thus on the versions of these and other German plays (rather than the lyric, for example) that Benjamin cites. I begin in the first section below with the late nineteenth-century collection of Andreas Gryphius's plays edited by Hermann Palm, a volume that Benjamin owned, as noted above, but that was also present in the Prussian State Library in Berlin. While the Palm Gryphius was in fact *not* "Baroque"—that is, not one of the seventeenth-century editions of Gryphius that the library owned at the time (and thus also not one of the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century editions of the dramas of the other Silesian playwrights, Hallmann and Lohenstein respectively, that Benjamin cites)—it does capture one highly overdetermined version of the period in the historically specific orthographic and text-editorial practices that contributed to its identity as an icon of the modern German nation-state. The 1882 Gryphius was no unicum in this respect, but rather the natural extension of developments in the study of the history of German-language literature, and especially drama, discussed in chapter 1.

These developments found additional material expression in the collections and editions of German-language dramatic texts prepared in the mid-nineteenth century by the archivists and librarians Karl Weiß and Franz Josef Mone. Weiß's work, in turn, found its own critical and textual afterlife in Rudolf Payer von Thurn's 1908–10 edition of the plays of the Viennese actor and impresario Josef Anton Stranitzky. Benjamin knew and cites extensively from these texts, which are the

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6. On "restoration" as part of "origin," see Benjamin (G: 1.1: 226; E: 45). The set of texts I deal with here is of necessity selective. Glaringly absent, for example, are the plays of Calderón, which Benjamin claims in a letter are the "virtual object" of his thesis (*Briefe* 1: 366). As important as Calderón's oeuvre is for Benjamin, the translations of the great Spanish Golden Age playwright that he read, by Johann Dierich Gries, belong to the same tradition as the Ulrici Shakespeare I discuss in detail below.

focus of the second section below. In curiously anachronistic fashion, he “collects” the “Baroque tragic drama” out of these several nineteenth- and early twentieth-century anthologies, thereby fulfilling the charge of the German Romantic literary historian Franz Horn to produce a “cultural history of the fatherland” (Horn 1: 3), a task Horn describes in the first volume of his *Die Poesie und Beredsamkeit der Deutschen, von Luthers Zeit bis zur Gegenwart* (German Poetry and Rhetoric from the Time of Luther to the Present) (1822–29), a book that Benjamin knew. The edition of Shakespeare that Benjamin cites is, finally, curiously equal in weight to this tradition of German plays, and I turn to a discussion of it in the third and final section of this chapter. Precisely because Benjamin did not read the Bard in a sixteenth-century English original—and the question of what an “original” Shakespeare text would have been for either British scholars of Shakespeare at the time or the German Shakespeareans who relied on them looms large—but rather in a heavily annotated nineteenth-century German-language translation, he was able to see the author of *Hamlet* as contributing to the creation of the tradition of the German tragic drama. That Shakespeare could not only be German for Benjamin, but could also be identified as “Baroque” fits easily with the way this edition was conceived and read at the time, for a Baroque Shakespeare had already become part of Germany’s national patrimony during World War I. The literal and figurative translation of Shakespeare into a German Bard occurred in articles and books by the well-known scholars Friedrich Gundolf and Oskar Walzel. Benjamin was familiar with both men’s work, as I show.

### The Origin of the Silesian School: Nationalism and the Baroque Tragic Drama

The plays of three major Silesian scholar-statesmen and playwrights—Daniel Casper von Lohenstein (1635–83), Andreas Gryphius (1616–64), and Johann Christian Hallmann (c. 1640–1704)—are some of the most bizarre literary artifacts of the German Baroque era. They figure importantly in Benjamin’s thesis on the German tragic drama. Little known to most Benjamin scholars, these plays’ literal beginnings, the contexts in which they were originally written and produced, are worth examining briefly before turning to the editions in which Benjamin read them as he prepared to write the *Habilitation*.

The plays of the Second Silesian school are extravagant, scandalous, and in many cases downright offensive. They are also monuments to the imbrication of a highly conventional and learned school culture in a broad array of contemporary political and social institutions in seventeenth-century central Europe. Designed for production by adolescent schoolboy actors, who were students at the Protestant schools (*gymnasia*) of the major Silesian city of Breslau (now Wrocław, Poland), where their authors also held important political positions, as Benjamin knew (G: 1.1: 236; E: 56), the plays often featured boys cross-dressed as female characters,

who, in the plays, often cross-dressed as men. The plots of the plays frequently called for the young actors to stage exotic and often lascivious scenes of political intrigue, seduction, human sacrifice, torture, execution, and murder derived from contemporary and ancient accounts of events at the courts of seventeenth-century England, medieval Byzantium, the Ottoman Empire, and ancient Rome. The political and erotic powers of female protagonists, including Cleopatra, Agrippina, Catharina of Georgia, and Sophonisbe, are often the focus of the plays; the historical anomaly of a long-standing tradition of female leaders in the small principalities of Silesia during these years may help explain the frequency of the playwrights' choices in this respect.<sup>7</sup> Given that issues of rulership and power were the plays' major concerns, it is no wonder that Benjamin was fascinated in his book by the topic of sovereignty—"the putting to the test of princely virtues, the representation of princely vices, insight into the workings of diplomacy, and the handling of all political machinations" (G: 1.1: 243; E: 62)—as well as by the intricacies of tyranny and martyrdom, state stability, and courtly display. These and related topics belong to the thematic center of most of the Silesian plays, out of which, as Benjamin quite correctly intuitively, "theatricality" speaks "with special force" (231; 51).<sup>8</sup>

While part of a performance tradition in early modern central Europe known as school drama (*Schuldrama*), the Silesian plays were also published, usually in the year following their production, in elaborately annotated editions, with a textual apparatus of notes (*Anmerkungen*), as Benjamin points out (244; 63), that teemed with references to both ancient and contemporary sources in political theory, geographical and protoscientific description, and collections of arcane monuments and artifacts.<sup>9</sup> As closely as the notes indicate that the plays were bound to the book culture that Benjamin accurately describes as an un-Renaissance-like world of "learnedness" (270; 91; "The Renaissance takes the universe as its object of study, the Baroque takes the libraries," he later writes, 319; 140), they also reveal that the tragic dramas were part of the professional preparation and ideological training of the young schoolboys who performed them. Their education was designed to shape them as male civil subjects destined for positions in the early modern administrative bureaucracies of the Holy Roman Empire, the cities, and the smaller principalities of eastern central Europe. That the plays were often produced not in the schools, but rather in the homes and courtly residences of the local Silesian political elite between about 1665 and 1679, an elite whose Piastian Protestant leanings often

7. On the female leaders of the Piastian houses of Silesia in the seventeenth century, see Newman, *Intervention of Philology*.

8. Here Benjamin is disputing the common assumption that these learned plays were "not stage friendly," or unperformable, and accurately notes that their "violent events" would have been very appealing to audiences.

9. Lohenstein's notes in particular compete with the main texts and plots of the plays for the reader's attention. The annotations often run to thirty or forty closely printed pages for plays just some hundred pages in length.



put it at odds with the Catholic Holy Roman Empire of the time, drives this point home. When Sophonisbe, the famous Numidian queen of the Second Punic War, for example, was seen resisting Rome in the homes of local Silesian leaders, it is entirely possible to conjecture that the young actors were being trained for similarly subversive political roles offstage. Or, if that is too strong, then they were at least being taught to understand the mechanics of this kind of subversion as well as the actions of the imperial authorities in Vienna, who were still trying to exert control over the volatile body politic of central Europe in the post-Treaty of Westphalia years. Benjamin writes of the plays of the Second Silesian school that they were concerned with “fratricide,” “incest,” “infidelity,” and “spousal murder”—and were also performed (249–50; 70; and 231; 51).<sup>10</sup> The list of issues he enumerates as central to this peculiar early modern stage tradition is entirely accurate and makes clear that he read enough of these dramas to get the description right.

While Benjamin appears to have owned the single-volume late nineteenth-century edition of Gryphius’s plays edited by Palm, as noted above, a huge selection of both Gryphius’s and the other Silesian playwrights’ dramatic texts was also available to him in the Prussian State Library on Unter den Linden in Berlin in a series of historical editions. The vast holdings of the library in this field—Benjamin insists in a letter to Rang in 1924 that he has read only a small selection of the available plays, “by no stretch all that come in question” (*Briefe* 1: 326–27)—would have been apparent to him already in the catalog volumes (*Bandkataloge*) of the Old Subject Catalog (*Alter Realkatalog*) there. These large, folio-size tomes, three to six inches wide, were used by readers to locate both primary and secondary works in the library’s noncirculating collection. Although the State Library had begun to be formed already in the 1660s (it was then the Kurfürstliche Bibliothek, or Electoral Library), cataloging did not begin until the early nineteenth century. Work began on the Old Subject Catalog after 1842 under the leadership of Julius Schrader (1808–98) and was completed by 1881.<sup>11</sup> The volumes as they were available in the early part of the twentieth century, when Benjamin worked in the State Library, are visible in pictures taken of the catalog room at the time.<sup>12</sup> Having decided on the plays of the Second Silesian school as his topic, Benjamin, like any reader, would probably have turned to—or been assisted by a librarian in the consultation of—specific volumes of the Old Subject Catalog, each of which is identified

10. Benjamin is also interested in the poetological treatises and the lyric of the Nuremberg poets, Harsdörffer, Birken, and Klaj, all of whom were members of the Order of Flowers on the Pegnitz (Pegnesischer Blumenorden), one of the so-called German-language societies (*Sprachgesellschaften*). On the Blumenorden, see Newman, *Pastoral Conventions*. There has been virtually no work to date on Benjamin’s understanding of the Nuremberg texts, citations from which are as frequent in the *Tragic Drama* book as citations from the Silesian plays.

11. On the history of the Old Subject Catalog, see Kittel; Roloff.

12. Photographs of the catalog volumes from c. 1905 and 1920 appear in Roloff 156 and 157. These volumes are still used by librarians today.

by national tradition, genre, and date on the spine and title page. Inside, the genre volumes are further subdivided by author, text, and the sequential editions that the library owned. Each main entry thus displays the “totality of history” of each text or edition as it had existed to be acquired by the library. Benjamin’s definition of “origin” in precisely these terms in the *Tragic Drama* book (G: 1: 226; E: 45) comes uncannily close, in other words, to being a description of what he would have seen on the pages of the Old Subject Catalog when he consulted it there.

The sheer abundance in the State Library holdings of texts by the Silesian playwrights in whom Benjamin was interested is documented in volume Y24 of the Old Subject Catalog, identified as “German Literature, VII-B: Drama, 1601–1772” on the spine. The continuity of editorial interest in the Baroque plays would have been immediately obvious as soon as he opened the book. All of the library holdings of works in this category are inventoried alphabetically by author, and, most importantly, within the author category, chronologically by edition. In volume Y24, for example, on the right-hand pages, earlier acquisitions are indicated in a light and regular “German script,” with later acquisitions added at the appropriate place in the chronological sequence either in a different and darker hand or typed and pasted in. Call numbers are listed on the right. A small superscript and underlined *a* after some call numbers indicates a second copy; a capital *R* accompanying others designates *rara*, or rare, texts.<sup>13</sup> In addition to the primary texts available in the collection, both historical and contemporary critical work held by the library on the individual playwrights is often documented in these volumes; the facing, left-hand pages appear to have been left blank for entries of relevant secondary studies and other bibliographic notes. Thus, even though he complained bitterly of a lack of time for his research, it is in some cases easy to see both from the layout of the catalog volumes and from the various entries on the left-hand sides of their pages how Benjamin could have used these volumes as a kind of bibliographic shortcut, with the titles of various relevant studies of the individual Baroque authors conveniently located directly across from the chronological listing by edition of the library’s holdings of their primary works.<sup>14</sup>

13. The superscript *a* in most cases indicates a replacement copy; a huge number of State Library books—and 218 volumes of the Old Subject Catalog itself—were either lost or destroyed as a result of the removal of library holdings to locations other than Berlin after the city began to be bombed during World War II; after 1945, a systematic shelf read was done to confirm which of the some three million books from the prewar collection were missing, and efforts were made to replace them. The missing catalog volumes could of course not be replaced; the so-called “gap files” (*Lückenkarteien*), now available on microfiche, represent efforts to replace them. The *Lückenkarteien* nevertheless contain only the titles that could be determined to have been returned to the library after the war.

14. Some of the entries seem to shadow Benjamin’s own scholarly notes (or, perhaps, vice versa). See, for example, the references to Kerckhoff’s book on Lohenstein’s plays on 502 of volume Y24 across from the listings of Lohenstein’s dramatic work on 503. Benjamin cites Kerckhoff at G: 1.1: 370; E: 193 of the *Tragic Drama* book.

The pages of the Old Subject Catalog in volume Y24 reveal that the holdings of the Prussian State Library in the area of Second Silesian school drama were extensive at the time Benjamin worked there. The plays of Lohenstein, for example, listed in this volume were available in numerous individual and collected editions, from the very earliest (1659) through sequential printings during Lohenstein's lifetime (1661, 1665, 1680), as well as in the early posthumous edition of the complete plays in 1685 and in later, early eighteenth-century editions (1701, 1708, 1709, and 1724) (Old Subject Catalog, vol. Y24, 503–9). The plays of Gryphius were similarly well represented, in editions dating from the mid- to late seventeenth century (1650, 1652, 1658, 1659, 1663, and 1681) as well as in the later, nineteenth-century edition of 1882 by Palm (Y24, 489–95). Perhaps appropriate for his somewhat lesser status and degree of renown, the plays of Hallmann were also adequately, if less extensively, represented in seventeenth-century editions. The Old Subject Catalog indicates holdings from the 1660s and 1670s (Y24, 533–35), and Benjamin's notes indicate that he read the plays of Hallmann in these editions. He cites Lohenstein *not* in the early editions from the 1650s through 1680s that the State Library owned, however, but rather in subsequent versions printed in the early eighteenth century (1708 and 1724, respectively). Finally, the plays of Gryphius are cited in the even more recent, late nineteenth-century edition (1882) by Palm.<sup>15</sup> The notes in the *Tragic Drama* book to these volumes of Baroque plays thus reveal to contemporary scholars as they would have to Benjamin too that the school drama of the Baroque, although originally part of the complex cultural milieu of the seventeenth century discussed above, was—in the holdings of the State Library—visibly *not* bound to what he might have referred to as its “genetic” moment of *Entstehung* (cf. G: 1.1: 226; E: 45). Rather, the diverse editions of the German-language plays as they would have lain, “torso”-like, before Benjamin on the tables of the main reading room, would have made it clear that the Baroque had taken on various editorial guises in the very “metamorphoses of poetry” referred to above, its various layers open to “excavation” in both a literal and a metaphorical sense.<sup>16</sup> In the Palm Gryphius edition in particular, the historical guise in which the Baroque appeared is a particularly “mythological” one, whose material form confirms just how much part of the “modern” German nation the Baroque had become.<sup>17</sup>

15. Most of the primary texts that Benjamin cites in the notes to the *Tragic Drama* book can still be located in this and other volumes of the Old Subject Catalog, which indicate the range of editions to which he would have had access. The State Library holdings of the plays of Calderón, for example, can be found in volume X17, and those of Shakespeare in volume Z6b.

16. Benjamin discusses memory as an archeological site in terms similar to Freud's in a fragment entitled “Excavation and Memory” (*Gesammelte Schriften* 4: 400–401) from about 1932. It is in this fragment that he refers to the “torsos” of the past that stand “broken free of all earlier contexts” (400) in the present.

17. Benjamin critiques the mythologizing work of historicism that celebrates only the victors. The Palm edition makes clear that claiming such mythic status for the Baroque plays took considerable work. On Benjamin's critique of historicism, see Raulet; Kittsteiner.

The 1882 Palm edition after which Benjamin cites Gryphius was considered a professional critical product at the time. It was published under the auspices of the venerable series *Bibliothek des Litterarischen Vereins in Stuttgart* (Library of the Literary Society in Stuttgart), in which it was volume 162. The Literary Society was first established in 1839; the series was designed to make available in modern editions the textual monuments of the German literary tradition from the nation's medieval and early modern past. In this edition, Palm provides an overview of the textual history of each of Gryphius's plays in the respective forewords; the complex provenance of the plays is indicated in the detailed bibliographic apparatus at the bottom of each page, where the variants of several editions of the plays are compared.<sup>18</sup> The relatively confusing textual history of Gryphius's plays—individual plays published in numerous editions both before and after the author's death in 1664—would already have been apparent to Benjamin in volume Y24 of the Old Subject Catalog (489–95); it could have been this very complexity, along with the more pragmatic factor that ordering numerous plays in their various editions would have cluttered his place at the reading-room table, that encouraged Benjamin to use the later and far more convenient single-volume Palm edition, which he also owned. Moreover, the Palm volume is provocatively entitled simply *Trauerspiele* (Tragic Dramas) on the front page—and thus captured Benjamin's topic in concise form.<sup>19</sup> Perhaps most importantly, however, the Palm Gryphius distinguishes itself from both the other available copies of his works and from the seventeenth-century Hallmann and eighteenth-century Lohenstein editions Benjamin consulted, by its systematic use of a practice at the center of an ideologically explosive orthographic controversy raging in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (and still under discussion in some quarters today), namely that of the noncapitalization, or *Kleinschreibung*, of German nouns.

The decapitalization practices at the heart of this debate are intricately encoded in the *Tragic Drama* book. In the discussion of the theory of sovereignty, for example, where Gryphius's plays feature prominently in the evidentiary logic undergirding Benjamin's claims, he cites the famous speech of the title character of Gryphius's *Leo Arminius* on the indivisibility of sovereign power.<sup>20</sup> At stake is what Benjamin calls the “cosmological” logic of the Baroque, which equated the ruler

18. See, for example, Gryphius's *Leo Arminius* (a play Benjamin cites often), in which editions A (1650), B (1657), C (1663), and D (1698) are compared to one another in the apparatus; see also Gryphius's *Papinianus* (cited equally as frequently by Benjamin), in which editions A (1659) and B (1698) are compared.

19. For the textual history of Gryphius's plays up to and including the “modern” Szyrocki and Powell edition of the 1960s through the 1980s, see Mannack 26–30.

20. Scholarship has confirmed that the issue of monarchical legitimacy, its strengths and, above all, its weaknesses, was of central concern to the Silesian playwright's entire dramatic oeuvre and, indeed, to his career. See Wiedemann's excellent discussion of Gryphius. On Gryphius's own involvement with the Piastian princes of Silesia, his “local” version of the monarch or sovereign, see Pietrzak. On Gryphius's *Catharina von Georgien*, a play about a woman ruler, see below, chapter 3.

not only with God, but also with Nature's sovereign instance, the sun. Benjamin cites Palm's 1882 edition as the source of the quote. The citation of the play in the first print edition of the *Tragic Drama* book (1928) reads: "Whosoever might set another at his side on the throne is worth [only] having his robes and crown taken away. There is only one prince and one sun in the world and kingdom." In German, the text reads: "Wer jemand auff den Thron / An seine Seiten setz't; ist würdig daß man Kron / Und Purpur ihm entzieh. Ein fürst und eine sonnen / Sind vor die welt und reich" (Benjamin, *Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels* [1928] 57; cf. G: 1.1: 247; E: 67). While not changing the sense of the passage, Benjamin has altered the rendering of it as it appears in the 1882 Palm Gryphius in a decidedly different orthographic form:

Wer *iemand* auf den *thron*  
 An seine *seiten setzt*, ist würdig, *dass* man *cron*  
 Und *purpur* ihm entzieh. Ein fürst und eine sonnen  
 Sind vor die welt und reich. (Gryphius, *Trauerspiele* 61, emphasis added)

While the changes that Benjamin has undertaken in his citation of the Palm edition are neither uniform nor systematic, they do intervene in the nineteenth-century editor's resolute decapitalization of most of the nouns throughout Gryphius's plays; *thron* has been capitalized in Benjamin's 1928 version, for example, as have *seiten* and *purpur*. Benjamin also replaces some of Palm's spellings, which appear archaic to a modern German-speaker and reader, with more "modern" spellings—*iemand* to *jemand*, *setz't* to *setzt*, *dass* to *daß*, *cron* to *Kron*—more closely aligned with orthographic practice in New High German, both in the 1920s and today. Benjamin's updating of the language of Palm's 1882 edition in 1928 draws attention to the ideological rootedness of Palm's orthography—and thus of his presentation of the Baroque—as an artifact of modernity at the time he was working.<sup>21</sup> Benjamin's Baroque represents a further "modernization" of Palm's Baroque in turn.

