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This Thesis by FRANK BRESSAT

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To the Faculty of Graduate Studies
University of Saskatchewan

We, the undersigned members of the Committee appointed by you
to examine the thesis submitted by Frank Bessai, B. A.,
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Master
of Arts, beg to report that we consider the thesis satisfactory
both in form and content.

Subject of Thesis: "Hamlet in the Theaterromane of Goethe and Hauptmann"

We also report that he has successfully passed an oral examination
on the general field of the subject of the thesis.
"HAMLET"
IN THE
THEATERROMANE
OF
GOETHE AND HAUPTMANN

A Thesis
submitted to the Faculty
Of Graduate Studies
in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements
for the Degree of
Master of Arts
in the Department of English
University of Saskatchewan

by
Frank Bessai

Saskatoon, Saskatchewan
March, 1955.
Es gibt kein Volk, auch das englische nicht, das sich ein Anrecht wie das deutsche auf Shakespeare erworben hätte. Shakespeares Gestalten sind ein Teil unserer Welt, sein Seele ist eins mit unserer geworden: und wenn er in England geboren und begraben ist, so ist Deutschland das Land, wo er wahrhaft lebt.

--Hauptmann
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number of antecedents to his novel, in Hauptmann's study of Hamlet, make a biographical approach also necessary.

While the final form of Goethe's novel, Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre, has been admirably translated by Carlyle, no translations of Shakespeare und kein Ende or Im Wirbel der Berufung have yet been made. I therefore include sections from these works in an appendix.
INTRODUCTION

Goethe was the first German critic to devote himself to an interpretation of Shakespeare's Hamlet. He chose to incorporate his ideas on this play in the world's most famous Theaterroman. When in our own time another great German dramatist, Gerhart Hauptmann, attempted to explain the enigma of Hamlet, he followed the precedent of Goethe, and used a novel to convey his ideas. And while the novel may not be the recognized vehicle of scholarly criticism, the opinions of great minds must always command respect; and so these, on a difficult product of Shakespeare's genius.

In this study, I propose to examine the treatment of Hamlet in two German novels of the theatre: Goethe's Wilhelm Meister and Gerhart Hauptmann's Im Wirbel der Berufung. A brief survey of the beginnings of Shakespearean criticism will lead up to Goethe. The formative influences that went into the writing of Wilhelm Meister, especially the Hamlet-episodes, will then be considered. Since Goethe's views on Shakespeare and Hamlet are not finally expressed in Wilhelm Meister, it will be necessary to extend the scope of this essay, as if affects Goethe, beyond the period of the novel. I hope to show that Hauptmann owed the basis for his final theory on Hamlet, as expressed in Im Wirbel der Berufung, to a late and rather obscure essay of Goethe's: Shakespeare und kein Ende. The
I

SHAKESPEARE CRITICISM IN GERMANY BEFORE GOETHE

The earliest known critical reference to Shakespeare in Germany is entirely negative. D.G. Morhof, in Unterricht von der teutschen Sprache, Kiel, 1682, writes

That man John Dryden has most learnedly written of dramatic poesy. The Englishmen he mentions herein are Shakespeare, Fletcher, Beaumont, of whom I have seen nothing.

This innocence of the subject is replaced by second-hand evidence in 1798, when Barthold Feind, in Gedancken von der Opera writes

M. Le Chevalier Temple tells us, that divers people, when the tragedies of the renowned English tragedian Shakespeare are read to them, do oft begin to cry out with loud voices, and shed numerous tears.

As late as 1740, the eminent German critic Bodmer's acquaintance with Shakespeare allowed him to corrupt the name to Saspar.

However, in the following year (1741) the first translation of a play of Shakespeare's appeared in Germany. It was C.W. von Borcke's Versuch einer gebundenen Uebersetzung des

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2 The reference is to William Temple's Essay on Poetry, which Feind had translated into French.
3 Pascal, p. 37.
4 In his Vorrede to von dem Wunderbaren in der Poesie, as quoted in Pascal.
Trauerspiels von dem Tode des Julius Cäsar. Von Borcke made a conscious attempt to improve on Shakespeare, for the translation is in rhymed alexandrines. It is questionable whether he is referring to Shakespeare, or to his own work in translating him, when he says in the Vorrede:

A work here steps into the light, which neither asks for favour, nor has need of protection.1

The acknowledged legislator of the German dramaturgy of the time, Gottsched, immediately condemned the work, not because of any inaccuracies on the translator's part, but because of Shakespeare's utter ignorance of the rules:

The most wretched historical play of our vulgar comedians is hardly as full of blunders and mistakes against the rules of the stage, and sound common sense, as this piece of Shakespeare's.2

Johann Elias Schlegel, himself a playwright, criticizes Von Borcke's translation.3 It is very bad. But no translator can be expected so to groom Shakespeare, Schlegel thinks, that he compares favourably everywhere with the indigenous dramatist Gryphius. Nevertheless, in comparing the work of the two dramatists, Schlegel admits that Shakespeare has the advantage of Gryphius in the expression of character and emotion. However, he deplores Shakespeare's irregularity, his jumbling of scenes, his mixing of the farcical and the

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1 Pascal, p. 38.
2 Pascal, p. 39.
3 In his Beiträge zur critischen Historie, Stück XXVIII, 1742, as quoted in Pascal.
sublime. Even though Schlegel's conclusions are based on a single play (i.e. Julius Caesar) he is Germany's first Shakespeare critic. There seem to be two types of tragedy, he says. There is the Aristotelian kind, which is the representation of an action with moral significance, and the English type, with no specific aim, in which construction is therefore not an element of absolute importance. While we can derive a lesson from formal tragedy, the English type reveals to us human nature.

Schlegel was a disciple of Gottsched, and therefore he probably did not mean to undermine the rigid dogmatics of his master. But, in suggesting that another dramaturgy was possible, that is precisely what he did, although his ideas were not followed up for two decades. Indeed, interest in Shakespeare appears to have waned in the period following the publication of Schlegel's essay. It was not until 1758 that another of Shakespeare's plays was translated: a rendering in iambic pentameter of Garrick's adaptation of Romeo and Juliet by Simon Grynaeus. A reaction in favour of Shakespeare begins with an anonymous article of 1753. The writer excuses Shakespeare's disregard for the unities, and his puns. He praises Falstaff:

Perhaps, if Shakespeare had wanted to follow the ancients too closely, his anxious caution would have set bounds to his fire, his amicable impetuosity, and to the beauty of his digression, which merits we all so admire in him . . . Shakespeare, removed from studied art, followed nature . . . It would be foolish to absolve him of errors, but it would be equally absurd to
wish to appear indifferent to his outstanding merits . . . The character of Falstaff is a consummate masterpiece . . . Shakespeare's frequent puns were defects, but a fault of his age . . . It would be unfair to judge him by the laws (of Aristotle) which were unknown to him.¹

The critic and philosopher Moses Mendelssohn, freely admitting Shakespeare's crimes against the rules of art, takes the attitude that the end justifies the means:

The larger the force by which the poet works on our imaginative capacity, the more external action he can allow himself, without impeding the poetry of the work; the more craft he must use, if he wishes to give the illusions of his poetry strong enough support. You are acquainted with Shakespeare. You know how, as it were, he tyrannizes over the imagination of his audience, and how easily, almost as if in play, he throws them from passion to passion, from illusion to illusion. But how many absurdities, how much that conflicts with the rules, do we not forgive him in the external action, and how little does the spectator notice of this, whose entire attention is occupied elsewhere.²

One year before Mendelssohn wrote these words, his friend Lessing had fired a critical bombshell, with the publication of the seventeenth in his series of Briefe die neueste Litteratur betreffend. It is now known simply as the 17. Literaturbrief, and reads in part:

Gottsched wished not only to improve our old theatre, but to be the creator of a new one. And what sort of a new one? A Frenchified one, without bothering to investigate whether this Frenchified theatre was adaptable to the German way of thinking or not.

¹ Neue Erweiterungen der Erkenntnis und des Vergnügens, Frankfurt & Leipzig, 1753, from Pascal, p. 47.
² Briefe die neueste Litteratur betreffend, No.84, 1760. from Pascal.
He should have been able to determine sufficiently from our old dramatic pieces, which he drove out, that we enter more into the taste of the English than the French, that we wish to see and think more in our tragedies than the timid tragedy of the French gives us to see and think; that the grand, the terrible, the melancholy, are more effective with us than the prim, the tender, the enamoured; that too much simplicity fatigues us more than too much complication, etc. He should therefore have kept on this track, and it would have led him straightway to the English theatre...

If the masterpieces of Shakespeare, with a few modest changes, had been translated for our Germans, I know positively that the results would have been better than to have made them so well acquainted with Corneille and Racine. In the first place the people would have found a far greater savour in the former, than they are able to find in the latter. Secondly, Shakespeare would have roused vastly different abilities among us, than we can boast with these. For a genius can be kindled only by a genius, and most easily by such a one, who seems to have only nature to thank for everything, and does not frighten us off with the laborious perfections of art.

Even if we were to judge by the patterns of the ancients, Shakespeare is a far greater tragedian than Corneille, even though the latter knew the ancients well, and the former knew them hardly at all. Corneille approaches them more closely in the mechanical disposition of his work; Shakespeare in substance. The Englishman almost always achieves the purpose of his tragedy, no matter what singular ways he may choose to employ, while the Frenchman almost never achieves it, even though he treads the well-marked paths of the ancients. Next to the Oedipus of Sophocles, there is no piece in the world that has more power over our passions than Othello, King Lear, etc.¹

Pascal jocularly finds an historical parallel to this complete reversal of dramatic values in Frederick the Great's

¹Lessings sämtliche Schriften ed. Lachmann, Stuttgart 1892, vol. 8, pp. 41-44 passim.
reversal of alliances of 1756. The one, like the other, had no inner effect on the state concerned. Lessing’s unorthodox opinions gained for him only the powerful wrath of Gottsched, but they went virtually unheeded for two decades. Nor indeed does his vague reference to "Othello, King Lear, Hamlet, etc." indicate an authoritative knowledge of Shakespeare. Except that he consistently alludes to Shakespeare as a great genius, Lessing’s attitude to Shakespeare, here as in the Hamburgische Dramaturgie, is never made plain.

The eventual popularization of Shakespeare in Germany was due to Wieland. His translation of twenty-two plays from 1762 to 1766 made Shakespeare known to all educated Germans. That Wieland should have been the agent for the passionate Shakespeare-cult of the following years, seems somewhat paradoxical. He was a man of most unstable temperament; he admired and despised Shakespeare by turns, and his translations reveal these fluctuations. He began with a verse-translation of A Midsummer Night’s Dream, but lacked the patience to continue in this; the rest of his translations are in prose. What Wieland enjoyed most in Shakespeare was his individualism, particularly his flight into the world of fancy. A Midsummer Night’s Dream and The Tempest were his favourite plays.

However imperfect a translator, Wieland gave the young generation easy access to Shakespeare. Heinrich Wilhelm von Gerstenberg was the best critical representative of this group.
His Briefe über Merkwürdigkeiten der Litteratur, published in 1776, contains the first full-scale appraisal of Shakespeare since Schlegel's time. He resumed Schlegel's argument about two types of tragedy, and used the theories of men like Home-Kames\textsuperscript{1} to maintain that the nature of drama changes with the passing of history. It is therefore not necessary to heed Aristotle's laws, says Gerstenberg, since they are strictly applicable to Greek tragedy alone. Gerstenberg therefore ridicules the claim that Shakespeare is irregular. The most classical of modern poets, he considers, can not claim to be much nearer to the spirit of Greek drama. Shakespeare's interest is primarily the representation of character. But that does not mean that Shakespeare fails to rouse the passions of his audience; he merely does it in a different way. His work is not descriptive tragedy, in which the characters make a direct rhetorical appeal to the audience; rather it is complete in itself. The audience is therefore called upon to take an imaginative part in the illusion of the stage, and the author too identifies himself with his characters. This is the first note of \textit{Sturm und Drang} in German Shakespeare criticism.

\textsuperscript{1} in his Elements of Criticism, 1760.
II

GOETHE: THE WAY TO SHAKESPEARE

The Sturm und Drang revolution in German literature was heralded by such works as Goethe's Goetz von Berlichingen and Klinger's Sturm und Drang, whence the movement took its name. Although Sturm und Drang burst suddenly on the world about 1770, it had its antecedents. The masterly criticisms of Lessing, and his pioneer enthusiasm for Shakespeare, had served to weaken the old order. The poems of Ossian stimulated a new interest in northern mythology, an interest which spread to ballad literature. And Rousseau became suddenly popular. The result was an almost cataclysmic return to nature, with nature being, as Lewes puts it, "a compound of volcanoes and moonlight": explosive force and lachrymose sentimentality. The proponents of the new movement, all of them young, threw literary tradition to the winds; literature needed but one ingredient, Natur. And because Shakespeare among writers was thought to possess this one quality in so great a measure, he became the patron saint of Sturm und Drang.

Herder and the young Goethe were among the leaders of this literary revolt. Goethe had met Herder at Strassburg while attending the university there. The older man passed his own enthusiasm on to Goethe, who up to this time had been

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1 Lewes, G. Life of Goethe, p. 100.
effectively isolated from new literary forces at Leipzig, the stronghold of Gottsched. Goethe recounts his own conversion in his memoirs:

Now it was that through Herder I became acquainted all at once with new strivings, and with all the directions that these appeared to take. I was made familiar with poetry from a totally different side, and this side appealed to me more.

and further

Thus it was that we, on the borders of France, suddenly became tired of all things French. We found their way of living too fixed and genteel, their poetry cold, their criticism destructive, so that we stood at a point where we were ready to deliver ourselves up, at least tentatively, to raw nature, if another influence had not already been preparing us for higher and freer opinions of the world and spiritual enjoyments, both true and poetic, which influence ruled us ever more strongly and openly.

This influence was Shakespeare. The young writers worshipped him in a manner which the sedate prose of Goethe's memoir does not allow us to suspect. They strove to imitate him, never very successfully: Goethe's own Götz von Berlichingen was the best attempt. Their writings on Shakespeare were eulogy, not criticism. Goethe's own essay, Zum Schakespeare's Tag, written for the occasion of a Shakespeare festival at Frankfurt on October 14, 1771, is entirely typical:

Do not expect me to write properly and much. Peace of the soul is not a holiday garment, and up

to this time I have thought little about Shakespeare—at the most, a perception, a feeling, is all I have been able to achieve. The first page of his that I read, made me his for a lifetime, and when I had finished with his first piece, I stood like one born blind, to whom a wonderful hand gives sight in an instant. I perceived, I felt most vividly that my existence had been widened by an infinite space; all things were new to me and unknown, and the unaccustomed light blinded my sight. By degrees I learned to see, and thanks to my perceptive genius, I am still able to feel vividly what I have won.

I doubted not for an instant that I would abandon the regular theatre. The unity of place seemed a frightful prison, the unities of plot and time burdensome shackles of the imagination. I rushed out into the open air, and did not realize till then that I had hands and feet. And at that moment, when I saw what injustice the gentlemen of the rules had done me in their hole, and how many free souls still writhed within, my heart would have burst, had I not declared war on these gentlemen, and sought daily to smash their towers . . .

Shakespeare, my friend, if thou wert still with us, I could live nowhere but with thee! . . .

This essay is essentially uncritical. Shakespeare is figuratively praised for his ignorance of the unities. Vague statements are made about the contents of his plays: they revolve about an undetermined point; they deal with the new and unknown. Shakespeare is used as a giant broom, to sweep out a tradition which has become suddenly discredited. He alone is ever new; he is life, he is Natur.

After the historical drama Goetz von Berlichingen, in which he tried to imitate Shakespeare, Goethe wrote Die

1 Jubiläumsausgabe - vol. 36, pp. 4 ff.
Leiden des jungen Werther, the sentimental novel that set Europe weeping. He wrote it out of his own unhappy experience, and indeed it was by writing the Werther-mood out of his soul that Goethe saved himself from the tragic fate of his hero. He had moved a step forward from the instinctive period of Sturm und Drang; he began to realize that artistic expression was necessary to his genius and temperament. He was, like the Titan Prometheus, like Shakespeare, a creator of men.

Werther was published in 1774. It brought sudden fame to Goethe, and an invitation to visit the court at Weimar. He arrived there on November 7, 1775, to pay a visit that was to last a lifetime.

The Dowager Duchess Amalie was at this time the principal figure at the Weimar court. She was an accomplished lady. Wieland had taught her Greek; she translated Propertius, but, quite unlike her uncle Frederick the Great, she did not despise German literature. Besides being something of a scholar and a musician, she loved light-hearted company, and made her court the gathering-place of a variety of young and talented people. Her son, Karl August, soon to become the reigning duke, shared her interest in genius, and became Goethe's lifelong companion and friend.

