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Conclusions

Baroque Legacies: National Socialism's Benjamin

The preface to Benjamin's Library began with a quote from Benjamin's essay "Literary History and the Study of Literature" (1931). I repeat that quote below because of its aptness as an introduction to the discordant image called up by the title of my conclusion, in which I discuss a particularly uncanny afterlife for Benjamin's Baroque. This post-Benjaminian version of the Baroque resonates uneasily, however, with some of the same issues that he addresses in the Tragic Drama book, namely the ability of "works," both literal Baroque texts and the ideas associated with them, to play a role in arguments about modernity and the nation. As for Benjamin, so also in this example, the story told about the Baroque relies on narratives about national cultural renewal that are deployed in a context that may seem counterintuitive to some. The invocation of Benjamin in direct association with the political and social movement of National Socialism, which might well be said to have caused his death, nevertheless reveals a great deal about the importance of taking periodization claims seriously whenever they occur.

In the essay "Literary History and the Study of Literature," we will remember, Benjamin describes contemporary literary historians as mercenary soldiers, who, entering a house full of treasures and claiming to admire its contents, in fact "do not give a damn for the order and inventory of the house," for they "have moved in [only] because it is strategically situated and because it is a convenient vantage point from which to bombard a railway or bridgehead whose defense is
important in the civil war” (Benjamin, Selected Writings 2: 461–62). The jarring thought that there was a “National Socialist Benjamin” may appear to be no more than a further strategic maneuver of this sort. It is designed, however, to be deliberately provocative, indeed, to disrupt the history of Benjamin reception with which we have become familiar, by tracing the ghostly presence of Benjamin’s “Baroque book” in Nazi-sponsored texts. In these texts, Benjamin’s ideas are neatly, although sometimes quite covertly, inscribed in both the footnotes and otherwise apparently marginal places in the textual apparatus, such as bibliographies and notes, as well as in the very terminology (Bollenbeck’s “semantic stockpiles,” 5) and methodologies deployed. The discovery of the subterranean presence of the work of a German Jew, who killed himself on the Spanish border in 1940 rather than be taken prisoner by the Gestapo, in Party-approved and, in some cases, even Party-sponsored scholarship beginning in the 1930s and as late as 1941, is nevertheless not overtly opportunistic in the ways Benjamin’s original image suggests. All the same, it is revealing of how books create their own histories in the ways I have been suggesting throughout.

One might explain—or explain away—the afterlife of Benjamin’s Baroque in Nazi-era scholarship by asserting that this scholarship merely kidnapped occasional Benjaminian insights, and, discarding their Jewish author as an inconvenience, integrated snippets of his ideas into the nationalist and often anti-Semitic rewritings of German literary history that flowed from the presses of the Reich after 1933. But there may have been something more than sporadic pilfering at work here. Indeed, what the labyrinth of direct and indirect citations of Benjamin’s work in post-1933 German texts reveals is that there seems to have been something quite acceptable in Benjamin’s thought to at least some Party-identified scholars, which, like many involved in intellectual labor from the late 1920s through the early 1940s in German literary studies (Germanistik) in general and in German Baroque literary studies in particular, had its origins in the late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century academic and disciplinary debates that I have traced here. That Benjamin’s ideas about the Baroque are present in texts identified with National Socialism at some important methodological and ideological as well as semantic levels serves as an illustration of what Wilhelm Voßkamp (“Deutsche Barockforschung”), building on the important work of Hans-Harald Müller (Barockforschung), has designated as precisely the absence of a “break in continuity” between studies of the Baroque of this earlier period and those of the Nazi years. Voßkamp argues that while some of the “institutional assumptions” of German literary studies of course changed after 1933 (“Deutsche Barockforschung” 699), certain methodological and “theoretical academic” premises did not (702).¹ The discovery in post-1933 Nazi

¹. Voßkamp’s claims about “continuity” need to be assessed carefully against the work of Jaumann, on which Voßkamp relies. Jaumann (Die deutsche Barockliteratur) argues that Baroque studies in the 1920s and 1930s experienced a significant “re-evaluation,” which is particularly visible in the work of Benjamin on the Baroque tragic drama.
scholarship on the Baroque of both Benjamin’s work and ideas that it shared with work on the Baroque from the 1910s and 1920s confirms Voßkamp’s point— which was indirectly Benjamin’s point too when he defined “origin” as a combination of pre- and posthistories caught in the complex eddies of history. The Nazi contributions to Baroque studies in which his work appears thus themselves function as “witnesses” to the survival of Benjamin’s ideas in material form—in spite of the efforts of the Party, to which their authors had in many cases declared outright allegiance, to silence him and other German-Jewish scholars once and for all.

