

Daniel Weidner · Sigrid Weigel (Hrsg.)  
Benjamin-Studien 1



Daniel Weidner · Sigrid Weigel (Hrsg.)

# Benjamin-Studien 1

Wilhelm Fink

Bibliografische Information der Deutschen Nationalbibliothek

Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek verzeichnet diese Publikation in der Deutschen Nationalbibliografie; detaillierte bibliografische Daten sind im Internet über <http://dnb.d-nb.de> abrufbar.

Alle Rechte, auch die des auszugsweisen Nachdrucks, der fotomechanischen Wiedergabe und der Übersetzung, vorbehalten. Dies betrifft auch die Vervielfältigung und Übertragung einzelner Textabschnitte, Zeichnungen oder Bilder durch alle Verfahren wie Speicherung und Übertragung auf Papier, Transparente, Filme, Bänder, Platten und andere Medien, soweit es nicht §§ 53 und 54 URG ausdrücklich gestatten.

© 2008 Wilhelm Fink Verlag, München  
(Wilhelm Fink GmbH & Co. Verlags-KG, Jühenplatz 1, D-33098 Paderborn)

Internet: [www.fink.de](http://www.fink.de)

Layout: Marietta Damm, Zentrum für Literatur- und Kulturforschung Berlin

Einbandgestaltung: Evelyn Ziegler, München

Printed in Germany

Herstellung: Ferdinand Schöningh GmbH & Co KG, Paderborn

ISBN 978-3-7705-4637-4

JANE O. NEWMAN

»Hamlet ist auch Saturnkind«:  
Citationality, Lutheranism, and German Identity in Benjamin's  
*Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels*

The ›Origins‹ of *Der Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels*

In a letter to Scholem, dated 22 December, 1924, Benjamin famously writes of the manuscript that was to become his *Trauerspiel* book: »[I]ndessen überrascht mich nun vor allem, daß, wenn man so will, das Geschriebene fast ganz aus Zitaten besteht« (GS I.3, 881). Much has been made of the mosaic-like citational technique to which Benjamin refers here; his »Zitatbegriff«<sup>1</sup> is said, for example, to subtend the theory of a »mikrologische Verarbeitung« of »Denkbruchstücken« into »Ideen« that Benjamin develops as his theory of representation in the »Erkenntniskritische Vorrede«, which in turn figures the relation between individual phenomena and their »ideas« in astral terms.<sup>2</sup> Because, however, the *Trauerspiel* book is so often understood only on this theoretical level, e.g. as either an early articulation of Benjamin's »avant garde« and »messianic« philosophy of history (Jäger, Kany, and Pizer) or as a performance of his systems of allegory (Menninghaus) and »constructivism« (Schöttker),<sup>3</sup> his »Zitierpraxis«<sup>4</sup> and the actual citations that form large parts of *Der Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiel* have seldom been read for the purchase they provide on the vexed status of the period and concept that was the book's direct subject, namely, the German Baroque.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Manfred Voigts: »Zitat«, in: Michael Opitz/Erdmut Wizisla (Ed.): *Benjamins Begriffe*, 2 Vols., Frankfurt a. M. (Suhrkamp) 2000, 2. pp. 826–50, here p. 827.

<sup>2</sup> On Benjamin's »micrological« thinking, see Roland Kany: *Mnemosyne als Programm. Geschichte, Erinnerung und die Andacht zum Unbedeutenden im Werk von Usener, Warburg und Benjamin*, Tübingen (Niemeyer) 1987.

<sup>3</sup> Lorenz Jäger: *Messianische Kritik. Studien zu Leben und Werk von Florens Christian Rang*. (= Europäische Kulturstudien 8.) Cologne – Weimar – Vienna (Böhlau) 1998; Roland Kany: *Mnemosyne als Programm* (note 2); John Pizer: *Toward a Theory of Radical Origin. Essays on Modern German Thought*, Lincoln (Nebraska) 1995; Winfried Menninghaus: *Walter Benjamins Theorie der Sprachmagie*, Frankfurt a.M. (Suhrkamp) 1980; and Detlev Schöttker: *Konstruktiver Fragmentarismus. Form und Rezeption der Schriften Walter Benjamins*, Frankfurt a.M. (Suhrkamp) 1999.

<sup>4</sup> Voigts (note 1), p. 828.

<sup>5</sup> This is true even in the case of scholars who call for an investigation of the book's »complex intellectual debts

The period and the concept at the center of the project that Benjamin often referred to as his »Barockbuch«<sup>6</sup> were part and parcel of »das explosive Gemisch seismographischer Denk- und Geschichtserfahrungen« of the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century intellectual world in which his ideas took shape.<sup>7</sup> The political, ideological, and aesthetic categories involved in the construction of literary history in general as a discipline were objects of particularly intense scrutiny at the time. As Petra Boden has shown, the often nationalistically inflected reform programs in the study of any number of ›national‹ literary periods in Germany after approximately 1890 benefited most from this attention; the Enlightenment, Romanticism, Biedermeier, and the Baroque were among the fields that were of most concern.<sup>8</sup> Müller and Jaumann, and, after them Warnke, Voßkamp, Rosenberg, and Kiesant, have devoted attention to these debates as they concerned the Baroque.<sup>9</sup> Yet, neither they nor the small army of more recent readers of the *Trauerspiel* book discuss in any detail (except via paraphrase of Benjamin's claims about the plays) the »rohe Bühne« (GS I.1, 335) of the seventeenth-century texts by the playwrights of the Second Silesian School that take center stage in his book. As a result, the curious array of editions in which Benjamin read these texts – Hallmann in seventeenth-century ›originals‹, for example, Lohenstein in eighteenth-century Enlightenment editions, and Gryphius in the late nineteenth-century ›nationalist‹ edition by Hermann Palm – is never mentioned.<sup>10</sup> The disciplinary divide that Hans-Jürgen Schings already in 1988 declared

to [a] rich network of competing intellectual traditions« in the early twentieth century. See Gerhard Richter: *Walter Benjamin and the Corpus of Autobiography*, Detroit (Wayne State) 2000, p. 23.

<sup>6</sup> See, for example, Benjamin's letter to Scholem of 19.2.1925, cited in GS I.3, p. 883.

<sup>7</sup> Burkhardt Lindner: *Links hatte noch alles sich zu enträtseln: Walter Benjamin im Kontext*, Frankfurt a.M. (Syndikat) 1978, p. 7.

<sup>8</sup> Petra Boden: »Stamm – Geist – Gesellschaft. Deutsche Literaturwissenschaft auf der Suche nach einer integrativen Theorie«, in: Holger Dainat/Lutz Dannenberg (Ed.): *Literaturwissenschaft und Nationalsozialismus*, Tübingen (Niemeyer) 2003, pp. 215–61, here p. 219.