Palm's late nineteenth-century version of the Baroque was designed to serve the modern German nation in several ways, first and foremost, as a material print artifact with an ideologically inflected orthography most clearly visible in its decapitalization of nouns. The procedure belonged to a well-known project of cultural

21. The editors of the Frankfurt edition follow the Palm version in their rendering of this quote (G: 1.1: 247), rather than Benjamin's "original" updating of the Palm orthography in 1928. Benjamin nevertheless does follow Palm's editorial principles in some places. Palm had edited Gryphius's 1659 *Papinianus*, for example, in such a way as to reflect the more "modern" nineteenth-century spellings of *umsonst*, for example, for *umbsonst* and *so viel* for *so vil* (Gryphius, *Trauerspiele* 635; *Großmüttiger Rechts-Gelehrter* n.p. after H v); Benjamin follows Palm in his citation of these lines (*Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels* [1928] 53) and in Palm's decapitalized *purpur* (Gryphius, *Trauerspiele* 212), an updating of the synecdochic *Purpur* from the 1663 *Leo Arminius* in *Freuden und Trauer-Spiele* (147). There are some fifteen citations from Gryphius plays in the text of Benjamin's *Tragic Drama* book.

nationalism developed after the creation of the German nation-state in 1871. Benjamin was no stranger to this program, as it was still part of the controversial politics of education during and after the time he was a schoolboy in Berlin. The history of the debate about *Groß-* and *Kleinschreibung*, or the capitalization and decapitalization of nouns, or substantives, in German, dates back to the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and the earliest days of mass production of vernacular texts, on the one hand, and the resulting movements to standardize the enormously heterogeneous regional dialects of the north, northeastern, central, central-eastern, and southern German-speaking territories, on the other. Efforts reached a high point in the very periods in which both Palm and Benjamin were interested, namely the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, as the desire for politico-confessional religious orthodoxies of several sorts emerged at the same time as projects were being initiated to create a standardized German literary tongue.<sup>22</sup> The use of capital letters at the beginning of sentences began as a way of clarifying syntax and allowing for greater ease in oral reading. The more complicated status of the use of capitals in the “interior of a sentence,” which became widespread in the early sixteenth century, seems, in spite of the relatively unsystematic application of the rule by printers, for example, to have become a generally accepted principle by the end of the seventeenth century. Benjamin would have been able to observe the orthographic precipitate of this particular historical (i.e., seventeenth-century) orthodoxy in the edition of Hallmann that he used; he comments on the “naturalization” of “the capital letter” in “normative spelling in German” during the Baroque period in the *Tragic Drama* book (G: 1.1: 382; E: 208).

Early reasons given for nearly universal capitalization of nouns in German included the importance of signaling graphically the centrality of what at the time were called *Hauptwörter* (“main words,” thus “nouns”) by capitalizing them. Subsequently arguments were derived from extending this privilege to other important words, such as proper names, the virtues and vices, and the days of the week. The development of contemporary philosophical doctrines, such as Spinoza’s “philosophy of substance” (*Substanzphilosophie*), is also sometimes invoked as an explanation for this trend. Benjamin’s comments about the ways that capitalization revealed a new status for language during the Baroque period because of its ability to work allegorically (G: 1.1: 382; E: 208) recognize this tradition of claims. The practice was then rendered a near orthodoxy by Johann Christoph Adelung in his *Vollständige Anweisung zur deutschen Orthographie* (Complete Instructions for German Orthography) (1788), which soon became the Enlightenment Bible of German orthography. It is significant that Adelung famously claimed that the authority of

22. The history of normative spelling in German (*Rechtschreibung*) is hugely complex. The following is based on a series of studies of the subdiscipline of the capitalization of substantives by Ewald and Nerius, Nerius and Scharnhorst, Mentrup, Mentrup et al., and Nerius.

his stabilization of both orthographic and grammatical norms was based on normative “popular” usage: “Write German and what is considered German with the conventional written signs as you speak it, in accordance with the pronunciation that is generally considered the best, following the closest possible and proven derivation, and, when all else fails, according to general usage” (qtd. in Nerius and Scharnhorst 6). The eighteenth-century Lohenstein editions that Benjamin used were based on Adelung’s norms.

Obscured by these efforts at standardization and, indeed, by the widespread adoption of and support for Adelung’s rules by the greats of German literature in the eighteenth century, such as Wieland and Goethe, was the fact that, like many of the standards set in the encyclopedic tomes issued during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (many of which included dictionary-like lists and inventories of German words), these rules may well have been derived from “common” *usus*, but from a far from universal usage, indeed, from a highly homogeneous, limited, and elite one. Already in the sixteenth century, for example, it was the “Meißen” German of Upper Saxony that dominated the linguistic landscape of both the north and the south by virtue of the concentration there of political-confessional and printing power associated with the spread of the Reformation and its mechanically reproduced Word (Nerius and Scharnhorst 1). In the seventeenth century, the founding in these same areas of the so-called language societies (*Sprachgesellschaften*) helped elevate this particular dialect and the way it was written by language-society members and sponsors, namely the noble and upper classes, to the status of orthographic orthodoxy and law.<sup>23</sup> In the mid-eighteenth century, Johann Christoph Gottsched’s imperious declamations about the German language—which were resented, but nevertheless continued to be widely influential “abroad” precisely because they provided standardized norms—were likewise based on Upper Saxon usage. Adelung merely extended in more systematic fashion and in more detail what he called “Gottschedian orthography” (Mentrup et al. 255); the project of working toward a uniform “national” linguistic practice thus had something of a hegemonic feeling to it from the very start. The printing and dissemination in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries of a huge number of texts devoted to cataloging the details of German normative spelling from an Upper Saxon perspective—and to proclaiming the natural reasonableness of one of those details, namely capitalization—may explain why later theorists and practitioners were gradually able to (re)write the history of the practice as a narrative about an “ancient custom” specific to a German language that always already allowed the “natural shape, beauty, and reason” of its nouns to emerge precisely by capitalizing them.<sup>24</sup> Matters of orthographic

23. See Newman, *Pastoral Conventions* 69–131. Benjamin remarks on the language-society reforms at G: 1.1: 379; E: 204.

24. This according to one of the first representatives of this school, Johann Balthasar Antesperg, in his *Kayserliche deutsche Grammatik* (Imperial German Grammar) of 1747 (qtd. in Mentrup 254).

standardization were, in other words, matters of regional and class hegemony masked as national, or perhaps better (because less anachronistic), regional unity and pride.

Effaced along with, yet also ironically preserved within, these “organic” origins of High German (*Hochsprache*) in political, confessional, and linguistic localisms of several kinds was nevertheless also a tradition of resistance to the exceptionalist narrative about the Upper Saxon dialect, even among contemporary scholars, some of whom championed other local dialects, but all of whom resented the homogenization and reduction of German to just one form of itself. This is where the story of Palm’s Gryphius begins. The most complex and prolonged of the historical battles over which dialect should function as the basis of a “universal” and normative High German was in fact the one between the much-praised “Meißen” German of Upper Saxony and none other than the dialect of Silesia, made famous by Martin Opitz, the “father of German poetry,” author of both the first defense of vernacular usage in Germany (*Aristarchus*, 1617) and the first defense of German poetry (*Buch von der teutschen Poeterey*, Book of German Poetics, 1624), and a leader of the so-called First Silesian school.<sup>25</sup> The widespread availability of printed texts by the second generation of Silesian poets, the playwrights, including Gryphius, about whom Benjamin wrote and to which the holdings of the State Library attest, made it possible for the mid- to late nineteenth century to take over wholesale the German language that the *Silesians* wrote—with its localisms, archaisms, and idiosyncracies intact—as a countermodel to “Upper Saxon” for the “standard” German that the newly unified, “modern” German nation would need. A veritable industry of work on the Silesian dialect and its presence in the works of the Silesian Baroque poets, among them, again, Opitz and Gryphius, thus arose at the very same time that the standardization debates about German orthography reached their peak in the mid- to late nineteenth century. From Joseph Kehrein (1844) to Ernst Heilborn (1890), scholars saw in the Silesian dialect the embodiment of the forces that would lead to a Renaissance-like “rejuvenation of the German language” and in turn—but ironically, given the dialect’s competition with the equally as local Upper Saxon—to the (re)birth of a unified German nation-state.<sup>26</sup> That Benjamin found in the plays of the Silesian Baroque proof of a “more-than-Renaissance” rebirth is thus not at all strange.

Given the ways in which the struggle over uniform orthography was cast as part of larger political and ideological debates, it should come as no surprise that a

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25. Even though Opitz himself declared that local dialects (*Mundarten*) ought not to function as the basis of a standardized German language, “Silesian localisms” in fact crept into his writing; contemporaries were aware of this fact and were critical (Andreas Tscherning) and laudatory (Friedrich Logau) in turn. It was Logau’s linguistic practice, moreover, that overtly sponsored and utilized the Silesian dialect in matters of orthography, pronunciation, and rhyme, which both Leibniz and Lessing later saw as exemplary. See Henne.

26. Kehrein and Heilborn are cited in Henne 4.



scholar famous for his devotion to creating a standardized and, most importantly, a simplified and universally available German language, namely the famous linguist Jacob Grimm, who was, with his brother, Wilhelm, the collector of German fairy tales and author of the massive *Grimmsches Wörterbuch* (Grimm Dictionary) (1854–), declared himself a foe of the by-then nearly orthodox practice of capitalization. He did so by using a curiously parallel logic of nostalgia that converted historical norms into naturalized standards that would guide the rejuvenation of the national tongue by devising a way to capture these standards in decapitalized form (*Kleinschreibung*).<sup>27</sup> Based on his earlier text critical and philological work on Old and Middle High German texts, in which he championed the production of editions that reproduced the dialectological specificity and individuality of the texts, Grimm's decision in favor of *decapitalization* developed out of a comparative historical approach to the systematic study of various "ancient" Germanic languages. Ultimately he came to advocate a new normative orthography for New High (i.e., modern) German based on its proximity to "organic" Middle High German usage as the purest form of the vernacular; historical sources for this modern "national" language were available in manuscript collections of primarily unpunctuated and decapitalized texts. In his German dictionary after 1850, the legitimacy and organicity of the words derived from such sources were to be signaled graphically by the systematic decapitalization (*Kleinschreibung*) of all nouns to indicate their "origin" in "ancient" texts and in "patriotic" Middle High German linguistic forms.

Acolytes of Grimm's, including Karl Weinhold, who became the rector of the Königliche Friedrich Wilhelm Universität (King Frederick William University) in Berlin in 1893, lauded "the idiomatic" and "the national" in the German language as it was cataloged in the massive tomes of the Grimm *Dictionary* after 1854, not as so much "dead rubble and discarded stone" of an archaic past, but rather as modern "witnesses" to "the history of the spiritual and moral life of our nation" (Weinhold 10–12). Soon, as Wilhelm Scherer describes in his biography of Grimm (1885), many scholars, following the now institutionally accepted and materially available practice, began equating Grimm's "scientific" approach to spelling with a kind of unifying and "patriotic" learnedness tout court, and began to have their own texts printed in entirely "decapitalized" form (Nerius and Scharnhorst 9–11). By 1903, in spite of the orthographic controversies between 1876 and the beginning of the new century, the imperial interior minister of Prussia issued guidelines for the normative spelling of German in the schools of the realm, including the recommendation that, "in cases of doubt about capitalization, decapitalization is preferred" (qtd. in Nerius 266). Hermann Palm's 1882 edition of Gryphius's plays collapsed these two

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27. Scharnhorst has argued that Grimm's critique of Adelung's normative orthography—with its endorsement of normative capitalization—began in his "historical grammatical" period, a time in which his work centered on the *Deutsche Grammatik* (German Grammar) (1819–1840 in three editions).

historically specific and ideologically informed dialectological and orthographic agendas into a single textual moment by celebrating the modern unity of Germany via a celebration of the glories of Silesian literature in the preferred decapitalized mode.

Palm's investment in the literature of Silesia was not merely professional. Born in 1816 in Silesian Grunau bei Hirschberg, he studied in Breslau, held various positions in the schools there in the 1840s through the 1860s, and in 1881 became the pro-rector of the city's two Protestant *gymnasias*, the very schools that had originally sponsored the Baroque tragic dramas about which Benjamin writes. Palm's scholarly devotion to the textual monuments of what he considered a Renaissance-like "ancient efflorescence of German poetry" (*Beitraege* 1) in the Silesian seventeenth century was thus partly a matter of local pride. There is nevertheless also consistent evidence of his commitment to fitting this localism into a larger national frame. In his essays and books on the Silesians Martin Opitz and Christian Weise, for example, as well as in his work on Gryphius, Palm never fails to highlight the centrality of their texts to the "birth"—or at least prehistory—of a new "national" literary culture. In a short monograph in 1862, for example, Palm praises both Opitz and Gryphius as Silesians who contributed to the "greatness and beauty of our German national literature" (*Martin Opitz von Boberfeld* iv). Later, in his 1877 *Beitraege zur Geschichte der deutschen Literatur des XVI. und XVII. Jahrhunderts* (Essays on the History of German Literature in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries), Palm remarks that even though there was no significant dramatic tradition in Silesia before the "special efflorescence" of the seventeenth century (113), the dedication of the ruling Piastian princes there to "the German essence" (113), and their "always enthusiastic ties to the rest of Germany" (114), meant that their commitment to sponsoring local culture rapidly acquired a proto-"national" profile as well. "Even if one is used to considering this province [Silesia] as too far away from the center of Germany," Palm writes (113), his research shows "that in the German east too the understanding of art took a major hold on German culture" early on (113). Oddly, yet logically, then, given the promotion of the Silesian dialect to the status of one possible measure of Pan-German linguistic orthodoxy at approximately the same time, the Silesian drama of the seventeenth century can be said to be the "early proof of an autonomous national spirit" that paved the way for "German drama" well before its founding by Lessing later in the eighteenth century, the historical moment more conventionally given in narratives of the origins of a German national theater (*Beitraege* 2).

In light of Palm's mid- to late nineteenth-century investment in constructing a narrative about the importance of the seventeenth-century Silesian tradition to the future development of a "modern" national literature, it is at first difficult to understand his harsh assessments of the very tragic dramas by Gryphius that he edits for the Stuttgart Literary Society in 1882. In the forewords to the plays in this volume (that, again, Benjamin appears to have owned), Palm points to "the weaknesses of

the structure of the play” and “imbalance of the acts in relation to one another” (Gryphius, *Trauerspiele* 10) in the case of *Leo Arminius*, for example, and remarks that Gryphius’s historical drama, *Ermordete Majestät oder Carolus Stuardus* (Sovereignty Slain, or Charles Stuart), suffers from “all the crimes that the plays of our poet suffer in general, among them the thoroughly rhetorical character, the dominance of the ugly, that culminates in bloody scenes, the entirely guiltless hero, the absence of an inner coherence in the action, all of which are constitutive parts of a drama that Gryphius considered necessary and permissible” (351). Gryphius’s other tragedies fare little better. Palm’s criticisms here of the failings of the German Baroque were of course common in contemporary literary histories of the kind that Benjamin dismisses in the prologue to the *Tragic Drama* book.

Nevertheless, Palm’s overall logic in preparing an edition of plays of which he seems to so disapprove does manage to peek out in the “Vorwort des Herausgebers” (Editorial Foreword) to the tragicomedy *Cardenio und Celinde* (Gryphius, *Trauerspiele* 259–62). As a form of “bourgeois tragic drama,” with characters from the middling rather than from “upper classes” (259), this particular play by Gryphius is “pioneering,” according to Palm, precisely in its choice of genre, personnel, and tone, choices that Lessing was to join Gryphius in celebrating more than a century later (260). Palm had already highlighted the relationship between Gryphius and Lessing in his earlier, 1877 essay on Christian Weise via a differentiated assessment of Gryphius’s various dramatic efforts, all of which prepared the way for Palm’s praise of *Cardenio und Celinde*: “It is obvious that A. Gryphius’ tragic plays, with their bombast, could not grip the healthy mind of the people; the brutal tastelessness of a Lohenstein and his epigones even less. Weise confronted this unnaturalness, as he confronted everything before, with fortitude and led [drama] back to the natural and the national” (*Beitraege* 41). In true nineteenth-century style, Palm explains the problem in the following way, namely as a result of the fact that the tragic dramas of the seventeenth century had moved too far away from the “popular theater” of the sixteenth century, “without replacing for the people that which had been taken away from them” (40–41). It took until Lessing’s rediscovery of what Palm earlier calls Weise’s dedication “to the popular” (*volkstümlich*, 9) for this aspect of the Baroque to be recognized (41, also 71).

Palm explains that Gryphius had nevertheless already shown an understanding of the needs of the people (*Volk*) in his “comedies,” which had served as models for Weise (*Beitraege* 41).<sup>28</sup> Precisely as a “new genre of theater,” then, and although the play “did not deserve the name tragic drama [even] for the sake of its conciliatory end,” as Palm writes in the foreword (Gryphius, *Trauerspiele* 259) to the 1882 edition of the play, *Cardenio und Celinde* was in fact the closest of the tragic dramas to

28. Palm had edited Gryphius’s comedies (*Lustspiele*) for the Literary Society several years earlier, in 1878 (vol. 138).

this new and prescient category of a national German theater. Palm had already explained in 1877 that the tragic dramas themselves, although characterized by “far more mistakes and artificial efforts” than by “healthy or natural” characteristics, were the early signs “of the spiritual life” of the nation, of interest not in and of themselves, but only in their “relation to the present, to the emergence and growth of that which now is, in a word, to the historical element,” and thus a premonition of the glories of German literature to come (*Beitraege* 1–2). Publishing an edition of *all* of Gryphius’s works—tragic dramas (*Trauerspiele*) and comedies (*Lustspiele*) alike—just five years later was thus the equivalent of preserving these important first steps in the development of the modern inheritance of the German *Kultur*ation.<sup>29</sup>

Palm’s insertion of the plays of the Silesian Baroque into the ranks of texts that supported the task of a greater German cultural revival represents an only mildly idiosyncratic and innovative solution to the conundrum of how to make a place for the Baroque in the nationalist literary histories of the nineteenth century to which Benjamin alludes in the “Epistemo-Critical Prologue” of the *Tragic Drama* book. Unlike presentations of the period for nonprofessional target groups, such as can be found in Edmund Hofer’s *Deutsche Literaturgeschichte für Frauen und Jungfrauen* (The History of German Literature for Women and Young Ladies) (1876), for example, in which the Silesian dramatists were especially targeted for the low moral and ethical niveau of their work, scholarly studies, such as Carl Lemcke’s much-cited *Geschichte der deutschen Dichtung neuerer Zeit* (History of Modern German Poetry) (1871) and others, had seen the period as problematic because of its susceptibility to “foreign” influences and thus its too great distance from the concerns of the “people.”<sup>30</sup> Palm’s critiques of Gryphius’s tragic dramas echo this argument. In the most well-known of these literary histories, however, Wilhelm Scherer’s *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur* (History of German Literature) (1880–83), the “anti”- or non-national and socially elitist Baroque is somewhat counterintuitively acknowledged as crucial to the gradual rise in the fortunes of a “national” literature insofar as its reliance on foreign models is said to have actually led to *increased* attention to the noble vernacular. “A patriotic attitude accorded quite well with the foreign bombastic style,” Scherer writes, “since all imitation was of course competition,

29. Palm was no stranger to conceiving of editorial work as embedded in a larger political agenda. He had spent the better part of the ten years from 1865 to 1875 collecting and publishing volumes containing the *acta publica*, or public documents (e.g., treaties, proclamations, and correspondence), of the Silesian princes and city officials, issued during the important years of 1618–21, at the outset of the Thirty Years’ War, when events in Silesia often allowed it to emerge and play a role on the world historical stage. Palm understood this project as a “patriotic enterprise” that would earn the gratitude of “all friends of the history of our fatherland” (*Acta publica* 1: vi) precisely because it linked Silesia to events of great consequence for the future of the German state. All the documents are printed without capitals.