Goethe came to Weimar as a literary lion. He was young, handsome, and famous: the court loved him at once, and
even Wieland stepped down from his position as erstwhile darling with right good grace. No written document recalls what effect this close proximity of the translator of Shakespeare had on Goethe's views of the dramatist. No doubt it did stimulate him to read again Wieland's translations: and perhaps to compare them with the originals, for which Goethe's knowledge of English then barely sufficed.

Goethe's presence at Weimar plunged the court into a few hectic weeks of a combined Sturm und Drang and Werther-mut. There was an immediate change of fashion; all the young men began to wear the Werther-costume; top-boots replaced silk stockings and shoes, and the ensemble was completed by a blue coat and yellow waistcoat, leather breeches, and pigtailed wig. In such fanciful dress the court whirled madly at the heels of the high-spirited Goethe, dancing, masking, flirting and, what was unheard of before, even skating. When at the end of two months Goethe slipped away for a short breathing-space, he was immediately recalled by Karl August, and offered a seat on the privy council of Weimar. He was to retain a position of influence in the administrative affairs of the little duchy until his death.

Goethe used his influence to draw his special friends to Weimar. His old Sturm und Drang associate Herder was made court-chaplain, a rather anomalous choice, since he was apt
to mount the pulpit in boots and spurs. And, although Goethe had now a hand in the business affairs of the little nation, he provided for amusement as well, by establishing private theatricals in which the entire court participated. The Weimar theatre had burned down in 1774, and there were no facilities adequate for the demands of a touring company. To provide what was lacking in professional talent, Goethe induced the celebrated and beautiful Corona Schröter to come to Weimar. They performed masques and operettas on a specially-built stage on the banks of the Ilm, with flambeaux illuminating the river and the night. They put on plays at home and at neighbouring courts. Some were light-hearted travesties, like the performance of Aristophanes' comedy *The Birds*, in which the actors wore feather suits equipped with flapping wings. Some were exotic productions, like Cumberland's *West Indian*. But many of the plays were especially written for the occasion, among them Goethe's early prose version of *Iphigenie*, and *Die Geschwister*. The latter play was written in three October evenings of 1776. The pair of lovers are named Wilhelm and Marianne; Wilhelm is the son of a merchant. This is exactly as in the opening book of *Wilhelm Meister*. The earliest positive indication that Goethe was working on a novel of that name comes from a cryptic entry of February 16, 1774 in Goethe's diary:
It is possible, of course, that Goethe began to write *Wilhelm Meister* as a sort of autobiography. But the evident selection he imposed on his own experiences does much to discredit such a notion. The novel is begun as a Theaterroman: "the play was late in breaking up" are its very first words. We are introduced immediately to the hero Wilhelm, a stage-enthusiast from this earliest childhood, a would-be dramatist, and lover of the actress Marianne. Goethe himself was certainly very much interested in the dramatic arts, and there is even said to have been a kind of Marianne. She was Amalie Kotzebue; he was not her lover, but he wrote for her the part of Marianne in *Die Geschwister*. Wilhelm Meister was meant to represent, as Goethe later explained to Frau von Stein, his "beloved dramatic image." The name he chose for his novel, *Wilhelm Meisters theatralische Sendung*, implies a sense of mission. He had vague ideas on the reform of the theatre in Germany, on the establishment of a national theatre. The name "Wilhelm Meister" that he gave his hero is an ostensible combination of Shakespeare's praenomen and the nomenclature of the guilds. The fact that Wilhelm comes of a tradesman's family agrees with both sources.

But aside from any ideas that Goethe may have had

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of a purely theatrical mission, he had come to believe, through Werther, that he had a poetic mission. This drive alone had saved him from the fate of Werther, and had even given him fame. Where would it lead him now? It may well have been out of the instinctive desire to plan some sort of Lebensziel that he began work on Wilhelm Meister. Thus he soon found himself unable to hold to the limited sphere of the theatre only. The theatre may well have been, at the outset, a sympathetic disguise for Goethe's soul, but it proved too small. Wilhelm Meister is endowed with all of the poet's own struggles and ideals; he is given a part of his creator's own ability to create. As the work progresses, Wilhelm draws perceptibly further away from the shadow of Werther's dilettantism and Schwärmerei. There is a dark striving for fulfillment, for consummate manhood, a striving which eventually withdraws Wilhelm altogether from the limited sphere of the theatre. But that is still far in the future; Goethe begins his novel under the influence of a great deal of somewhat amateurish theatrical experience. And while he is writing the novel, his experience as the unofficial leader of a dilettante group continues. But the stage is not taken seriously by the select circle at Weimar, and while he has entered whole-heartedly into the spirit of parody and fun, he has a vision of better things. Therein lies the germ of Meister's mission. Shakespeare becomes the symbol of ultimate
stage-craft; his play *Hamlet* the outstanding example.

The first book of *Wilhelm Meister* was completed by 1778. After this the work progressed slowly; Goethe had by this time taken up countless administrative duties, and fallen in love with Frau von Stein. He and the Duke visited Berlin on official business in 1778; however Goethe did not meet Frederick the Great. Indeed he had no reason to feel very much drawn to the King; Frederick's *De la litterature Allemande*, just published, had chastised him unmercifully for *Goetz von Berlichingen*:

> But behold where a Goetz of Berlichingen appears on the scene; a detestable imitation of those bad English pieces, and the parterre applauds, and enthusiastically demands the repetition of such disgusting platitudes!\(^1\)

Frederick's opinion of Shakespeare was similarly unqualified:

> Here you will see the abominable pieces of Shakespeare translated into our language, and the entire audience swoons away with ease, while hearing these ridiculous farces, that are worthy of the savages of Canada.\(^2\)

This exceptional virulence can safely be attributed to the influence of Voltaire.

How Goethe reacted to Frederick's violent denunciation is not known. He drafted a reply to Frederick, which for reasons of policy was never published, and which Goethe probably destroyed. He may have recognized whence came the


\(^2\) Ibid. - p. 254.
Kiing's cynical tirade; for Goethe had attacked Voltaire with youthful malice in the Frankfurt essay. At any rate, Frederick's criticism no doubt stimulated him to a renewed interest in Shakespeare. It is known that Goethe was studying Hamlet at the time he introduced the play into Wilhelm Meister.¹ This was about the year 1785. At the end of that year he had completed the first six books of his novel. The work was interrupted by the Italian journey.

The Italian journey was not an arbitrary interruption of Goethe's life and activity at Weimar. It was not a vacation or rest-cure. Goethe was drawn to Italy by the overpowering inner conviction that only there, in direct communication with the works of another age, could he learn to understand the universal in art, and become the true artist himself. The yearning songs of his Mignon had given expression to his longing; he satisfied it now, and the experience was a very fruitful one.

When he returned, he promised himself that he would complete the novel without delay, but the outbreak of the French Revolution prevented him from doing so. The dowager duchess Amalie and Herder both urged him to finish the work, but little had been done by 1794. Then, in an act of desperation, he committed himself to its completion by selling it

¹Jubiläumsausgabe - vol. 17, p. 346, note.
to the bookseller. He studied the unfinished fragment, and decided that it must be revised. The revision was soon done. Goethe is thought to have then destroyed the old manuscript. This supposition of Goethe-scholars became a virtual certainty in 1885, when the Goethe-archives were released to the public, but failed to reveal any traces of the earlier work. However, in 1910, a fortunate accident brought a copy of the fragment to light. A Zurich schoolboy showed his teacher an old manuscript that had lain for years in his father's writing-desk. It was Wilhelm Meisters theatricalische Sendung, badly copied in feminine handwriting. Subsequent research revealed that the copy had been made by a Zurich lady, Barbara Schultess, and her daughter Babe. The girl's diary was also recovered by researchers; it revealed how Goethe had sent them the sheets of the original manuscript as they were written at Weimar, and how they had copied and returned them. The Schultess copy was published in 1911 as Wilhelm Meisters theatricalische Sendung, the name Goethe had originally intended for his novel. It is also popularly known as the Ur-Meister.

A comparison of the revision with the Sendung reveals a few important differences. The theatre plays a smaller part in the revised work; some comically grotesque scenes involving the touring company to which Marianne belongs are cut; Wilhelm himself becomes a considerably reduced figure. The
indications of his own talents as an actor and a dramatist are less obvious; he is pared down to the stature of an inspired dilettante, whose eventual farewell to the arts may be regarded as a matter of course. Slight inconsistencies in the plot are eliminated; the style of the revision is more fluent. But except for minor mechanical details in one or two places, the episodes in which Wilhelm Meister discusses Hamlet remain entirely unchanged.

Schiller's encouragement inspired Goethe to finish Wilhelm Meister in the years 1794-96. The novel was published as Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre. The Shakespeare-theme is dropped entirely after the fifth book.¹

¹ For a comparative table of the Hamlet-episodes in the Sendung and Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre, see Appendix A.
III

THE GENESIS OF A CRITIC

Eckermann recounts a conversation he had with Goethe on Christmas Day, 1825. The aged poet had been showing him an English edition of Shakespeare, profusely illustrated with copper-plates:

'It is even terrifying,' said Goethe, 'to look through these little pictures. Thus are we first made to feel the infinite wealth and grandeur of Shakespeare. There is no motif in human life which he has not exhibited and expressed! And all with what ease and freedom!

'But we cannot talk about Shakespeare; everything is inadequate. I have touched upon the subject in my Wilhelm Meister, but that is not saying much. He is not a theatrical poet; he never thought of the stage; it was far too narrow for his great mind; nay, the whole visible world was too narrow.

'He is even too rich and too powerful. A productive nature ought not to read more than one of his dramas in a year, if it would not be wrecked entirely. I did well to get rid of him by writing Goetz and Egmont, and Byron did well by not having too much respect and admiration for him, but going his own way.'

Here Goethe sums up briefly all that Shakespeare has meant to him through a long lifetime, and how his own views on Shakespeare have changed. He began as an enthusiastic admirer of Shakespeare the dramatist; he strove to imitate Shakespeare. But his Goetz, and later his Egmont, showed him that he could not write Shakespearian plays. Shakespeare was not to be imitated; even to read extensively in Shakespeare

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could mean ruin for a dramatist, since the temptation to emulate him might prove overpowering. But Goethe had succeeded in "writing Shakespeare out of his system." He continued to revere Shakespeare the poet, but he gradually became convinced that Shakespeare was not a good dramatist.

When Goethe first began to write Wilhelm Meister, he was still strongly under the spell of Shakespeare. The Hamlet-episodes in the fragment were written in the years 1785-86 for the most part, at a time when Goethe was himself studying Hamlet. Goethe's editors remark:

He weaves that drama of Shakespeare's into his novel, which, from the time that it was first naturalized on the German stage, continued to call forth the deepest and most powerful effects. To the contemporaries of Werther, the Danish prince appeared to be a spiritual relative. He remained close to the hearts of their successors as well.1

It is understandable that the man who had himself created the Werthergemüt not long before, should now be attracted to the figure of Hamlet. Nevertheless, it would probably be going too far to assume also that Goethe was consciously identifying himself with both Meister and Hamlet. In fact, at least one notable German critic, Gundolf, questions whether any of Goethe's comments on Hamlet in the novel can be taken seriously at all:

It is not permissible to regard the speeches on the subject of Hamlet as being valid outside the novel itself. They belong to the composition and

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1 Jubiläumsausgabe, vol. 17, p. 346 n.
plot, and throughout they are destined for, and meant to relate to, their own environment. It is even questionable whether they represent Goethe's absolute opinion of *Hamlet*.

But Gundolf admits that the inclusion of *Hamlet* in the novel is only another "fragment of a great confession," to use the phrases by which Goethe later characterized all his own work in *Dichtung und Wahrheit*:

Why is it that in *Wilhelm Meister* the theatre and Shakespeare play so great a part? Well, to objectify Goethe's experience; as a means in the process of his own development. In other words, Goethe has made Shakespeare's effect on himself a symbol in *Wilhelm Meister*; he has confessed his Shakespeare-fever here, as the Lotte-fever in *Werther*.

So the question whether Goethe's pronouncements can be taken as bona fide criticism revolves around the consideration: is the young critic Meister the same man as the young critic Goethe? There is only one positive reference to Goethe's intention in the matter; it occurs in a letter of June, 1782, to Frau von Stein, in which Goethe refers to Meister as "mein geliebtes dramatisches Ebenbild." And there is of course (for what it is worth) Goethe's direct intrusion into the narrative of *Wilhelm Meister*, when he dismisses the subject of the Hamlet-revision in these terms:

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2 Ibid. pp. 316-17.
"We shall not enter further on these points at present; but, perhaps, at some future time we may submit this altered Hamlet itself to such of our readers as feel any interest in the subject." This evidence is not conclusive proof that Goethe was Wilhelm Meister. But for the purpose of examining what he had to say about Hamlet in the Sendung-fragment, it does not appear necessary to establish such an identification. The critic Meister is not criticizing Shakespeare; he is justifying and explaining him. When Goethe wrote this early part of Wilhelm Meister, he was not yet convinced that Shakespeare was too large for the stage. Shakespeare was still the ultimate expression of Goethe's own artistic creed, Freiheit und Natur, and so he was to remain until the Italian journey influenced him to change his creed. In the fragment, then, Goethe attempted to interpret Hamlet as Shakespeare wrote it. His exegesis is not, strictly speaking, criticism at all; it is the illuminating and sympathetic insight of one genius into the work of another.

How close Wilhelm Meister's first reaction to Shakespeare is to Goethe's own may be seen by comparing the following passages:

When I had finished with his first piece, I stood like one born blind, to whom a wonderful hand gives sight in an instant. I perceived, I felt most vividly that my existence had been widened by an infinite space; all things were new to me and unknown, and the unaccustomed light blinded my sight.

Thus Goethe. Now Meister:

Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship, II - V, Chap.9, p.43.
You would think while reading them, you stood before the unclosed awful Books of Fate, while the whirlwind of most impassioned life was howling through the leaves, and tossing them fiercely to and fro.1

How much of Werther was still present in Wilhelm Meister, is seen by his extravagant sympathy with Hamlet, on first reading the play. He lauds especially "those scenes in which forces of soul, vehemence and elevation of feeling, have the freest scope; where the agitated heart is allowed to display itself with touching expressiveness."2 This is still in the Werther-vein; in the conviction that makes Faust cry out, in one of the early-written scenes:

Gefühl ist alles,
Name ist Schall und Rauch
Umnebel und Himmelsglut.

Werther-like, too, is Meister's treatment of Hamlet as if he were a real creature. The reader cannot help but get this impression; he is carried away by the strong sympathy of the critic, and himself enters into a living conception of an imaginary figure.

When Meister proceeds to investigate Hamlet's character, he is similarly most strongly aware of Hamlet's capacity for Gefühl. The prince is soft, a royal flower, pleasing in form, pure in sentiment, tender of soul, calm in temper,

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artless in conduct, pliant, courteous and discreet. And Meister arrives at these conclusions, not by an examination of the actual Hamlet in the play, but by the dubious device of picturing the prince as he was before his father's death. There, Wilhelm argues, was the true Hamlet:

Soft and from a noble stem, this royal flower had sprung up under the immediate influences of majesty . . . Pleasing in form, polished by nature, courteous from the heart, he was meant to be the pattern of youth and the joy of the world.

Without any prominent passion, his love for Ophelia was a still presentiment of sweet wants . . . He knew the honourable-minded, and could prize the rest which an upright spirit takes on the bosom of a friend. To a certain degree, he had learned to value the good and the beautiful in arts and sciences; the mean, the vulgar, was offensive to him; and if hatred could take root in his tender soul, it was only so far as to make him properly despise the false and changeful insects of the court, and play with them in easy scorn. He was calm in his temper, artless in his conduct, neither pleased with idleness, nor too violently eager for employment. The routine of a university he seemed to continue when at court. He possessed more mirth of humour than of heart: he was a good companion, pliant, courteous, discreet, and able to forget and forgive an injury, yet never able to unite himself with those who overstepped the limits of the right, the good, and the becoming.¹

That Wilhelm's opinions are nevertheless impressive is due to the insight of his creator Goethe.

In the later Hamlet-episodes in the novel, two new characters make their appearance. They are brother and sister, but temperamentally very different. The theatre-director

Serlo is a practical man, whose business happens to be the stage. His sister Aurelia is an unhappy creature of Gefühl. Serlo is the first character to appear in the novel who does not enthusiastically applaud Wilhelm in all he says and does, and this includes Wilhelm's ideas on Hamlet. Serlo does not like the play; it has defects.