<sup>9</sup> Hans-Harald Müller: *Barockforschung: Ideologie und Methode. Ein Kapitel deutscher Wissenschaftsgeschichte 1870–1930*, Darmstadt (Thesen Verlag) 1973; Herbert Jaumann: *Die Deutsche Barockliteratur. Wertung-Umwertung*, Bonn (Bouvier) 1975; Martin Warnke: »Die Entstehung des Barockbegriffs«, in: Klaus Garber (Ed.): *Europäische Barock-Rezeption*, 2 Vols., Wiesbaden (Harrassowitz) 1991, 2: pp. 1207–23; Wilhelm Voßkamp: »Deutsche Barockforschung in den zwanziger und dreißiger Jahren«, in: *Europäische Barock-Rezeption*, 1: pp. 683–703; Rainer Rosenberg: »Über den Erfolg des Barockbegriffs in der Literaturgeschichte: Oskar Walzel und Fritz Strich«, in: *Europäische Barock-Rezeption*, 1: pp. 113–27, and Knut Kiesant: »Die Wiederentdeckung der Barockliteratur. Leistungen und Grenzen der Barockbegeisterung der zwanziger Jahre«, in: Christoph König/Eberhard Lämmert (Ed.): *Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte 1910 bis 1925*, Frankfurt a. M. (Fischer) 1993, pp. 77–91.

<sup>10</sup> While Benjamin owned the Palm Gryphius (he had received it as a birthday present in 1917 (see *Briefe* I, p. 140), he probably read the Hallmann and Lohenstein plays in editions he ordered in the Preußische Staatsbibliothek, where he did most of the research for the book. For a reading of this sequence of editions as a materialization of what Benjamin understands as »Ursprung«, namely as »kein Werden des Entsprungenen, vielmehr dem Werden und Vergehen Entsprechendes« (GS I.1, 226), see my *Benjamin's Library: The Afterlives of the Baroque*.

existed between the two separate states of scholarship on the *Trauerspiel* book, Benjamin »exegesis«, on the one hand, and the approaches of the »Barockisti« to the historical texts of the period, on the other, thus still persists in most cases.<sup>11</sup> By failing to attend to the ways in which actual citations function in the *Trauerspiel* book, students of Benjamin ignore the important role of the sometimes scandalous and often extravagant texts of the Silesians in the development of the argument, dismissing them instead as »dusty volumes of plays long unread«, the »bastardized« texts of a period »long... consigned to the dusty attic of literary failures«.<sup>12</sup>

As important as the citations of the Silesian plays are to understanding Benjamin's claims about the specifically German »Sippe des barocken Trauerspiels« (GS I.1, 307), however, the references in which I am interested here concern another example of »Baroque« drama that plays an equally central role in Benjamin's book, namely, the initially counter intuitive example of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. In the actual quotes from that play, as well as in additional texts in which the melancholic prince appears, Benjamin's relation to what I am provisionally calling »Lutheran« and, by extension, German national concerns, emerges. Benjamin's argument that he is interested in that which makes the »Trauerspiel« »spezifisch deutsch« (260) of course seems to cast his claim about the plays of both Shakespeare and Calderon as the best exemplars, »die vollendete Kunstform« (260), of »das deutsche Trauerspiel« (emphasis added) in a strange light; later, he famously underscores what appears to be the difference of both the Bard and the Spanish Golden Age dramatist from the Germans when he explains that »Calderon und Shakespeare [haben] bedeutendere Trauerspiele geschaffen [...] als die Deutschen des XVII. Jahrhunderts« (306). And yet, already by 1916, Shakespeare had become unmistakably »German«, »nationalisirt« by a series of German translators and critics.<sup>13</sup> In that same year, Oskar Walzel published his now famous essay, entitled »Shakespeares dramatische Baukunst«, in which Shakespeare becomes explicitly Baroque.<sup>14</sup> I will show that *Hamlet* belonged more clearly to the canon

<sup>11</sup> As cited in Uwe Steiner: »Allegorie und Allergie. Bemerkungen zur Diskussion um Benjamins Trauerspielbuch in der Barockforschung«, in: *Daphnis* 18 (1989) 4, pp. 641–701, here p. 662. Klaus Garber's work is of course the exception. See below.

<sup>12</sup> Graeme Gilloch: *Walter Benjamin. Critical Constellations*, Cambridge, England (Polity Press) 2002, pp. 63 and 15.

<sup>13</sup> Hermann Ulrici, whose work on Shakespeare I analyze below, refers to a »nationalized« German Shakespeare in his Foreword to the edition of Shakespeare from which Benjamin quotes in the *Trauerspiel* book. See below (note 46).

<sup>14</sup> Oskar Walzel: »Shakespeares dramatische Baukunst«, in: *Jahrbuch der deutschen Shakespeare-Gesellschaft* 52 (1916), pp. 3–35 (reprinted in: *Das Wortkunstwerk. Mittel seiner Erforschung*, Leipzig (Quelle und Meyer) 1926, pp. 302–25).

of »deutsche Trauerspiele des Barock« in the early twentieth century than Benjamin's caveats suggest.

The denial that there is much of a relation between Shakespeare's prince and ›the Germans‹ is problematic in additional ways, as revealed in a series of citations that follow the virtually unglossed opening line of the final section (GS I.1, 317–35) of the second part of the *Trauerspiel* book (›Trauerspiel und Tragödie«, 238–335), namely: »Die großen deutschen Dramatiker des Barock waren Lutheraner« (317).<sup>15</sup> The claim leads into the analysis of the origins of »Trübsinn« in a peculiarly German Protestantism, as Benjamin goes on to explain how a humorally and astrologically induced melancholy is profoundly related to the confessional logic of »das Luthertum« vis-à-vis and versus Reformed Calvinism (317). Benjamin's argument here is heavily beholden to the writings of the Warburg School (by Aby Warburg himself, as well as by Erwin Panofsky and Fritz Saxl, and their common source, Karl Giehlow), as Steiner and Pensky have pointed out, and these debts are obvious in the countless footnoted and unfootnoted citations that make up this section.<sup>16</sup> And yet, these same debts, especially to Warburg, also reveal how Benjamin's version of Hamlet relies on a much less sanguine assessment of ›Lutheran‹ melancholy than those of the Warburg School, as that assessment arises not only from Max Weber's famous thesis about the sixteenth-century »Entzauberung« of the world developed at approximately the same time, but also from debates about the role of the Protestant Church in German national politics both during the run-up to 1914 and during the war itself.<sup>17</sup> Weber, of course, associated the process of disenchantment with the ›other‹ Protestant confession, namely Calvinism, historically linked on the continent with its Swiss and French instantiations; this association is the one that has most consistently concerned generations of Shakespeare scholars, who see in Hamlet's ›the fall of a sparrow‹- speech (V.ii. 219–24), for example, evidence of a dialogue with the English (Scottish) Calvinism of King James.<sup>18</sup> In Benjamin's citations, however, it is the peculiarly German – and thus

<sup>15</sup> Max Pensky: *Melancholy Dialectics. Walter Benjamin and the Play of Mourning*, Amherst (University of Massachusetts Press) 1993, p. 83, notes the line and paraphrases Benjamin's claims there about the »exhausted transcendental impulse« of the »Lutheran playwrights« (pp. 87–9, here p. 88). Garber usefully contextualizes the line in his »Konfession, Politik, und Geschichtsphilosophie im ›Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels‹«, in: *Rezeption und Rettung: Drei Studien zu Walter Benjamin*, Tübingen (Niemeyer) 1987, pp. 81–120, in seventeenth-century debates.