30. See Fohrmann, “Das Bild des 17. Jahrhunderts” 582, on Hofer, and 585, on Lemcke. On the lack of attention to the “people” in Wackernagel’s *Geschichte der deutschen Litteratur: Ein Handbuch* (History of German Literature: A Handbook) (1848), see Fohrmann 586.

merely an attempt to oppose something of equal value and worth to the foreign.”<sup>31</sup> Jürgen Fohrmann has argued that even the far more common and less generous condemnations by a figure like Lemcke of seventeenth-century literature as too far from the interests of the “people” also saw an important and necessary role for the Baroque as a kind of warning to his own nineteenth-century contemporaries about which elitist pitfalls to avoid as they invested in promoting the “cultural blossoming” of “German poetry” in a post-1871 world (Fohrmann, “Das Bild des 17. Jahrhunderts” 587). The deployment here of what Wolfgang Höppner calls a strategy of historical analogy, whereby the literary-historical products of the seventeenth century could function as prototypes, or, if that is too strong, as indicators of the general direction in which contemporary literary history should move, may have provided the template for something like Palm’s assessment of the relationship of Silesian drama to the subsequent birth of a national theater under Lessing and then Goethe (“Die Mode des Barock” 597)—as well as for Benjamin’s subsequent “discovery” of analogies between the Baroque tragic dramas and Storm and Stress and Romantic plays. Palm’s edition of Gryphius participates in this kind of analogistic logic when it orthographically “updates” and absorbs seventeenth-century texts into a nineteenth-century narrative of a national language and literature on the cusp of being “reborn” into “modern” excellence, while also investing them with an already achieved foundational profile and function via their publication in the Bibliothek des Litterarischen Vereins series. The universal decapitalization of nouns in the texts testifies to the tradition’s venerable antiquity in turn.

Again, Benjamin was not unaware of the vexed history of the capitalization and decapitalization practices in the Baroque. As noted above, the different historical afterlives of the several Silesian authors he cites would have been obvious to him in the competing orthographies of the volumes that lay spread out on the tables at the Prussian State Library before him, a seventeenth-century Hallmann next to an eighteenth-century Lohenstein next to the nineteenth-century Palm Gryphius. All nevertheless provided evidence of the Baroque as it had been unleashed into history in textual form. Benjamin’s own “modernization”—not only of Palm’s already “modernized” Gryphius, but of the Hallmann and Lohenstein volumes he cites too—simply added to the afterlives of the Baroque and moved in the direction of a contemporary inventory of the genre’s “totality.” The “updating” of these other Baroques in Benjamin’s citations in the 1928 edition of the *Tragic Drama* book is fairly consistent with his rendering of Palm. Hallmann’s seventeenth-century “Tantz” (dance) (Hallmann, *Trauer-Freuden- und Schäufer-Spiele* 36) becomes the more modern “Tanz” (Benjamin, *Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels* [1928] 114), for example,

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31. Scherer, *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur* (History of German Literature), qtd. in Höppner, “Die Mode des Barock” 602. On this argument in Scherer, see also Fohrmann, “Das Bild des 17. Jahrhunderts” 588–89.

and the early "Aegyptens Nacht" (Egyptian night) (Hallmann 90) becomes "Ägyptens Nacht" (Benjamin 179), with the umlaut replacing the diphthong, as is still conventional today; Benjamin also separates out into three words, "höchst trauriges Ballet" (highly tragic ballet) (179), the seventeenth-century "höchsttrauriges Ballet" (Hallmann 69), in which the adverb and adjective are combined, signaling his as the more "modern" version. When quoting from another Hallmann text, the *Leich-Reden: Todten-Gedichte und Aus dem Italiänischen übersetzte Grab-Schriefften* (Funeral Orations, Funeral Poems, and Funerary Inscriptions Translated from the Italian) (1682), also available in the State Library, Benjamin likewise updates Hallmann's "privilegirte Personen" (Hallmann, *Leich-Reden* 88) to "privilegierte Personen" (Benjamin, *Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels* [1928] 76), with the modern German *ie* replacing the archaic *i*. When he quotes from the eighteenth-century edition of Lohenstein's *Sophonisbe* play, finally, the modernizing pattern replays itself again and again: the 1724 "Scepter" (*Sophonisbe*, *Trauer = Spiel* 11, already changed from the "Baroque" "Zepter" in 1680, *Sophonisbe: Trauerspiel* 11) becomes the updated "Szepter" in 1928 (Benjamin, *Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels* [1928] 119), just as the eighteenth-century "Liljen" (lilies) (*Sophonisbe*, *Trauer = Spiel* 76) becomes the more modern "Lilien" in 1928 (*Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels* [1928] 190).

Benjamin's modernizing adjustments in the 1928 *Tragic Drama* book of the orthography of the Baroque texts he read are thus abundant and integrate the plays of Hallmann, Lohenstein, and Gryphius, in their respective seventeenth-, eighteenth-, and nineteenth-century formations, into what Benjamin elsewhere calls (with reference to translation) the continual "afterlife" of "the original."<sup>32</sup> The altered citations thus contribute to the production of an ongoing and nonstatic "origin" for the tragic dramas of the German Baroque in the way he describes at a more theoretical level as well. Already signaled in the tidy sequence of historical periods in the volumes of the Old Subject Catalog as he consulted them, and nearly palpable in any given copy of a "Baroque" text that he or others would have held in their hands, the Baroque that was on the move between the covers of Benjamin's own "Baroque book" in that text's idiosyncratic orthography is merely its next iteration, a sign of the "incomplete" and "unfinished" side of the modern "restoration" (G: 1.1: 226; E: 45) of a "national" Silesian Baroque.

### Collecting the Baroque: Editing the German Dramatic Tradition

At the beginning of the second chapter of the *Tragic Drama* book, Benjamin gives two reasons for looking at "extremes" in order to come to an adequately

32. On translation, see Benjamin, "Die Aufgabe des Übersetzers" (The Task of the Translator) (*Gesammelte Schriften* 4.1: 9–21, here 11).

“philosophical” concept; his specific example here is the “development of the concept” of the “origin of the German Baroque tragic drama” (G: 1.1: 238; E: 57). It is the first of these reasons that is of interest in the context of the versions of the Baroque available in the early twentieth century to Benjamin in book form, namely his claim that the examination of the “extreme” guarantees that a “wide material spectrum” will be considered in the construction of the “concept” of the tragic drama; only out of the “elements” of as many examples as possible, he explains—examples that will of course initially appear “diffuse and disparate”—can the “concept” be created as the “synthesis” in which the genre’s “form” can be observed. The best way to find such a multitude of extremes is to consider the dramatic production of both the “greater” and the “lesser,” even “weaker poets,” he writes, all of whose plays are the witnesses according to whose testimony this “form” can be deduced (238; 58).

Although the evaluative vocabulary of the “lesser” and “weaker” poets that Benjamin uses here reminds us of his claim at the end of the “Epistemo-Critical Prologue” that the “artistic will” of a period will be best found in the work of “epigones” (G: 1.1: 235; E: 55), it is more significant that Benjamin takes the opportunity here *not* to create a hierarchy of “good” and “bad” tragic dramas in and among just the small selection of Silesian playwrights, namely Gryphius, Lohenstein, and Hallmann, to whom he devotes most of his book on the Second Silesian school. Rather, he turns to a number of other authors and texts even *less* well known than the Silesians today, and does so precisely because they can serve as even better “witnesses” to the genre of the tragic drama writ large. It may be significant that the volumes of the Old Subject Catalog in which these other texts were listed were *not* the same as those that contained the lists of texts by the Silesian playwrights; rather, they are volumes A21a and Y22a, entitled “Miscellany and Academic Publications” and “German Literature, VIIa2, Individual Theaters/Stages,” respectively. In these volumes, and especially in volume Y22a, Benjamin found collected the “extremes” of what he goes on to identify as the tragic drama of the Baroque.<sup>33</sup>

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33. It is unfortunate that precisely these volumes of the Old Subject Catalog—A21a and Y22a—did not survive the war, although the volumes of dramatic texts and plays themselves did. Their destruction makes it impossible for us to see what else Benjamin might have observed on the catalog pages on which the books he did read were listed, or, indeed, how he might have come upon just these books in the first place. For a variety of reasons, I would argue that he probably discovered or was referred to volume Y22a, with its greater coverage of the dramatic tradition, first, found the Weiß volume listed there, and quoted from it as part of his argument for “wide material spectrum.” Weiß refers in his book to Mone and to Horn; Benjamin may thus have encountered the titles of their texts there. The location in volume A21a of the von Thurn text—with a title that was identical to the title of Weiß’s book—may have been indicated in a cross-reference in volume Y22a in association with Weiß. In any case, it seems unlikely that Benjamin would have turned to volume A21a first, as it carried an unpromising “title” on its spine—merely “miscellaneous” “academic” works—which, in this case, probably referred to the series, the *Schriften des Literarischen Vereins in Wien* (Texts of the Literary Society in Vienna), in which the von Thurn volume appeared. See below.

What is striking about these additional books from which Benjamin quotes is, first of all, that they include editions and collections of plays from periods not only both before and after those traditionally identified as the Baroque, but that they are also associated with locations quite distant from “German” Silesia. Prominent among these locations was Vienna. The geographical breadth is not surprising from a contemporary political perspective. Beginning with the early to mid-nineteenth century’s enthusiastic interest in what Fohrmann calls the “fostering of national poetry” (*Das Projekt* 185), there had in fact been a preoccupation with the cultural heritage of not just specific or individual locations, but also the greater German *Kulturnation*, including—with a hint of hegemonic desire—the Austro-Hungarian territories too. The concept had become a fashionable one to cultivate—both intellectually and politically—ever since the Napoleonic incursions. In the tradition of Achim von Arnim’s and Clemens Brentano’s collection of traditional folk songs in *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* (The Boy’s Magic Horn) (1805–8) and the Grimm brothers’ *Kinder- und Haus Märchen* (Fairy Tales) (1812–15), for example, the anthologies of German-language dramatic texts from the medieval period through the early eighteenth century from which Benjamin cites contained the “elements” of a national dramatic tradition that, precisely because it included neither ancient tragedy nor the “high” texts of an imitative Renaissance, could be identified as a specifically anticlassical, and specifically anti-French, German Baroque. Although not well known in either Benjamin or Baroque studies today, it is thus no surprise that these collections, edited by Mone, Weiß, and von Thurn, were produced when they were, or that the State Library owned copies of these books. Archivists and librarians all, these men’s primary interest as editors was in the cultural-political program of making accessible to as broad a public as possible a legacy of specifically German-language texts, documents that, before the publication of the books, had been available only in manuscript form.<sup>34</sup> As abstract as the argument for the “development of the concept” of an “origin” for the Baroque tragic drama may appear, then, in the context of the *Tragic Drama* book, the quite literal “wide material spectrum” (G: 1.1: 238; E: 57) of plays available in this series of volumes contributed to Benjamin’s ability to “discover” and “invent” a much more textually embodied “lineage of the Baroque tragic drama” (307; 128) than had previously been seen. In these editions and collections, the greater “law of the tragic drama” (315; 136) that he sought could be discerned.

Franz Josef Mone (1796–1871) was originally a historian. In 1825, he became the director of the university library at the University of Heidelberg; ten years later, he took over as the main archivist and director of the State Archive of Baden, where

34. See Fohrmann, *Das Projekt* 184–210, on the upsurge at midcentury of literary and historical *Ver-eine* (societies), public lecture series, publishing initiatives, and public poetry festivals designed to appeal to as broad a segment of the population as possible, in both class-specific and mixed groups, to the end of creating an “educated” German nation.



he worked until his retirement in 1868. An enthusiast of Celtic lore and texts, he was also involved in publishing projects concerning one of the oldest German epics, the *Nibelungenlied* (Song of the Nibelungen) (1818), as well as *Quellen und Forschungen zur deutschen Litteratur und Sprache* (Documents and Research on German Literature and Language) (1830). Mone's participation in the editing of a vast array of texts about the "ancient" history of his home state of Baden also suggests the kinds of genealogies of the present with which he was concerned. His two-volume collection of medieval plays, *Schauspiele des Mittelalters* (Plays of the Middle Ages) (1846), the first volume of which is the book that Benjamin cites, was designed, as Mone writes in the "Preface," to fill the "significant gap" in the "history of our literature" and, in particular, in "the history of German dramatic poetry" (vii). His production of a book of manuscript transcriptions was thus not merely an archivist's task. Rather, it was part of the mission sweeping the learned classes at the time to support the "promotion of national literature" (viii), as he writes. Mone was also an active participant in the patriotic gathering of the first professional organization of Germanists in 1846, the year his volume appeared (Meves). While the thought of a literal German "nation" was of course premature in that year, the sentiment was in keeping with the upsurge of patriotic idealism and celebration of the *Kulturnation* that had begun at the time of German Romanticism. Benjamin's citation of Mone in close proximity to his reference to the arguments by the Romantic Franz Horn (G: 1.1: 302–5; E: 123–26) thus makes a great deal of sense. It is clear, finally, from the descriptions of the various manuscripts that Mone had found in monastery libraries and private collections across Germany that it was the documentation of a coherent and continuous German dramatic tradition with which he was concerned. Brought together between the covers of a single book, the diverse texts joined one another to produce a kind of "national" textual unity explicitly designed to rival similar products that the French had already created to celebrate "the ancient drama of their nation" (Mone xi).<sup>35</sup>

Mone clearly did not intend to create a continuous German-language dramatic tradition on his own. The cultural work still to be done would involve support by what he describes as a national collective of archivists and editors, who, in solidarity with him, would produce a "coherent" history with no gaps (Mone vii). The notion that it was in the nature of the German "character" to form such collectives of citizen-scholars dedicated to the cultivation of the national past had in fact been the topic of an essay entitled "Ueber das deutsche Vereinswesen" (On the Essence of German Societies) that Mone published in the *Deutsche Vierteljahrs Schrift* (German Quarterly) three years before (see Fohrmann, *Das Projekt* 185–86). The book from which Benjamin cites some of the texts that Mone had collected participates in

35. On Mone's exceptionalist argument about the German character and its autonomy, see Fohrmann, *Das Projekt* 185–86.

this project in material form in its transcriptions of the manuscripts, which, in the case of “Die sieben Todsünden” (The Seven Deadly Sins), from which Benjamin quotes, is printed entirely in “national” decapitalized form and also in the archaizing typeface of a Gothic *Fraktur*. For an early twentieth-century reader like Benjamin, the typeface would have signaled an even more “authentic” version of these ancient “national” texts. Benjamin famously himself chose the *Fraktur* typeface in which his *Tragic Drama* book was printed in 1928.

The seamless history of the early dramatic legacy that Mone offers in his 1846 collection is visible first and foremost in the sequencing of texts there, with a series of early sung pieces for Easter and “the very oldest German play,” a “Lament for the Virgin Mary” (27–37) from “the end of the thirteenth century” (27), at the beginning, up to the confessional “Seven Deadly Sins” (324–36), also thirteenth century, at the end. Mone points out that he has deliberately arranged the texts “chronologically” (vii–viii) in order to create a continuous narrative of the history of German dramatic forms. Crucial to the project—as well as potentially of importance in Benjamin’s mind—was Mone’s correction of the standard dating to the fifteenth century of the “origin of drama” (x). Contra Georg Gottfried Gervinus and Karl August Koberstein, whom he, like Benjamin, cites, Mone would push such origins back into the thirteenth and even the twelfth century (1). His attention in the “Introduction” to the relationship between theater and history, theater and the church, and theater and its performance on certain feast days (1–4) embeds the “dramatic” texts that follow in the clearly medieval—and thus also non-Renaissance—context out of which they emerged. Organized as a series of eleven genres of textual “monuments,” such as seven examples of texts celebrating “The Childhood of Christ” and six examples of “Last Judgment” texts (to which the “Seven Deadly Sin” text belongs), Mone’s book also includes information about the location of the manuscripts, and descriptions of their appearance. Along with the transcriptions themselves, the book would have offered Benjamin a conveniently packaged anthology proving the “ancient” lineage of a “national” German dramatic form.

The availability of early dramatic texts such as those in Mone’s collection was crucial to the argument that Benjamin sought to develop about the non-Renaissance nature of the Baroque discussed above, in chapter 1. Moreover, the texts Mone reproduces would have endowed Strich’s grand, but imprecise claims about the Baroque’s affiliation with “old Teutonic” and “primal German poetry” (“Der lyrische Stil” 29 and 45) with much more heft. The “Deadly Sins” text (Mone 324–36), as reproduced in Mone’s collection, probably did resemble the format and hand of the thirteenth-century manuscript as Mone had originally read it in a private collection in Karlsruhe some years before; the 1846 print edition retains the archaic spellings of the manuscript text and notes, as well as the original punctuation. Mone remarks that the “punctuation” of the original was so “curious,” or strange, that he has chosen to mimic it exactly in his edition (324) in order to give the reader a sense of the original. The archaizing message of the “Seven Deadly Sins” text would thus have

resembled that of the decapitalized Palm Gryphius discussed above. Benjamin nevertheless modernizes the orthography of the “Deadly Sins” text as transcribed by Mone in his quote from it in the 1928 edition of the *Tragic Drama* book, just as he modernizes Palm, changing the archaic spelling of the adjective “erbeitsamen” (industrious) to the modern “arbeitsamen,” and the old German “unt” to the modern “und” (Mone 329; Benjamin, *Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels* [1928] 151), for example. He may have been trying to make these “ancient” words more comprehensible to the “modern” reader. But he simultaneously retains in his quotes the decapitalized nouns from Mone’s “original” pre- and non-Renaissance texts, even inserting an additional archaizing diacritical mark (the famous “virgula suspensiva,” or oblique slash<sup>36</sup>) at one point where it does not appear in Mone’s 1846 text. The pre-Renaissance origins of German drama in the medieval period that were typographically visible in Mone’s book thus find an equally robust afterlife in Benjamin’s *Tragic Drama* book.