It is well known that Goethe made extensive use of real people as the basis for characters in his works. This was a tendency that became less evident in his later years, although he began by incorporating his friend Lerse, bag and baggage, into Goetz von Berlichingen, not even bothering to change his name. Although he occasionally admitted later incorporations, they become harder to trace. In some cases, and in fact, in two notable instances in Wilhelm Meister, no living parallels have ever been found; the two splendid creations Philine and Mignon appear to have existed entirely in Goethe's imagination. Not so Serlo. Of him Goethe's editors say:

It has often been asserted that Serlo bears numerous traits of Friedrich Ludwig Schröder, the most famous German actor and producer of the time. Schröder had visited Goethe at Weimar in 1791, to advise him on the direction of the theatre there, which he was about to take over. But to judge from his stock rôle, and from his peculiarities as an actor, Serlo is better compared with the cautious Iffland, who was always careful to weigh the artistic effects of his craft, rather than with the temperamental Schröder.¹

¹ Jubiläumsausgabe, vol. 17, p. 348 n.
Serlo is thus thought to be a combination of two personalities: the actor Iffland, and the actor-director Schröder. Both men were friends of Goethe; both enjoyed a very wide reputation. Iffland was the most successful character-actor of his time. Schröder was the great adapter of Shakespeare. For the most part of his career Schröder was the director of the civic theatre of Hamburg.¹ Beginning with an adaptation of Hamlet, first produced in 1776, Schröder rewrote a total of seven Shakespearean plays. He himself was Germany's first indigenous Shylock, Lear, and Macbeth.

Whatever resemblance Serlo may have to actual persons, he appears to be introduced into the novel to provide a point of view essentially different from that of Wilhelm. It is a point of view, moreover, at variance with Goethe's own when he was writing the Meister-fragment, where Goethe's enthusiasm for Shakespeare is brought out in Wilhelm's interpretation.

The last Hamlet-episode contained in the Sendung is a discussion of several aspects of the play, in which Meister, Aurelia, and Serlo take part. Serlo regards Wilhelm's exposition of Hamlet's character before the tragedy (as it is recounted for us in the preceding episode) with a good deal of doubt, and asks him to discuss the actual Hamlet of the

¹ In the Sendung-fragment, Serlo is referred to simply as $S_{xx}$ in $H_{xx}$. 
tragedy. Wilhelm does so, and the essence of his delineation is contained in the magnificent metaphor, which has since become familiar to all students of Hamlet:

There is an oak tree planted in a costly jar, which should have borne pleasant flowers in its bosom: the roots expand, the jar is shivered.¹

This is a restatement of what Wilhelm has said of Hamlet already: the prince is too soft to cope with his harsh environment, and perishes. This interpretation he then proceeds to extend to Ophelia as well: she is a delicate creature, whose strong passions do not permit her to survive the shattering of her little world. And Aurelia provides the living parallel; her own half-conscious identification of herself with Ophelia is strengthened by Wilhelm's interpretation, and she eventually comes to a sad end.

Goethe abandons the Hamlet-theme in the Sendung at this point. He has given us a Werther-Hamlet, and a corresponding interpretation of Ophelia. Of this criticism, or rather interpretation, only the evaluation of Hamlet has occupied the attention of later critics to any extent.

It was during his sojourn in Italy that Goethe completed Egmont, the last of the dramas in which he admitted the influence of Shakespeare. For the Italian journey began a new phase in Goethe's development, which amounted almost to an about-face. He had been an admirer of Gothic

architecture, yet he learned to despise it in Italy; he had admired the Dutch painters, now Raphael and Michael-Angelo eclipsed them quite; he had praised Natur und Freiheit, but now adopted Winckelmann's maxim, Edle Einfalt und stille Grösse as his own definition of great art. He returned from Italy to write the classical Roman Elegies, the Greek play Iphigenie, the epic poem Hermann und Dorothea.

Goethe's new philosophy of art led him to regard his own early productions, so full of extravagant life, so lacking in form, with a kind of contempt. It is quite likely that he would never have resumed work on the old manuscript of Wilhelm Meister, had it not been for the encouragement of his Sturm und Drang friend Herder, and at the request of the dowager duchess Amalie. When Goethe resumed work on the unfinished manuscript in 1791, the Werther-fever had left him entirely. We note a change of sympathy in the Lehrjahre: Goethe now appears to hold Serlo's view of Shakespeare. Wilhelm, for the sake of a barely achieved consistency, holds on to his Sendung-principles for a short space, but quickly succumbs to Serlo's arguments. In fact, he becomes Serlo's enthusiastic disciple before another chapter is written.

Serlo tries to persuade Wilhelm to revise Hamlet. His argument is strangely reminiscent of that of the cynical theatre-director in Faust:
Gebt ihr ein Stück, so gebt es gleich in Stücken,
Solch' ein Ragout, es muss euch glücken,
Leicht ist es vorgelegt, so leicht als ausgedacht.
Was hilft's, wenn ihr ein Ganzes dargebracht?
Das Publikum wird es euch doch zerpflicken.

This view is not in keeping with Goethe's own of an earlier date. On September 15, 1772, he had printed an indictment against revisions of Shakespeare in the Frankfurter gelehrtten Anzeigen. He was referring specifically to J. Sulzer's adaptation of Cymbeline:

Our author, out of a deep sense of propriety, has seen fit to deplore the many incongruities through which (as the excellent Johnson has already remarked ad hoc drama) 'many just sentiments,' and a number of beauties are too dearly bought. He therefore determines to separate the gold from the dross (and this is, of course, for time immemorial vox populi critici on the subject of Shakespeare). At any rate, he would make an attempt to present the honoured public with nothing less than this: an approximation of how Sophocles would have arranged matters, if he had had this material to deal with. He then proceeds to travesty—not travesty! at least the form of the original would have remained—to parody!—not parody either! for then it would be possible to infer something from the contrast—what then?—what word will express such poverty beside the richness of Shakespeare! . . . We are certain that everyone—even he who merely reads Shakespeare, will toss it out of his hands in contempt.²

But Goethe would hardly have written this exuberant denunciation in 1794, the earliest date at which the chapter containing Serlo's suggestion to revise Hamlet could have been written. For by that time, Goethe had been manager of the

¹ The reference is to Johnson's Preface to Shakespeare.
² "Jubilaumsausgabe, vol. 36, pp. 27-28."
newly-built Weimar Court Theatre for four years, and had acquired some first-hand experience at producing Shakespeare.

The Weimar theatre was reopened in 1790. When Goethe undertook to direct it, the court granted him absolute freedom of policy. Since the venture was independent of financial success, Goethe could use the Weimar theatre as a means to experiment. He made full use of the privilege. But to acquire first-hand information on the somewhat unfamiliar business of managing a theatre, he invited the well-known Schröder, manager of the Hamburg Civic Theatre, to Weimar. Goethe admired this man, and much of him, as we have seen, is thought to have gone into the character of Serlo in Wilhelm Meister. Schröder of necessity had a business-view of the theatre. It must make money to operate at all; if financial success could be reconciled with good drama, so much the better; but he had a healthy respect for the tastes (and pocket-books) of his audience. This same view is emphatically stated by Serlo in Goethe's novel. If Shakespeare is impossible in the original, then Shakespeare must be revised. Schröder himself had revised Hamlet and several other Shakespearean plays. His revisions had become the standard versions of Shakespeare on the German stage.

Precisely how Schröder's visit to Weimar influenced
the stage-manager Goethe can only be guessed at. Goethe himself was far removed from the desire to cater to the public taste; his later friendship with the idealistic Schiller only served to strengthen his principles. The Weimar theatre came to serve as a practical means of working out the dramatic theories of Goethe and Schiller. As the years passed, the repertoire consisted more and more of their own plays, and of the strictly modelled plays of Racine and Molière. Shakespeare, when he was produced at all, always suffered radical modifications; his histories only appear to have been allowed to remain intact; no doubt the German reverence for history would have made changes seem sacrilegious here. Thus the first Shakespearean production of the new theatre, King John, played in 1791, was not adapted. Henry IV (Parts 1 and 2) followed in 1792, in an all-prose translation done by Eschenburg. The Falstaff-scenes drew no specific mention from Goethe; he appears however to have been impressed by the high moral nature of Prince Hal.¹ In the same year, Hamlet was done after Schröder's second version. Schröder had cut the grave-yard scene, Fortinbras, and the affairs in Norway; he had also given the play a happy end. Hamlet was produced again in 1795, the same year in which Goethe is believed to have written the revision-episodes, and the final account of the play's

¹ See Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship, IV - II, p. 259.
production in the *Lehrjahre*. The play was based once more on Schröder's version, but this time Goethe made a few changes of his own. In keeping with Wilhelm's plan in the novel, Goethe restored the graveyard scene, "a grand moment which we must not part with". Wilhelm's conviction, "without the four corpses, I cannot end the play: no one must survive," is also acted upon; Goethe puts back the tragic ending. In keeping with Schröder and Wilhelm Meister, Fortinbras is left out, although in Wilhelm's revision the disturbances in Norway become almost the central aspect of the play. We may surmise that all the finer touches of staging that Wilhelm incorporates into his production, appeared also in Goethe's. At any rate, the *Hamlet* of 1795 was one of the more successful productions of the Weimar Theatre; it was repeated for several nights. If nothing more, this production of 1795 indicates that Goethe was reconciled to the necessity of revising Shakespeare, since he had now himself taken an active part in such a revision. The revision-episodes in his novel would not, taken by themselves, serve to provide us with proof that his attitude to Shakespeare had changed.

Indeed, it is questionable whether Goethe's reverence for Shakespeare, the creator, was diminished at all. He is merely becoming increasingly conscious of what he considers
defective in Shakespeare, namely his lack of unity. There is nothing in Wilhelm's revision of *Hamlet*, or in Goethe's own adaptation, that seriously interferes with Wilhelm's original estimate of the characters in the play. In centralizing the plot on the disturbances in Norway, Wilhelm hopes to achieve dramatic unity. This end is helped along further by assigning to one character the double rôle of Fortinbras and Horatio. If anything, Hamlet would appear to become an even more vacillating figure, for the new plot has Horatio entirely in his confidence, and giving him advice on matters of policy against his uncle. All this appears to be quite in keeping with the metaphor in the *Sendung*, by which Wilhelm characterizes Hamlet.

Goethe's own dramatic trend towards what he called harmony is consciously illustrated in further productions of Shakespeare at Weimar. All of them are revisions. The production, in 1796, of Schröder's mutilation of *Lear* proved a failure. For the next few years Goethe avoided Shakespeare altogether. During this time, the correspondence between Goethe and Schiller reveals that the latter was trying to reconcile Goethe with Shakespeare once more. Schiller opposed Goethe's growing preference for the French classicists, and did his best to assure the older poet that Shakespeare was in some respects nearer to Aristotle than the French. Then, in 1800, he brought Goethe his adapted translation of

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1 for the details of Wilhelm's revision see *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*, II - V, Chap. 4, pp. 19-22.
Macbeth. Goethe's interest was at once renewed, and the play was put on. It proved to be the greatest triumph of the Weimar stage, and was repeated many times in the next ten years. That Schiller's translation is an inspired one, is confirmed by the fact that it remains the standard German Macbeth. The one major change is in the omission of the porter scene, for which Schiller substituted a pious aubade of his own devising. But it was in Goethe's staging of the play that a departure from tradition was most obvious. Goethe had the witches played by young maidens, beautifully dressed, and trained to speak with a slow singing intonation. They are meant to be something between sirens and fates, and to convey the impression of a Greek chorus. The success of this play, in which Goethe used all his new ideas on stage technique for the first time, caused him to summarize his principles in 1803 as the Regeln für Schauspieler. This treatise advocates a stylized, formal mode of acting, with special attention to rhythmic and clear enunciation of speech.

In 1803, Goethe used Schlegel's translation of Julius Caesar as the basis for another Shakespeare-production.

August Wilhelm von Schlegel's translations have since become the standard in Germany. He began his work in 1789, in collaboration with Bürger, when they translated A Midsummer Night's Dream into rhymed alexandrines. Schlegel himself revised this to blank verse in 1795, at Goethe's request. Schiller invited him to Jena in 1796, where he translated The Tempest and Romeo and Juliet. In an essay published 1796 in Schiller's Horen he took issue with Wilhelm
He made only one important change; it was the insertion of a sort of dramatic tableau of Caesar's funeral, which he felt necessary to balance the triumphal procession of Act I.

The last of Goethe's productions of Shakespeare was the *Romeo and Juliet* of 1811. He completely rewrote the play. It opens in the best musical comedy tradition; a chorus of servants arrange lamps and garlands before Capulet's house, while maskers pass in to the party. Romeo and Benvolio enter, and the dramatic exposition is achieved by their conversation. They are about to enter Capulet's house when an unrecognizable Mercutio enters. He is a feeble Falstaff, with no Mab-speech to redeem him. Instead, his lines are these:

"Now, goodbye to you. Do your business as well as you can. I seek my adventures on my pillow." He fits action to speech, goes home to sleep, and the play proceeds with the other two

Meister's apparent indifference to the necessity of a verse-translation of *Hamlet* (since none had so far been made). He went on to express the hope that Shakespeare could, by the exercise of great care and skill, be rendered in verse, without losing the sense or more than a part of his exquisite nuance of language. This he set out to achieve. Using the recent Malone (1790) edition, and conferring frequently with his predecessors Wieland and Eschenburg, he translated 17 of Shakespeare's plays, most of them histories. *Hamlet* was done in 1798. Schlegel could not be persuaded to continue his work, and the rest of the plays were translated by Ludwig and Dorothea Tieck, and Graf Baudissin. The complete works did not appear in a single edition until 1839.
attending the party. Of the principles he followed in his adaptation, Goethe writes thus to Frau von Wolzogen:

The maxim which I followed, was to concentrate all that was most interesting, and bring it into harmony; for Shakespeare, following the bent of his genius, his time, and his public, was forced to bring together much that was not harmonious, to flatter the reigning taste.

This emphasis on harmony figures again in Goethe's final summing-up of his experiences in producing Shakespeare at Weimar. This Rückblick occurs in the three-part essay, Shakespeare und kein Ende, written in the years 1813 and 1826. This is Goethe's mature and final evaluation of Shakespeare.³

Goethe expresses here the fundamentals of dramatic art, as he sees them, in philosophical terms. He distinguishes the old and new drama, and makes Shakespeare the mean uniting the two. He then goes on to derive his theory of Shakespearean tragedy. Man, he says, regarded in terms of moral character, should do certain things; as a human being, he would do certain others. Will itself is never satisfied. The two conflicting forces, ideally, ought to be in balance; in reality they are never so. Out of this, then, arises a primary source of conflict. This conflict alone, being a part of the nature of every man, is not in itself necessarily

1 This account is from Lewes, p. 446.
2 Lewes, loc. cit.
3 see Appendix B.
tragic, but Shakespeare invariably exposes it. A secondary conflict, originating from without, precipitates the tragedy in Shakespeare. The impact of this external agent further increases the unbalance between duty and will in the tragic personality: duty becomes an indispensable imperative; will is undermined. The result is dilemma and tragic ruin.

Goethe points to Hamlet as an illustration of this double conflict in Shakespeare; of the inner and external forces that combine to raise duty above will. As the witches in Macbeth (all of them), as the friends of Brutus in Julius Caesar, so in Hamlet the ghost is the moving force that brings about tragedy. Goethe here regards tragedy as inner conflict, the struggle of a single nature against a single fetter within itself. That fetter is duty, a moral force. But the outside agent is also of the nature of a moral force, and the two combine to raise duty to a higher power. The struggle is now an unequal one; it leads to the extinction of the personality. Goethe prefers not to add that this extinction is achieved in drama by visible action, by the interplay of characters on a stage. In Shakespeare, Goethe thinks, all this were better imagined than actually seen. He regards only that as dramatic which is a kind of sustained symbol. He finds few instances of this in Shakespeare, and mentions only a single example. It is Prince Hal's theft of the crown in Henry IV. Because of this lack of dramatic symbol, Shakespeare is not a dramatic poet at all. It
may not be unfair to add that Shakespeare is not dramatic because the aged Goethe is. For Goethe's theory of the dramatic symbol is certainly consistent with his own last work. Anyone who has studied Faust II only slightly will readily admit that it resembles nothing in Shakespeare. There is no reality here; all is symbol. The play is certainly dramatic in Goethe's sense, but caviar to the general in Shakespeare's.