<sup>16</sup> See Uwe Steiner: »Traurige Spiele – Spiel vor Traurigen. Zu Walter Benjamins Theorie des barocken Trauerspiels«, in: Willem van Reijen (Ed.): *Allegorie und Melancholie*, Frankfurt (Suhrkamp) 1992, pp. 32–63, here p. 37f., and Pensky: *Melancholy Dialectics* (note 15), pp. 95–8, 110–105.

<sup>17</sup> Weber's *Protestantische Ethik* was first published as a two-part essay in 1904–5, but then, revised, appeared in his collected essays in 1920, right in the middle of the years during which Benjamin locates his work on the *Trauerspiel* book, famously »entworfen«, as he notes on the dedicatory page, in 1916, but »verfaßt« in 1925.

<sup>18</sup> For an excellent overview, see John E. Curran, Jr.: *Hamlet, Protestantism, and the Mourning of Contingency*:



Lutheran rather than Calvinist – implications of melancholic Protestantism for the prince that come to the fore. We can learn a great deal about these implications from the texts from which Benjamin cites when he refers to Hamlet.

### Benjamin's Hamlets

Benjamin cites Shakespeare's *Hamlet* twice in the second chapter of the *Trauerspiel* book. The first citation occurs in his discussion of the prevalence of »Traumerscheinungen« and »Gespensterwirken« in the »Trauerspiel« (GS I.1, 313f.), the second immediately following the claim about the Lutheran identity of the »die großen deutschen Dramatiker des Barock« (317). In both cases, the quotes play a cat-and-mouse game of logic at the level of the sentence with references to the specifically German traditions that are Benjamin's concern. In the first case, Hamlet's famous »'Tis now the very witching time of night«-speech (III.ii.380–91), rendered in German »(»Nun ist die wahre Spükezeit der Nacht [...]«, 314), follows up on a series of references to plays by the German Baroque playwrights, Gryphius and Lohenstein, whose authors are actually identified in association with the titles of their plays. The quote is then followed by a citation from Stranitzky's *Die Gestürzte Tyranny in der Person deß Messinischen Wütterich Pelifonte*; here, neither play title nor playwright is introduced in the text. Although accompanied by a footnote to the edition after which he cites Hamlet's speech, Benjamin's non-attribution of these unforgettable lines to the Bard, even as he interpolates them into an argument about the Germans, could perhaps be forgiven, due to their manifest fame. Yet their position – and the fact that they are quoted in German – suggests that the citations from Shakespeare are in fact meant to provide support for Benjamin's claims about the indebtedness of the »[d]as Drama der *deutschen* Protestanten« (276, emphasis added) to the world of spirits as signs for the dominance of »Schicksal«.

The second citation of *Hamlet* follows hard upon Benjamin's opening salvo of the second section of the second chapter, where the series of claims about the evacuation of sacred meaning from the secular and profane world dictated by the great Reformer's doctrine of faith and grace – »Schon bei Luther selbst, dessen letzte zwei Lebensjahrzehnte von steigender Seelenbeladenheit erfüllt sind, meldet sich ein Rückschlag auf den Sturm gegen das Werk« (317) – is supported with, again, an only belatedly attributed quote from Shakespeare's play (IV.iv.33–9), here too quoted in German: »Was ist der Mensch,

*Not to Be*, Aldershot (Ashgate) 2006, and Linda Kay Hoff: *Hamlet's Choice. A Reformation Allegory*, Lewiston, New York (E. Mellen) 1988.

Wenn seiner Zeit gewinn, sein höchstes Gut/Nur Schlaf und Essen ist? Ein Vieh, nichts weiter...dies, Hamlets, Wort, ist wittenbergische Philosophie und ist Aufruhr dagegen« (317). The strange ventriloquizing of Luther by the at least notionally English Hamlet in this sequence is repeated, finally, at a textually less visible level in Benjamin's puzzling argument at the very end of this section, where the figure of Hamlet is said to have been uniquely able to capture the »Zwiespalt neuantiker und mediavaler Beleuchtung [...] in welchem das Barock den Melancholiker gesehen hat« (334). The very »Deutschland« that is at the center of the »Barockbuch« »hat das [nicht] vermocht« (334); in other words, Germany was not able to either capture or transcend the essence of the Baroque contradiction, or duality, between the medieval and the neo-antique versions of melancholy, Benjamin claims. Rather, only the Englishman's »Lutheran« version of a Christian Dane could: »Shakespeare allein vermochte aus der barocken [...] Starre des Melancholikers den christlichen Funken zu schlagen« (335). Coyly quoting the Bard in a further unattributed line, Benjamin writes: »Der Rest ist Schweigen« (335).

The exclusion of the Germans from the ranks of »die bedeutenden Werke« of the Baroque (225) of course accords with Benjamin's earlier Rieglian claims that it is in fact *only* the German »Epigonen«, writing at times of decadence (»die sogenannten Zeiten des Verfalls«), who have access to »das runde Werk« and thus the »Kunstwollen« of the time (235).<sup>19</sup> In this scheme, the »inferior« German plays quite logically reemerge as central to understanding the »Ursprung des *deutschen* Trauerspiels«. And yet, the figure of the English (Shakespearian) Hamlet – in the web of texts in which Benjamin finds him – testifies equally as persistently to the specifically German issues that were at the center of the period, which Benjamin repeatedly calls the »Jahrhundert der Religionskämpfe« (245) and the »Zeitalter der Religionskriege« (256). For Benjamin in fact quotes *Hamlet* after a German-language edition of Shakespeare edited by Hermann Ulrici. Further German versions of the Danish prince emerge a few sentences later, when Benjamin refers to an early twentieth-century novella about *Hamlet*, »Die siebente Todsünde«, originally written and published in a popular feuilleton, *Über Land und Meer*, by the eminent scholar, Rochus von Liliencron, in 1877.<sup>20</sup> A final reference to a German – and Lutheran – Hamlet is more indirect, and occurs in Benjamin's gesture in the direction of the other central figure in these pages, namely, the »Genius der geflügelten Melancholie« (335) identified with that other icon of Germanness (i.e. in addition to Luther), namely Albrecht Dürer. Benjamin

<sup>19</sup> On Benjamin's indebtedness to Riegl for his ideas of Baroque epigonality, see Michael W. Jennings: *Dialectical Images. Walter Benjamin's Theory of Literary Criticism*, Ithaca (Cornell University Press) 1987.