The creation of the link between Baroque plays and their medieval antecedents is central to Benjamin’s argument about the specifically German lineage of the tragic drama. In either deliberate or inadvertent solidarity with Mone, Benjamin writes just before his first citation of Mone of the need to invest further in an “account of the medieval elements of the drama of the Baroque”; his own brief reflections should serve merely as a “prolegomenon to further comparative discussions of the medieval and the Baroque spiritual worlds” (G: 1.1: 256; E: 76). It is in specific reference to the necessity of seeing the medieval “Passion play character” of the Baroque (255; 75) that Benjamin cites Mone; the nineteenth-century editor’s claims about the medieval tendency to see the history of the world as itself “one big tragic drama” accord perfectly, according to Benjamin (256; 77), with statements made about the interpenetrability of the world and the stage during the later period. “The word ‘tragic drama’ referred in the seventeenth century to the theatrical and the world stage in the same way,” Benjamin writes (244; 63). The prehistory of “the formal world of the Baroque tragic drama” in the dramatic products of “the Middle Ages” (257; 78) can thus be seen in the transcriptions of the texts that fill Mone’s book. Via citation of it, Benjamin allows the Baroque to rebirth the medieval German tradition in a more-than-Renaissance way.

The impact of the Mone collection on Benjamin’s ability to create an extended German dramatic tradition is clearest in Benjamin’s second reference to Mone. Although Mone is not named directly, when Benjamin quotes from an otherwise unidentified “manuscript from the thirteenth century” (G: 1.1: 332; E: 155) in the last section of the second chapter of the *Tragic Drama* book, as part of his narrative about the genealogy of the long-standing German fascination with melancholy, or

36. The “virgula suspensiva” was developed, according to M. B. Parkes, to indicate the briefest pause or hesitation in a text. It was in common use from the thirteenth to the seventeenth century.

"Acedia," as a "theological" concept, it is the Mone collection that is his source. Immediately following the citation, which is from the beginning of "On Lethargy," part of the thirteenth-century "Seven Deadly Sins" text in the Mone volume, Benjamin goes on to cite a lengthy passage from Aegidius Albertinus's more properly "Baroque," that is, seventeenth-century, text, *Lucifers Königreich und Seelengejaidt: Oder Narrenhatz* (Lucifer's Kingdom and Hunt for Souls; or, The Hounding of Fools), published in 1617, entitled "Accidia," or "Lethargy" (333; 156), which repeats and elaborates on the earlier "Seven Deadly Sins" text. I return to Albertinus's text and its relation to Benjamin's understanding of the "Lutheran" Baroque in chapter 3. Here it is more important to note that Benjamin's serial quotations from the thirteenth- and seventeenth-century texts at this point in his argument quite literally create a visual link on the page between the medieval and the later Baroque period. They also confirm and extend Mone's own claim about the continuity of the German tradition by producing an even longer "history of German dramatic poetry," a history that matches and outdoes the one available in the nineteenth-century archivist's book. Benjamin's ability to absorb and extend Mone's earlier assertions about specifically German traditions into the seventeenth century is central to his argument about Baroque melancholy in particular, and he relies heavily in these pages on a strategy that piggybacks on arguments already made about the afterlives of medieval thought in the Reformation by art historians Karl Giehlow, Aby Warburg, Fritz Saxl, and Erwin Panofsky, also extending what, in their work, is a specifically Lutheran tradition into the seventeenth century of his sample. Benjamin's juxtaposition here of the citations from Mone with his citations from Albertinus calls attention to this move.

As crucial as Mone's little book was in providing Benjamin with medieval textual antecedents for the tradition of the Baroque tragic drama, it was in the work of Karl Weiß (1826–95) that the specific connection between collections of texts such as Mone's and the canon of authors and texts more conventionally understood as the dramatic tradition of the Baroque proper, including the Silesians, was made. Weiß's *Die Wiener Haupt- und Staatsactionen: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des deutschen Theaters* (Viennese Plays about Affairs of State: A Contribution to the History of the German Theater) (1854) was less an anthology, or collection, than a literary-historical brief on behalf of the Viennese dramatic tradition in general and about the holdings of the Kaiserliche Hofbibliothek (Imperial Court Library) in particular. It includes transcriptions of some fifteen manuscripts of popular "political" plays from the early eighteenth century associated with the Viennese playwright and impresario Josef Anton Stranitzky (c. 1676–1726). Fourteen of the manuscripts are described in detail; their library call numbers are included for easy referencing (Weiß 58), the plots summarized, characters listed, and the stage sets described. One especially accomplished play ("the inimitable and most valuable," 58), *Die Glorreiche Marter Joannes von Nepomuck* (The Glorious Martyr John Nepomuck) is reproduced in its entirety in an appendix (113–92). This is the play

from which Benjamin quotes numerous times in his discussion of such plays as “extremes,” as some of the “most radical” and thus “most unartistic” examples of the dramatic genre of the plays about rulers and affairs of state that exist (G: 1.1: 302; E: 123). The thematic, plot, and production parallels between this “lower” genre of theater and the “high” learned Silesian tragic dramas—with their own political and erotic intrigue in courtly circles and extravagant staging of horrific scenes—confirm the external logic of the juxtaposition.

Weiß’s attention to these plays about “affairs of state” and to Stranitzky as a native son was understandable.<sup>37</sup> Weiß was a devout citizen of Vienna. Even though the actual text collections, including presumably the manuscripts on which his book was based, had initially been owned by the city, they had been absorbed into the imperial library already in 1780. Weiß was instrumental in wrenching them back into civic hands when he established a city library in 1855. From this time on, the play texts as well as numerous other historical documents and artifacts were held there. He also helped found a city historical museum in 1888. The decision to continue the celebration of local cultural heritage by collecting its dramatic traditions in book form is thus not surprising. Weiß’s project represents, moreover, the articulation of a “patriotic” task of excavating the German-language literary heritage not unlike the one in which his near contemporary Mone was engaged. That it was at a different location, Catholic Vienna, rather than predominantly Protestant Silesia, that Stranitzky flourished is additionally suggestive of the role that Weiß’s book played, also for Benjamin, in capturing a Pan-German dramatic tradition in print. Aware of but not bothered by distinctions between these discrete geopolitical and confessionally distinct states, Weiß clearly considered—or, in a politically vexed time, would like to have seen—the northern and southern branches of the German *Kultur* as one. The notion of a reorganization of the two great Germanic powers—Prussia and the Austrian territories—under a common banner, with the latter even in the lead, had been a popular one, particularly among Catholics of course, since the beginning of the century. Although not in direct proximity to the Weiß quotes, even Benjamin endorses the claim that the “Protestants of the Silesian school” and the Catholic “Jesuit” tradition (as well as Calderón) should be considered together (G: 1.1: 258; E: 79).<sup>38</sup> In his lengthy background chapters, Weiß endorses this vision as he embeds the Viennese story of Stranitzky and his plays in a kind of apologetic and melancholy narrative of a unified “national poetry” and cultural heritage that had been put asunder during the confessional chaos of the Thirty Years’ War (1–2), but that it was now time to redeem.

37. See the entry on Weiß in the *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie* 41: 577–79.

38. The role of Catholic Vienna in the literary-historical developments of the nineteenth century in Germany and particularly among the German Romantics, including the Schlegels, for example, is (and was, also for Benjamin) well known. Many of the originally Protestant Romantic writers converted to Catholicism.

In a backhanded argument, Weiß claims, moreover, that the drama of the seventeenth century represented the beginnings of a “modern” kind of literature with the “artistic character of the new poetry” (2). The “modernity” alluded to here may not have been an exclusively enviable one, however, precisely because it mirrored the divisiveness of the “nation” between 1618 and 1648. The story Weiß tells is thus in fact one of the *failure* of the two dominant strains of drama in the seventeenth century, the “high” “learned drama” of the Silesians, on the one hand, and the often farcical “folk play” genre to which Stranitzky was indebted, on the other, to form the unity he desires. His project consists in trying to bring the two strains together in the “regeneration of German drama” (26) writ large. In the present absence of such a joining and because they appealed to different classes and segments of society, the continuing separation of these genres cannot help but produce a “complete splitting of the artistic powers” that sadly mirrors the fraught “modern life of the nations” (35) of his own time. Even though such cultural class stratification was not known by either the Greeks or the Romans (35), according to Weiß, the non- or anti-Renaissance pattern he discerns can thus only serve not as an uplifting distinction of the moderns from the ancients, but rather as a downbeat allegory of the entire “process of modern society” (3) that threatened to engulf the entire German heartland at the time. Given this dark picture of the legacy of the seventeenth century for the mid-nineteenth century, it is not surprising that Weiß claims that it is his goal to restore a forward-looking potential to this “awakening of a new taste” (3). The rhetoric of a rebirth of the modern is audible here.

Weiß begins his own restoration of the unity of the German dramatic tradition by knitting the two kinds of drama together in a wide-ranging literary-historical narrative about the popular theater of pre-Enlightenment Germany, claiming, for example, that a “naturalized” form of the plays of the so-called English comedians of the sixteenth-century traveling theater troupes intersected in the late sixteenth century with local German dramatic traditions. This mixing provided the textual antecedents of a hybridized high “learned drama” (Weiß 14) in turn. It is of particular importance to Weiß that both the “people” and courtly audiences were entertained by these popular plays (17), and that the great German playwrights of this period, Johann Ayer (1543–1605) and Herzog Julius von Braunschweig (1554–1613), were able to create an authentically mixed German theater (22–23) out of this legacy, a dramatic tradition that could heal the wounds of cultural division that were so prominent both then and in his own time. Weiß introduces the plays of the Silesians, especially those by Gryphius, but also by Lohenstein and Hallmann, at this point in his narrative as additional important links between the “popular theater” and Stranitzky’s later “affairs of state” plays (22–25), even claiming (as it turns out, incorrectly, but this is of little import to his argument) that Gryphius represented the best in the earlier national German tradition, as he was “opposed to all translations and imitative texts” (25). Had the learned Silesian playwrights continued in this direction, Weiß argues, and attended to the synthesis

of popular tradition with their own work, the much longed-for “regeneration of German drama” (26) would have occurred. Instead, they and their courtly sponsors tried to ingratiate themselves with the dreaded French (“via cuddling up with France”), thus losing their native “feeling for national greatness” (26). Although displaced back into the context of a literary history of the seventeenth century, an anti-French and also anti-Prussian sentiment appropriate to the mid-nineteenth century is clearly in evidence here. The celebration of an authentically “German” dramatic sensibility is the only antidote Weiß can recommend.

Weiß concludes his pre-Stranitzky literary history of German popular drama with a discussion of the efforts of Johannes Velten (1640–93?), whose translations of ancient Greek and contemporary Spanish and French plays, on the one hand, and disciplinization of stage productions, on the other, began the work of creating a more respectable and, above all, more unified “branch of German literature” (28–30, here 28). The firmly indigenous, or native, commitment of this tradition was guaranteed by the presence of the traditional folk figure Weiß refers to as “Hannswurst,” the Falstaff-like clown figure, in his productions (29). Moreover, Velten’s improvisations, which Benjamin apparently knew about via Horn (G: 1.1: 302; E: 123), guaranteed their popularity “in all of Germany” (31), according to Weiß, and thus also worked to counter the earlier split. The introduction of the figure now known as Hans Wurst, a character out of a Punch and Judy-like popular tradition, is key to what turns out to be Weiß’s patriotic story of the connection between *all* of these dramatic traditions and the “popular stage” of Vienna, to which he turns in the pages that follow (45–49). Seen as a follower of the Veltenian tradition, Stranitzky—whose plays are the center of Benjamin’s discussion of this brand of tragic drama—was in fact best known precisely for his signature performances as the burlesque Hans Wurst in the “affairs of state” plays. Nevertheless, even as he embeds an account of the Stranitzky plays and their “author” and main actor in a general social, political, and even architectural history of Viennese culture (32–50), Weiß’s emphasis is on Stranitzky’s move away from mere improvisation in his acting of the Hans Wurst role toward an integration of the clownish figure into a scripted position within the main plot (rather than as an interlude entertainment, for example), specifically as an instigator of the all-important political and erotic “intrigue” (48) that was the motor of these plays.

It should not be surprising that Weiß quotes Mone at this point in his argument about the medieval “clown” figure functioning as a precursor to Hans Wurst in order to underscore that such a figure was not a foreign “import” from texts “from other countries” (Weiß 48). Rather, Hans Wurst was part of the preexisting and indigenous “German” tradition that the Vienna plays both embodied and defended into the eighteenth century and beyond. Benjamin, citing Weiß, also juxtaposes the comic figure of “Hannswurst” with the medieval “clown” as described, according to Benjamin, by Mone (see G: 1.1: 304–5; E: 126). Following Weiß, Benjamin also associates Stranitzky with the melding together of the two strains of German theater,

the popular and the high, the comic and the serious, the south and the north, into a "unity" of native "dramatic forms" (304; 126–27). Weiß argues—contra an earlier scholarship that apparently saw in this tradition a "Protestant bias" (51)—that it was Stranitzky and the Viennese popular theater, which was decidedly Catholic, that began to achieve independence, indeed, began to be the source of a future (i.e., later eighteenth-century) German popular theater (44). Its "thoroughly" "independent" (i.e., not imitative) "works" (52) had a clear appeal, moreover, to the "lower classes," which, according to Weiß, had always remained loyal to "national poetry" (53). The pressures of the times, on the one hand, and an Austrian, but also Pan-German, "patriotic" charge to protect the folk tradition, on the other, thus condense in Weiß's celebration of the actor, Stranitzky, and his plays. Benjamin's insistent deployment of Stranitzky texts in the *Tragic Drama* book adopts many of the same arguments about a unified German tradition of tragic dramas.

As complex as Weiß's literary-historical and formal arguments about the merging of "national" high and low dramatic forms achieved by Stranitzky are in the descriptive section of his book, it is in the transcription of the entire *Nepomuck* play, from which the majority of Benjamin's quotes from Weiß derive, that the unifying and thus tradition-guaranteeing link between the "popular plays" and the high "learned drama" of the Silesians is best achieved. The text of the play runs some seventy-five pages in Weiß's edition; in its orthographic irregularity, archaic spellings, and erratic punctuation, it appears to mimic the manuscript on which it was based. Written in the same "careless" (112) hand as the other fourteen plays, according to editor Weiß, the original *Nepomuck* text was characterized by numerous repetitions, which his transcription retains in the interest of authenticity. The typographical appearance of the play in the Weiß volume, and the short introduction's emphasis on the presence of a Hans Wurst character in the play (112), work to root it in the historical Viennese context and tradition of popular theater. In an interesting move, Weiß also devotes considerable attention to pointing out that precisely this text, again, the "most valuable" of all of the manuscripts (54), was in all likelihood not by the same author as the other fourteen (it "was probably penned by another hand," 55), even though the copyist's version resembles the hand there. Both its unity of plot and seriousness of theme, including the foregrounding of both the piety of Queen Augusta and the loyalty of her confessor, Nepomuck, in the face of threats by her jealous husband, King Wenzeslaus, and the liberal sprinkling of Latin sayings and the grace of the "poetic forms" throughout the text, suggest, Weiß writes, that the play was written, rather, by a "learned author" (111–12) and simply adapted to make it more appropriate for the popular stage. Additional exaggerated stage effects and occasional obscene gestures (112) call attention, for example, to the need to sell the more serious play to a Viennese audience expecting to be entertained. The *Nepomuck* play—in both the original early eighteenth-century Viennese manuscript and in the mid-nineteenth century transcription in the volume from which Benjamin cites—thus unites in itself the high and low strains of



the German dramatic tradition, whose distance from each other had been the cause of such concern to the patriotic Weiß.

Given the synthesizing work that the *Nepomuck* text does in Weiß's book, it is not surprising that even though Benjamin finds the play (which he appears to have actually read) otherwise "uninteresting" (G: 1.1: 383; E: 209), he explicitly identifies it as belonging to the genre of "Viennese plays about affairs of state," on the one hand, and as an exemplification of the language theory of a more generalized Baroque, on the other. Benjamin had cited the Weiß *Nepomuck* play earlier in more generous terms, as the "not inglorious end" of the Baroque tragic drama and in connection with the "end in Vienna of the tradition that parodied" the "affairs of state" genre. As part of the "southern" tradition, it paralleled, Benjamin suggests, the "northern" end of the genre in opera in turn (G: 1.1: 248–49; E: 68–69). This north-south alignment is clearly derived from Weiß's narrative of the two-strains theory of German drama. In its claims for their parallel development, Benjamin's juxtaposition thus reproduces his source's dedication to the creation of a unified dramatic tradition. Finally, while Benjamin does modernize the quotes from Weiß's transcriptions of the *Nepomuck* play in modest fashion when he quotes them, his interventions in the orthography of the play are minor and thus allow the early eighteenth-century Viennese plays to join the ranks of the medieval dramatic forms cited after Mone. "Originally," he writes, "the two were very close to one another" (305; 127). The updating of the Weiß Stranitzky text in the *Tragic Drama* book is in any case not nearly as extreme as that which characterizes the new edition of the texts of the Stranitzky plays prepared by Rudolf Payer von Thurn a half century later. Von Thurn's version of the Viennese legacy, which Benjamin also cites, serves the project of creating the German national tradition in different ways than Mone's and Weiß's. Von Thurn's devotion to the same cause would nevertheless have been obvious to the young scholar, Benjamin, as he held von Thurn's books in his hand.

Rudolf Payer von Thurn's (1867–1932) book, *Wiener Haupt- und Staatsaktionen* (Viennese Plays about Affairs of State) (two volumes, 1908–10), carries the same title as Weiß's. Both von Thurn and his book of course belonged to a different generation (see Adel). His version of the German dramatic legacy as captured in Stranitzky's Viennese oeuvre likewise took a somewhat different form. It nevertheless offered equally compelling material proof of Stranitzky's plays as part of the literary-historical narrative on which Benjamin relied. Von Thurn studied in Vienna with the famous Germanist Jakob Minor, whose work on the "tragedy of fate" was so central to Benjamin's understanding of that genre, and became an archivist and librarian in state service, first in the Ministry of Culture and Education in Vienna, and later at court. Von Thurn's many publications were the result of his access to materials in his archival positions; he wrote a history of the Order of the Golden Fleece, for example, while he was in charge of the Order's archive. His interest in the manuscripts of the folk plays in the imperial library in Vienna is thus not surprising. Von Thurn used his edition of the plays of Stranitzky as part

of his own application for the *Habilitation* in Vienna in 1921, after which he taught at the university until 1932. Finally, in addition to being an archivist and a scholar, von Thurn was a public promoter of the celebration of both local and Pan-German literary culture in Vienna. He wrote frequently on Franz Grillparzer, founded the Vienna Goethe Society and edited its journal, and in 1932 was the organizer of the Goethe exhibit there on the centenary anniversary of the great literary icon's death. Von Thurn's efforts were thus not unlike those of Mone and Weiß, as he used his professional and academic expertise to cultivate familiarity with the German literary tradition and to make it central to a kind of unified linguistic and ethnic culture. Benjamin's use of von Thurn's texts was likewise designed to publicize the "lineage" of a specifically German tragic drama in turn.

Given his professional and scholarly profile, it makes sense that the volume of Stranitzky plays that von Thurn edited was published in a series, the *Schriften des Literarischen Vereins in Wien* (Texts of the Literary Society in Vienna), which resembled the *Bibliothek des Litterarischen Vereins in Stuttgart* (Library of the Literary Society in Stuttgart) in which the *Palm Gryphius* had appeared. Von Thurn's edition differed from Weiß's in that it included transcriptions of all fourteen Stranitzky plays that had not been published before, seven plays in each volume (Benjamin cites only from volume 1, 1908). The result is something like a critical edition of Stranitzky's oeuvre, which thus creates the image of the playwright as something of a legitimate auteur.<sup>39</sup> Published in twenty-four volumes between 1904 and 1919, the mission of the Texts of the Literary Society in Vienna series was to make available, in more or less "modern" format, documents (diaries, letters, biographies, and literary texts) from the literary life of Vienna in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as part of a publishing initiative that, resembling the one in which the *Palm Gryphius* appeared, was devoted to the production of "reprints" of "literary-historical memorials," or monuments, as von Thurn calls them in his introduction (v-vii), to the literary and cultural heritage of the past.<sup>40</sup> While the use of the word is conventional in this context, that most such "monuments" were actually architectural objects suggests the nature of the impact that the publication of these volumes was intended to have.