At any rate, this, his latest view, appears far removed from the simple distinctions that Goethe makes between the dramatic and the non-dramatic in Wilhelm Meister. The novel, he says there, being non-dramatic, ought properly to consist of sentiments and events which retard the development of the plot, while the drama ought to consist of character and action which speed it up. In Wilhelm Meister, Goethe's theory of the ideal drama appears to be the violent interaction of character, to bring about a series of actions hastening to a conclusion. This theory is illustrated in Egmont, the play which Goethe wrote almost concurrently with this section of Wilhelm Meister. Here the dramatic action is the result of the clash of two strong personalities, Egmont and Alva. According to this theory, then, Hamlet is not a dramatic play, because "it has in some measure the expansion of a novel;" it contains too many episodes that are unrelated to the progress of the main action.
Yet Goethe appears to have derived, in the above essay, a general formula for Shakespearean tragedy which conforms to the individual estimate of Hamlet which he made earlier in *Wilhelm Meister*: the tragic flaw of Shakespeare's heroes is lack of will. But the emphasis is no longer the same. When he says that he has formerly demonstrated his principle in *Hamlet* (the reference being, of course, to the treatment in *Wilhelm Meister*) he appears to have forgotten precisely what he demonstrated there. For in the novel he says:

> The hero in this case [Hamlet], it was observed, is endowed more properly with sentiments than with a character; it is events alone that push him on.  

Here Hamlet is made to appear entirely the victim of external forces: there is no indication of an inner struggle; indeed, he does not appear capable of such, as he is endowed, not with a character, but sentiments only. Hamlet is the passive victim of circumstance in *Wilhelm Meister*; Goethe now makes Hamlet the victim of himself. The view of Hamlet he now holds, therefore, is not the Werther-view for which tradition has assigned him a place among critics of Shakespeare, and for which he has been alternately praised and condemned. It is a view more in keeping with the modern idea of Hamlet, and, as we shall see, an anticipation of Hauptmann's theories on the subject.

The perplexing element in *Shakespeare und kein Ende*,

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1 *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*, II - V, Chap. 7, p. 34.
namely the singular view that Shakespeare is not a dramatist for the stage, is summarily dealt with in Hauptmann's novel, and merits no further mention at this point.

The widely prevalent view that Goethe did not really understand Shakespeare, or, as the Germans would put it, that his genius was foreign to Shakespeare's, appears to be corroborated by Goethe's last written reference to Hamlet. In an article published in 1827, he discusses the 1603 Quarto of Hamlet, newly reprinted in facsimile at Leipzig. He had never seen this early version of the play before; he now reviews it in terms of unqualified praise. Yet, in spite of this (to adopt a charitable and indeed quite possible view) it may well be that the old sage Goethe could communicate his private vision of Shakespeare but imperfectly to us lesser mortals, who would study both him and Shakespeare.

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Gerhart Hauptmann's death on June 6, 1946, was scarcely noticed in the turmoil of political events. He died at 'Wiesensteine', the Silesian manor where his hospitality in former times had rejuvenated a salon-tradition out of a kindlier past. He had never sympathized with the political movement which had drawn Germany into a disastrous war, to leave her ruined, and swarming with foreign troops. His prestige was too great to make feasible the usual methods of intimidation, and Hauptmann remained unmolested to the end. He was treated with deference by the Russian occupation authorities; they allowed him to die in quiet, though broken in body and spirit, and almost alone.

But Hauptmann's death marked the passing of a great literary figure, of a stature analogous to that of Bernard Shaw. It was Oxford University that first honoured him publicly, by conferring on Hauptmann the honorary degree of Doctor of Laws in 1905. On that occasion he met Shaw, who remarked rather characteristically: "I admire Germany very much. She is a great country. And like all great countries, Germany is modest, for she is quite willing to leave to other nations the business of honouring her great men."¹ It was true. Only after Hauptmann had received the

¹ Von Hülsen, Gerhart Hauptmann, Fischer Verlag, Berlin (1932) p. 82.
Nobel prize for literature in 1911, did Germany tender him the recognition which was his due. His position as the greatest of modern German dramatists remains undisputed today.

Two figures from the past have influenced Hauptmann more than any others. They are Shakespeare and Goethe; and of their works, he busied himself most with Faust and Hamlet. And next to Faust, of the productions of Goethe, Hauptmann was concerned with the novel Wilhelm Meister. In a lecture at Columbia University on March 1, 1932, Hauptmann explained his own affinity to Goethe as coming from "a common fatherland and a common language, from a likeness in kind and a likeness in social class." ¹ Certainly the first two reasons are obvious ones. As for the likeness in social class, Hauptmann, like Goethe, came of a good middle-class family. The "likeness in kind" was to become increasingly evident in Hauptmann's advancing years. He bore a very striking physical resemblance to the older poet; it was a phenomenon that his friends continually remarked on. He was even considered, by some of his more extravagant admirers, to be a reincarnation of Goethe. All this no doubt served to reinforce Hauptmann's interest in him. In the same year that he gave the Columbia lecture, he wrote a preface to a new

¹ Muller, Gerhart Hauptmann and Goethe, Columbia (1949), p. 5.
abrugged edition of Goethe's works, in which he confirms his appreciation of the heritage of two great men:

What oracular pronouncements have there not been made in the course of time concerning Goethe?! He himself declared, with reference to Shakespeare, that no matter how one expressed oneself about him, it would still remain inadequate. The same thing applies also to Goethe. Yet, what good were a voice without an echo? We must now and forever continue to speak of that which is irreplaceable; and thus we speak of Goethe, one of the dearest possessions of the German mind and heart.1

Goethe had been inspired by Shakespeare: Hauptmann has the inspiration of both of these great minds in literature.

Hauptmann's acquaintance with the works of Shakespeare dates from a very early age. He was barely eight, and very sick with the mumps, when his brother and sister brought him a little puppet show:

They brought in a little chest, from which they drew forth all sorts of things. There were little stage-wings made of cardboard, which conjured up the solemn gothic interior of a cathedral. What Prince Hamlet had to do with this cathedral I did not know. But he was there! in beautiful armour, with golden hair, cut out of pasteboard with a little wooden block at the bottom. Carl and Johanna introduced him to me as Prince Hamlet; through their mouths he said all sorts of things to me, but he stood for a short time only on his little prop of wood. Then he was laid on two doll-chairs, and stayed there for some time, stretched out for what purpose I know not.

Thus he remained in my memory. I will never be able to give an exhaustive answer to the question

'why?' A pasteboard figure, a little theatre that could not have cost more than eight groschen, and yet this came to resemble the solemn laying of the cornerstone for a structure that has grown through seventy years.1

This vivid recollection from Hauptmann's youth is reminiscent of Goethe's memories in the opening chapters of Wilhelm Meister, which deal with the puppet theatre. But Hauptmann, in retrospect, has come to regard this single event as a prophetic symbol: "the solemn laying of the cornerstone for a structure that has grown through seventy years." The structure to which he refers is single and well-defined. It is the figure of the puppet-show, Hamlet, on whom Hauptmann lavished years of this creative lifetime.

It was at Breslau, where he was attending school with indifferent success, that Hauptmann first saw Shakespeare on the stage. The famous Meininger company presented Macbeth and Julius Caesar, along with two German plays. Hauptmann notes the experience in his memoirs:

Julius Caesar followed Wallenstein. Here all was gigantic, filled with horror and awe, and the sentiment of death. It all passed in anguish of the heart, as if oppressed by the heaviness of a gathering storm. Brutus, Cassius, Calpurnia, Caesar: even in broad daylight they moved about like ghosts who were damned, in a world where all reality appeared dissolved in fate, and fate only. Nothing here was banal; it was all mystery. No; for then the murder took place in the Capitol. This was a grand and

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undeniable reality. This was no murder, but a hundred murders in one. It was murder, one felt it, cumulative murder, done as with bolts of lightning, and one felt too, that the reverberation which followed must convulse the world.

Murder, murder, and again murder! Macbeth, so great and so sublime in cowardice, brought it all to an end . . . How could this intensification of murderous rage and fury exert on me this cleansing, liberating, animating, elevating effect, and expand my soul's room thus into the sublime? I think it is because my spirit was raised, once and for all, above the lifeless and lowly, above the repulsive and vulgar of my everyday experience, and was made capable of higher insights and experiences.  

This is an old man's inspired recollection of an event that lay half a century in the past, and if he implies here that it was Shakespeare at Breslau who first made him experience tragic catharsis at the age of fourteen, we may take this cum grano salis if we please. But it would not be extravagant to say that this first acquaintance with Shakespeare on the stage fired a young and impressionable artist with the desire to write plays. Hauptmann's first attempts at drama, like Goethe's were imitations of Shakespeare. While still at Breslau (1880-82) he wrote Germanen und Römer, a dramatic treatment of the Battle of Teutoburg Forest. Hauptmann's play is in iambic

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Voigt and Reichart, Hauptmann und Shakespeare, Maruschke and Berendt Verlag, Breslau (1938) pp. 8-9. This is an excerpt from a separately published chapter, not included in Das Abenteuer Meiner Jugend. Voigt and Reichart, with commendable thoroughness, have investigated the records of the Meininger theatre, and the theatre-reviews in the Schlesische Zeitung for 1876-77, and point out that Hauptmann's memory has telescoped two separate performances into one. The Meininger players presented only Julius Caesar in 1866.
pentameters, mingled with prose scenes. One scene may be considered a direct imitation of *Julius Caesar*: Varus asks his Syrian slave to sing for him.

A newly-translated German edition of Shakespeare began to appear in 1881, a so-called Volksausgabe, which Hauptmann enthusiastically read. This was his first acquaintance with all the work of Shakespeare. In the same period he saw productions of *The Tempest* and *Hamlet*. The title role in *Hamlet* was played by Ludwig Barnay¹, one of the best actors in Germany.

Since 1880, Hauptmann had been attending an art school in Breslau. After a short stint at Jena, he left for Rome in the fall of 1883, determined to become a sculptor. There, clad in a fanciful monkish robe, and seated between wholly unsatisfactory reliefs and clay models, he scribbled verses, all the while dreaming grand plans—to sculpt the mad Lear or Prometheus in massive marble. He saw another production of *Hamlet* in Rome, with the widely famed Salvini playing the rôle of the prince. Then, in the spring of 1884, he contracted typhus, and was taken home by his fiancee. In a fit of madness, his studio partner had smashed all Hauptmann's work with a hammer. Whether Hauptmann regarded this as an omen or not, he married, and decided to become an actor. He

¹ later mentioned in *Im Wirbel der Berufung*. 
spent a short time taking lessons from Alexander Hessler, former director of the Strassburg theatre, now the proprietor of a costume-shop in Berlin. Hauptmann's quixotic ambition now was to become the dramatic interpreter of Hamlet. Hessler persuaded him to desist. There was one thing left. He must go back to writing plays.

But the following summer, on the first of many vacations on the island of Rügen, Hauptmann had the opportunity to play Hamlet at the Putbus theatre there. It appears to have been a purely amateur production, with Hauptmann as producer, and acting the title rôle. Much later, this experience provided the frame for his Hamlet-novel, Im Wirbel der Berufung.

There followed an interval of five desperate years. Then, on October 20, 1889, with the stormy première of Vor Sonnenaufgang, at the Lessingstheater in Berlin, Hauptmann found sudden fame. The play had been billed as a social drama; it was reviewed as "filth" that attempted to make of the theatre an "intellectual brothel." It was violent modern realism, the first of a series of such plays Hauptmann was to write. He did not actively return to Shakespeare and Hamlet for many years. That Hauptmann never completely forgot Shakespeare and Hamlet during this period of realism, is proved by his dedication of Die Weber (1892) in which he

\[1\] "meint ein feudaler Abgeordneter," says V. Hülsen (G.H. p. 32) "der sich dort auskennt."
refers to himself as "ein armer Mann, wie Hamlet ist." During the World War (1915) he delivered an address to the Shakespeare-Gesellschaft in which he discussed Shakespeare's genius in general terms, praising especially its Protean adaptability.¹ This is a characteristic he was later to ascribe to Hamlet in his play, *Hamlet in Wittenberg*.

Von Hülsen records that Hauptmann began his study of *Hamlet* in September, 1924, while he was at Bad Liebenstein.² He was to continue it more or less intermittently for eleven years. During this period he produced almost nothing that did not relate to the Hamlet-theme. It was at Liebenstein Spa in the autumn of 1924 that Hauptmann first conceived the plan of writing a *Hamlet*-novel.³ Hauptmann had a double purpose in mind. He wished to describe, in the manner of Goethe, the development of a young man with artistic inclinations that had not yet reached fruition. For this purpose, the sphere of the theatre, and Hauptmann's own experiences, seemed almost mandatory. Hence the novel was to contain a great number of autobiographical elements. Hauptmann's second purpose was to deal with the Hamlet-problem. The plan of a *Theaterroman* thus stands at the very beginning of Hauptmann's

¹ See *DgW* vol. 17, pp. 318-325.
³ *DgW*, vol. 13, p. 357.
work on the theme of Hamlet, just as the finished novel, *Im Wirbel der Berufung*, stands at the end. The actual working out of the novel was delayed for several years. Hauptmann spent much of this time reading and rereading Shakespeare's play. Every new reading increased his difficulties in attempting to understand Hamlet. He became convinced that there was something wrong with the play as it stood. He abandoned work on the novel in 1926, after only ten chapters had been written, and devoted himself entirely to Hamlet.¹

It should be understood that Hauptmann did not undertake the study of Shakespeare's play according to the approved methods of scholarship. His dramatic instincts told him that Hamlet was a puzzling play. He then tried to determine why. Shakespeare, Hauptmann felt, could not deliberately have written such a play: he was too great a craftsman. For Hamlet was a defective play; like Goethe's Serlo, Hauptmann felt that several aspects of it were illogical, and detracted from the dramatic unity of the piece. Hauptmann then proceeded to study the sources, and the textual history of Hamlet, as well as a variety of critics.² His procedure was, however, that of a poet rather than a scholar. As soon as he discovered a certain amount of historical evidence in

¹ For an account of Hauptmann's Hamlet-investigations, see Voigt & Reichart, *Hauptmann und Shakespeare*, Chapter 3.
favour of the idea that an accurate text of the play was not preserved, he felt his own more radical conclusions confirmed. To Hauptmann it now appeared certain that the play was a patched-up collection of fragments, left over from a lost Grund-text. In Hamlet, Einige Worte zu meinem Ergänzungsversuch he set about to construct a reasonable scholarly argument in favour of his conviction. His strongest arguments, from the point of view of historical evidence, are not really arguments at all, but rather determined attempts to beg the question. Hauptmann begins by calling the accepted version of Hamlet a "torso." He explains various ways in which the text could have become corrupt. The selling of theatrical rights, and consequent separation of the genuine text from the control of the original producer and playwright, is a possibility. Others are the careless copying of roles, the traditional improvisations of players, minor textual changes made by subsequent producers, and finally stenographic and other errors in piracy. All these are possibilities. Hauptmann then cursorily investigates the textual history of Hamlet. The Quarto of 1603 is bad; that of 1604 indifferent. Hauptmann then cites Heywood on the accuracy of such texts:

(This) did throng the Seats, the Boxes and the Stage
So much, that some by Stenography drew
The plot: put it in print: (scarce one word trew)

The basis of the modern text is the Folio of 1623, which, he says, is a badly printed and carelessly edited version.
Hauptmann is therefore convinced that the task of an accurate reconstruction of Hamlet is quite hopeless. He now undertakes, on the basis of intuition and "internal evidence" to provide what he feels to be missing from the play.

The first step in Hauptmann's restoration is to make Hamlet the leader of the revolt against Claudius. Laertes is high in Claudius' favour, so he would never condemn the king on hearsay. Nor would he possess the influence to attract a large band of followers against the king. But Claudius says of Hamlet (Act IV - scene iii)

How dangerous is it that this man goes loose!  
Yet must not we put the strong law on him:  
He's lov'd of the distracted multitude.

If Laertes were indeed the desperate rebel, the king would never be able to circumvent him as he does; and even if he did, such a man would be too dangerous to tolerate for long at the court. Thus, Hauptmann reasons, Hamlet is the rebel. He points to the sources of the Hamlet-legend, where the prince, not Laertes, leads the revolt. He also indicates that Goethe came very near to the same conclusion in Wilhelm Meister.