<sup>20</sup> Benjamin cites the 1903 book version of the text at note 51, p. 335.

had first seen the original of Dürer's *Melencolia I* (1514) in Basel in the summer of 1913.<sup>21</sup> More proximate to his work on the *Trauerspiel* book, he had read both Erwin Panofsky's and Fritz Saxl's 1923 book, *Dürers Melancholia I*, and the essay to which Panofsky and Saxl were themselves heavily indebted, namely, Aby Warburg's painstaking analysis of the image in his »Heidnisch-antike Weissagung im Wort und Bild zu Luthers Zeiten« (1920), as he was completing the *Habilitation* (GS I.3, 881). It was in Warburg's essay that Benjamin would have discovered that »Hamlet«, like Luther, »ist auch Saturnkind,« thus creating the connection between the two.<sup>22</sup> It was also in Warburg's essay that Benjamin would have found the reference to Liliencron's novella, which is the text that Warburg cites as the source for his own claims about the melancholy prince (507, note 2).

Benjamin's interest in these German Hamlets – and in the question of whether they were or were not truly Lutheran – revolves around his struggle to understand the confessional politics that were tearing the relatively young nation of Germany apart in the years during which he was working on the *Trauerspiel* book. In so doing, he was also struggling to understand what it meant to be »spezifisch deutsch« (GS I.1, 260). The odd denial in the *Trauerspiel* book that the German Baroque could deal effectively with the challenges of melancholy belongs to this combination of issues and themes, and would seem to set Benjamin apart from scholars like Warburg, for whom Dürer's etching was deeply implicated in a desperate attempt to defend the nation's soul – or, at least, its military and political ambitions – at the time. In his biography of Warburg, E.H. Gombrich paints a picture of the eccentric art historian frantically seeking to get involved in the »patriotic« war in 1914, for example, clipping newspaper articles, traveling to Italy to encourage Italian colleagues to support staying the course as part of the Triple Alliance, and, in 1915, when the Italians left the Alliance, turning away from his interest in Italian art to the art of another period of crisis for Germany, the Reformation.<sup>23</sup> Erwin Panofsky's »Heidnisch-Antike Weissagung« article, which was based on lectures originally planned for 1917, celebrates the dynamic duo of Luther and Dürer as warriors in the battle over »die innere intellektuelle und religiöse Befreiung des modernen Menschen« on German soil.<sup>24</sup> Benjamin's intersplicing of Luther and Hamlet in the *Trauerspiel* book via Warburg, on the one hand, and in dia-

<sup>21</sup> Benjamin writes to his friend, Franz Sachs: »[e]rst jetzt habe ich eine Vorstellung von Dürers Gewalt und vor allem die Melancholie ist ein unsagbares tiefes ausdrucksvolles Blatt« (*Briefe* I, p. 76).

<sup>22</sup> Aby Warburg: »Heidnisch-Antike Weissagung in Wort und Bild zu Luthers Zeiten«, Orig. 1920, in: Warburg: *Gesammelte Schriften*. Erste Abteilung. I.2 (Die Erneuerung der heidnischen Antike), Horst Bredekamp/Michael Diers (Ed.), Berlin (Akademie Verlag) 1998, pp. 487–558, here p. 507.

<sup>23</sup> E.H. Gombrich: *Aby Warburg. An Intellectual Biography*, Orig. 1970, Chicago (University of Chicago Press) 1986, pp. 206–15, here p. 206f.

<sup>24</sup> Warburg: »Heidnisch-Antike Weissagung« (note 22), p. 531.

logue with Ulrici's and Liliencron's versions of the melancholy Dane, on the other, nevertheless involves him in a similar argument, one situated squarely in the vexed confessional debates of pre- and wartime Germany.

### Melancholy Protestants?

The context out of which Benjamin's version of Hamlet's specifically Lutheran melancholy arises is that of an extraordinarily complex politico-confessional situation in the *Reich* at the end and turn of the century, when Protestantism and its relation to German identity were not casual topics. References to Lutheranism were embedded in both the late nineteenth-century struggle between the confessions known as the *Kulturkampf* (ca. 1860–1890) and the possibility of its early twentieth-century revival and the so-called »zweiter Kulturkampf«, ca. 1907–14, as well.<sup>25</sup> The main sentiments of those involved in these contests can be heard in the words of a founding member of the liberal »Protestantenverein«, Daniel Schenkel, for example, in 1862: »[W]ir sagen mit tiefster Ueberzeugung: Der gesammte Culturfortschritt der Völker unseres Jahrhunderts beruht auf den Grundlagen der religiösen, sittlichen und geistigen Freiheit, und eben darum auf dem Protestantismus.«<sup>26</sup> Schenkel's position is made more precise several years later by Wilhelm Scherer, the first official holder of a university chair in German literary history, who writes in 1874: »Die Lutherische Bibel war die entscheidende That zur Begründung einer einheitlichen deutschen Cultur und Sprache. Sie war der Schöpfungsact dessen was wir heute unsere Nation nennen. Wir knüpfen an Luther unsere nationale Einheit wie Italien die seinige an Dante. Luthers Bibel ist unsere *Divina commedia*.«<sup>27</sup> The actions undertaken subsequently to ensure the necessary confessional ›cleansing‹ of non-Protestants from Germany make it clear that these sentiments were more than just idle chatter. Laws were passed in the 1870s restricting the citizenship rights of Jesuit teachers and priests, for example, and bishops who did not comply with the so-called May Laws were imprisoned; in 1891, one Carl Fey even eerily writes of the »Rassendunkel« of the Catholic peoples who did not belong in the German land.<sup>28</sup> Although most of these laws were officially rescinded by the early twentieth century, the renewed energy of what one recent historian

<sup>25</sup> Helmut Walser Smith: *German Nationalism and Religious Conflict. Culture, Ideology, and Politics, 1870–1914*, Princeton (Princeton University Press) 1995, pp. 19–49 and pp. 141–65. I am grateful to Professor Smith (Vanderbilt) for providing me with the original German of some of his archival documents.

<sup>26</sup> Daniel Schenkel: *Die kirchliche Frage und ihre protestantische Lösung*, Elberfeld (R.L. Friedrichs) 1862, p. 12.

<sup>27</sup> Wilhelm Scherer: »Die deutsche Spracheinheit«, in: *Vorträge und Aufsätze zur Geschichte des geistigen Lebens in Deutschland und Oesterreich*, Berlin (Weidmannsche Buchhandlung) 1874, pp. 45–70, here p. 55.