Disrupting the specific claim that has insinuated itself with great vigor into most understandings of Benjamin’s work—a claim that the dean of the original generation of Benjamin scholars, T. W. Adorno, was perhaps the first to make in his 1955 edition of some of Benjamin’s essays, namely that Benjamin’s “name had been repressed in and by the public German consciousness since 1933” (ix)—allows us, first of all, to see that Adorno’s assertion was quite simply not true. In addition to some eight reviews of the Tragic Drama book between 1928 and 1936, which Uwe Steiner first noted in his 1989 essay, “Allegorie und Allergie,” Benjamin’s work on the Baroque drama also made its way discretely, yet unmistakably, into the textual interstices of several high-profile, Party-approved texts in subsequent years. This reception was possible because some of what Benjamin claimed to be doing in his book, including his celebration of a specifically German tradition of Baroque texts, accorded methodologically and substantively quite well with Nazi-inflected literary-historical claims. The overlaps are thus understandable, as they frequently drank from the same sources. Indeed, it is part of the broader irony of what some might consider the disturbing proximity of Benjamin’s and National Socialism’s Baroques that precisely that which they shared also seems to have allowed Party-identified scholars to dedicate considerable effort to finding a place in the literary-historical canon for a period that may have seemed to have been as odd a candidate for absorption into a National Socialist literary-historical agenda as Benjamin himself. Showing not only where Benjamin appeared, but also what in the “inventory” of the shared domain of his and National Socialism’s assessments of the Baroque allowed for this apparently alarming cohabitation, is my subject here. The effect that listening more closely to Nazi-sponsored texts as unexpected “witnesses” to an odd afterlife for Benjamin’s Baroque might have in recuperating a more nuanced genealogy and history of the reception of his work in general should be obvious. Instead of continuing the hagiographic enterprise begun by Adorno, we can reinsert Benjamin into the continuum of the time out of which his work emerged. Just as importantly, examining the afterlives of Benjamin’s book in

2. For an earlier discussion of the reception of Benjamin’s book, see Jaumann, Die deutsche Barock-literatur 570–76. Jaumann (576) nevertheless agrees with Adorno that the Tragic Drama book failed to get a “critical” reception until after Adorno’s 1955 publication of the two-volume Benjamin edition. See also Garber, Rezeption und Rettung 59–81.
National Socialist work on the Baroque opens a window onto the politics of literary history and periodization during the Nazi years by asking us to track not just how illustrious single authors, such as Goethe and even Shakespeare, were translated into figures of National Socialist pride, but also the extent to which period theorization often accommodates itself to political pressure, circumstance, and change. 3

In his fascinating history of the footnote, Tony Grafton points to a serious consideration of footnotes as one way to begin to reclaim “those parts of history which lie beneath ground level,” the “hidden cracks and forgotten conduits” of historical and political knowledge transmission (6). While this observation has lain at the heart of my discussion of Benjamin’s Tragic Drama book throughout this book, here it is a short footnote in a post-1945 book about German Baroque drama by the well-known Germanist and scholar of the Baroque Albrecht Schöne that is particularly interesting in this respect. At the end of the brief introductory chapter of his now famous 1964 book, Emblematis und Drama im Zeitalter des Barock (Emblematics and Drama in the Age of the Baroque), Schöne notes that Baroque emblematics is “a nearly submerged continent, concerning which only a very few specialists have engaged in reconnaissance” (14). While Schöne is the coauthor of the spectacular encyclopedia of early modern emblems that he compiled with Arthur Henkel in 1967, it was his earlier, 1964 Emblematics and Drama that first took up the challenge of exploring this “Atlantis” of Baroque figures and texts, a challenge unaddressed, Schöne claims in the footnote that accompanies his claim, since the 1946 review of the literature by Henri Stegemeier; “since that time,” the note reads, “hardly anything has changed.” The main text above then proceeds to outline the dimensions of the mid-twentieth-century voyage of discovery that Schöne will undertake. A second, final footnote to these opening remarks stands out for both its content and its placement as the last word on the page. It reads: “Walter Benjamin was the first to draw our attention to these kinds of connections; let me especially underscore here [the importance of] his treatise on the ‘origin of the mourning play’ (1928; cf. bibliography, no. 99).”