The architectural analogy is also useful for understanding the details of these volumes. Even though von Thurn insists in his introduction, for example, that he has reproduced in his book the "difficult-to-decipher manuscripts" that he, like Weiß, had found in the Viennese Court Library (vii), in their original form "with

39. The absence from these volumes of the *Nepomuck* play, identified by Weiß as in all likelihood originally written by someone else, as noted above, is explained by reference to the more recent, revised edition of that text by Fritz Homeyer in 1907. I return to the Homeyer text below.

40. On the tradition of such reprints, albeit in a different context, in the series *Neudrucke deutscher Literaturwerke des XVI. und XVII. Jahrhunderts* (Reprints of Works of German Literature from the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries) published by Max Niemeyer Verlag in Halle beginning in 1876 and continuing up through World War I, see Barner, "Literaturwissenschaft" 94–97.

all of their linguistic and orthographic peculiarities" (xxxvii–xxxviii), he also admits to having standardized the texts "following modern principles" (xxxviii), supplementing abbreviations, distinguishing between *das* and *daß*, which in the manuscripts are both rendered as *dz*, as he reports at the end of his introduction, and correcting "obvious" scribal errors as well. Von Thurn does not mention in his introduction the additional modernizations that he undertook, namely that in all fourteen of the plays as he prints them nouns are uniformly capitalized and modern punctuation used. No editorial commentary or any account of textual irregularities or variants at all is given at the bottom of each page of the play texts, as there is (although sparingly) in Weiß. The overall effect is to obscure what are actually the manifold editorial interventions that mark this edition of Stranitzky plays, and thus to present, indeed, perhaps even to substitute his early twentieth-century edition of the plays for the early eighteenth-century originals housed in the archive. Von Thurn's "preservation" strategy was, in other words, not to leave the textual monuments in the state of disrepair to which the passage of time had reduced them, but rather to render them capable of surviving by repairing and restoring them to an integral "modern" shape. There are similarities between von Thurn's efforts and those of Greve, for example, in the latter's "modernizing" edition of Hofmannswaldau, and with Benjamin's updating of the Palm Gryphius as well.

The physical differences and thus distance between von Thurn's collected plays of Stranitzky and Weiß's edition of *Nepomuck* are striking, and they would have been obvious in a comparison of the two volumes as they lay in front of Benjamin on the table in the reading room in the State Library in Berlin, suggesting that even this "folk" tradition was on the move in ways similar to the "high" Silesian plays he read in a variety of editions there. Even though updated, von Thurn's Stranitzky nevertheless continues the cultivation of the narrative of a "native" popular or folk tradition intersecting with the high (or at least higher) tradition of learned plays begun by Weiß, from whom von Thurn distinguishes himself in his introduction (viii), but whose overall project he follows. Von Thurn's Stranitzky edition does so somewhat counterintuitively by noting, first, on the occasion of mentioning the new and recent Homeyer edition of *Nepomuck* (1907), that Weiß's narrative of an "independent" and nonimitative folk origin for these plays may have to be revised. Homeyer had shown that at least five of the Stranitzky plays were based on Italian operas produced in Vienna; "the remaining plays" in all likelihood follow other "operatic texts" that have not survived (Von Thurn viii–ix). This more careful philological work nevertheless provides proof, according to von Thurn, that the Hans Wurst figure so often identified with Stranitzky himself, was genuinely "new" and "original" (ix), as there were no external or foreign models for it in the source texts that Homeyer and others had found. Here, philology serves identitarian ends, for the Stranitzky plays, as von Thurn represents them, can now conclusively be said to combine the popular and indigenous with the learned in ways of which Weiß would have been able to approve. Adducing a full complement of additional prior

research, finally, von Thurn replaces Weiß's popularizing image of Stranitzky as a burlesque actor with an entirely different biography (xi–xxxvii), but one that does the reputation of the Viennese theater no harm. Based on a wide range of both archival sources, “fictional” autobiographical texts by “Hans Wurst,” whom von Thurn takes to be Stranitzky himself, and official state documents, the life of Stranitzky as it emerges here is one of a successful wine dealer, canny entrepreneur, and owner of a hugely popular marionette theater, whom the editor thinks Vienna in the end must heartily thank for his efforts in establishing the city's first permanent German stage (xxviii). The two-volume edition of Stranitzky's (nearly) complete works in a series published by the custodial literary club of record in Vienna during these years is thus the appropriate monument to erect to this important literary native son.

Given the role that these volumes—editions, collections, and anthologies—played in confirming the narrative of a German-language dramatic tradition that could be understood as distinctly “native” because it could be shown to have roots in “ancient” German texts, on the one hand, and because it participated in a broadly conceived indigenous folk tradition, on the other, it is not surprising that Benjamin's consideration of “medieval” precursors for the Baroque tragic drama, as represented by Mone's volume, on the one hand, and of the plays about “affairs of state,” as represented by the plays of Stranitzky collected by Weiß and von Thurn, on the other, for the most part occurs in the first and second sections of the second chapter of the *Tragic Drama* book. As suggested above in chapter 1, it is Benjamin's specific project in these sections to “redeem” both the genre and the Baroque by differentiating the plays that are his object of study from ancient tragedy, as well as from other forms of “Renaissance-ified poetry” (G: 1.1: 240; E: 60). The volumes edited by Mone, Weiß, and von Thurn help him in this project when they are cited snug up against the anti-Renaissance plays of the Silesian Baroque. It is also in these sections that Benjamin adduces further examples from the German Storm-and-Stress and Romantic playwrights (Zacharias Werner, 263 and 300; 84 and 121; Heinrich Wilhelm von Gerstenberg and Johann Anton Leisewitz, 300; 121; and Friedrich Schiller, 301; 122) and goes on to discuss the career of the “drama of fate” (307–16; 128–38), not only in various periods of German literature, but also with specific reference to Shakespeare and Calderón. All of these sources belong to the canon of “extreme” examples of the Baroque tragic drama that it is necessary to “collect” in order to develop a “concept” of the genre. Their ability to provide precisely a “wide material spectrum” is especially obvious in Benjamin's long lists of quotes taken from this broad tradition of texts, which resemble nothing so much as the stringing together of the note-card citations he had taken with him to Capri. Citations from both Gryphius and Stranitzky show their common interest in using source texts from the East in their plays (248–49; 68–69), for example, and lines from Lohenstein's, Gryphius's, and Stranitzky's dramas are quoted in a series and without differentiation to illustrate the famous “indecisiveness of the tyrant”

(250–51; 70–71), Most strikingly, extracts from works by Gryphius, Lohenstein, and Stranitzky, along with those from Shakespeare and Friedrich Schlegel, are lined up one after the other to demonstrate the commitment of the genre of the tragic drama across the ages to having important action take place at night (313–14; 134–35). To the reader, little if anything distinguishes these various generations of dramatic forms from one another in Benjamin's text, which thus quite literally patches together citational fragments from a wide range of texts so that the "constellation" of the German tragic drama may appear.

According to Benjamin, "the German drama of the Baroque" emerged out of the "situation of being caught between" the transcendent "mystery" indicated by the medieval texts, on the one hand, and the worldly "immanence" of the "profane drama" of the *Staatsaktionen*-plays, on the other (G: 1.1: 257–59; E: 78–80). More literally, it emerged out of the documents reproduced by Mone, Weiß, and von Thurn as they lay in front of him alongside the texts of the Silesians as he worked. Somewhat less literally, the epochal in-betweenness of the Baroque was something of an academic commonplace at the time. Both Paul Stachel and Herbert Cysarz had discussed the relationship between "popular drama" and "learned drama" in the seventeenth century in general (Stachel 364) and in the plays of Stranitzky in particular (Cysarz, *Deutsche Barockdichtung* 226), for example. Benjamin's argument about the difference of the Baroque from the ancient and Renaissance dramatic traditions, with its reliance on assertions about the "Passion play character" (G: 1.1: 255; E: 76) of the Baroque plays associated with Mone and about the fundamentally secular nature of the political plays as derived from Weiß and von Thurn, nevertheless stands out insofar as it produces another curious set of claims about the modern and "national" dramatic tradition he would define in his book. These claims have to do with the crucial place that the Spanish and English playwrights Calderón and Shakespeare and their plays occupy in the "origin of the German tragic drama." Calderón and Shakespeare are referenced specifically in the context of Benjamin's citations from the Mone, Weiß, and von Thurn texts and in connection with the "aesthetic aporias of the historical drama" (302; 123) that concern him in the final pages of the second section of the second chapter (304–7; 125–28) of the *Tragic Drama* book.

Benjamin's interest in these pages is famously the figure of the intriguing "minister," or adviser and courtly counselor. Given the Silesian playwrights' historical proximity to courtly power, and their interest in theories of sovereignty, it makes sense that the character of the courtly "intriguer" is ubiquitous in their plays and is thus also a frequent subject of commentary in Benjamin's book (G: 1.1: 274 and 277; E: 95 and 98). Relying on both Weiß and Mone, Benjamin's job here is nevertheless, first, to argue for the intimate connection between the medieval Passion play and the "affairs of state" plays in their common deployment of the devilish "clown" figure and the comic figure of the intriguing counselor often associated with Hans Wurst (304–5; 125–27). Even though the two traditions could be said

to differ because of the increasingly secular nature of the later plays, Benjamin asserts that their juxtaposition is appropriate, for "the bureaucrat takes the place of the devil" as the result of this "secularization." Quotes from Mone and Weiß to the effect that the "clown" and the "fool of the following era" are related immediately follow this assertion. Citing Mone, Benjamin writes: "Just as now in the secular plays, so too already in the fifteenth century in the sacred plays, the clown took over the role of the comic figure in the play" (Mone, qtd. in Benjamin after Weiß, 305; 126). Benjamin confirms here that the association between the two anchors "the tragic drama, which often seems so elevated, in the native soil" (306; 127) of a deep German past. Although not stated explicitly, the argument intersects with the claim he borrows from Hübscher about the antithetical nature of the tragic drama: "Speculative aesthetics was seldom, indeed, probably never able to account for the proximity of the harsh joke and the atrocity" (305; 126). An extension of this tradition into the Silesian plays, with their own foregrounding of "ministerial intrigue" (304; 125), as well as the integration into a single tradition of all of the inventoried dramatic forms signaled by the homogenizing cascades of quotes noted above, would thus seem to be the logical—and unifying—next step.

It is here, however, that Benjamin seems to interrupt his narrative of a continuous "lineage of the Baroque tragic drama" (G: 1.1: 307; E: 128), which includes Mone's and Weiß's plays as well as those of the Second Silesian school, by noting that the "high" German "learned drama" (*Gelehrtdrama*) (304; 125) in fact does not feature the "cabal-producing adviser" nearly as effectively as the popular "folksy plays" of a Stranitzky. (That the term "learned drama" probably refers to the Silesians is suggested by Weiß's use of the term to designate their plays.) According to Benjamin, the Silesians (unlike Stranitzky) do not allow the "comedy" of the popular tradition, which is the necessary antithetical partner of "mourning," to penetrate onto the stage of the tragic drama. As a result, precisely those plays that are at the center of his discussion of the Baroque mysteriously appear to threaten to be exceptions to it. Yet Benjamin stays true to his method of measuring the "concept" by its "extremes" as he proceeds to argue that it is this "failure" that in fact defines these plays best: "Very little characterizes the limits of the art of the German Baroque drama so relentlessly as the fact that it gave over the expression of this significant relationship [between comedy and mourning] to the tradition of the popular play" (306; 127). The clarity of the "form" of the tragic drama as associated with the "lesser" plays of the Silesians is confirmed, in other words, by the claim that, in addition to Stranitzky, there are other playwrights in whose texts the figure of the buffoonish adviser makes a more successful appearance. These are the texts that display the all-important link to both the medieval and the popular traditions best.

It is this link that distinguishes the Baroque tragic drama from ancient tragedy once and for all. "In England," Benjamin writes, "it was Shakespeare who invested figures such as Iago and Polonius with the old scheme of the demonic fool, and with that, comedy entered into tragedy" (G: 1.1: 306; E: 127). Quoting Novalis, who

well before him had already seen Shakespeare's wedding of the "comedy" and the "tragic drama" as a sign of just how different his plays were from "Greek tragic drama" (306–7; 127–28), Benjamin famously goes on to argue that precisely because Shakespeare—and Calderón—had in this respect written "more significant tragic dramas . . . than the seventeenth-century Germans," it was left to the Silesians to produce only a "static type" of the very genre alleged to represent the distinction between the antiquity-loving Renaissance and the "modern" and national German Baroque once and for all (306; 127). It is crucial to remember that Benjamin's claim here is not designed to dismiss the Germans in favor of their betters. Rather, to recall his explanation, from the opening of the chapter, regarding why he includes such a wide range of plays in his "development of the concept" of the Baroque tragic drama to begin with, only the Silesian plays, in combination with the "extremes" of the tradition represented in Mone, Weiß, and von Thurn, can display, "in the frail corpus of a feeble poetry," in the rigid "skeleton" of the imperfect example, that is, the true "form" of the German Baroque *Trauerspiel* (238; 58). That these extremes were quite literally not that far apart—and all necessary to indicate the "idea" of the tragic drama—is suggested by the fact that Benjamin would have discovered the Mone and Weiß texts in the folio volume of the Old Subject Catalog carrying the call number Y22a, just a few volumes to the left of volume Y24, in which the holdings of the Prussian State Library in the area of the Second Silesian school were listed, and where it is likely that the von Thurn books were listed as a newer edition of Weiß in turn.<sup>41</sup> That Shakespeare's plays might have been understood as a somewhat more distant example is possible; after all, the State Library holdings of editions of Shakespeare were listed in volume Z6b of the Old Subject Catalog, somewhat to the right and on the next shelf above Y24. Yet precisely their physical distance from the Silesians on the shelves of the Catalog Room suggests that Shakespeare's plays too could have counted as one of the "extremes" that made up the genre of the tragic drama that it was Benjamin's task to assess. The particular edition of Shakespeare that he cites confirms its membership in the "lineage of the German Baroque drama" in a number of ways, among them, that it was, quite literally, the Bard in German-language garb.

### The Task of the Translator: Shakespeare as German Tragic Drama

The second chapter of Benjamin's *Tragic Drama* book contains two references to Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. The edition of *Hamlet* from which Benjamin quotes this most famous of "German" plays, and the related definition of Shakespeare as a

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41. Again, volume Y22a no longer exists as Benjamin would have consulted it, as it was lost after the evacuation of the State Library holdings during the bombing of Berlin at the end of World War II.

"German" writer just before and during the years Benjamin was working on the *Habilitation*, help explain the place of the Danish prince's tale in the *Tragic Drama* book. Hamlet—both the character and the play that carries his name—had been explicitly identified with the fate of the German nation since the mid-nineteenth century, if not before.<sup>42</sup> The story of the various German-language editions of Shakespeare's plays available for Benjamin to read confirms how this identification came to be, indeed, how Shakespeare could have been said not only *not* to belong only to his birth culture of England, but also not to belong to the original (i.e., sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century) context of the so-called Elizabethan Renaissance at all. Such dislocations may have been what allowed *Hamlet* to be so easily absorbed into Benjamin's and others' studies of the German Baroque. One particular edition, namely the Schlegel-Tieck Shakespeare of 1825–33, is said to have been foundational for the German reception of the Bard up through World War I. This reception is best captured in the words of the famous playwright Gerhart Hauptmann, who wrote in 1915: "And even if [Shakespeare] was born and buried in England, Germany is the land where he truly lives."<sup>43</sup> Benjamin nevertheless did not use the 1825–33 Schlegel-Tieck edition when citing Shakespeare. Rather, he used—or claims in his footnotes to have used—an *updated* edition of Schlegel-Tieck prepared by Hermann Ulrici, who lived from 1806 to 1884. The distinction is important, for, as Kenneth Larson ("Classical German Shakespeare") explains, it was actually only with the republication of the Schlegel-Tieck translation in the second half of the nineteenth century under Ulrici's stewardship that the Schlegel-Tieck Shakespeare "achieved" its "canonical" status as *the* German Shakespeare. The world of Shakespeare studies into which Benjamin stepped when using the Ulrici edition clarifies how the Bard could so easily become part of the "lineage" of modern German Baroque tragic dramas that is at the center of Benjamin's book.

Ulrici was the first president of the German Shakespeare Society. Founded in the aftermath of the 1863 tercentenary celebrations of Shakespeare's birth, the society and its publishing organ, the *Shakespeare Jahrbuch* (Shakespeare Yearbook), played an important role in the consolidation of the "cult of Shakespeare" in Germany (Habicht, "Shakespeare Celebrations" 449), which had already begun much earlier with Lessing's well-known celebration of Shakespeare as the antidote to the allegedly poisonous influence of French classicism on the German dramatic tradition at the dawn of the so-called mythic period (1750–1815) of Shakespeare criticism in Germany (Habicht, "Shakespeare in Nineteenth-Century Germany" 142–43). This was the same period that not only saw the publication of Herder's

42. For the various claims that "Germany is Hamlet," see Habicht, "Shakespeare in Nineteenth-Century Germany" 151–54, and "Shakespeare Celebrations" 453.

43. Hauptmann xii.



and Goethe's famous essays on the Bard but also prepared the way for the famous translation endeavors of August Wilhelm Schlegel (1767–1845) and Ludwig Tieck (1773–1853). As noted above, Ulrici was also the general editor of the *revised* Schlegel-Tieck edition, which the society began publishing in 1867. It is the second edition (1876–77) of Schlegel-Tieck, which was revised under Ulrici's lead, that Benjamin cites as his source.

Ulrici's German Shakespeare was heavily indebted to research on Shakespeare by the English scholar John Payne Collier, whose publications on English sixteenth-century drama in general and on Shakespeare in particular had begun to appear in the early 1830s. Collier's well-known efforts on behalf of the playwright—and Ulrici's intersection with them—explain more about the Benjaminian notion of “origin” than has been understood to date. Ulrici's familiarity with Collier's work is clear in the former's *Ueber Shakspeare's dramatische Kunst und sein Verhältniß zu Calderon und Göthe* (On Shakespeare's Dramatic Art and His Relationship to Calderón and Goethe) of 1839, a book that Benjamin knew and had quoted from extensively in an earlier essay (“‘El mayor monstruo, los celos’ von Calderon und ‘Herodes und Mariamne’ von Hebbel: Bemerkungen zum Problem des historischen Dramas”) that is assumed to have been written in 1923 (*Gesammelte Schriften* 2.1: 246–76, here 259).<sup>44</sup> The Collier texts that Ulrici cites in his 1839 book date from the period of Collier's early work, namely 1831–35. Collier then went on to publish an edition of Shakespeare in 1842–44, which was “supplemented” (Collier's word) by the publication in 1853 of emendations of that text based on Collier's infamous study of the annotations in the so-called Perkins copy of the 1632 Second Folio of Shakespeare's plays—infamous because these annotations were declared falsified, if not outright forgeries, by specialists at the British Museum in 1859 (Ioppolo 32). Nevertheless, not only Ulrici and Karl Elze (1821–89), who was the editor of the *Hamlet* volume in the Ulrici edition cited in Benjamin's notes, but also the German playwright and literary historian Julius Leopold Klein (1808–76), whose *Geschichte des englischen Drama's* (History of English Drama) (1876) is the source of a number of Benjamin's claims about *Hamlet* in the *Tragic Drama* book, continued to rely on Collier's work.<sup>45</sup>

Benjamin could have read *Hamlet* in the Ulrici edition in the Prussian State Library during his nearly year-and-a-half-long period of research there. As noted above, volume Z6b of the Old Subject Catalog (378–90) lists all of the editions of

44. Steiner, “Allegorie und Allergie” 684–85 n. 168, finds significant “prefigurations” of Benjamin's arguments about Calderón to be indebted to this book. I return to Ulrici's 1839 reading of *Hamlet* below.