<sup>28</sup> Cited in Smith (note 25), pp. 41 and 54.

has called the »furor protestanticus«<sup>29</sup> of a still ideologically potent second *Kulturkampf* can still be heard in the words of a position paper written for the *Evangelischer Bund* in Berlin in 1913: »Die geistigen und sittlichen Interessen Gesamtdeutschlands sind aber zugleich die christlichen Interessen. Denn auf das Christentum der Bibel und der Reformation ruht die geistige und sittliche Entwicklung von ganz Deutschland, einschliesslich der deutschen Katholiken.«<sup>30</sup>

The nation-rending confessional conflicts of the *Kulturkämpfe* during the preceding 50 years were of course absorbed into the patriotic rhetorical economy of a unified »fortress Germania« after 1914.<sup>31</sup> The compliance of a (Protestant) Church ready to use »Deutschlands Schwert durch Luther geweiht« to support the needs of a bellicose nation nevertheless remained intact, based at least in theory upon the historical Lutheran doctrine of »cujus regio, ejus religio«, that had ratified the ascendancy of political jurisdiction and power over spiritual concerns already in 1555.<sup>32</sup> Roger Chickering describes the articulation of the early twentieth-century Protestant »Kriegstheologie« that »amplif[ied] [...] themes that were already well defined in Protestant thinking« by »framing« the war »in light of divine will and German destiny.«<sup>33</sup> The actual endorsement of the up-swell of militarism across the nation by some of the best known Protestant theologians almost immediately after war was declared created the fraught wartime and post-war debates about Lutheranism with which Benjamin would have been familiar, in all likelihood primarily through his friend, the Protestant theologian, Florens Christian Rang. Like Warburg, Rang initially supported the pro-war conservative nationalist position, but after 1920 turned vehemently against the militarism of the German state.<sup>34</sup> Other prominent Protestant theologians had rejected the state violence of the First World War quite a bit earlier of course. Karl Barth writes, for example, of his »Entsetzen« at seeing »ungefähr aller meiner deutschen Lehrer« as signatories of the »das schreckliche Manifest der 93 deutschen Intellektuellen, die sich vor der Welt mit der Kriegspolitik Kaiser Wilhelms II. und seines

<sup>29</sup> Smith (note 25), p. 151.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 160.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 165.

<sup>32</sup> This is the title of Wilhelm Walther's book, *Deutschlands Schwert durch Luther geweiht*, Leipzig (Dörffling und Franke Verlag) 1914. Walther explains the »göttlich legitimiertes Recht« the Germans have to fight the war (p. 1) with the claim: »Der Krieg ist Gottes Wille« (p. 11).

<sup>33</sup> Roger Chickering: *Imperial Germany and the Great War, 1914–1918*, Cambridge (Cambridge University Press) 1998, p. 125.

<sup>34</sup> See Rang's vehement treatise: *Deutsche Baubütte. Ein Wort an uns Deutsche über mögliche Gerechtigkeit gegen Belgien und Frankreich und zur Philosophie der Politik*, Leipzig (Gemeinschafts-Verlag Eberhard Arnold) 1924, with a »Zuschrift« by Benjamin, p. 185f. For another reading of the relation of Rang's *Deutsche Baubütte* to Benjamin's *Trauerspiel* book, see Steiner: »Traurige Spiele« (note 16), p. 46f.

Kanzlers Bethmann-Hollweg identifizierten.«<sup>35</sup> Barth's more or less radical refusal of the immanence of God in the world and thus of the notion that one could ally God's will or plan with any human (e.g. statist or military) agendas, led him later to help draft the so called »Barmer Erklärung« of 1934, which rejected the jurisdiction or influence of National Socialism on German Christianity – over which God alone, in His absolute transcendence, ruled. Nevertheless 93 prominent intellectuals, among them, the Protestant theologians Adolf von Harnack and Reinhold Seeberg, did sign on in support of the first war in 1914.<sup>36</sup>

The problem of Barth's theology of an essential separation of Church and State was that this separation could – and also did – quite easily tip over into its opposite, into the vexed logic of accommodation lurking beneath the surface of the thoughts of Barth's sometimes colleague and friend, the Protestant theologian Friedrich Gogarten, for example. In 1924, Gogarten had maintained that »alle Institutionen und Funktionen des menschlichen Lebens, wie Ehe, Schule, Staat, Wirtschaft, Kunst, Wissenschaft«, must be recognized as ephemeral (»unwirklich«) insofar as they are merely the products of the creaturely, human »subject«, »das Ich«. Only by opening one's eyes for the »Du« of divine »reality« (»die Augen für das Du [müssen] geöffnet werden«) can the real »Gesetz der Dinge« be recognized and the limited (un)reality of such institutions be »zerstört«.<sup>37</sup> The fact that most »modern« Protestants had made their peace with the de facto »reality« and authority of the world of inauthentic institutions does indeed call for action, according to Gogarten, but only in terms of one's theological politics (rather than in terms of the state's political theology).<sup>38</sup> Above all, one's eyes must always already be kept on the absolute otherness of God.

The consequence of this mystical optic was of course a turning away from the world; it by no means demanded activist resistance to the state (although it did result in such resistance in the case of Barth). Rather, it was premised, in good Lutheran fashion, upon waiting for God to bridge the gap between His own transcendence and the human world by means of revelation or grace. The position was in fact not all that far from what Gogarten calls the »Protestantismus der Reformatoren«<sup>39</sup> which lay behind Luther's acknowledgement of the

<sup>35</sup> Karl Barth: »Nachwort«, in: Friedrich Schleiermacher: *Schleiermacher-Auswahl*. Munich – Hamburg (Siebenstern Taschenbuch Verlag) 1968, pp. 290–312, here p. 293.

<sup>36</sup> The signatories of the manifesto may be viewed at: <http://www.nerst.de/kulturwelt.htm> (accessed 19 September, 2007).

<sup>37</sup> Friedrich Gogarten: »Nachwort«, in: Martin Luther: *Vom unfreien Willen*, Munich (Chr. Kaiser Verlag) 1924, pp. 344–71, here p. 371.

<sup>38</sup> Compare Gogarten (note 37), p. 347, for example.