1 Further reasons, repeated in Im Wirbel der Berufung, are omitted here.
2 Belleforest's Histoires tragiques, and the chronicles of Saxo Grammaticus.
3 The passage Hauptmann cites from the novel is: "You will easily perceive, Wilhelm goes on, how I shall contrive to keep the other parts together. When Hamlet tells Horatio
In Hauptmann's opinion, the fourth act is the most incomplete and sketchy of all the acts in the play. He condemns the buffoonery in Act IV, scene iii, as spurious. Claudius urges that Hamlet be "tempted with speed aboard." The audience accordingly expects to see him on shipboard next. Instead, he is roaming, almost unguarded, on a plain in Denmark over which Fortinbras has just passed. Hamlet asks the Norwegian captain what Hauptmann considers to be silly questions about things he might be expected to know already. The scene ends in a great soliloquy in which Hamlet makes no mention of any of the things he might be expected to think about: his banishment, the threat of Fortinbras' presence on Danish soil, etc. Hauptmann goes on to criticize the scene between Claudius and Laertes in which Hamlet's letter arrives. (IV - vii). He considers the reaction of the king to this unexpected turn of events to be unnatural. He criticizes the repetitions in the speeches pertaining to the poison plot. Hamlet does not, as he promises in the letter, appear before the king. Instead, Act V, scene i, finds him in a graveyard. Hauptmann asks: is there a gap between Act IV, scene vii, and Act V, scene i? Does not Hamlet's speech of his uncle's crime, Horatio counsels him to go to Norway in his company, to secure the affections of the army, and return in war-like force." Hauptmann adds, "Aber Goethe sieht nicht, dass diese Szene, wirklich vorhanden, im Aufstand des Laertes unerkannt ein sinnloses Leben gefristet hat."
in the last scene of Act III indicate that he intends to take some action in Act IV?

"Let it work;
For 'tis the sport to have the enginer Hoist with his own petar: and it shall go hard But I will delve one yard below their mines, And blow them at the moon.

And how should Hamlet's letter to Horatio be interpreted?

(Act IV - scene vi)

... repair thou to me with as much haste as thou wouldst fly death. I have words to speak in thine ear will make thee dumb; yet are they much too light for the bore of the matter.

Hauptmann thinks these words include not only the discovery of the letter and the death of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, but news of Hamlet's landing, and of his alliance with Fortinbras.

Hauptmann next turns to the political events mentioned at the beginning of the drama: the armament of Denmark, the disturbances in Norway, the mission of Cornelius and Voltimand. He believes that these are surviving fragments of an originally coherent treatment of the "Haupt und Staatsaktion," which successive producers allowed to lapse, because audience interest centred on the domestic aspects of the tragedy. Hauptmann now tries to restore what he believes missing, in the following manner:

ACT II - scene i (with note: Erstes Ergänzungsstück--nur als Notbehelf zu werten.)

Norway. The palace of old Norway. The old king, the English foreign minister, a nobleman.
The nobleman informs the old king of the arrival of Cornelius and Voltimand. The king has been expecting a mission from Claudius. The English minister promises to assist Norway in its revolt. The king receives Cornelius and Voltimand; they bring up the question of young Fortinbras' revolt. Norway promises to curb his nephew.

ACT II - scene iii

King Claudius, the English minister. The English minister discusses Hamlet with Claudius, advising the king to send him to England. Enter Polonius.

ACT III - scene i

The camp of Fortinbras on a plain in Denmark. Fortinbras and an English gentleman. From the conversation of these two, we discover that old Norway has circumvented Cornelius and Voltimand by false promises, and that Fortinbras' revolt will go on as planned, with his uncle's sanction.

ACT IV - scene ii

A plain in Denmark. Hamlet, a ship-captain, Marcellus, Bernardo, sailors; then Fortinbras and followers. This scene is the rendezvous of Hamlet and Fortinbras. They decide to unite against Claudius.

ACT V - scene ii

Hamlet alone. The soliloquy "To be or not to be." He has lost all desire for action after the graveyard scene. Horatio, Marcellus, and Bernardo enter. They try to persuade him to rejoin Fortinbras. He wants only to leave Denmark forever, or die. Enter Osric.

Hauptmann makes minor changes in the graveyard scene. Hamlet is the first to jump into the grave. To Laertes goes the speech:

1 In Hauptmann's arrangement; this interpolation would occupy Act II, scene ii to 1.40 in the accepted text.
What is he whose grief
Bears such an emphasis?

and Hamlet replies:

This is I
Hamlet the Dane!

Hauptmann criticizes the beginning of scene ii in Act V as badly corrupt. He does not see how the substitution of the letter can make sense. Surely, he argues, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern would not be silly enough actually to deliver the letter without Hamlet. Then he points to a contradiction of the whole episode in the last scene of the play:

First Ambassador.
. . . Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are dead. Where should we have our thanks?

Horatio. Not from his mouth. Had it the ability of life to thank you: He never gave commandment for their death.

Horatio, Hauptmann thinks, can be anything but a liar.

Hauptmann believes that Horatio has become a much shrunken figure in the surviving text. He points to a scene in Q₁ between Gertrude and Horatio, in which the latter tells her of Hamlet's adventure on shipboard. The queen survives in the accepted version as a shrunken enigmatic figure. The extent of her crime can only be surmised. The relationship between Hamlet and Ophelia is a riddle as well. Hauptmann believes that she may have been Hamlet's mistress, and points

1 Hauptmann points out that Q₁, while allowing Lear's sig to jump first into the grave, gives him this speech as well.
Hauptmann's restoration of *Hamlet*, as outlined above, was completed in 1927.\(^1\) It received its theatrical première at Dresden in December of that year, with Hauptmann as producer. The ideas behind this restoration, as here given, were printed and distributed as supplements to the theatre-programme. These *Einige Worte &c.* received no wider circulation until they were printed in an appendix to Voigt & Reichart's *Hauptmann und Shakespeare* in 1938.

This first restoration had been based on Schlegel's translation. Hauptmann considered Schlegel's work to be inaccurate and dated, and mustered his own knowledge of English to improve on it. The result was *William Shakespeare: Die tragische Geschichte von Hamlet, Prinzen von Dänemark*, in deutscher Sprache neu übersetzt und eingerichtet von Gerhart Hauptmann, which appeared in 1930, in a luxury folio-edition of 230 numbered copies, few of which were sold. This second version did not attract the notice of Shakespeare scholars.

When Hauptmann had completed his work on Shakespeare's play, he went on to construct a Hamlet-work entirely his own. To arrive at an intuitive understanding of the character of Hamlet, he began to imagine, like Wilhelm Meister, what Hamlet must have been before the beginning of the tragedy. Hauptmann's intimate acquaintance with the historical period of

\(^1\) For the complete text see *DeW.* vol. 11, pp. 287-453.
the Reformation helped him to seize on Hamlet's connection with Wittenberg as a clue. Out of this, he relied on his imagination to construct an entire play, Hamlet in Wittenberg. He began work on this in 1929. It was completed in 1935, and produced at Leipzig in November of the following year.

Hamlet in Wittenberg is interesting as a Hauptmann play, but has no organic connection with Shakespeare's Hamlet, except insofar as it helps to illustrate Hauptmann's conception of the prince. The play is constructed around the old ballad King Cophetua and the Beggar Maid. Hamlet is an enigmatic Cophetua, student of the humanities at the University, loved and honoured by his friends, who call him Proteus because of his many moods. He falls in love with a gipsy girl, who betrays his affection in favour of a stalwart of her own kind. The play ends with a despatch from Elsinore, announcing Henry Hamlet's death. No mention of Ophelia is made.

Hauptmann resumed work on the novel in 1928, and continued it in conjunction with Hamlet in Wittenberg. Like the play, it was also completed in 1935. With the exception of a single chapter, printed in Die Neue Freie Presse of December 25, 1926, none of the novel appeared until 1936, when it was published under the title Im Wirbel der Berufung.¹

¹Von Hülser relates (Freundschaft mit einem Genius, p.156) that Hauptmann was at a loss for a name for his work. He had jocularly suggested Die Eheferien des Erasmus Gotter to V. Hülsen, who respectfully demurred. Another suggested title was Katharsis. His final choice is perhaps related to Schiller's letter to Goethe of 15. June, 1795, re. Book V of Meister: Selbst im Meister ist nichts, was mich so Schlag auf Schlag ergriffen und in seinem Wirbel unfreywillig fortgenommen hätte.
V

GOETHE AND THE HAUPTMANN-HAMLET

Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister* was written in the spacious tradition of the eighteenth century. It is a long and leisurely narrative, in which the Hamlet-episode is no more than incidental digression. Hauptmann's novel is a compact *roman à thèse*. While Goethe's theme of Bildung is Hauptmann's, Hauptmann has a more particular purpose in *Im Wirbel der Berufung*: to develop his view on Hamlet within an imaginative framework. The entire novel is built around the play. While the action in *Wilhelm Meister* occupies about five years, everything in Hauptmann's novel takes place in the course of a single summer. The novel is undeniably inspired by Goethe's *Meister*, and to some extent modelled on it: both works are divided into eight books. The theatrical background is a common feature; in both novels the play is prepared for the stage. This device permits both novelists to integrate their theories on Hamlet with the progress of the production.

In spite of the overriding importance of *Hamlet* in *Im Wirbel der Berufung*, the novel has a strong element of plot. The date of a letter contained in the novel indicates that Hauptmann placed the action in the summer of 1885. Its location is the seaside resort of Granitz on the island of Rügen. This corresponds with the date and locale of his own
experience as an amateur producer of Hamlet.

In the course of a rest-cure away from his wife and family, Erasmus Gotter, a young dramatist and doctor of philosophy, meets the members of a stock-company who are performing at the court of the ruling prince at Granitz. Jetro, Erasmus' actor friend, introduces Hamlet to his circle, and mentions that the dramatist is planning to write a play on the theme of Hamlet in Wittenberg. In conversation with these people, Gotter airs his (i.e. Hauptmann's) views on Shakespeare's Hamlet, and finally consents to direct a production in which these views are incorporated. While preparations are going on, everyone at Granitz is caught up "in the whirlwind of a mission": a kind of Hamlet-fever. The tragedy appears to be influencing their private lives. Gotter begins to feel himself estranged from his wife and family, and drawn to the charms of the actress Irina Bell, who eventually seduces him, only to have Ditta, an unconventional princess from the court, overshadow her in an attempt to win Gotter's undivided attention. His wife Kitty's arrival for opening night, and a sudden hemorrhage that besets Gotter as a result of his strenuous activities of the past few weeks, suffice to draw him suddenly out of circulation at Granitz, to become once more the devoted husband and father. Briefly stated, this is the plot of Im Wirbel der Berufung. The Hamlet-conversations occur throughout its length.

I have attempted to show how the Hamlet-episodes in
the Sendung and the Lehrjahre reflect a change in Goethe's view of Shakespeare, bound up with his own development as an artist from Sturm und Drang to classicism, by way of the Italian journey. Goethe's spokesman in the Sendung is Wilhelm Meister, who speaks for Goethe's own admiration of Shakespeare. In the Lehrjahre, Goethe's point of view is that of Serlo, who criticizes Shakespeare, and persuades Wilhelm to revise Hamlet. Between these two attitudes of Goethe's, lies a formative period. In Im Wirbel der Berufung, Hauptmann also changes his mind, not on Shakespeare himself, but only on Hamlet, his play. When he vaguely planned a Hamlet-novel on the model of Meister in 1924, Hauptmann had not yet begun his formal study of Hamlet. It was to prepare himself for Im Wirbel that he now undertook a protracted study of the play. Goethe had done the same thing in 1785, but he was a young man who still admired the titanism in Shakespeare, without objecting to what he later called his faults. Hauptmann was old, and at the zenith of his dramatic career. His study of Hamlet led him, as we have seen, into dramatical byways; he rewrote the play, and even attempted a scholarly argument to show that, in the accepted version, Hamlet was badly corrupted. These activities occupied the period between 1924 and 1927, the year when Hauptmann's argument, and his restoration of Hamlet, were presented to the public. During this time, he had written
only a small part of his novel.

These early chapters of Hauptmann's novel contain what is essentially a restatement of the Hamlet-criticism in Hamlet. *Einige Worte zu meinem Ergänzungsversuch.* Erasmus Gotter begins by outlining "the cleanly prepared skeleton of the piece," as Hauptmann himself had revised it. This skeleton he defends, on invitation, in a formal lecture before the Granitz court. Erasmus' arguments are, however, restricted to what might properly be called common sense; his plea is based on logical sequence rather than textual criticism. In justifying his revision to the Dresden theatre-audience in 1927, Hauptmann had used both. It may well be that he felt pedantic investigations to be incongruous in a novel; on the other hand, their omission may be taken as a tacit admission, on Hauptmann's part, that he had gone too far in *Einige Worte &c.* Nevertheless, Hauptmann's essential position remains unchanged. By giving the rebellion of Laertes to Hamlet, Hauptmann exalts the prince to the stature of a monolith that dominates the entire play. This view is diametrically opposed to that of Goethe in the *Sendung.* But what the Hamlet-revision of 1927 and the present opinion of Erasmus did not explain to Hauptmann, was Hamlet's death. How could this new Hamlet, this strong-willed and impetuous creature, fail to gain his revenge? This seems inconceivable
to the logical Hauptmann. Yet he does not discard his
theory; nor does he criticize it, except vaguely, at second
hand, in the words of Erasmus:

    He had 'the parts in his hand, but the spiritual
    sequence was lacking.'

Only now does it become evident that Hauptmann is still
struggling with the play; that, in spite of Einige Worte,
he has failed to make up his mind on Hamlet. For now he
makes Erasmus say:

    Drama is struggle, and in this one by no means do
    a determined and an undetermined combatant oppose
    each other . . . But the piece rests on two strong
    pillars: Hamlet and Claudius. These two powerful
    opponents, as Hamlet says, come forth to do battle,
    and the play is full of spark-showers that flash
    from their swords.

    Hauptmann has not decreased the stature of Hamlet,
but he has increased that of his opponent. Now Hamlet and
Claudius are evenly matched:

    There are two whole-blooded opponents and haters
here, and it shall go hard.

This makes it easier to explain the end of the play:

    Exhausted by the struggle, apathetic and indiffer-
ent, Hamlet enters into the seemingly playful but
actually earnest combat with Laertes at the end of
the play. And in this farce, coming after seriousness,
he must die.

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1. An interpolation in the revision attempts to motivate
Hamlet's fall by the shock of Ophelia's death.

2. All quotations from Im Wirbel der Berufung are in-
cluded in Appendix C.
This new attempt to interpret Hamlet is only slightly less removed than the old, from Goethe's view in Wilhelm Meister, and Hauptmann knows it:

Away with this damnable sentimentality, this misunderstood Werther-heritage, which makes of Hamlet an aria-singing soloist, a blubberer and a whimperer.

Erasmus Gotter now sets about to reinterpret the rôle of Claudius on the stage; to give it "a hellish grandeur." In the course of rehearsals, Dr. Ollantag, the learned librarian of the court, remarks on the liveliness of this new Hamlet-production. Gotter defends it:

Erasmus replied that this was natural, since Hamlet was no longer an end in himself in this production, nor could the elegiac element broaden itself into stagnant ponds and pools, enlivened only by the mirroring of a cloudy sky . . . There is not, there must not be, a minute, let alone a half-hour, of bare detached meditation or comfort in this Hamlet-drama.

But Erasmus contradicts himself in the same breath:

Or can it be that we ought to regard the scene where both friends stand at Yorick's grave as such?

It is then that we discover Hauptmann groping once more towards a new synthesis. And as Erasmus goes on, imaginatively, poetically, to analyze this scene, we remember that the prince and Ollantag have already discussed its singularity. Erasmus says:

The earth throws forth its dead. Yorick, the murdered king's fool, must leave his resting-place to make room for Ophelia, a fool of a higher rank. His skull rolls up to Hamlet's feet, the feet of him who so willingly plays the fool . . . The doomed one
looks down into the gruesome and mouldering hole, which becomes for him a scurrilous mirror. The jester Yorick, the clown who must make room for him, springs out as if with a jest, as if he spoke the words: 'Prithee, come and take your place.' The revulsion which Hamlet feels when he regards the skull of the jester with such strange curiosity, does not have to do with Alexander the Great alone. . . . He is thinking of his own careworn head.

For the first time, Erasmus finds himself contemplating a third element: fate. Hamlet and Claudius are no longer the twin pillars of the tragedy, which had thereby begun to assume the uncomplicated guise of an ordinary revenge play. Hauptmann has once more moved a step nearer to Goethe, whose Wilhelm says:

Neither earthly nor infernal thing may bring about what is reserved for fate alone.¹

But while Erasmus is conscious of the inconsistency, he is not ready to abandon his "twin pillar" theory. So he begs the question to reconcile the hero-Hamlet and the "doomed one" in the graveyard:

The words which these circumstances press from him are surely not mere detached meditation.

But Erasmus has weakened his own case, and we are thereby prepared for the triumph of Rector Trautvetter, who next appears on the scene. Yet when producer and close-scholar meet, Erasmus wins a victory in the first skirmish with his opponent. Trautvetter is a confirmed disciple of the old

¹ Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship, IV - xv, p. 316.
Goethe of *Shakespeare und kein Ende*:

Actually, he affirmed, Shakespeare had so inimitably come to life in the holy quiet of his study, that any stage, any actor no matter how good, was bound to disappoint him.