45. Collier remained embroiled in controversy about possible forgeries of so-called Shakespearean documents for several decades thereafter. See Ioppolo 32–34 with notes there. Benjamin cites Klein in connection with *Hamlet* at G: 1.1: 368 and 402; E: 191 and 228. Collier is an important source for Klein throughout the second volume of his history of English drama, which is the volume from which Benjamin cites. On Benjamin's reliance on Klein for his theory of the afterlife of the medieval Vice figure in Shakespeare's plays, see Steiner, “Allegorie und Allergie” 690.

Shakespeare that would have been available there to Benjamin at the time. The State Library owned a large number of Shakespeare editions in both English and German, from a copy of the famous First Folio of 1623 and the original Schlegel translation from 1821–23, on the one hand, to numerous copies of both the subsequent Schlegel-Tieck version and the Ulrici revisions from 1867–71 and 1876–77 as well. The “panorama” (G: 1.1: 237; E: 56) of the continuous lineage of German Shakespeares, beginning with the original Schlegel and Schlegel-Tieck and extending into the time of both the revised text from which he claims he quotes and his own book, is visible in the tragic drama study itself as it was published in 1928. There, Benjamin’s first *Hamlet* citation on pages 130 and 131 reads: “Dies ist die wahre Spükezeit der Nacht/Wo Gräfte gähnen, und die Hölle selbst / Pest haucht aus ihrer Welt.” These famous lines are from the end of act 3, scene 2, and in the Arden Shakespeare read: “’Tis now the very witching time of night, When churchyards yawn and hell itself [breathes] out Contagion to this world.” Benjamin’s quote in the 1928 edition of the *Tragic Drama* book initially seems peculiar, not only because he appears to have preferred “breathes out” (*haucht*), which is the First Folio (1623) version of this line (contested, but nevertheless preferred over the Second Quarto of 1604’s earlier “breakes” out<sup>46</sup>), but also because Benjamin’s emendation changes the directionality of the “Contagion” (*Pest*). As indicated in the quote from the Arden edition above, that is, both the 1604 Quarto and the 1623 Folio of *Hamlet* read “to this world”; that is, the “Contagion” and the ghost of his father come “into this,” Hamlet’s, world. In the 1876–77 Ulrici edition of the Schlegel-Tieck translation of *Hamlet* that Benjamin had identified as the source of the quotation in his original note (*Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels* [1928] 248), this original (i.e., English-language) directionality is in fact maintained. There the lines read: “Nun ist die wahre Spükezeit der Nacht, / Wo Gräfte gähnen, und die Hölle selbst / Pest haucht in diese Welt,” “to this world” (Ulrici, *Shakespeare’s dramatische Werke* 98). The 1869 first edition of the Ulrici Schlegel-Tieck (also 98) also renders the line “to this world” (*in diese*), as do both the original Schlegel translation of *Hamlet* from 1798 and the Schlegel-Tieck translation of 1821–23.<sup>47</sup> Benjamin’s version, however, as cited above, reads “aus ihrer Welt,” “out of its world”; that is, it is out of the world of hell that the “Contagion” proceeds on its way to circulating in an open-ended set of possible places and times. The 1928 quote thus breaks with the continuity of the German tradition as figured in volume Z6b. “Origin”-like, Benjamin’s version nevertheless gives the Shakespeare text a further afterlife in turn.

46. On the superiority of the quarto over the folio, still see Wilson, who nevertheless lists the “breakes/breathes” confusion under the heading “Misprints Not Yet Accounted For” (120).

47. Shakespeare, *Shakespeare’s dramatische Werke* (1798) 263. I read the Schlegel-Tieck translation of *Hamlet* in its third edition: Shakespeare, *Shakespeare’s dramatische Werke* (1844) here 95.

Even with its “correction,” Benjamin’s *Hamlet* quote allows his book to join the ranks of a German Shakespeare that not only stretches back through Ulrici to Schlegel-Tieck, but also brings that tradition “out of” these illustrious origins “into” his own time and text. It is not just that Benjamin could have read Shakespeare in any one of these translations that allows a German identity to emerge for the play. His desire to cast *Hamlet* as German may also be detected when, in the *Tragic Drama* book, the “witching time of night” quote is not identified as deriving from Shakespeare’s play; rather, unattributed, it is sandwiched in between references to the German-language plays of Gryphius and Lohenstein, on the one hand, and of Stranitzky, on the other, at a point in Benjamin’s argument (G: 1.1: 313–14; E: 134–35) where he is heaping citation on citation in support of an argument about the ongoing “origin” of the *German* tragic drama. That Benjamin cites *Hamlet* after the Ulrici edition offers an additionally precise window, then, on what it meant to offer the play as part of the German tradition. The background emerges, first, out of the story of the vexed tradition of English-language editions of Shakespeare on which some of the most famous German translators and editors, including Ulrici, relied in their work.

Edmond Malone’s 1790 edition of Shakespeare’s plays is the one on which the original Schlegel-Tieck edition appears to have been based (Habicht, “Shakespeare in Nineteenth-Century Germany” 143). According to Margreta de Grazia, the most important characteristic of Malone’s Shakespeare was the innovation it represented in the editorial tradition. Emphasizing historical research and using documents and archives of materials from the sixteenth century to corroborate individual readings and emendations of orthography and diction in the text, Malone (1741–1812) had reversed the protocols that had become standard in seventeenth- and early to mid-eighteenth-century editorial practice. In these earlier traditions, “actual usage” in Shakespeare’s day had been supplanted by stylistic, orthographic, and even moralistic catalogs of Shakespeare’s “Beauties and Faults” (Pope, qtd. in de Grazia 63) developed according to the standards of the various editors’ times. Malone sought, in his edition and textual apparatus, to “withstand” the “modern sophistications and foreign admixtures” that “history” (De Grazia 6) had introduced into the Bard’s plays in this way. He did so by citing not post-1623 updated editions of Shakespeare by the likes of Nicholas Rowe (1709), Samuel Johnson (1765), and Alexander Pope (1723–25, 1747), but rather, only “Shakespeare’s contemporaries to support his use of phraseology and metre” (De Grazia 119). By consulting, collecting, and referring only to the “written and spoken language of Shakespeare’s period” (De Grazia 120), in other words, Malone’s mission was to “expunge” the “contamination” of the texts by printers’ blunders or editorial interpolations, or, indeed, by any interventions in the text subsequent to the 1623 Folio. Malone’s very un-Benjaminian “work” was thus firmly rooted, indeed, immobilized, in the time of its original making, in the moment of the text’s genesis, in other words.

Malone's method was nevertheless also constitutive of the invention of the canon of what is now considered sixteenth-century, Elizabethan, and Renaissance British literature, since "in the search for illuminating parallels to passages in Shakespeare's plays and poems, hundreds of formerly neglected contemporary literary materials were scrutinized," leading in the end, de Grazia writes, to the constitution of a "body of works" that became "characteristic" of a period with a "vocabulary, grammar, and poetics of its own" (122). The English Renaissance thus seems to have been created by editorial decree. Given this background, it is not surprising that Malone's was the edition that Schlegel and Tieck appear to have used as the basis of their translation, albeit in a much more complicated cooperative fashion than usually assumed, as Larson has shown. Tieck himself was quite interested, as suggested in the two volumes of *Altenglisches Theater* (Old English Theater) (1811) that appeared under his name and in his years of work on *Shakespeares Vorschule* (Shakespeare's Predecessors) (1823 and 1829), in the tradition of plays predating Shakespeare's (Larson, "Origins of the 'Schlegel-Tieck' Shakespeare" 24), and thus in an English Renaissance tradition assumed to have been all of a piece. Tieck seems to have understood, in other words, along with Malone, that Shakespeare belonged to the Renaissance, or at least to a bounded set of historical norms and a specific time.

By the high (or low) point of his career in the 1850s and 1860s, John Payne Collier (1789–1883), on whose work Ulrici, the general editor of the text from which Benjamin cites, relied, had a very different understanding from that of Malone of the authenticity of Shakespeare's plays and, indeed, of what the "original" of a text was. Again, it was Collier's research on Shakespeare on which Ulrici based his 1839 *Ueber Shakespeares dramatische Kunst* (On Shakespeare's Dramatic Art), the book that Benjamin read and cited in an essay written at the same time as he was working on the *Tragic Drama* book. Ulrici writes: "Shakespeare and the history of English drama is mostly in debt to Payne Collier's efforts" (*Ueber Shakespeares dramatische Kunst* v). He repeats the claim in the second, supplemented edition of the 1839 book, *Shakespeare's dramatische Kunst: Geschichte und Charakteristik* (Shakespeare's Dramatic Art: History and Characteristic) (1847) ("Vorwort," viii–ix). Not only had Collier, in his 1842–44 edition of Shakespeare's plays, put forth the maverick argument that "Shakespeare had chiefly employed his pen in the revival, alteration, and improvement of existing dramas" (Ioppolo 32), thus de-authorizing Shakespeare as the singular genius he had been alleged to be. He also subsequently and more spectacularly retracted "much of his editorial comment and criticism" originally published there (i.e., in the 1844 edition) in his updated *Notes and Emendations to the Text of Shakespeare's Plays*, published in 1853. In the *Notes and Emendations* volume, Collier offers textual readings of the plays based on his recent purchase and use of the controversial Perkins Folio. Allegedly a copy of the 1632 Second Folio, the Perkins text contained substantial corrections in its margins, which, according to Collier, had been "penned in" there by Thomas Perkins,

a member of the acting company The King's Men, allegedly with Shakespeare's consent (Ioppolo 32). These were nevertheless the "corrections" that were subsequently found to have been tampered with, if not outright falsified and forged, by none other than Collier himself. Although Collier had earlier spent decades tracking down the sources of one of the earliest anthologies of memorable quotations extant from the period, the so-called *Englands Parnassus* of 1600, then, he is best remembered for his problematic association with this 1853 plagiarized or, if that is too strong, at least post-Shakespeare Shakespeare, whose texts were thus revealed to be by no means bound to the sixteenth century, the Renaissance, or any one edition of Shakespeare's plays.<sup>48</sup>

As noted above, Ulrici relied heavily on Collier in his 1839 study of Shakespeare, the book that Benjamin knew. It is Collier's work, according to Ulrici, that "in both public and private libraries all over England" had made it possible for "many an important document" to be found; thus, Ulrici writes, indirectly pointing to the subsequent fraud, "not only was [it possible] to confirm much that was once doubtful, but several entirely new and unexpected pieces of information were revealed" (*Ueber Shakespeares dramatische Kunst* v). Of course Ulrici could not have known in 1839 that Collier would go on to forge materials in 1853. Nevertheless, what Ulrici liked about Collier's work in 1839 was that it in fact "confirms" many of the earlier "conjectures by Tieck," whose "contribution" it had in any case been to have used both the quartos and the folio to "[sweep] away the chaff of the arbitrary and highly prosaic emendations by the English editors" (vi). In Ulrici's eyes, the Englishman Collier's work thus only confirmed the earlier German translator's ability to understand the English playwright better than the latter's countrymen. Even in the much later general introduction to volume 1 of the first edition of Schlegel-Tieck (1867–71; vol. 1, 1867), in which Ulrici gives a thorough review of the editorial traditions in both English and German (83–113), Collier's earlier work, up through 1840, is still mentioned as having contributed in "significant" ways to "historical research" (96–97). Several pages later, the forgeries—"documents" that "he had fabricated himself with the intention to deceive" (99)—are mentioned, yet in an odd claim that appears to want to distinguish Collier's work as an editor from his work as a "critic." For Ulrici, it was the "critic" Collier who had engaged in forgery, not the editor, even though it is obvious, in Collier's own words, that the 1853 *Notes and Emendations* were as much of an editorial effort as the earlier edition itself. They contain proof, Collier writes there, of "the restored language of Shakespeare" himself (19). Even though Collier's "fabrication" of other documents is noted frequently elsewhere in Ulrici's introduction (e.g., 36, 39n, and 43), it is only mentioned in such a way as to show that, in the meantime, other, more

48. On the problematic "authenticity" of the *Englands Parnassus* anthology itself, see de Grazia 218–19.

respectable documents had demonstrated that Collier's fakes had not been so far off the mark.

Ulrici's apologetic attitude toward Collier and his perhaps problematic, but nevertheless decisively nongenealogical poetics of translation in the lengthy foreword to the edition of Shakespeare that Benjamin cites explain, at the level of editorial logic, how he can claim that it is a "commonly acknowledged fact" that August Wilhelm Schlegel's translation of Shakespeare had made "England's greatest dramatic poet into the spiritual property of the German nation" (Ulrici, "Allgemeine Einleitung" 110–11). After the Schlegel-Tieck translation, Shakespeare had become not only Germany's "adopted son" (114), according to Ulrici, but also, and perhaps more importantly, entirely "nationalized" (111) by the Germans. It was also Ulrici who, as president of the German Shakespeare Society, had called in his annual report for 1866, printed in the *Shakespeare Yearbook* of 1867, for the Germans to take complete ownership of the Bard: "We want to, as it were, de-Anglicize the Englishman Shakespeare" (*Shakespeare Jahrbuch* 2 [1867]: 2). In light of Ulrici's project to teutonify Shakespeare editorially, it is only ironic that Karl Elze (1821–89) of Dessau, who later became a professor of English philology at the University at Halle and who was the author of the individual "Annotations" and "Notes on *Hamlet*" that appeared in volume 6 of the Ulrici Schlegel-Tieck edition that Benjamin cites, should write that Schlegel "followed the quarto texts of *Hamlet* almost universally in the present play [i.e., *Hamlet*]" (Elze in Ulrici, *Shakespeare's dramatische Werke* 165). The word "breathes" (*haucht*), which appears just before the troublesome "into this world" (*in diese Welt*) phrase in all of the German editions, of course follows the "breathes" of the Folio rather than the "breakes" of the Quarto. Elze's claim about the affiliation of the updated Schlegel-Tieck *Hamlet* with the quartos, which, as he notes earlier in his introductory remarks, had in fact been discovered only fairly recently (Elze in Ulrici, *Shakespeare's Dramatische Werke* 10), is thus not quite correct. Moreover, in the context of an edition overseen by Ulrici, with his indebtedness to Collier, Elze's remark seems counterintuitive, since what he is suggesting is that the older and closer to the original English source the version of a text is, the better and more authentic it can be assumed to be. Collier's premise had been precisely the opposite, namely that an updated Shakespeare was inevitably the better one.

In his 1877 *Hamlet* introduction (Elze in Ulrici, *Shakespeare's dramatische Werke* 3–14), Elze actually refers to Collier on several occasions (4, 7, 9) in his discussion of various reputable commentators on Shakespeare and the British dramatic tradition without mentioning the forgeries, which were well known by this time. Elze's participation in the reediting of Schlegel-Tieck, and his claim at the end of his introduction that it had been "the leading minds of our nation," including Lessing, Schlegel, and Tieck, who had accomplished the "cleansing process" of the Bard's plays, which, having been so "deformed" over the years, were now restored "to their original purity" (14), suggest, in un-Malsonian fashion, that it is only by

moving away from the context of its particular historical and linguistic “genesis” (*Entstehung*) that an “original” text of *Hamlet* in the Benjaminian sense could be produced. In keeping with Ulrici’s program of “de-Anglicization” of the Bard, the “purest” *Hamlet* would thus be the one that was the furthest removed from its historical moment of genesis—and thus both German and not necessarily tied to the English Renaissance at all.

Benjamin could have consulted the 1876–77 edition of the Ulrici Shakespeare in the State Library, as noted above. He had nevertheless already been reading Shakespeare for quite a long time before he began his research for the *Tragic Drama* book; the editors of the Frankfurt edition describe “reading evenings” in Berlin beginning in 1908, for example, during which Shakespeare’s works were read aloud in a small circle of friends (*Gesammelte Schriften* 2.3: 1420). Already by 1918, however, in notes on *As You Like It*, for example, even as Benjamin describes Shakespeare as living “at the time of the Renaissance” and as a playwright who had thoughts on “infinity” analogous to those of the great Renaissance figures of Nicolas of Cusa, Leonardo, and Michelangelo, he declares the Bard ultimately independent of the particular historical period. Indeed, Shakespeare is, according to Benjamin, “a Romantic poet,” “the greatest Romantic” in fact (*Gesammelte Schriften* 2.2: 610). The claim is conventional and may have been indebted to Hegel’s description of Shakespeare as “essentially romantic,” as Werner Habicht suggests (“Shakespeare in Nineteenth-Century Germany” 146). Another link to a “Romantic” Shakespeare would have been the Schlegel-Tieck German-language edition that Benjamin appears to have been using, as the citation of the titles of the plays in German—*Wie es Euch Gefällt* and *Sturm*—in these notes suggests that it was. A Hegelian Shakespeare could also have emerged out of a reading of this edition, since in addition to his devotion to the Shakespeare cult, Ulrici was deeply involved in Hegelian debates, although perhaps somewhat differently than Habicht indicates. It was in fact via some of Ulrici’s other work that by the time he wrote the *Tragic Drama* book Benjamin could have understood that Shakespeare was also something more than a “Romantic,” indeed, that he was also the author and creator of a “Christian” Hamlet, who, “unique in the tragic drama[,] is the audience (*Zuschauer*) of God’s grace.” It was Shakespeare as the creator of this Hamlet who was, according to Benjamin, the only writer of tragic dramas who could “cause Christian sparks to arise out of the melancholy rigidity of the Baroque,” something “the German tragic drama” had never been able to do (G: 1.1: 334–35; E: 158).

It is commonly assumed that Benjamin was indebted for his reading of a “Christian” Shakespeare to the man he considered the “most proper reader” (*Briefe* 1: 374) of the *Tragic Drama* book, namely Florens Christian Rang (1864–1924).<sup>49</sup> Benjamin writes to Hugo von Hofmannsthal in the winter of 1925, for example,

49. On Rang’s and Benjamin’s relationship, see Steiner, *Die Geburt der Kritik*.

after the withdrawal of his thesis from Frankfurt, that he had never “felt at home with Shakespeare, but, rather, could approach him only at a distance and periodically”; it was, moreover, only “in the company of Florens Christian Rang” that he had learned what it meant to be truly “comfortable with him [Shakespeare]” (*Briefe* 1: 406). Rang had commented on the figure of Hamlet as “the male version of the figure of Melancholy, that Dürer had modeled as female” (Rang, *Shakespeare der Christ* 166), for example, and the juxtaposition of Hamlet with Dürer’s engraving is central to Benjamin’s argument about the role of melancholy in a specifically Lutheran Baroque, as I show in chapter 3. But in the book in which Rang makes this claim, published posthumously as *Shakespeare der Christ* (Shakespeare the Christian) (1954), the focus is specifically on Shakespeare as a “poet of sonnets.”<sup>50</sup> For an extended reading of the *plays* as “Christian,” Benjamin may have had to turn to Ulrici instead.