<sup>39</sup> Gogarten (note 37), p. 346.

rights of secular power in his (in)famous »Wider die räuberischen und mörderischen Rotten der Bauern« of 1525. In that missive, Luther condemns the peasants' struggles outright as so much »auffrur«, reminding the perpetrators that they are subject, »mit leyb vnd gut«, to the »weltlich recht«; »denn die tauffe«, he continues, »macht nicht leyb vnd gut frey/sondern die seelen«. Conversely, the ruler »versündigt« »sich eben so hoch fur Gott« if he »seyn ampt nicht volfüret«, if he does not, in other words, »flux zum schwerd greyffen« to put down the rebels.<sup>40</sup> Both compliant and resistant early twentieth-century Lutheran theologians thus followed the original Reformer by having the secular stay out of the way of the sacred. Their »prying apart«<sup>41</sup> of the temporal realm from the realm of God nevertheless made it possible, along the lines of what Richard van Dülmen characterizes as the original »subordination...to the state« of »Lutheranism in particular«, for the temporal to be left to do pretty much what it wanted.<sup>42</sup>

Max Weber describes the disjunction that permits this kind of runaway autonomy of the secular as the doctrine of the »absolute transcendentalität of God«<sup>43</sup>; for him, as for Benjamin, Calvinism fills the vacuum with honest work. Early in the *Trauerspiel* book, Benjamin refers to a similar absence of any »Eschatologie« (GS I.1, 246) in the world of the Lutheran Baroque, and yet, distinguishes that world from its Reformed twin. For the Lutherans, he writes in a more or less historically accurate assessment, the absence of God from Man's world made room for the potentially dictatorial »neuer Souveränitätsbegriff« of »die absolute Unverletzlichkeit des Souveräns« (245). It is this same »Vakuum« (246) that later, in the melancholy section, results from the »leere Welt« of Lutheranism's »desecularization« of religion<sup>44</sup>, and that creates the challengingly »antinomic« relation to »der Alltag« and »das profane Leben« (317). The challenge is less for »das Volk«, of course, who, according to Benjamin, respond to life in a de-sacralized world with »Pflichtgehorsam«. Rather, the »Trübsinn« that wells up under this Lutheran sky afflicts primarily the great (»in [den] Großen«, 317) insofar, of course, as they are not »Inhaber diktatorischer Gewalt« (245–6).<sup>45</sup> Turning to the melancholy figure of the most proximate »Großer«

<sup>40</sup> Martin Luther: »Widder die stürmeden bawren«, in: Otto Clemen (Ed.): *Luthers Werke. Studienausgabe*, Berlin (de Gruyter) 1962, vol. 3, pp. 69–74, here p. 70–2.

<sup>41</sup> Rebecca Newberger Goldstein: Review of Mark Lilla: *The Stillborn God. Religion, Politics, and the Modern West*, New York (Knopf) 2007, in: *The New York Times Book Review* (September 16, 2007), p. 9.

<sup>42</sup> Richard van Dülmen: »The Reformation and the Modern Age«, Orig. 1987, in: C. Scott Dixon (Ed.): *The German Reformation*, Oxford (Blackwell) 1999, pp. 193–219, here p. 207.

<sup>43</sup> Max Weber: *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, transl. Talcott Parsons, London (Routledge) 2005, p. 60f.

<sup>44</sup> On the »desecularization of religion«, see van Dülmen (note 42), p. 219.

<sup>45</sup> Yet, even »great ones« such as kings are subject to the power of melancholy; cf. Benjamin's quotation of Pascal, GS I.1, 321.

in a similar state of helpless nonage, namely, Prince Hamlet, may well have seemed the natural next step for Benjamin. Indeed, the entire discussion that follows (319) is centered on the figure of melancholy, who, as captured in Dürer's etching, is, in Rang's later words, the »weibliche« model for Hamlet as the »männliche Figure der Melancholie«. <sup>46</sup> Benjamin's subsequent citation of Hamlet's words after the Ulrici edition and the references to Lilencron's novella dialogue with these statist and nationalist versions of Lutheranism in interesting ways.

### German Shakespeares

As noted above, directly after his claim that it was the orthodoxies of »das Luthertum« that in fact led to the melancholy of »great men«, Benjamin cites Hamlet's famous »What is a man...?« (IV, iv, 33–9) speech after the German translation he found in an edition of *Hamlet* edited by Hermann Ulrici (317). <sup>47</sup> He thus did *not* read Shakespeare in the original or even in the German edition one might expect, namely, the so-called Schlegel-Tieck Shakespeare, of 1825–1833. Rather, Benjamin cites the *updated* edition of Schlegel-Tieck translation from 1876–77 prepared by Ulrici, who lived from 1806 to 1884. The distinction may seem small, except that, as Kenneth Larson explains, it brings into view the fact that it was actually only with the *republication* of the Schlegel-Tieck translation under Ulrici's wing in the second (nationalist) half of the nineteenth century that their Shakespeare in fact »achieved« its »canonical« status as *the* German Shakespeare in the first place. <sup>48</sup> Ulrici, who was also the first president of the Deutsche Shakespeare Gesellschaft, writes in the lengthy Foreword to the edition of Shakespeare that Benjamin used that it is an »allgemein anerkannte Thatsache« that Wilhelm August Schlegel's translation of Shakespeare had made »den größten dramatischen Dichter Englands zum geistigen Eigenthum der deutschen Nation«. <sup>49</sup> Indeed, after his and Tieck's translation, Ulrici writes, Shakespeare not only became Germany's »Adoptivsohn«, but also, and perhaps more importantly, was entirely »nationalisiert« by the Germans. <sup>50</sup> That the figure of the

<sup>46</sup> Cited in Steiner: »Traurige Spiele« (note 16), p. 33.

<sup>47</sup> Hermann Ulrici: *Shakespeare's Dramatische Werke nach der Uebersetzung von August Wilhelm Schlegel und Ludwig Tieck, sorgfältig revidirt und theilweise neu bearbeitet...Zweite aufs neue durchgesehene Auflage*, Berlin (Georg Reimer) 1876–77, vol. 6.

<sup>48</sup> Kenneth E. Larson: »The Classical German Shakespeare as Emblem of Germany as a »geistige Weltmacht«: Validating National Power through Cultural Prefiguration«. A paper delivered at the 1991 Modern Language Association Annual Meeting. Available at <http://aurora.wells.edu/~klarson/>

<sup>49</sup> Hermann Ulrici: »Allgemeine Einleitung, Geschichte Shakespeare's und seiner Dichtung«, in: *Shakespeare's Dramatische Werke* (note 47), vol. 1, pp. 3–114, here p. 110f.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 114 and 11.



Bard was subsequently drawn into the maelstrom of cultural initiatives that made up the propaganda arms of the military conflict of the First World War is thus not surprising.