This conviction had led Trautvetter to regard Erasmus' "lively" Hamlet-production with a good deal of reserve. But Erasmus vehemently counters the argument of Trautvetter (and Goethe):¹

Such pretentious allegations are of small service to the living stage. It is quite true that the phantasy is mightily stimulated by the reading of a Shakespearean play, but this arousing of the imagination, without which poetry would hardly be poetry, this stimulation which grips the reader by his lonesome lamp, is only a preliminary in drama that is meant for the theatre. The hermit, the closet-scholar, in short the man apart, banned to his museum like Faust's famulus Wagner, does not feel more, nor is he obliged to go beyond that. The error begins when he denies any further obligation, with a grudging attitude of haughty superiority... All honour to the stage that existed in Shakespeare's imagination, and to the one in yours, Professor Trautvetter, but if this stage was insufficient to the mind of a great genius, how much less, one should think, ought yours to be to yourself!

Trautvetter admits the fallacy of his conviction, and consents to help Erasmus stage the play. But he now brings forth his own theory of *Hamlet*:

¹ That Hauptmann was familiar with Goethe's essay is proved by Erasmus' mention of his name in this connection (*DgW*, vol. 13, p. 525):

> Mag selbst Goethe dazu neigen, anzunehmen, man geniesse Shakespeare mehr beim Lesen als auf der Bühne, so heisst dass doch im Grunde ihn kranken, die Bestimmung seiner Stücke und seine theatricalische Meisterschaft ableugnen.
In Shakespeare's *Hamlet* we find the unconscious development of an antique-heroic drama of shades. The terrible ghost of the murdered king, now become hero, demands revenge on his enemy... Blood alone can suffice to placate him. Seen from this mythical standpoint, the hero, if unsatisfied, becomes a terrible, unreconcilable, macabre spirit, glowing with revenge, destroying the good with the bad, the guilty with the innocent, in a frenzy of destruction. And seen thus, there is a new significance in the bloodbath in which the adulteress Gertrude, the adulterer and usurper Claudius, his tool Polonius, the son and daughter of this man, and finally the dilatory prince, lie judged and destroyed. The injured demon has destroyed his own household. And thus he becomes, in the economy of the play, the subterranean, fateful thing of first importance.

We have seen how Trautvetter held the same view as Goethe in *Shakespeare und kein Ende*, namely that Shakespeare is better read than acted. He has now abandoned this opinion. But the idea that the ghost is the central element in the play stems also from Goethe's essay. Goethe had written:

> Ancient tragedy is based on inexorable duty, which is aggravated and quickened by opposing will. Perhaps no one has ever portrayed more splendidly than Shakespeare, the first great interaction of duty and will in the individual character... And here already an inner conflict begins, which Shakespeare brings out above all the rest. But now an external conflict is added, and this one is often inflamed when an inadequate will is raised by circumstance to an ineluctable duty. I have formerly illustrated this maxim in *Hamlet*, but it is repeated in Shakespeare. For even as Hamlet, through the ghost, gets into a dilemma that is beyond him, so Macbeth through the witches... so Brutus through his friends.\(^1\)

Goethe has here expressed the core of Trautvetter's theory.

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\(^1\) See Appendix B.
But he does not attempt to derive Trautvetter's conclusion; Goethe's conception of the "antique-heroic" makes him incapable of that. His own Greek play, *Iphigenie*, reveals to us that Goethe saw in classic Greece the edle Einfalt und stille Grösse of Winckelmann; this "Apollonic" conception had in it none of the terrors that Hauptmann later found there. Goethe's ghost is not a complicated figure; he places him on the same level with the witches in *Macbeth* -- but even Lady Macbeth is classed as a witch by Goethe -- and the friends of Brutus in *Julius Caesar*. They are all external forces, which serve to aggravate an already existing conflict in the hero, and the result is tragedy. But while Goethe recognized this external nature of the tragic device in Shakespeare as antique, he did not pursue the matter further. This Trautvetter the classical scholar now proceeds to do:

I extend ... the entire play into the realm of myth. Perhaps the whole piece belongs under the classification of a cult for the dead. This cult seems to be older than Homer, and the oldest known example, namely the funeral rites for Patroclus, is already an anachronism. But instead of cult for the dead, I prefer to say heroic cult. The soul of a great man who is dead must be placated, especially if he has lost his life by murder or assassination. Otherwise his anger, and the might to assert it, are destructive. The hero assumes after his death a rank and sphere of activity similar to that of the gods of the underworld. ... Wherever they are content to dwell, appeased by never-ceasing sacrifices, they come to stand as a powerful means of protection in the eyes of the entire populace. Every post-Homeric colony and city-state had such a hero.
Having thus found the prototype of the ghost in *Hamlet*, Trautvetter forestalls any argument based on Shakespeare's ignorance of the classical tradition, by calling the play "the unconscious development of an antique-heroic drama of shades." He then begins to apply his theory directly to the play:

This ghost, only twice visible, but always and everywhere invisibly present, placed in the midst of the play as the all-moving force, this ghost permits all sorts of strange things in the work to be explained. Thus at the beginning, Hamlet's attempted flight to Wittenberg.

Erasmus has been listening attentively, and his suggestion now makes us aware that he has accepted Trautvetter's theory without reserve. He says:

He wishes to withdraw himself from the power of the invisibly present and terribly threatening demon. I admit that the thought occurred to me only in the course of your lecture.

The "twin-pillar" idea is obscured for the time; like Wilhelm to Serlo, so Erasmus now becomes Trautvetter's disciple. Together they pass Goethe by, and proceed into the realm of myth.

But Hauptmann himself is not yet ready entirely to abandon the visible world. The Wittenberg business now begins to interest him, and while he remembers that Goethe's Serlo had condemned it as irrelevant, Wilhelm Meister had attempted, with no specific reference to the same, to reconstruct the *Hamlet* of the period preceding the tragedy. This now leads Hauptmann into a departure that does not figure in the novel:
Hamlet in Wittenberg. But the experiment proves to be a cul-de-sac. This former Hamlet cannot be reconciled to the demon-ridden creature of his novel. So Hauptmann resumes the myth-interpretation of Hamlet, which he has enunciated through Trautvetter, and which that scholar now proceeds to extend:

Such a demon-hero cannot be loved, only feared. And so Hamlet too, does not love his father in this transformation ... Hamlet does not know how much blood the spectre would drink: only that of the murderer, or also that of Hamlet's mother, the queen? He, the son called to revenge, did he not see the Erinnys of his murdered father, gruesomely waiting at his mother's back, silently saying: 'Thou wilt be silent, thou sacrifice to me consecrated, and nourished by me; yet living wilt thou refresh me with thy blood'. And it was this Erinnys perhaps, and with it, the soul of the murdered king, who placed the thought into the mind of the adulterous wife, that Hamlet should not be permitted to return to Wittenberg: to hold the revenger fast near his grave and Elsinore, and thereby to allow the ghost, for his own purposes, to plunge him into a kind of half-madness.

Here Trautvetter has advanced once more beyond the limits of Goethe. The ghost, only twice visibly present, is allied to a conception entirely Greek: the ever-present and invisible Erinnys. By this means, Trautvetter hopes to explain the Hamlet-conception of his colleagues (and Goethe) in a way which they have failed to understand:

A great many of my colleagues call Hamlet weak, because of his wavering in the service of the irreconcilable fiend. They have no comprehension of the terrible extent of such a service, precipitating him into blood-madness ... It dissolves the personal aspect entirely, and makes of the free man one possessed.

1 Hauptmann began Hamlet in Wittenberg in 1929.
But Erasmus, while now a disciple of Trautvetter, cannot abandon all his old ideas on *Hamlet*; the rehearsals proceed unchanged. It is only when he tries to get away from it all, from the romantic confusion of Granitz, and from his own mounting Hamlet-fever, that he finds himself, on the deck of a small patrol boat operated by a former university friend, once more imaginatively giving way to his obsession. We detect at once the influence of Trautvetter's ideas:

Murder, blood, guilt, all this blood-reeking, raw and butcherlike business, this judgment in blood, which he senses, and before which he trembles like an animal in the vicinity of a slaughterhouse: all this repels Hamlet even in the first scene of the drama. He conceals what he suspects, what he knows and feels, and quietly tries to get away. The prince wishes to save himself from his task; to hide in Wittenberg. Here the blindly obedient hands of the royal adulterer, so tractable to the royal adulteress, are strengthened by the tender, blind-groping hands of a mother's love. The catastrophe is released beyond recall. It is only a short time now before Hamlet is no longer master of his own decisions. For, while the murder victim materializes before him, and within him, the crime which had taken place also materializes. Henceforth there is no escape, no Wittenberg hiding-place, not even a chance to look away.

But Erasmus is not yet prepared, with Trautvetter, to personify the omnipresence of the ghost in the terms of classical Greece: Trautvetter's Erinnys remains for him an intuition of Hamlet's mind. Nor can he abandon his former idea of a forceful, strong-willed Hamlet. In spite of what he has just said, Erasmus continues:

Hamlet has too much self-respect to be an ordinary tool of revenge, entirely devoid of will. He loved
his individuality. Rather than to damage his soul, he was prepared for a moment to forego the gratification of his thirst for revenge; indeed, even to withdraw from his duty, for which he was to sacrifice all the worth of his life.

Thus inexorable duty resumes once more the character of free will. Erasmus wavers between two extremes of interpretation, and cannot make up his mind.

This indecision is still apparent in the dress-rehearsal, which forms the last Hamlet-scene of the novel. For a time, Erasmus appears to give way entirely to Trautvetter's ideas:

It was only after . . . the conversations with Professor Trautvetter . . . that Erasmus had begun to perceive the mythical aspects of the piece. He now proceeded to impregnate the production with them. Where he had formerly held the view that the structure of the drama rested predominantly on two pillars, namely Prince Hamlet and the usurper-king Claudius, he now saw in the fiend, armed and thirsting for revenge, the terrible power that transcends all, moves all, and in the end destroys all with random fury. . . . A cosmic fear pervaded all, tightly knit with inexorable fate. An uneasy disturbing atmosphere was communicated to the audience, in which no petty, arrogant human will, desirous of being master of its own fate, could any longer exist.

The large figure of the professor, in the rôle of the ghost, is magnified to awesome proportions by lighting effects. The sickness of doomsday, of which Horatio speaks in the first scene, is made to pervade also the council of state. And now Erasmus accepts Trautvetter's Erinnys; the classical fury is even used to explain the carousings of Claudius:

Marked for sacrifice, and at the same time the primary instrument of 'the omen coming on', stood the
sable-mantled Prince Hamlet, the Erinnys of his murdered father almost visibly behind him. She puts words into his mouth, into the mouth of his mother, and of her murder-laden husband. 'Hamlet,' the mother must say, 'I pray thee, stay with us; go not to Wittenberg.' And her husband, in a long hypocritical speech, must support her wish, whose fulfillment is fatal to them all. It is a proceeding in which all cheerfulness denotes an oppressed lie; cheerfulness which, in order not to be submerged in horror, must cast itself into the stupor of a bacchanal.

But Erasmus feels himself called upon to explain the paralysis of will in the iron hero he had envisaged before the advent of Trautvetter's myth:

In the fourth scene, the dreadfully armed, dread demon materializes in appearance and word before his son. 'My fate cries out,' Hamlet says, obeying the signs of the phantom to follow it,

'My fate cries out,
And makes each petty artery in this body,
As hardy as the Nemean lion's nerve.'

Erasmus, irresistibly drawn to the proceedings on the stage, experienced an all-comprehending mystical participation that extended to the innermost fibres of his being. And this passage, where Hamlet is defeated by the belief in his iron will, moved his deepest sympathies.

Yet when the rehearsal is over, and Erasmus muses for a few moments more on the play, the Hamlet of the rebellion intrudes on the omnipotence of the demon hero. Erasmus makes a last-minute attempt to reconcile the two, which weakens his former conviction once more:

Prince Hamlet does not deliver himself up to the death-sentence of the avenger, Erasmus thinks, until the instant when he allows the sword of rebellion to be flattered out of his hand by his mother. Thereafter all becomes macabre and dark and confused around
him; his will appears to be lamed, and at last the raging fiend crushes him too with armoured foot.

On this uncertain note ends Hauptmann's long struggle with the enigma of Hamlet. Always the consummate craftsman, he had begun by condemning the structure of Shakespeare's play, while unable to condemn Shakespeare himself. This had led him to the intuitive substitution of Hamlet for Laertes, making Hamlet the dominant force in the play. When this theory proved untenable, he raised the stature of Claudius. The play was now a conventional revenge tragedy. Hauptmann next took up Goethe's suggestion in Shakespeare und kein Ende, but his own attitude to classical antiquity resulted in an extension of Goethe's surface view. Yet he could not abandon his earlier theory, nor could the demon hero of myth and the strong avenger of the revenge play be properly reconciled. And perhaps Hauptmann's failure is the strongest indication of any we so far possess, that Shakespeare has compounded in Hamlet an eternal riddle.
# APPENDIX A

Hamlet episodes in

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Meister, Serlo discuss revisions of Hamlet

discussion of roles

novel vs. drama

rehearsals & performance of Hamlet

Meister, Serlo discuss revisions of Hamlet

discussion of roles

novel vs. drama

rehearsals & performance of Hamlet
APPENDIX B

SHAKESPEARE UND KEIN ENDE

I. - Shakespeare als Dichter Überhaupt (1813)

"Shakespeare's works are not for the eyes of the body. I will try to explain myself . . . It is a fact that Shakespeare appeals above all to our inner sense, and through it, the picture-world of the imagination is at the same time brought to life. In this way, a total effect is created, which we do not quite know how to explain. For it is here that we find the reason for that delusion, which presents all as if it were really before our eyes. If however the plays of Shakespeare are minutely considered, they will be found to contain much more sensory action than spiritual word. He allows those things to happen that are easily imagined; aye, that were better imagined than seen. The ghost in Hamlet, the witches in Macbeth, and many horrors besides, receive their full worth only through the imagination, and the many small scenes that stand between their successive appearances, are meant to point only to them. Such matters pass before us easily and fittingly when we read, whereas a production makes them disturbing and burdensome, even repulsive.

"Shakespeare affects us by means of the living word, and that is most easily transmitted by having him read. We follow the simple thread on which he spins out the course of events. All the things that fly secretly through the air on the occasion of great events, all the things that remain hidden in the hearts of men, are spoken out; what nature timidly conceals is here freely and fluently brought to light. We are made to discover the truth of life, and we know not how.

"Shakespeare is akin to the world-spirit; like him he transcends the world; nothing is hidden to either. But all the civilized world must yield up its treasures: arts and sciences, crafts and trades, all of them present their gifts. Shakespeare's writings are a great and lively fair, and for this Shakespeare owes thanks to his fatherland.

"England is everywhere, sea-girt England, bound in clouds

1
Jubiläumsausgabe, vol. 37, p. 38 ff.
and mist, active in all the regions of the world. The poet lived in an important and worthy time; with great clarity he presents its learning and unlearning to us, and we may be sure that he would not thus have affected us, if he had not been abreast of his own lively times. No one despised the material garb so much as he, but he knew the inward garb of mankind, wherein all of us are alike."

II - Shakespeare, verglichen mit den Alten und Neuesten (1813)

"The greatest and most numerous of afflictions to which mankind can be exposed, originate in the disparity, common to all our natures, between duty and will, between duty and performance, will and performance. Ancient tragedy is based on inexorable duty, which is aggravated and quickened by opposing will. Perhaps no one has ever portrayed more splendidly than Shakespeare, the first great interaction of duty and will in the individual character. The individual, regarded in terms of character, shall; he is limited, destined to a particular action; but as a human being, he wills otherwise. He is unlimited, and demands the universal. And here already an inner conflict begins, which Shakespeare brings out above all the rest. But now an external conflict is added, and this one is often inflamed when an inadequate will is raised by circumstance to an ineluctable duty. I have formerly illustrated this maxim in Hamlet, but it is repeated in Shakespeare. For even as Hamlet, through the ghost, gets into a dilemma that is beyond him, so Macbeth through the witches, Hecate, and that queen of witches his wife; so Brutus through his friends. A desire, therefore, that is beyond the powers of the individual, is modern. But the fact that Shakespeare allows this struggle to originate, not from within, but through an external agency, allies him with the writers of antiquity, in whom will becomes a kind of duty. For all the heroes of literary antiquity desire only that which is possible to men, and it is in this that we find such a beautiful balance between will, duty, and performance. But their will is always too bluntly present to be agreeable to us, even if we admire it. Necessity that more or less, or else entirely, denies free will, is no longer in line with our sympathies. However Shakespeare has approached our sympathies in his own way, for in making necessity an ethical force, he has bound up the antique and modern worlds, to our joyful"
astonishment. If there is something to be learned in Shakespeare, it is this point we ought to study in his school. Rather than exclusively to exalt our romanticism beyond all bounds -- and I am not condemning or reproaching it -- rather than to follow after it, however, in a one-sided manner (whereby we ignore and spoil its strong and healthy aspect) we ought to seek the more to unite that great and seemingly incompatible antithesis, in the same way that a great and unique master has already achieved the marvel, whom we treasure so highly and rate above all the rest, often without knowing why."