The most relevant—and proximate—book on this topic was in fact by Ulrici. It was also a book that Benjamin had already read and cited in his earlier essay, “‘El mayor monstruo, los celos’ von Calderon und ‘Herodes und Mariamne’ von Hebbel,” as noted above. In his 1839 *Ueber Shakespeare’s dramatische Kunst* (On Shakespeare’s Dramatic Art), Ulrici had already (and quite a bit earlier than Rang) claimed to be presenting “an assessment of Shakespeare’s plays from the highest point of contemporary aesthetics, namely Christian aesthetics” (vii). The position was in line with his perhaps better-known scholarship; indeed, Ulrici’s later critical assessment of Hegelian idealistic rationalism from the point of view of a more theistically informed position was the basis of his *Glauben und Wissen* (Faith and Knowledge) (1858), *Gott und die Natur* (God and Nature) (1862), and *Gott und der Mensch* (God and Man) (1866–73), all published during the same years that he was overseeing the new edition of Shakespeare’s works based on Schlegel-Tieck.<sup>51</sup> But his position on religion is also apparent in the earlier, 1839 book, in which he offers a reading of the character Hamlet as a “Christ,” a Christian, who, “still struggling with his human nature and its demand for revenge” (*Ueber Shakespeare’s dramatische Kunst* 233) and “still caught in an earthly existence” (236) throughout the play, finally dies “in peaceful longing and transfiguration” (242). Ulrici’s Hamlet dies believing in “the idea of a divine justice that is all-guiding” (241) and “with a firm trust in heaven’s pardon and salvation” (242). The words are unmistakably audible in the eleventh-hour, Lutheran insight into God’s grace that characterizes Benjamin’s Hamlet too, and may also explain Benjamin’s claim earlier in this section

50. For many years and especially after 1920, Rang had been deeply immersed in the sonnets as part of a translation project. See Jäger 119–45. It is fascinating that, according to Steiner, Rang placed “his translation of the sonnets in a historically parallel situation to the Schlegel-Tieck translation of the plays” (*Die Geburt der Kritik* 235). Jäger claims that Rang and Benjamin also corresponded about and discussed the plays.

51. See Habicht, “Shakespeare in Nineteenth-Century Germany” 146, for the suggestion that Ulrici may have written “under the influence of Hegel.”



that “this, Hamlet’s, word is philosophically Wittenbergian” (G: 1.1: 317; E: 138).<sup>52</sup> In any case, Ulrici was an author whose work Benjamin appears to have known perhaps as early as 1918–19, but certainly since 1923, when the Frankfurt editors suggest the Calderón-Hebbel essay was written (see *Gesammelte Schriften* 2.3: 998). Using Ulrici’s edition of *Hamlet* may well have made sense, either in a copy of the Ulrici Schlegel-Tieck Benjamin could have owned as a student, or the copy he could have consulted during his months of research in the State Library in Berlin.

The German-language Shakespeare Benjamin cites in the *Tragic Drama* book was also more than the literal textual one discussed here, however. Another version of the Bard is visible in the appearance of other more figuratively updated German Shakespeares circulating widely in print at about this same time. Benjamin’s writings from approximately these same years provide evidence that he was familiar with at least two of these additional versions. The profile of the playwright captured in Friedrich Gundolf’s famous *Shakespeare und der deutsche Geist* (Shakespeare and the German Spirit) (1911), while controversial, was perhaps the most well known—or at least the one with the greatest popular impact—of the many literary-historical and critical versions of a German Shakespeare available in the early twentieth century. Gundolf’s book gave the “myth of Shakespeare’s role as a catalyst of classical-romantic German thinking . . . its quasi-definitive state” (Habicht, “Shakespeare in Nineteenth-Century Germany” 143).<sup>53</sup> Originally Gundolf’s *Habilitation*, the book followed his own programmatic recommendations, registered in an essay from 1912, to produce cultural “heroes” by means of a “discerning transformation” of the past into a model for the present (qtd. in Osterkamp 164–65). Gundolf (1880–1931) had himself done just this in his own ten-volume translation of Shakespeare’s plays. While he based his edition on Schlegel’s translation as he had “reviewed” it (the volume contains “A. W. von Schlegels Uebersetzung durchgesehen,” the elaborately decorative Jugendstil typeface of the edition’s title page declares), it was also “in part newly translated” (*zum Teil neu uebersetzt*), as the title also makes clear.

This version of Shakespeare, reinvented for his own modern time, had been undertaken by the young Gundolf at the behest of the oracular poet-genius Stefan George (Osterkamp 164) and was published between 1908 and 1918 (second edition, 1920–21) as a more popular competitor for Ulrici’s late nineteenth-century edition.<sup>54</sup> It was nevertheless the lengthy monograph *Shakespeare und der deutsche Geist* (Shakespeare and the German Spirit), which appeared in the midst of the

52. Benjamin goes on to claim that Hamlet is protesting the Lutheran position here. See Steiner, “Traurige Spiele” 35, on the role of Ulrici’s work in Benjamin’s understanding of Calderón; Steiner calls it a “productive utilization of materials he found in Ulrici” (36).

53. On the reaction to Gundolf in principle and to his Shakespeare book in particular in the context of Baroque scholarship, see H.-H. Müller, *Barockforschung* 136–47.

54. Steiner notes the intersection of Rang’s and George’s versions of Shakespeare’s sonnets (*Die Geburt der Kritik* 251–52). On Benjamin’s complicated intersection with Gundolf and George, see Brodersen, *Spinne im eigenen Netz* 123–25 and 219–22; and with abundant bibliography, Braungart.

publication of Gundolf's "translations" of the plays, that really made his reputation, for it represented an open challenge to what he perceived as the vacuous work of traditional philology of the sort that could have been associated with the Ulrici edition. Written by an author who, although an outsider in the academy, in fact became "the most famous scholar of German literature of his time,"<sup>55</sup> the book had gone through six editions by 1927. It had given Shakespeare an even newer profile as a "German" in ways that had very little to do with a traditional understanding of his origins, or of his identity as an English Renaissance playwright at all, by the time Benjamin included him among the other playwrights of the "German" tragic drama in his book. Gundolf's massive tome offers additional evidence of what Shakespeare signified in Germany at the time. Although based on a radically different scholarly method and trajectory than Ulrici's, Gundolf's book was aimed at a similar goal, namely the appropriation of Shakespeare as part of modern Germany's cultural heritage.

Gundolf's book "translates" Shakespeare into a German playwright by tracking his "penetration" "into German writing up through Romanticism," showing how his plays had made German poetry "fertile" (Gundolf, *Shakespeare und der deutsche Geist* vii) up through the time of Schlegel's and Tieck's work. This sexualized understanding of the English playwright's role in the "formation of the German spirit" (105) had begun, according to Gundolf, already in the seventeenth century (7–8), when versions of his plays traveled across the English Channel in the repertoires of the so-called English comedians, whose highly successful performances at a number of late sixteenth-century German courts were nevertheless geared to the lesser needs of a German audience caught in a process of cultural "decline" (4–5, 33, 56); the "Comoedianten" offered to these local consumers terrifying tragedy and grotesque farce in ways very much at odds with the culture of contemporaneous England, Gundolf writes, which was enjoying a true "Renaissance" of drama at the time (12; cf. also 35 and 56). While Gundolf's description of such early Shakespearean moments in Germany is entirely condemnatory, in substance it mirrors Ulrici's own descriptions of the "English actors" and the productions of their plays at German courts in his general introduction ("Allgemeine Einleitung" 101–2), where Ulrici specifically mentions their influence on the Silesian playwright Gryphius. Gundolf also devotes a lengthy early section of his *Shakespeare and the German Spirit* (71–82) to a comparative reading of Gryphius and Shakespeare, although not necessarily to Gryphius's benefit, in his project of assessing this early "stage of Shakespeare's impact on the German spirit" (71).<sup>56</sup> When Benjamin discussed the two

55. The career of the controversial Gundolf (originally Gundelfinger), first in association, then at odds with the George Circle, has received much scholarly attention. Osterkamp provides an excellent overview and gives a full bibliography. The quote here is from Osterkamp 162. Gundolf's monumental *Shakespeare: Sein Wesen und Werk* (Shakespeare: His Essence and Work) appeared in 1928, the same year as Benjamin's *Tragic Drama* book.

56. There are obvious continuities here with Weiß's discussions of the history of German-language drama (15–20).

playwrights together and in the context of both the popular dramatic tradition and “the German tragic drama,” as he does, he thus found himself in good company.

Gundolf’s story of the “rebirth” and Renaissance of Shakespeare “as a German linguistic unity,” especially in Schlegel’s translation (Gundolf, *Shakespeare und der deutsche Geist* 354), stops with the German Romantics at the outset of the nineteenth century. The chronology aligns his book with Ulrici’s in indirect fashion, for, according to Gundolf, since then there had been no further versions of Shakespeare as an expression of the German “spirit” (355–56). It for this reason that both his and Ulrici’s editions had to rely on Tieck’s and Schlegel’s work. The narrative of a post-Romantic literary void may well have been what prompted Gundolf to call for a further Renaissance, for a “new German spirit,” to produce yet another “new image of Shakespeare” (358), one more in line with the grand achievements up through Schlegel, in Gundolf’s own time. Gundolf’s translation—based on Schlegel’s and appearing simultaneously with the monograph—of course fits the bill, as it takes up the banner in ways not unlike Ulrici’s Schlegel-Tieck, which had itself extended that original project.<sup>57</sup> Such literary-historical lineages, and the arc from the Baroque tragic drama up through the Storm and Stress and Romantic playwrights that Gundolf describes, mirror those articulated by Benjamin, as indicated above in chapter 1. It comes as no surprise, then, that in act 3, scene 2, of *Hamlet*, in Gundolf’s translation, which appeared in the ninth volume of his 1914 edition of the plays, *Shakespeare in deutscher Sprache* (Shakespeare in German), as also in Benjamin’s book, as noted above, we can read: “Nun ist die wahre Spükezeit der Nacht / Wo Grüfte gähnen, und die Hölle selbst / Pest haucht in diese Welt” (n.p.). Gundolf’s Hamlet speaks his lines in the same German as Schlegel’s, Schlegel-Tieck’s, Ulrici’s—and Benjamin’s—Hamlets, in other words, and for good reason, as they are all evidence of the presence of Shakespeare moving not “out of hell,” but rather “into” the “world” of “the German spirit.”

Even though Gundolf’s *Shakespeare and the German Spirit* does not appear among the volumes listed in Benjamin’s account of the books he had read (*Gesammelte Schriften* 7: 437–76), the flood of copies in the book market—along with the reality of Gundolf’s academic notoriety (he was famously considered, but ultimately rejected as the successor not only to the famous Erich Schmidt in Berlin [Osterkamp 166–70; Höppner “Eine Institution wehrt sich” 362–80], but also to countless other well-known professorial chairs)—would have made it difficult for anyone interested in Shakespeare not to know it or its author at the time.<sup>58</sup>

57. According to Gundolf in the merciless critiques that fill his pages, it would be difficult to overlook that most of the earlier German Shakespeares had actually for the most part failed to grasp the “power” and “will to realism” that was Shakespeare’s “deepest instinct” (*Shakespeare und der deutsche Geist* 358), a task that Gundolf’s own “new” German Shakespeare will clearly fulfill.

58. Since Benjamin’s list begins only after 1916–17, according to the Frankfurt editors, it is possible that Gundolf’s 1911 book might have been among the 461 some titles read before that point in time.

Benjamin nevertheless does list a number of other Gundolf titles—on Opitz, Gryphius, and Annette von Droste-Hülshoff, for example—as books that he had read (*Gesammelte Schriften* 7: 454, 459, 464). He also reviewed Gundolf's 1927 book on the Silesian playwright Andreas Gryphius for the feuilleton of the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, dated 1 January 1928 (3: 86–88)—albeit in decidedly unfriendly terms. That much of the review recalls arguments from Benjamin's own *Tragic Drama* book, fashioned here as critiques of Gundolf's failure to understand the "formal world" of Gryphius's work (87), is not surprising, as Benjamin's book had just appeared. In this brief little book on the Silesian poet, which Gundolf claims is based on lectures given a decade before, he declares he wants to comment on Gryphius's status against the background of the "fashionable frenzy that is accompanying the desired scholarly reappraisal of German Baroque poetry" (*Andreas Gryphius*, Vorwort, n.p.). The timing suggests that it may well have been in the aftermath of and in reaction to approaches such as Fritz Strich's in 1916 that Gundolf originally gave these lectures, which he then some years later turned into the book that Benjamin read. Gundolf's remark nevertheless also suggests that the "frenzy" for the Baroque had not yet settled down.<sup>59</sup> And even though Gundolf is at least as ungenerous to the Silesian playwright in *Andreas Gryphius* as he had been in the earlier Shakespeare book—"Gryphius has nothing to do with Shakespeare," he writes (*Andreas Gryphius* 6)—his repeated juxtapositions of the two (17, 20, 22, 26, 29–30, 38, 51, 57–58, 62) suggest that it would be fair to ask the question whether for Gundolf, Gryphius had not been, like Shakespeare, a man of the Renaissance (as Shakespeare had been in his *Shakespeare and the German Spirit*), or whether, perhaps, as Gundolf writes here, he had been a playwright whose work "makes quite clear for us what distinguishes the Baroque from [the Gothic and the Rococo]" (17). For Gundolf, as for Benjamin, then, it is Gryphius in juxtaposition to Shakespeare who defines the Baroque.

In this respect, it is only confusing when Benjamin writes in his review of Gundolf's *Andreas Gryphius* that Gundolf's reading of the Baroque playwright is "completely at odds" with "the paths of [current] research on the Baroque" (*Gesammelte Schriften* 3: 87), by which he presumably means his own book. For Benjamin, Gryphius emerges as a quintessentially Baroque writer and as an author not of tragedies, but rather of tragic dramas, and this precisely in juxtaposition to Shakespeare. In the *Tragic Drama* book, it is in *Hamlet* that one can best observe those elements of the tragic drama that Shakespeare's plays embodied but the German texts did not reflect. Benjamin famously writes: "At least once the period succeeded in calling up a figure that corresponded to the split between the neo-antique and the medieval in which the Baroque had seen the melancholic man. Germany was not able to do it,

59. Gundolf had studied with Wölfflin in Berlin in the years after his *Renaissance and Baroque* book had made the art historian famous (Osterkamp 163), and thus was directly familiar with debates about the Baroque as well.

however. This figure was Hamlet" (G: 1.1: 334; E: 157). Here, in a comparative turn that, again, does not differ substantially from Gundolf's, it is Shakespeare's *Hamlet* that confirms where the German Baroque tragic drama stands. *Hamlet* was thus a German text in both the Ulrici edition of Shakespeare and in the edition circulating under Gundolf's name (which was not significantly different from Ulrici's). The Bard can thus quite legitimately be, for Benjamin, "the foundation of the new form of drama" (*Gesammelte Schriften* 1.3: 915).

Gundolf's person and his work on Shakespeare were highly visible in the years Benjamin was working on the *Tragic Drama* book. There was, however, another literary-historical and critical version of Shakespeare that competed with Gundolf's during these years, one that brought the Bard even closer to the fold of the German Baroque poets than the parallels drawn between his work and Gryphius's by Ulrici and Gundolf might suggest. Already by 1916, Oskar Walzel (1864–1944) had published his now famous essay "Shakespeares dramatische Baukunst" (Shakespeare's Dramatic Architecture), in which an explicitly Baroque Shakespeare is described. Walzel, whose literary-historical project Walter Schmitz describes as "nationally oriented," was well known as a mediator not only between academe and a broader bourgeois literate public, but also to contemporary writers and artists alike.<sup>60</sup> The piece nevertheless originally appeared in the academically very respectable *Shakespeare Yearbook* 52 (1916) and was then reprinted in Walzel's 1926 *Das Wortkunstwerk* (The Linguistic Work of Art), which appeared after Walzel had accepted a distinguished professorship in Bonn. In Walzel's essay on Shakespeare, which originally appeared in the same year, and thus at the very birth hour of German Baroque studies, as Fritz Strich's essay on the "Baroque lyric style," the English playwright was—if not for the first time, then certainly with the most resonance, given the place of publication—labeled a "Baroque" playwright.<sup>61</sup>

Benjamin reviewed Walzel's *Linguistic Work of Art* in the feuilleton of the *Frankfurter Zeitung* on 7 November 1926 (*Gesammelte Schriften* 3: 50–51); that he was aware in 1926 of the context in which Walzel's article had originally appeared in 1916 is clear there when he discusses Walzel's place in a tradition of "formal analysis" (50) that takes as its anchors the work of Alois Riegl and Heinrich Wölfflin, for example, so prominent the decade before. Benjamin's commentary on Walzel's *Linguistic Work of Art*, which was a collection of sixteen essays published over the course of the previous two decades, focuses on the essays' relationship to the "recent trends in aesthetics" associated with the two art theorists; Benjamin

60. See Schmitz 124 and 119–20 also on the shape this nationalism took during the National Socialist years.

61. Hans-Harald Müller ("Die Übertragung des Barockbegriffs" 112) argues, and Rosenberg (117) agrees, that even though Strich's and Walzel's arguments on behalf of the Baroque succeeded in creating the period as the object of literary-historical study, they did not actually contribute to the discussion of the German literature of the seventeenth century. Neither addresses the question of Shakespeare's place in this discussion.

ultimately laments, by the end of the review, that Walzel has strayed too far into generalized statements about the “‘synthetic’ gesture” of art and thus away from fidelity to “the radical singularity of the work of art” (51) so important to Wölfflin, Riegl, and himself. Benjamin’s location of Walzel in this company is not surprising, since Walzel himself knew the work of both Riegl and Wölfflin well; indeed, it was between their two methodologies that he had sought to negotiate in one of his early and most well-known works, *Wechselseitige Erhellung der Künste: Ein Beitrag zur Würdigung kunstgeschichtlicher Begriffe* (Reciprocal Illumination of the Arts: A Contribution to the Evaluation of Art Historical Concepts) (1917), the book to which Benjamin appears to be referring in his review. The essay on Shakespeare may well have been a kind of dry run for the *Reciprocal Illumination* book; indeed, there are often exact repetitions of arguments made in the essay in both that book and in Walzel’s next work, *Gehalt und Gestalt im Kunstwerk des Dichters* (Content and Form in the Poetic Work of Art) (1923), which appeared just after he had moved to Bonn. According to Hans-Harald Müller, Walzel was “without a doubt one of the most versatile minds of German literary studies between 1900 and 1933” (“Die Übertragung des Barockbegriffs” 95), at which point permission to lecture at Bonn was summarily withdrawn and Walzel was forced into retirement because of his marriage to the half-Jewish Hedwig Karo.<sup>62</sup> Benjamin could not have been aware of this future when in his review he critiqued Walzel precisely in terms of his reputation for interdisciplinary, indeed, comparative intermedial methods due to the latter’s interest in the “synthetical gesture.”

The echo of the title of Wölfflin’s 1915 *Principles of Art History* in the subtitle of Walzel’s 1917 book situates the latter’s work—and thus his take on Shakespeare—squarely within the Renaissance-Baroque debate. The original version of Walzel’s essay “Shakespeare’s Dramatic Architecture,” as it appeared in the *Shakespeare Yearbook*, lists and explains Wölfflin’s famous five categories, linear versus painterly, closed and open form, and so on, in the context of Walzel’s interest in adapting to an analysis of “Shakespeare’s form” the terms of the “transformation that took place in the fine arts between the sixteenth and the seventeenth century on the way from the Renaissance to the Baroque” (“Shakespeares dramatische Baukunst” 25). In 1916, it could perhaps not yet have been assumed that every reader of the *Shakespeare Yearbook* would be familiar with Wölfflin’s terms; thus the detailed inventory of terms and the explanation were necessary. The passage is omitted, however, in the 1926 version, which Benjamin read; by then, Walzel could have expected a greater familiarity with the art historical categories, a familiarity attested in Benjamin’s ability to supply them in his review when he notes the links in Walzel’s argument to Wölfflin’s “schematics” (*Gesammelte Schriften* 3: 50).