In number 52 of the German *Shakespeare Jahrbuch*, for example, published in 1916, the lengthy front-matter including such documents as the »Ansprache und Jahresbericht« from the annual meeting of its sponsor, the Deutsche Shakespeare Gesellschaft.<sup>51</sup> 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 »Chor der Unmenschlichkeit«, shouting »wüste Fabeln [...] von gekreuzigten Gefangenen und abgehackten Kinderhänden«, can be heard from across the Channel. He then goes on to excoriate »die Machthaber und [...] Verblendeten im heutigen England [die] uns aus freien Männern in Knechte verwandeln möchten«. Such men are incapable of tending to their own heritage, and especially to Shakespeare; the work of the Deutsche Shakespeare Gesellschaft, whose members were gathered there, was thus all the more legitimate and indeed, was to be equated with patriotic work. The introduction ends with the exclamation to the assembled scholars: »So sind wir alle bereit, Gut und Leben zu opfern für Kaiser und Reich.«<sup>52</sup> In volume 52, Shakespeare is thus clearly being used as what Werner Habicht calls a »cultural weapon«, whose »special closeness« to Germany was all the more important in this war-time three hundredth year anniversary of his death.<sup>53</sup>

Just as interesting as the covert appearance via citation of this dangerously secular German Hamlet in Benjamin's book is a second one who peeks out from between the nearly very last lines of the melancholy section, when Benjamin, following Warburg, refers to Hamlet's »Saturnkindschaft« (GS I.1, 335). Here, the astrological and humoral (rather than confessional) origins of the melancholy, which Benjamin had nevertheless earlier characterized as the result of »wittenbergische Philosophie«, are given priority, but the similarity of the description of a humanity caught in the immanence of a mournful world is clear. According to ancient, medieval, and Renaissance lore, about which Benjamin learned in the work of Panofsky, Saxl, and Warburg, those born under the sign of Saturn are constitutionally predisposed to a debilitating melancholy (cf. 326). The Baroque, so Benjamin, inherited from these earlier periods their explanation of the origins of »Trüb-sinn« (320); the melancholic is characterized by a soul only weakly illuminated by the

<sup>51</sup> »Ansprache und Jahresbericht«, in: *Jahrbuch der deutschen Shakespeare-Gesellschaft* 52 (1916), pp. v–xv.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. v, vi, and xiv.

<sup>53</sup> Werner Habicht: »Shakespeare Celebrations in Times of War«, in: *Shakespeare Quarterly* 52 (2001) 4, pp. 441–55, here pp. 449 and 451.

cold light of the furthest planet and by a dry and heavy ›earthiness‹ and depressive nature bequeathed to him by Saturn as the monstrous archaic Golden Age deity, Cronus. The Saturnine individual mirrors the god; potentially fertile, he is nevertheless nearly fatally afflicted with an excess of heavy black bile in the spleen, with a tendency to cleave to the earth, and also, potentially, with the mortal sin of sloth (*acedia*) in the face of a cold, cruel, and unredeemable world. Lutheran and Saturnine melancholy intersect and overlap.

For Benjamin, as for so many readers of Shakespeare, the premier ›Saturnkind‹ was of course Hamlet. Yet, his best face as a German melancholic was precisely not the one described by the revolutionary poet, Ferdinand Freiligrath, who coined the phrase ›Deutschland ist Hamlet‹ ›to castigate the political inactivity of German intellectuals‹ in 1844.<sup>54</sup> Rather, at this point, Benjamin appears to believe that a more or less redeemed – and thus Lutheran – Hamlet had been created by Rochus von Liliencron, who initially, Benjamin writes, read the ›Male der Acedia in Hamlets Zügen‹ (GS I.1, 335). A note leads to the source of this claim, which is, again, Liliencron's novella, ›Die siebente Todsünde‹.<sup>55</sup> The seventh deadly sin is of course sloth. Liliencron's novella in fact turns out not to be about Hamlet, but, rather, about a Hamlet surrogate – or two – namely, the ›schöne melancholische Jüngling‹ named Sir Arthur (108), and his friend, the fictional Shakespeare, who is the other Hamletesque protagonist of the tale. In the course of the novella, the Bard must shake Sir Arthur from a debilitating lethargy induced by any number of factors, including his noble leisure, his humanistic studies, a lawsuit over his familial inheritance, and confusion about his love affair with ›Miß Ellen Addington‹, all of which worldly challenges Sir Arthur is unable to master. Indeed, he avoids – in good Lutheran rather than Calvinist fashion – any ›gesunde Tätigkeit‹ (109) at all in the world, as the narrator has Shakespeare observe.

And indeed, Sir Arthur wastes away for most of the story, storming in and out of both his beloved's garden and Shakespeare's atelier (where Shakespeare is working on rewriting *Hamlet*, the first version of which had flopped at the opening of the novella), fleeing both her attentions and his friend's ministrations in a series of tumultuous, melancholic scenes. Liliencron's Shakespeare, by contrast, first uses the figure of Sir Arthur as a model for a successful rewriting of his play, only then to use the rewrite and a command performance of the play, with Sir Arthur in attendance, to save his young friend's psyche and soul. In the novella, the diagnosis of Arthur as a melancholic – and, just as importantly,

<sup>54</sup> See Habicht: ›Shakespeare Celebrations‹ (note 53), p. 453.

<sup>55</sup> Rochus von Liliencron: ›Die siebente Todsünde‹, Orig. 1876, in: Liliencron: *Zwei Novellen*, Leipzig (Duncker und Humblot) 1903, pp. 93–194.

the solution to Shakespeare's own intellectual fatigue vis-à-vis his work on the *Hamlet* script – is based on the account of the seven deadly sins given in a manuscript shown to him (Shakespeare) by a character known as »der alte Meister«, a wizened old scholar who feeds the Bard »Lehrstoff« to make up for the »Bildung« he feels he lacks (118). This particular manuscript is by one of the »alter Meister's« former students, Aegidius Albertinus, and is entitled »Luzifers Höllenjagd« (121f.). After »der alter Meister« reads long sections of the book about *acedia* and the distance of the melancholic from God's goodness and grace aloud to Shakespeare (156–61), the playwright proceeds to catch up his quill and set to work completing what turns out to be the spectacularly successful revision. All's well that ends well.

Excerpting Aegidius Albertinus' *Lucifers Königreich und Seelenjaidt* (1616) for use in his novella would have been easy for Liliencron, as he was the editor of the Albertinus *Neudruck* in Kürschner's series, Deutsche National-Litteratur, published in 1884.<sup>56</sup> Liliencron cites his edition of the Baroque text in the »Vorwort« to the 1903 novella, and numerous quotes from the *Neudruck* in fact appear in Benjamin's *Trauerspiel* book. Liliencron was much more famous as the founder and general editor of the multi-volume *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie* than as a writer of novellas, however. Beginning in 1869, he was the prime mover behind the nursing into existence of this monumental collection of information about the cultural history of German arts, sciences, and letters under the sponsorship of the Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften. Liliencron retired in 1907 after 53 volumes of the *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie* had been completed. His engagement with the project, whose purview he describes in a letter to Ranke as being »die gesamte Geschichte der Nation in ihrer politischen, wissenschaftlichen, künstlerischen und industriellen Entfaltung umspannt«, overlapped almost exactly with the years with the decades of the *Kulturkampf* described above.<sup>57</sup> It is probably significant that Liliencron came from a pro-Prussian German (rather than Danish) family in Schleswig-Holstein and was a good Protestant. Yet he saw it as his scholarly duty to be ecumenical, and spent considerable time, his biographer, Anton Bettelheim claims, working – in what Bettelheim calls the context of the »Schicksalswende« for the soon-to-be-unified nation in 1871 – to have scholars from both sides of the confessional aisle (Catholic and Protestant) collaborate in their work on the *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie*.<sup>58</sup> It is nevertheless difficult to

<sup>56</sup> Rochus von Liliencron (Ed.): Aegidius Albertinus: *Lucifers Königreich und Seelengejaidt*, Orig. 1616, Berlin – Stuttgart (W. Spemann) 1884.