III - *Shakespeare als Theaterdichter* (1826)

... "But carefully considered, nothing is dramatic which is not at the same time symbolic for the eye: an important action that points to an even more important one. That Shakespeare reached this summit as well, is proved in the scene where the son and heir takes the crown from the side of the dying king, who has fallen asleep; puts it on, and struts away. But scenes like this are mere moments, scattered jewels that are separated by much that is undramatic. All of Shakespeare's dramatic art finds something recalcitrant in the actual stage; his greatest talent is that of an epitomist, and since the poet in general seems to be an epitomist of nature, we must acknowledge the great merit of Shakespeare. We deny, however, and by no means to his discredit, that the stage was adequate for the scope of his genius ...

"Whence was it that Schröder earned for himself such great distinction in bringing Shakespeare's plays to the German stage? He became the epitomist of the epitomist! Schröder retained only the dramatically effective parts of Shakespeare; he discarded the rest, even what was necessary at times, if it appeared to disturb the effect he desired to produce on his time and nation. But for a long time now, the prejudice has grown up in Germany, that Shakespeare must be produced word for word on the German stage, even if actor and audience choke in the process. The attempts, inspired by an accurate and excellent translation, however succeeded nowhere. The honest and repeated efforts of the Weimar stage bear the best witness to this circumstance. If one would see a Shakespearean play, he must go back to Schröder's revisions. In spite of this, one constantly hears the opinion (and a nonsensical one it is) that not a jot ought to be left out in producing Shakespeare. If the perpetrators of this view gain the upper hand, we are bound to see Shakespeare disappear entirely from the German stage. Nor would this be too great a misfortune either, for the solitary reader, and he who reads in company, will then find all the more enjoyment in him.
"But it was to make an attempt at producing Shakespeare in the sense broadly referred to above, that we have revised Romeo and Juliet for the Weimar stage."
HAMLET IN IM WIRBEL DER BERUFUNG

"If you will give me your attention for five minutes, I will read you a scenario of Hamlet.

The student Hamlet has been recalled from Wittenberg to Elsinore in Denmark, to attend the funeral of his father, King Hamlet.

His mother marries his father's brother, and makes him king.

The rights of the heir to the throne are thus trampled underfoot: the throne is usurped.

The student and heir to the throne wants to return to Wittenberg. His request is refused.

The ghost of the dead King Hamlet appears to several student friends of the crown prince, and then to the heir, Hamlet himself. He, the former king, has been murdered by his brother Claudius. He demands that his defrauded heir avenge him.

This Hamlet promises to do.

But since he is still somewhat in doubt as to the reality of the ghostly apparition, he plays the detective with the presumed murderer and throne-rober.

The murderer and usurper Claudius believes himself sensible of such a plan; he becomes distrustful of the stepson and duped heir to the throne.

The heir causes a play to be acted, at which his stepfather King Claudius is present. The Murder of Gonzago is played; the murder takes place in the garden, in exactly the same manner that the ghost of King Hamlet has described his own

murder by his brother. King Claudius is unable to hide his bad conscience; half-swooning, he leaves the play, convicted to those that know.

He now becomes Hamlet's deadly opponent, and Hamlet his.

But Claudius has power: he banishes the heir, and sends two arch-rascals, two murderers, with him as companions. They are Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. Before Hamlet boards ship with them, he says among other things, that he will take counter-measures, and dig his mines deeper than those of the throne-robber Claudius.

The ship's crew supports Hamlet's cause; the ship does not proceed to England, its destination, but returns to Denmark. Crown prince Hamlet temporarily allies himself with an armed foe of Denmark; he sends a sailor to King Claudius, bearing a message in which he purports to have landed helpless and ship-wrecked. However on the following day he stands at the head of a Danish uprising, armed to the teeth, and confronts the usurper with an armed force in the palace of Elsinore: 'O thou vile king, give me my father!'

His mother succeeds, the usurper succeeds, in convincing him that Claudius is innocent of his father's murder. Claudius proposes a tribunal to decide his innocence or guilt. Till then there is to be a truce:

'If by direct or by collateral hand
They find us touch'd, we will our Kingdom give,
Our crown, our life'.

Hamlet has accidentally killed an old chamberlain named Polonius. Claudius now incites the son of this chamberlain to a blood-feud with the heir to the throne.

The outcome is a mock-duel, which is actually a real one, in which the crown prince is killed by Laertes, Polonius' son; Claudius and Laertes are killed by the prince, while the adulteress, Hamlet's mother the queen, inadvertently prepares her own death.

Here you have the cleanly-prepared skeleton of the piece; its flesh and blood is another matter."

... ... ... ... ... ...

416. "Erasmus spoke of Shakespeare, the English dramatist, who had like no other become also a treasure of Germany. He
spoke of Shakespeare's works with enthusiastic words. He was a kind of universe, Erasmus said.

He then approached his actual theme: Hamlet, a work whose existence denoted an eternal riddle.

'An immortal riddle,' he said, 'is here placed beside our mortal existence, in spite of the fact that only fragments of the work are left to us.' But the riddle to which he now proposed to turn, namely the question how it all came to pass, has nothing to do with the eternal riddle. This smaller riddle was somewhat easier to solve. The figure of Hamlet presented an insoluble problem, but for that very reason it continued to live forever.

Erasmus' speech held all his hearers spellbound. To reproduce it fully here would delay the course of the narrative. The cardinal points were the following: Hamlet, Prince of Denmark, whose father has been murdered by his uncle Claudius, who has also stolen his mother's love and his throne, attempts to regain the latter by means of an insurrection. By the changing of a name in the corrupted text, this uprising is credited to an eminently correct courtier names Laertes. This is completely absurd, absolutely paradoxical. More especially so, when we consider the words which the usurper-king addresses to Laertes at the beginning of the piece:

"... What wouldst thou beg, Laertes,
That shall not be my offer, not they asking?
The head is not more native to the heart,
The hand more instrumental to the mouth,
Than is the throne of Denmark to thy father."

Can it be possible that a young man, dismissed with such grace, with these words in his ear and his heart, well-acquainted with circumstances at court, should make the king responsible, when he hears of the unfortunate end of his father; the king, who has spoken with such loving kindness of this same father? And should it not have been easy for him to determine that his father had become the victim of Prince Hamlet's blind carelessness? Should he therefore feel himself able to overthrow King Claudius by a giant mutiny, and to address the benefactor of his entire family in these words: 'O thou vile king, give me my father!'? If this spinal fracture were repaired, as the speaker observed, the piece would be straight of backbone, viable, on firm feet. Otherwise it would remain an absurd structure in spite of the unwithered beauties that cling to its parts."
‘I will recite to you,’ said Erasmus simply, ‘the short monologue “To be or not to be” out of Hamlet. Where it now stands, namely in the first scene of the third act, it is incomprehensible. It is possible to interpret it there only through the general frame of mind of the Danish prince, but not, as appears necessary, out of the situation, out of the succession of events. Does not Grillparzer say, of the persons of a drama: What they say must come out of their present circumstances, out of their present passions. Present circumstances, present passions -- the word present is especially noteworthy. Hamlet is suddenly here; the reason for his appearance is not clear, although it is true that he is being secretly manipulated by Polonius and the king, and does not know it; their purpose being to have him meet Ophelia, of which also he has not the least suspicion. Why then does he begin, To be or not to be, that is the question? The great actor Ludwig Bamay always carried a drawn dagger in his hand during this soliloquy, so that he could by this means at least relate his words to some intention, action, deed; to wit, suicide. That is understandable. Another relation is not to be found here. In my Hamlet-revision the second scene of the fifth act begins with this monologue, and you will judge from the production whether it has acquired a natural relation in this place or not.’

It was still undecided to whom the rôle of Ophelia should be given . . . How much has not already been said about this Ophelia by actors, dramatists, scholars, and theatre-goers! Especially the scholars are wont to judge this character almost exclusively from the immanent poetry and extreme beauty of the mad-scenes, at the same time virtually ignoring the sound, almost dry dialectic of the girl in conversation with her brother. The thought that Ophelia could have committed a physical transgression with Prince Hamlet would destroy the whole figure in the eyes of these delicately perceptive souls. It is contrary to their ideals of girlhood. But in spite of this, so it seemed to Erasmus, Ophelia's madness would be more soundly motivated if she had indeed sinned with her lover. Perhaps she would then in her own way perceive herself to be implicated in Hamlet's murder of her father, when she remembered the sermon in which the latter had forbidden her possible relationship with Hamlet.

Such an explanation is indicated by certain words in the text, as when someone says on the occasion of her madness:

--Her speech is nothing,
Yet the unshaped use of it doth move
The hearers to collection; they aim at it,
And botch the words up fit to their own thoughts;
Which, as her winks, and nods, and gestures yield
them,
Indeed would make one think there might be thought,
Though nothing sure, yet much unhappily.

or

So full of artless jealousy is guilt,
It spills itself in fearing to be spilt.

What comes to light in the work at great intervals, of the relationship between Hamlet and Ophelia, certainly speaks for a clandestine love-affair, a passion that flowers in secret, the bounds of which are indeterminate because of the nature of the prince, at times so headlong."

... ... ... ...

439. "When Erasmus directed: 'Enter Ophelia,' she appeared again, completely changed, in an almost totally unconscious state, in a trance that appeared not affected but genuine. Her face was horribly distorted, so that Erasmus was almost too startled to read his part ... This speaking, hearkening, singing, cooing creature that walked before him, by turns infinitely desirable and infinitely repulsive, this hunted being seemingly pursued by hidden fear and secret guilt--he could barely recognize this to be Irina ... This Ophelia was a fair sinner.

Then up he rose, and donn'd his clothes,
And dupp'd the chamber-door;
Let in the maid, that out a maid
Never departed more.

This Ophelia had given Hamlet a favourable hearing. This Ophelia believed that she had brought blood-guilt upon herself, that she was implicated in her father's death. And since she continued to live in this delusion, a union with her father's murderer now also became impossible. So she grew mad.

She ended with the words, 'God be wi' you,' and, curiously wraithlike, slipped out through the door, to return again in a moment as the matter-of-fact Irina Bell."

... ... ... ...

486. " 'Do you know,' said the prince to Ollantag, having returned to the palace, 'do you know, this graveyard scene in
Hamlet is repulsive.

'And yet, when one speaks the name of Hamlet, and he steps before the imagination, it is surely always with the skull in his hand. Perhaps we do not always remember that it is the jester Yorick's skull, but we ought to remember it.

'Do you know, if a modern dramatist were to bring these sextons on the stage, who dig a grave while bawling vulgar songs and guzzling whiskey, the theatre would certainly become restive. If the first, the second, the third skull from unearthed remains were to fly out on the stage, the explanation of the rottenness of these corpses being added, a great many of the ladies would surely faint; some spectators would be violently ill, others would flee from the theatre; the remainder would hoot and hiss, smash the seats in the parterre and hurl the splinters on the stage.'

'I admit that,' said Ollantag.

'But why does it not happen today?' asked the prince.

'Because a picture we see again and again loses the force of its first impression. "Custom hath made it in him a property of easiness," says Horatio of the clown. The same custom prevents us from feeling the full, repulsive, mouldering, horrible reality in this graveyard scene . . . ' "

Erasmus did not want to set up parts, no matter how charming and compelling, but a whole Hamlet. He had 'the parts in his hand, but the spiritual sequence was lacking': in these words all the Hamlet-productions he had hitherto seen might have been characterized. Drama is struggle, and in this one by no means do a determined and an undetermined combatant oppose each other; rather, Prince Hamlet and his uncle Claudius both begin with the determination to combat each other, and later become deadly enemies.

Without Hamlet no King Claudius, no Hamlet without King Claudius. It would not do, in the opinion of the young producer, to neglect one of the two, and exalt the other at the expense of the slighted one. Hitherto this had always been done with Hamlet; Claudius had become an incidental figure. But the piece rests on two strong pillars: Hamlet and Claudius. These two powerful opponents, as Hamlet says, come forth to do battle, and the play is full of spark-showers that flash from their swords. Away with this damnable sentimentality, this misunderstood Werther-heritage, which makes of Hamlet an aria-singing soloist, a blubberer and a whimperer. No, there are
two whole-blooded opponents and haters here, and it shall go hard. Exhausted by the terrible struggle, apathetic and indifferent, Hamlet enters into the seemingly playful but actually earnest combat with Laertes at the end of the play. And in this farce, coming after seriousness, he must die. The opponent has set his snare for him: in the apathy of his exhaustion he has carelessly stepped into it. The villainous Claudius has won; for since he has brought this noble being to his fall, this prince from the land of genius and rightful heir of a kingdom, this growing and perhaps highest glory of the Danish kingdom, who shall be placated, or even comforted that Claudius himself goes down to destruction thereby?

This struggle it was, therefore, that Erasmus worked out with painstaking method, so that the most neglected role of King Claudius won a hellish grandeur. It was now possible to see the almost immovably brooding anguish and guile won over by the swift-footed, tenacious and youthful spirit of revenge, which, quick as thought, perceives its advantage, deals forth its blow, and wounds its enemy to the death."

518.
"'Things are a bit lively in your Hamlet,' said Dr. Ollantag, after he had been present for several acts. Erasmus replied that this was natural, since Hamlet was no longer an end in himself in this production, nor could the elegiac element broaden itself into stagnant ponds and pools, enlivened only by the mirroring of a cloudy sky. For the fact was that here a wild struggle took place, sometimes loud, sometimes silent, but never-ceasing, in which the two opponents, in the given circumstances found themselves in a condition of very great tension. 'The characteristic of those productions that I have seen', said Erasmus, 'was drowsiness. But drama is anything but this. We may sooner attribute it to the sleeplessness of life's fever, the sleeplessness of a grave illness, the paroxysm of fever-heat and the agony in the nights and hours shortly before death. There is not, there must not be, a minute, let alone a half-hour, of bare detached meditation or comfort in this Hamlet-drama. Or can it be that we ought to regard the scene where both friends stand at Yorick's grave as such? The earth throws forth its dead. Yorick, the murdered king's fool, must leave his resting-place to make room for Ophelia, a fool of a higher rank. His skull rolls up to Hamlet's feet, the feet of him who so willingly plays the fool. How could such a nocturne, a greeting and reviling of death so menacingly dreadful, so rich in reference, be expressed musically? It is as if, in broad daylight, a heavy thundercloud were to spread the darkness of the grave over the earth.
Hamlet is looking into his own grave. Never, so far as we have proof, has such a fearful scene been written. The doomed one looks down into the gruesome and mouldering hole, which becomes for him a scurrilous mirror. The jester Yorick, the clown who must make room for him, springs out as if with a jest, as if he spoke the words: Prithee, come and take your place. The revulsion which Hamlet feels when he regards the skull of the jester with such strange curiosity, does not have to do with Alexander the Great alone. Whether Alexander's skull looked and smelt thus is all one to him. He is thinking of his own careworn head. The words which these circumstances press from him, are surely not mere detached meditation."

... ... ... ... ...

525.
"Rector Trautvetter held firm in his cool reserve and frigid opposition to the Hamlet hypotheses of the court-favourite. Actually, he affirmed, Shakespeare had so inimitably come to life in the holy quiet of his study, that any stage, any actor no matter how good, was bound to disappoint him.

'We can never move along this way!' said Erasmus. 'Such pretentious allegations are of small service to the living stage. It is quite true that the phantasy is mightily stimulated by the reading of a Shakespearean play, but this arousing of the imagination, without which poetry could hardly be poetry, this stimulation which grips the reader by his lonesome lamp, is only a preliminary in drama that is meant for the theatre. The hermit, the closet-scholar, in short the man apart, banned to his museum like Faust's famulus Wagner, does not feel more, nor is he obliged to go beyond that. The error begins when he denies any further obligation, and opposes the theatre, which is the realization of such an obligation, with a grudging attitude of haughty superiority.

'Shakespeare conceived his plays for the theatre, wrote them to suit his company and himself, and, no doubt even while they were in the process of being written, put them on the stage. Even if Goethe himself tends to the opinion that Shakespeare is better appreciated as closet drama than on the stage, such a view is an insult to Shakespeare, a negation of the purpose of his work, and of his dramatic craftsmanship.