62. Karo-Walzel was deported in 1944, at age seventy-four, to Theresienstadt. The eighty-year-old Walzel, who because of the marriage was also to be expelled from the city, was nevertheless given permission to stay; he died in a bombing attack on Bonn in December 1944. See Enders 347.

Not omitted in 1926, however, was Walzel's famously contradictory explanation of the usefulness of applying Wölfflinian vocabulary and categories, including that of the Baroque, to a reading of Shakespeare:

It should not be assumed that I want to adopt Shakespeare in the service of the fashionable term Baroque. And it has become a fashionable term. I am in fact extremely uninterested in the term Baroque. At the same time, it does help us see that, in drama, Shakespeare[']s plays] signify exactly the same transformation that the fine arts were undergoing at approximately the same time. This kind of historical relation is not my main point in terms of the task I have set myself here, however. Something else is much more important, namely the distinction between two major groups of formal possibilities in art. These two groups stand opposed to one another, but each has the same right to a recognition of their internal intentions and formal patterns, namely, following Wölfflin, open and closed style, starkly architectonic and looser, unarchitectural. ("Shakespeares dramatische Baukunst" [1916] 27; [1926] 317–18)

Walzel's claim that he does not intend his Shakespeare to be a "fashionable" Baroque playwright in specifically Wölfflinian terms is not borne out by the rest of the essay, however, in which he takes pains to do close readings of several of the plays of the man he identifies as the author of "Baroque drama" and creator of "Baroque art" ("Shakespeares dramatische Baukunst" [1916] 32; [1926] 323) par excellence. A reader could easily be forgiven for associating Shakespeare with the Baroque after reading Walzel's essay to the end.

Walzel's claim here that his interests in understanding Shakespeare as a Baroque playwright were not "historical" points not only to his complicity in what he may have understood as a "stylistic," Wölfflinian approach, which he, like Fritz Strich, endorsed at the same time,<sup>63</sup> but also, and just as fundamentally, according to Hans-Harald Müller ("Die Übertragung des Barockbegriffs" 96), to Walzel's indebtedness to his student Wilhelm Worringer's interest in his *Formprobleme der Gotik* (Formal Problems of the Gothic) (1911) in the "will to form" of the Gothic. This version of the Rieglian "artistic will" was a type of primal, or essential, "Teutonic artistic will" not bound to specific epochs, but, again, intrinsic to "the German spirit" coming to fruition in modern times. Worringer's Baroque was decisively and thoroughly German; to make Shakespeare Baroque was thus to adopt him as a native son in ways that were in fashion at the time. That in *The Linguistic Work of Art*, Walzel deletes not only the longer explanation of Wölfflin's categories from the essay as it had appeared in 1916, but also even his name from the bibliography ("Shakespeares dramatische Baukunst" [1916] 35; [1926] 325) indicates just how

63. Both Walzel and Strich later claimed that they came to their readings independently of each other; see Rosenberg 114.

much Worringer had come to replace Wölfflin in Walzel's mind, as a somewhat later Walzel essay on Shakespeare (1921), not surprisingly entitled "Das Deutschtum unserer Klassiker" (The Germanness of Our Classical Authors), reveals.

It is important to note that already in 1916, and in the *Shakespeare Yearbook* in particular, it was no accident that Walzel's Shakespeare, who had already been considered the property of the Germans since at least Ulrici's term as president of the German Shakespeare Society and tenure as editor of its journal, as noted above, could be identified as essentially German. Volume 52 of the journal reveals why. Appearing at the height of World War I and with Walzel's essay as the lead scholarly item, the volume also contains considerable front matter, including such documents as the "Address and Annual Report" (v-xv) from the annual meeting of the Society, and the transcription of the remarks by the president at the time. This preliminary matter notes that there were no representatives from England in attendance at the annual meeting, as there had been in the past. The president comments on this absence as unremarkable, however, since the English are no longer scholars; rather, only an "inhumane chorus," shouting "vile fictions . . . of crucified prisoners and children's hands being amputated," can be heard from across the Channel (v). He then goes on to excoriate "those in power . . . and the benighted in England today [who] would love to change us from free human beings into slaves" (vi). Such men are incapable of tending to their own heritage, and especially to Shakespeare. The scholarly work of the German Shakespeare Society, whose members were gathered there, was thus all the more legitimate and indeed was to be equated with militaristically described patriotic work. The introduction ends with a rousing and patriotic wartime call to the assembled scholars: "We are all prepared to sacrifice our homes and lives for the Kaiser and for the *Reich*" (xiv).

The main evening address, by Professor Rudolf Brotanek of Prague, that year at the annual meeting is also reprinted in the front matter to volume 52 (xvi-xlviii). Entitled, appropriately enough, "Shakespeare über den Krieg" (Shakespeare on War), it leads the audience through the lessons of the great playwright about war and peace, which are described as more familiar to "*our* politicians" (xlviii, emphasis added) than to "the amateurish English politicians" (xvii) of the Bard's original home. In volume 52, Shakespeare is thus clearly being used as what Habicht calls a "cultural weapon" ("Shakespeare Celebrations" 449); his "special closeness" (451) to Germany was all the more important in this wartime three-hundredth anniversary year of the Bard's death. It is no wonder that Walzel's essay, with its association of Shakespeare with the Baroque, was the lead academic essay in this context. Not only would the editors of the *Shakespeare Yearbook* have been pleased to publish an essay by a well-known scholar who had already been active in what Walzel himself later calls "propaganda" activities associated with the Great War.<sup>64</sup> They also

64. Walzel was himself—reluctantly, he later claims—actively complicit in such nationalist agendas and held what he calls "propaganda lectures" during the Great War. He describes these lectures



would have approved of an essay whose premise was based on the suggestion of a Baroque Shakespeare, especially since the Baroque had already some years before been christened as a signifier of a kind of primal, yet also all-pervasive “German-ness” by none other than Walzel’s student Wilhelm Worringer.

In his memoirs, Walzel states categorically that, even as a student in Bern (1897–1907), Worringer (1881–1965) was one of his closest intellectual colleagues; later, the impact of Worringer’s work became more and more important to him, first supplementing, then displacing Wölfflin’s both in Walzel’s own distinctions between classical and nonclassical, or Gothic, art and in the conceptualization of the “reciprocal illumination of the arts” (Enders 227–28). This displacement seems to have not yet fully occurred either in the Shakespeare essay or in Walzel’s book of that title.<sup>65</sup> Worringer’s interest in his widely distributed *Formal Problems of the Gothic*, a book that Benjamin read (*Gesammelte Schriften* 7: 452), is in what Worringer calls the “rehabilitation of those non-classical epochs in Europe that to date have experienced a measured and even negative evaluation from the point of view of Classicism” (9). The “actual” (*eigentlich*, that is, historical) Gothic is his main focus, but he is also interested in its role as a “timeless aspect of the race” that reappears subsequently in the “secret Gothic” of later “Teutonic” epochs and styles (126–27).<sup>66</sup> Worringer’s inclusion of the Baroque (28, 60, 79–80, and 127, for example) in his list of “non-classical” periods whose forms expressed the “secret Gothic” is significant in the jingoistic context of the original publication of Walzel’s “Shakespeare’s Dramatic Architecture,” for in this context, as suggested above, Walzel’s proposal to understand Shakespeare via the lens of Baroque art would in all likelihood have been not only acceptable, but indeed, deeply desired by its editors, and thus given pride of place as the lead article in the 1916 wartime number of the *Shakespeare Yearbook*.

Worringer’s project to “rehabilitate” nonclassical epochs of art of course recalls not only Wölfflin on the Baroque, but also Riegl’s interests in a different kind of nonjudgmental and nonhierarchical art history. Jennings suggests that it was Riegl’s work that gave Worringer his direction in the first place (*Dialectical Images* 152 and

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explicitly as some of his first attempts to apply Wölfflin’s “principles” to “poetry” as a way of trying to excite “an understanding for German art and for its essential characteristics . . . that for many counted as inferior.” See Enders 167, for example; and Schmitz 120.

65. In the talk, held on 3 January 1917, that became the book, the work of both art historians, Wölfflin and Worringer, is discussed as suggestive of the role that a theory and practice of intermedial comparison could play; nevertheless, even as Walzel accurately notes—and underscores—Worringer’s devotion to definitions of “Teutonic art” (*Wechselseitige Erhellung* 27) in that book, he just as accurately recapitulates Wölfflin’s method and arguments too (29–41), indeed, gives them priority as an approach to “the individual work of art” (38 and 86).

66. As odd as it might sound in this context, even as he focuses on the Gothic as a “specifically northern development” (27) and as suggestive of a “northern feeling for form” (76), Worringer’s project is an explicitly anti-Eurocentric one; “we must not confuse Europe and its fiction of progress with the world,” he writes (24), as he examines what he calls “primitive” and “oriental” art along with the art of the West. On Worringer and the Baroque, see H.-H. Müller, *Barockforschung* 59–74.

156); he thus places Benjamin, as an inheritor of Riegl's work, in line with Worringer, with his major influence on Walzel. Walzel himself points out Worringer's dependency on Riegl in his 1913 essay, "Wilhelm von Humboldt über Wert und Wesen der künstlerischen Form" (Wilhelm von Humboldt on the Value and Essence of Artistic Form), which was reprinted, along with "Shakespeare's Dramatic Architecture," in the 1926 volume *The Linguistic Work of Art*, which Benjamin reviewed (Walzel, *Das Wortkunstwerk* 72). Benjamin thus could have discovered the intersection of the two men's work there. Riegl's relevance for both Worringer and Benjamin is important not just because of a common methodology, however, on which Jennings comments. It is also their shared interest in the Baroque that finds an afterlife in Benjamin's work. That is, even though the pre-Renaissance "Gothic" is Worringer's master example in the *Formal Problems* book, it is precisely because the Gothic had been overwhelmed by the "Italian Renaissance, which had entirely different spiritual assumptions," that "the northern Baroque" as "the renewed flaring up of the suppressed Gothic will to form" of the north, the originary northern, indeed, "Arian" (28) Gothic, becomes crucial to Worringer's thesis about the survivability of more or less permanent "northern" "forms."

According to Worringer, the Baroque was the period and style that offered an alternative to the "invasion of the foreign artistic ideal of the Renaissance" (61), which had been privileged by art history to date (73). Indeed, "after the intermezzo of the Renaissance," it was precisely this new "Gothic" style, the "transcendental style, the Baroque" (79–80), that emerged to have a lasting influence in the north. Much more recently, he concludes, the "secret Gothic," the post-Gothic Gothic, had made itself felt yet again, "even up into our own time" (127). There is an echo here of Benjamin's juxtaposition of the Baroque and Expressionism in the *Tragic Drama* book (G: 1.1: 234–35; E: 54). It must be noted that Worringer takes great pains to dismiss arguments that the superiority of the "Germanic" and "northern" "will to form" is anchored in "differences between the races" (29, 126–27); indeed, in political protest, Worringer refused to publish during the National Socialist years. Nevertheless, beginning in 1911, his work became well known for its argument that "the disposition for the Gothic only emerges where Teutonic blood becomes mixed with the blood of the other European races" (29). That a German Shakespeare could be Baroque precisely in the "mixing" that occurs in translation might not have seemed odd in light of such claims. For Worringer, neither the "Gothic" nor its afterlife in the "Baroque" is necessarily to be associated any longer with strictly defined historical epochs, or, for that matter, with narrowly circumscribed cultural spaces at all, but was, rather, all German all the time, where- and whenever each appeared.<sup>67</sup> Against this background, it is, again, not surprising that Walzel's

67. See H.-H. Müller, "Die Übertragung des Barockbegriffs," on the nonhistorical use of the term Baroque in Walzel.

argument about Shakespeare, with its indebtedness to Worringer's concept of a Teutonic Gothic Baroque, found a favorable reading with the editors of the *Shakespeare Yearbook* in 1916, for—as in Ulrici and Benjamin—it allowed the English playwright to be celebrated in appropriately German terms.

By 1921 and in the aftermath of Germany's crushing defeat, Walzel's Shakespeare had become much more than the merely formal representative of the Baroque that he was in "Shakespeare's Dramatic Architecture." Indeed, he had become a full-blooded German "classic" explicitly in association with Worringer's "concept of the Teutonic" as articulated in his *Formal Problems of the Gothic* in 1911. Worringer's book had gone through twelve editions by 1919, and by 1930 it had been reissued a twenty-first time. In an essay entitled "Das Deutschtum unserer Klassiker" (The Germanness of Our Classical Writers), which appeared in 1921 in the *Zeitschrift für Deutschkunde* (Journal for German Studies), Walzel argues that precisely a post-Versailles Germany must begin to understand "what it is that we are actually calling the essence of the German" (85) in an age when, as in the age of German "Classicism," the German state was no longer capable of serving as a unifying force. Although Wölfflin's distinction between the Renaissance and the Baroque is occasionally mentioned in this essay (90–91), it is, rather, Worringer's category of "the Teutonic-Gothic" (86) that Walzel introduces early on as the most "unifying and distinguishing characteristic of the German," linked not only to the "Baroque of the seventeenth century," but also to Shakespeare as "related in essential ways to the German" (85–86) and as "the artist of the Teutonic-Gothic" (95) par excellence. Walzel also addresses the allegiances that more traditional representatives of "classical" German literature, namely Schiller and Goethe, as well as Lessing, Klopstock, and the medieval writers Wolfram and Gottfried too, do or do not owe to "the Gothic aspect of Germanness" (99) in various texts and at various times in their careers. But in this essay, it is Shakespeare—in combination with Lessing (86–87), Goethe (97), and even Nietzsche (94)—who provides the most consistent measuring stick of where the German "Gothic" did and did not emerge at various times.

"The Germanness of Our Classical Writers" is not included in the selection of Walzel's earlier essays reprinted in 1926 in *The Linguistic Work of Art*, the volume that Benjamin reviewed. Perhaps this was because of the essay's obvious links to the immediate historical-political conditions of its original year of publication (1921), and its corresponding disregard for questions of "synthetic" method or intermedial concerns for what Walzel calls the "essential characteristic of the work of art," concerns that by 1926 he wanted to claim—in the foreword to *The Linguistic Work of Art* at least—had been his primary concerns of the wartime and postwar years (viii–ix). The 1921 essay does not fit easily into this model and in any case might not have been the kind of "scholarly" approach that Walzel would have chosen to highlight as his trademark in a collection of essays that appeared after he had made a significant career move from Dresden to Bonn. He had in fact carefully

distanced himself in the meantime from both the “fashionable motto” that Worringer’s idea of the Gothic had become and from the easy assumption of the opposition of the Baroque to the Renaissance that his reception of Wölfflin’s work in his 1924 essay, “Das Wesen des dichterischen Kunstwerks” (The Essence of the Poetic Work of Art), had underscored. Benjamin nevertheless would have been familiar with Worringer’s claims about the “Gothic” in another way, namely via Burdach’s essay “On the Origin of Humanism” (discussed in chapter 1) which Benjamin quotes in the “Epistemo-Critical Prologue.” Although Benjamin quotes only that part of Burdach’s original note in which Troeltsch is named as the main culprit in association with the essentializing concept of “‘the Gothic Man’, who plays such a confusing role today,” along with the just as questionable notion of “the Baroque Man, in whose guise Shakespeare is introduced to us today” (G: 1.1: 220–21; E: 40), in the original, it is in fact, and understandably, Worringer and his 1911 book that Burdach names as the origin of the claim (Burdach, *Reformation, Renaissance, Humanismus* 213). It may well have been in Burdach, in other words, that Benjamin came across the possibility of a Baroque Shakespeare yet again, associated, first, with Worringer, whose importance to Riegl then emerged with additional clarity in Walzel’s “Essence of the Poetic Work of Art” and in his essay on Wilhelm von Humboldt in *The Linguistic Work of Art*, which Benjamin reviewed. Walzel’s “Shakespeare’s Dramatic Architecture” essay, which also appears there, nevertheless identifies Wölfflin’s—rather than Worringer’s—work as providing the base line for this alignment. Together, the work of these two men, with which Benjamin was clearly familiar, confirmed for him that it was entirely possible to identify Shakespeare as “a Baroque poet” alongside the more intuitively *German* Baroque playwrights of the Second Silesian school.

The Palm edition in which Benjamin read Gryphius’s plays, the religious drama of the German Middle Ages, the farces of the Viennese Stranitzky, and Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* all contributed to defining the Baroque tragic drama as ideologically (and linguistically) German. These texts all appear, moreover, in a kind of shorthand, on the list of issues that Benjamin notes will be central to his argument in the “Baroque book,” jotted down on a loose page now in the Benjamin archives and reproduced in the Frankfurt commentary volume for the *Tragic Drama* book. The list includes “the founding of the new dramatic form [of the tragic drama] by Shakespeare,” on the one hand, and, under the heading “Types of Drama in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries,” the “mystery and Passion plays, in their German popular form” and the “dramas of affairs of state. Vienna,” on the other (*Gesammelte Schriften* 1.3: 915–18). This rough list functions as a kind of inventory of many of the books described in this chapter. Moreover, even though—or perhaps better, precisely because—the material versions in which Benjamin encountered most of these texts did not in fact belong to the “time of genesis” of the German Baroque of the seventeenth century, they were crucial to defining what he comes to call the “origin” of the genre. As noted above, Benjamin writes of “origin”: “The

category of origin is thus not, as Cohen suggests, a purely logical one, but, rather, historical." Taken in their historical "totality," all of these books testified to the origin of the German tragic drama as the sum of its "pre- and post-histories" in material form (G: 1.1: 226; E: 46).

Many critics, including John Pizer, Uwe Steiner, and Bernd Witte, have discussed Benjamin's notion of "origin" in terms of theological, eschatological, and historico-philosophical principles of "pre-lapsarian semiotic plenitude" and "messianic" idealism (Pizer 41, 45) and via reference to the theories of origin offered by Goethe and Georg Simmel, both of whom Benjamin cites. It is Steiner, however, who most compellingly links such explanations of the weighty term as it is used in the *Tragic Drama* book also to the "empirical historicity of the real," and does so in direct reference to the plays themselves, which are, according to Steiner, "the works of art" and "the media in which history successfully appears" ("Zarte Empirie" 30).<sup>68</sup> In the "Exposé," or summary, of his *Habilitation* that Benjamin wrote for Hans Cornelius at Frankfurt as Cornelius prepared to review it, Benjamin himself explains that the "digressions" about both "the later tragic drama and . . . the medieval tendencies that are linked to the Baroque tragic drama" (*Gesammelte Schriften* 1.3: 950) are intrinsic to his "concept of origin" as a "historical category" in the thesis. He then goes on to describe the "task of the scholar" as one that must demonstrate "the unmistakable relation" of the essence—"des Wesens"—of the tragic drama to these earlier and later forms (951). The volumes of the Old Subject Catalog in the State Library on Unter den Linden provided him with an image of just such a "series of historical instantiations" (G: 1.1: 227; E: 46) of the "German" tragic drama as they were available in the cases of both Gryphius and the Shakespeare editions; the Mone, Weiß, and von Thurn volumes supplemented these plays with "unmistakable" examples of earlier and later forms of drama in the same German tradition to which Ulrici's, Gundolf's and Walzel's Shakespeares likewise belonged.

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68. See Pizer 41–70 for a critical review of the ways in which "origin" has been understood by readers of Benjamin.