<sup>57</sup> Liliencron's letter to Ranke is quoted in Anton Bettelheim: *Leben und Wirken des Freiherrn Rochus von Liliencron*, Berlin (Verlag von Georg Reimer) 1917, p. 157.

<sup>58</sup> See Bettelheim (note 57), p. 164f.

consider the *ADB* project as anything other than the attempt to create – by peaceful means in book form – the confessional unity, if not also homogeneity, for the young nation that the Protestant majority sought to impose by law.

The »Einleitung« of the 1884 edited Albertinus text from which Benjamin quotes supports this thesis. Even as Liliencron glosses over Albertinus' problematic identity as a »Zögling der Jesuiten« (and thus as »einen eifrigen Vertreter der katholischen Reaktion jeder Periode«), for example, and emphasizes that the book is most importantly »die Arbeit eines volkstümlichen Schriftstellers«, he also makes clear that the »Gelehrsamkeit« of his »primitive« author stood diametrically opposed »zu den modernen Richtungen«; indeed, according to Liliencron, Albertinus had sought to cancel out the gains of humanism and the Reformation all in one by turning back »die Uhr des menschlichen Geistes um einige Jahrhunderte«. <sup>59</sup> Given his dismissal of the Jesuit thinker and his extraordinary emphasis on the value of Catholic penance (»Bueß«) as any kind of model for intellectual progress or modernity at all, it is significant that Liliencron has the perhaps more compelling of the two Hamlets of his novella – the charismatic character of Shakespeare – finally shake off his melancholy writer's block by means of a curious amalgamation of Calvinist hard work on the script and Lutheran belief in God's grace. »Fühle die Hand des Himmels«, he thunders at Sir Arthur (177), when Arthur morosely tells him he has lost the inheritance case and thus become more slothful than ever. In Sir Arthur's legal defeat, Liliencron's Shakespeare sees redemption for his friend, whom he in the same breath encourages to have faith (»Glaube«) in the unseen love of Miß Ellen (179).

A vocabulary of melancholy and divine grace, of faith in unseen love, and of »das Licht der Weisheit« defeating »die Nacht des Irrsinns« (180) fills the final pages of the novella, in other words. By the end, the hold of the old Jesuit lore of melancholy – represented by the Albertinus citations – on both of the now more-or-less Protestant Hamlet stand-ins has been broken for good. It is no wonder that Benjamin saw in Liliencron's »Hamlet« a »Zuschauer von Gottes Gnaden« (GS I.1, 335), and it is more than possible that the Shakespeare to whom he attributes the ability to strike »den christlichen Funken« out of the medieval »Starre des Melancholikers« (also 335) is the Shakespeare of the scholar's tale. – Against this background, it is more than curious that Benjamin repeatedly denies that any German could see his way clear to this kind of »Christian« redemption, for both of his Hamlets (Ulrici's and Liliencron's) spoke German, and both get recruited to the cause of a rebellion (»Aufruhr«, 317) against a Wittenbergian resignation and hopelessness. In

<sup>59</sup> See Liliencron: »Einleitung«, in: Albertinus: *Lucifers Königreich und Seelengejaidt* (note 56), pp. i–xxi, here pp. v, i, and xx–xxi.

the process, they become something like hyper-Lutherans who would ironically defeat the confessionally-induced national melancholy they face by fleeing into it.

While depicted in a more or less ›redemptive‹ scenario in Benjamin's book, the intensification of the Lutheran stance visible in the actions of Liliencron's ›Hamlets‹ may thus have had another side. For one thing, it sounds quite a bit like a Gogarten's theory of commitment to the realm of the ›Du‹. As for Gogarten, so here too, rebellion seems, in good Lutheran fashion, to remain a strictly spiritual affair. Enacted in the heart or, in Liliencron's novella, on a fictionalized stage and amidst the circle of friends in Shakespeare's atelier, the move beyond melancholy in any case occurs at a good distance from the consolidating secular powers of the nineteenth- and twentieth-century German state lurking beneath the cover of faith. The denial, or, if that is too strong, the elision of any link between the individual's spiritual and creative redemption and the real world may well have been precisely the problem these Lutheran Hamlets presented for Benjamin. Indeed, by separating this version of the ›Überwindung‹ (GS I.1, 335) of melancholy out from the ›rohe Bühne‹ of the German playwrights, he may have been suggesting that a better Germany – or at least the Germany prefigured in the world of the actual Baroque *Trauerspiele* as opposed to these Shakespearian worlds – would stand firm and confront ›das Dasein‹ as ›ein Trümmerfeld halber, unechter Handlungen‹ (318), rather than turning away from the very forces that led to that destruction.

It is, finally, revealing that the question of how to make ›Ideen‹ and ›writing‹ (›Schrift‹) have an impact (›Wirkung‹) in the real world of post-World War I Europe is one that Benjamin addresses in his ›Zuschrift‹ to the more or less eirenic, and yet also deadly serious *Deutsche Bauhütte* text by Rang. In that book, the Protestant theologian suggests that, as a way of saving its ›Geistesleben‹ and soul, an ecumenical Germany must take responsibility for the ›Kriegsschäden‹ and ›die vernichteten Menschenleben von Zivilpersonen‹ wreaked upon France and Belgium by his country's military during the war by paying reparations to those countries for the destruction.<sup>60</sup> Benjamin had had doubts about Rang's ›analysis‹ of the situation, he writes in his ›Zuschrift‹, but these doubts had in large part been erased by the text that Rang wrote; he (Benjamin) now (somewhat implausibly of course) has hopes for its impact (›Wirkung‹).<sup>61</sup> In this context, Benjamin's acknowledgment in the *Trauerspiel* book that the German playwrights of the Baroque, and Lohenstein and Gryphius in particular, had in fact played important roles in the ›Staatsgeschäften‹ of their time (GS I.1, 236) is significant. It is not by chance that much of his analysis of the

<sup>60</sup> See Rang: *Deutsche Bauhütte* (note 34), p. 14f., for example, and Benjamin's ›Zuschrift‹ there, p. 185f.

<sup>61</sup> Benjamin: ›Zuschrift‹ (note 60), p. 185.

German plays turns on just how engaged their princely protagonists stay with the detritus that surrounds them in their own fraught political times. In the distance Benjamin claims to find between Liliencron's Hamlet and the Baroque *Trauerspiel* may lie the possibility of a different kind of ›Lutheran‹ redemption – perhaps even the possibility of real »Aufruhr dagegen« (GS I.1, 317) – through active engagement with the world.