'The stage is the world into which Shakespeare's characters are born. The manuscripts were rescued as mere actors' copies. The texts, insofar as they are available to us, were procured directly from the lips of the actors by stenographers seated in the parterre. All honour to the stage that existed in
Shakespeare's imagination, and to the one in yours, Professor Trautvetter, but if this stage was insufficient to the mind of a great genius, how much less, one should think, ought yours to be to yourself! And since Shakespeare found the way from the internal to the external stage, why should you shut yourself up to it?

'Did Shakespeare desire to find his theatre of the imagination in the real stage? Yes and no. But for this negation stands the solid reality of the actual theatre, in Shakespeare's day still a rough thing of the people, a structure of boards set up in churches and haymows, or on the open marketplace; painted tatters counterfeiting forests, halls and palaces; tin crowns, ermine of rabbit-fur, false pearls, glass diamonds; royal mantles and robes of state out of begged-together rags; poor outlawed wretches, these players! That is the frame in which even today the greatest of dramatic art must clothe itself, if it is to fulfil its true purpose. For this frame Shakespeare wrote... Thus, the book frees imagination in us; the theatre illusion: the two are not to be compared, because they are basically different.'

'Trautvetter rejoined: 'I confess my scholar's life of the study to be somewhat implicated in my conception of the ghost-scene. If the apparition has a peculiar power and quality of terror in my reading of the scene, then that is because I extend the scene, and with it, the entire play, into the realm of myth. Perhaps the whole piece belongs under the classification of a cult for the dead. This cult seems to be older than Homer, and the oldest known example, namely the funeral rites for Patroclus, is already an anachronism.

'But instead of cult for the dead, I prefer to say heroic cult. The soul of a great man who is dead must be placated, especially if he has lost his life by murder or assassination. Otherwise his anger, and the might to assert it, are destructive. The hero assumes after his death a rank and sphere of activity similar to that of the gods of the underworld. The shades of heroes often inhabit graves and caves. Wherever they are content to dwell, appeased by never-ceasing sacrifices, they come to stand for a powerful means of protection in the eyes of the entire populace. Every post-Homeric colony and city-state had such a hero.

'In Shakespeare's Hamlet we find the unconscious development of an antique-heroic drama of shades. The terrible ghost of the murdered king, now become hero, demands revenge on his
enemy. He is clad in full armour, and prepared, if necessary, to revenge himself on his dilatory instrument. Blood, and blood alone, can suffice to placate him.

'Seen from this mythical standpoint, the hero, if unsatisfied, becomes a terrible, unreconcilable, macabre spirit, glowing with revenge, destroying the good with the bad, the guilty with the innocent, in a frenzy of destruction. And seen thus there is a new significance in the blood-bath in which the adulteress Gertrude, the adulterer and usurper Claudius, his tool Polonius, the son and daughter of this man, and finally the dilatory prince lie judged and destroyed. The injured demon has destroyed his own household. And thus he becomes, in the economy of the play, the subterranean, fateful thing of first importance.

'It were even possible to see in Hamlet's sable attire something more than coincidence. The animal sacrifices demanded by the heroes of ancient times had to be black in colour. Similarly the garb of the priests entrusted with the placating of the heroes by sacrifice, was black . . .' "

537.

. . . 'This ghost, only twice visible, but always and everywhere invisibly present, placed in the midst of the play as the all-moving force, this ghost permits all sorts of strange things in the work to be explained. Thus at the beginning Hamlet's attempted flight to Wittenberg.'

Erasmus said: 'He wishes to withdraw himself from the power of the invisibly present and terribly threatening demon. I admit that the thought occurred to me only in the course of your lecture.'

'You are right, and do you know why? Because the angry hero is mighty only in the region of his grave, his palace, his country, but not beyond the borders of the land. This is the belief of the ancients, and the presentiment of Hamlet's soul. By flight abroad, Hamlet would have been able to save himself. For mark you, Hamlet is the first modern without the slightest interest in blood-revenge. However he cannot withdraw himself from its power in the halls and vaults of the old palace at Elsinore. What he feels is irrational, but the more terrible for that very reason. Already three thousand years ago the souls of the murdered, like that of the Danish king, went about restlessly, seeking revenge. Painfully tormented, he must obtain revenge as soon as he can. The longer he is delayed of success, the more destructive in the end becomes his pent-up fury.
'Such a demon-hero cannot be loved, only feared. And so Hamlet too, does not love his father in this transformation. He perceives the chthonian hero everywhere; his silent, threatening, pitiless, sense-confusing, weapon-clattering demand. Hamlet does no know how much blood the spectre would drink: only that of the murderer? or also that of Hamlet's mother, the queen? He, the son called to revenge, did he not see the Erinnys of his murdered father, gruesomely waiting at his mother's back, silently saying: "Thou wilt be silent, thou sacrifice to me consecrated, and nourished for me; yet living wilt thou refresh me with thy blood." And it was this Erinnys perhaps, and with it, the soul of the murdered king, who placed the thought into the mind of his adulterous wife, that Hamlet should not be permitted to return to Wittenberg: to hold the revenger fast near his grave and Elsinore, and thereby to allow the ghost, for his own purposes, to plunge him into a kind of half-madness. A great many of my colleagues call Hamlet weak, because of his wavering in the service of the unreconcilable fiend. They have no comprehension of the terrible extent of such a service, precipitating him into blood-madness. It leads into the furthest deeps of infernal night. It dissolves the personal aspect entirely, and makes of the free man one possessed.'

This adds a new possibility to our understanding of the Danish prince in your sense,' cried Erasmus. 'A kind of trance has come over Hamlet, now that he is once more in Elsinore and near the place of the murder. In this state he drifts between heaven and Hades, the black folds of his robe dipped now in the gloom of hell, now in the lustre of the empyrean. But he shies away from this condition, which brings him near to the dreadful, revenge-lusting fiend, and wants to get back to Wittenberg.'

Next day in the theatre they rehearsed the new scene where Hamlet forces his way at the head of a band of conspirators, to take his revenge on the murderer of his father, and to make good by force his right to the throne. This was the core of Erasmus' attempt to restore the badly-corrupted play, to permit the direct line of the drama's theme once more to be seen. That Laertes, an accomplished courtier in the highest favour of the king, should have incited the rebellion, is an absurd- ite which has been unhesitatingly swallowed by German poets, scholars, producers, and others, for almost a century and a half. Would it moreover be possible, if Laertes did organize the revolutionary revolt, and confronted King Claudius with the words: 'O thou vile king,' threatening his life, that a few
scenes later, Osric should speak of him thus to Hamlet: 'Sir, here is newly come to court Laertes; believe me, an absolute gentleman, full of most excellent differences, of very soft society and great showing; indeed, to speak feelingly of him, he is the card or calendar of gentry, for you shall find him in the continent of what part a gentleman would see.'

Thus it was that Prince Hamlet, at the head of his insurgents, stormed three or four times on the stage, overpowering the guards; whereupon Gertrude's motherly power, to be sure, blunts his sword.

'O thou vile king, give me my father!'

the lines read, and, asked to control himself the prince goes on:

'That drop of blood that's calm proclaims me bastard, Cries cuckold to my father, brands the harlot Even here between the chaste unsmirched brow Of my true mother.'

At this point Erasmus has the actor place his finger on Gertrude's brow.

Claudius, he of the perpetual smile, once and once only without his self-possession, coolly asks:

'What is the cause, my Hamlet That thy rebellion looks so giant-like?'

The courtier Laertes, who with his father has been, and remains even now in the highest favour of the court, should he be capable of inciting so giantlike a rebellion, just because his father has lost his life in a mysterious accident? Mark well too, that his father, King Claudius and the queen have been friends for as long as he can remember, their relationship clouded by nothing.

And besides, when Osric speaks of Laertes several scenes later, he knows nothing whatever of this giantlike rebellion.

The maternal influence on Hamlet is very strong, and leads to his eventual misfortune. He wishes to return to Germany, to the university at Wittenberg, at the beginning of the play. Gertrude pleads with him to stay at the court. King Claudius gives in to her, even if it were more in his interests not to have Hamlet held back. The whole bloody course of the play could have been avoided in this way. But he says:
-- 'the queen his mother
Lives almost by his looks, and for myself,--
My virtue or my plague, be it either which,
She's so conjunctive to my life and soul,
That as the star moves not but in his sphere,
I could not but by her.'

To his mother's request at the beginning of the play: 'Go not to Wittenberg!' Hamlet has answered:

'I shall in all my best obey you, madam.'

The queen's love, who lives on his looks almost more, it seems, than on those of King Claudius, serves to bring Hamlet by his filial requital of parental affection into a dangerous dependence: 'I shall in all my best obey you, madam.'

During the rehearsal, this theatrically very effective scene was the subject of a lively debate among the spectators in the parterre. Erasmus pointed to a later instance in ActIV --Scene VII, where the king is very openly discussing the rebellion with Laertes:

---'he which hath your noble father slain
Pursued my life,'

whereupon Laertes:

---'But tell me
Why you proceeded not against these feats,
So crimeful and so capital in nature?'

The king confesses:

'O for two special reasons,' the first being as stated already; his mother's love; the other in the fact that the multitude so hangs on him.'

588.

"The whole thing is sorcery!" With these words Erasmus began an extended discourse on Hamlet. 'I am the victim of a spell. Like Hamlet I am being drawn into something undesired. The undesired has the character of the inexorable. With Hamlet it is his own mother, whose sacred body is desecrated by a villain muddy and lecherous in his eyes, who is also the murderer of his father, as a voice from the next world breathes into his soul. What inexorably hideous realities confront this being, so dedicated to pure ideals! And he, whose lofty idea it was to spend his freedom in a life of freedom, now sees
his freedom too, irrevocably withdrawn. The obligation to
revenge, the obligation to crime is laid upon someone desper­
ate, and filth makes purity once for all impossible. Black
crime takes the place of innocence. For charged with the mur­
der of an uncle, and possibly with the responsibility for the
death of his own mother, Hamlet's soul can never thereafter
be clean, no matter how justifiable the dread deed itself.
Murder, blood, guilt, all this blood-reeking, raw, and butcher-
like business, this judgment in blood, which he sense and be-
fore which he trembles like an animal in the vicinity of a
slaughter-house: all this repels Hamlet even in the first
scene of the drama. He conceals what he suspects, what he
knows and feels, and quietly tries to get away. But to his
ruin the Aegisthos of the piece does not grant the vacation his
Prince Orestes-Hamlet asks for. The prince wishes to safe him-
self from his task; to hide in Wittenberg.

Here the blindly obedient hands of the adulterer, so tract-
able to the royal adulteress, are strengthened by the tender,
blind-groping hands of a mother's love. The catastrophe is
released beyond recall. It is only a short time now before
Hamlet is no longer master of his own decisions. For while
the murder victim materializes before him, and within him, the
crime which had taken place also materializes. Henceforth
there is no escape, no Wittenberg hiding-place, not even a
chance to look away.

'But Hamlet is not Orestes; he is more, even though the at-
mosphere in which he lives is closely related to that other
drama of blood-revenge, the Choephorae of Aeschylus . . .
As I have said, Hamlet is more than Orestes. And what he
really is, in all his individuality and novelty of type, will
surely preoccupy many a man of the future, who lives out his
destiny in full consciousness of his own self. If only the
psychologists would keep their hands off him: these people who
classify, and see all things summarily from without. It would
be bitter to rediscover one of the most exalted figures of
youthful suffering, and one of the most worthy and sacred, in
the cell of a mental institution, or perhaps in the pages of
a medical journal. Hamlet has too much self-respect to be an
ordinary tool of revenge, entirely devoid of will. He loved
his individuality. Rather than to damage his soul, he was
prepared for a moment to forego the gratification of his thirst
for revenge; indeed, even to withdraw from his duty, for which
he was to sacrifice all the worth of his life.'

Erasmus broke off, and apologized for his Hamlet monoman-
ia . . . "
Erasmus had thought out a rather daring introduction, which we may credit to his youth. The curtains parted, and the costumed players, including Hamlet, stood around a figure that purported to be Shakespeare himself. The masquerade succeeded; a rustle in the theatre gave proof of its strong effect on the audience.

In this prologue, which Shakespeare himself spoke in place of Hamlet, Erasmus Gotter expressed his conviction that Hamlet and his creator were in a measure one and the same person. At any rate it is certain that the prince, like the playwright Shakespeare, writes verses for a troupe of players, and that he instructs them before the beginning of the play, as Shakespeare himself may often have done.

And Shakespeare spoke the same words in the induction that Hamlet speaks to the players who are to act the play within the play, by which the king and regicide is to be found out ...

The curtain closed on this prologue, to re-open on the first scene of the drama; the night-scene on the terrace of Elsinore, where the ghost of the murdered king appears to the officers of the palace watch. It was only after . . . the conversations with Professor Trautvetter, who had indeed now taken over the rôle of the ghost, that Erasmus had begun to perceive the mythical aspects of the piece. He now proceeded to impregnate the production with them. Where he had formerly held the view that the structure of the drama rested predominantly on two pillars, namely Prince Hamlet and the usurper-king Claudius, he now saw in the fiend, armed and thirsting for revenge, the terrible power that transcends all, moves all, governs all, and in the end destroys all with random fury. The professor was big and broad-shouldered. By lighting effects . . . the figure of the armed demon was raised to a stature larger than life. He was no longer a figure like other figures, or merely a superfluity. Already in this first scene, even though not a word passed from his lips, he became a prologue of approaching terror.

And already in the course of the first scene an oppression was laid on the audience; and the air, as in the text, appeared to grow sickly with a gloom as of the day of judgment. A cosmic fear pervaded all, tightly knit with inexorable fate. An uneasy disturbing atmosphere was communicated to the audience, in which no petty, arrogant human will, desirous of being master of its own fate, could any longer exist.

'I'll cross it, though it blast me,' says Horatio of the ghost. No. It will not blast Horatio, but all the more mercilessly will it blast its own household.
The diseased gloom of the day of judgment lay also on the second scene; a state-proceeding in which the king and usurper Claudius publicly appears with the widow of the murdered king, apparently for the first time as man and wife. Over this council of state the same condition lowers in the air, of which Horatio speaks in the first scene . . .

Marked for sacrifice, and at the same time the primary instrument of the 'omen coming on', stood the sable-mantled Prince Hamlet, the Erinny of his murdered father almost visibly behind him. She puts words into his mouth, into the mouth of his mother, and of her murder-laden husband. 'Hamlet', the mother must say, 'I pray thee, stay with us; go not to Wittenberg.' And her husband, in a long hypocritical speech, must support her wish, whose fulfillment is fatal to them all.

It is a proceeding in which all cheerfulness denotes an oppressed lie, cheerfulness which, in order not to be submerged in horror, must cast itself into the stupor of a bacchanal.

In the fourth scene the dreadfully armed, dread demon materializes in appearance and word before his son . . . 'My fate cries out,' Prince Hamlet says, obeying the signs of the phantom to follow it,

'My fate cries out,
And makes each petty artery in this body
As hardy as the Nemean lion's nerve.'

Erasmus, irresistibly drawn to the proceedings on the stage, experienced an all-comprehending mystical participation that extended to the innermost fibres of his being. And this passage, where Hamlet is defeated by the belief in his iron will, moved his deepest sympathies.

It is not possible here to raise up a stage, and to make visible the progress of all nineteen scenes of Hamlet, or the dress-rehearsal of the entire piece. Nor is that intended . . .

627.
"Towards five o'clock the rehearsal was over. Erasmus felt as if his soul had been spun out of his body, so that only an empty and inwardly painful shell remained. The applause was sustained; all agreed that it had been a great experience. Erasmus, while receiving the applause, said to himself: 'Yes, it is all in balance once more. The majesty of buried-unburied Denmark stands above the corpse-strewn field, a blood-lusting, invisible, but sated fiend. And thus too the last four dead
are comprehensible, who have been preceded by Polonius and his daughter. Now all the chamberlain's family is rooted out. The heroic phantom has destroyed his own wife, his brother, his son. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern have also become his prey.'

Prince Hamlet does not deliver himself up to the death-sentence of the avenger, Erasmus thinks,'until the instant when he allows the sword of rebellion to be flattered out of his hand by his mother. Thereafter all becomes macabre and dark and confused around him; his will appears to be lamed, and at last the raging fiend crushes him too with armoured foot.

'Well said, old mole! canst work i' the earth so fast?' Thus Hamlet had once called out to the underground ghost, when by the comand, 'Swear!' it had demanded obedience to Hamlet from his companions. The old mole had burrowed on. Hamlet's exorcism, 'Rest, rest, perturbed spirit!' had borne no fruit. Only now, through superhuman raving, had the offended spirit found rest."
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**Hauptmann**