There is much to ponder about Schöne’s notes. For one thing, why does he get the title of Benjamin’s book wrong—leaving out the crucial adjective “German”? Just as substantively, what is the significance of the literal subordination of Benjamin’s inaugural study of emblematics in 1928 to Schöne’s own 1964 project on this page? Placed so as to seem quite literally marginal to the main argument, one might overlook that, as Baroque scholar Gerhard Spellerberg observed just six years later, Schöne’s understanding of the significance of emblematics throughout

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3. Barner (“Literaturgeschichtsschreibung”) provides excellent data about the persistence of a variety of literary-historical schemas from the Nazi period well into the post-1945 period. Schools and introductory university curricula were particularly impacted by the discourses of literary history as they were formulated in overview volumes and handbooks, which in many cases found their origins in the 1933-45 years.
his book is heavily indebted to, indeed literally supported by, Benjamin's prior work (see below). Of greater interest, however, than Schöne's curious masking in 1964 of his reliance on Benjamin's earlier insights into Baroque emblematics is the implicit historical location that Schöne wants to give his own book by placing it, in the first note, in relationship to texts that appeared in 1928 (Benjamin) and 1946 (Stegemeier), respectively, for these dates silently mark—even as they elide—the very fact of World War II and the impact it had on the scholarly community in Germany. By refusing to mention National Socialism—and indeed, that the author of the “first” treatment of Baroque emblematics and drama had in fact died as a result of the Nazi regime—Schöne effectively disappears the location and historical context of Benjamin's book along with its focus on that which was decidedly “German.” Schöne thus fails to take a stance here—as he actually did in subsequent publications—on the relationship between the disciplinary history of German literary studies and the National Socialist machine (see Schöne, Göttinger Bücherverbrennung).

Spellerberg, who was the one to point out Schöne's reliance on Benjamin, nevertheless himself engaged in a similar politics of elision several years later in a footnote in Verhängnis und Geschichte (Fate and History) (1970), his monumental study of the work of one of the Silesian Baroque playwrights, Daniel Casper von Lohenstein. Like the plays of Gryphius, Lohenstein’s dramas figured prominently in Benjamin’s Tragic Drama book, to which Spellerberg explicitly refers in his study. His reception of Benjamin nevertheless distorts the context in a way similar to Schöne’s. As he works his way through the secondary literature on Lohenstein, for example, Spellerberg refers approvingly to “modern and very contemporary Baroque Studies” (12–13), among which he includes the work of both Benjamin and Schöne, as well as of one Erik Lunding, who had published an important book on Silesian Baroque drama in 1940. By setting these three scholars, publishing in 1928, 1940, and 1964, and thus during the prewar, wartime, and postwar periods respectively, into a kind of timeless dialogue with one another in an unglossed way, Spellerberg silences the astounding differences between them and between the various epochs of scholarship on the Baroque they represent. In the process, he seems, like Schöne, and perhaps for some of the same complex reasons, to forget history, specifically the history of Germany and German Baroque studies between 1928 and 1967, particularly when he refers to the Benjamin of the 1928 Tragic Drama book as a contemporary of Erik Lunding. Lunding’s book on Silesian drama was published, ironically, in the very same year that Benjamin took his own life. In Spellerberg’s mind, Benjamin is a contemporary of Lunding as well as of Schöne in a kind of timeless and ideologically uninvested academic realm.4

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4. For a similar politics of historical elision in the annotational and dedicatory apparatus of a 1953 edition of Lohenstein’s plays, see Newman, Intervention of Philology 167–69.
This constellation of footnotes and of the scholarship to which they refer is not at all timeless or neutral, however. Rather, it is part of the discourse of Baroque studies in postwar, indeed, Cold War West Germany that, like much of the rest of German literary studies, relied for survival on eliding the years between 1933 and 1945. The Schöne-Spellerberg examples do allow access to the world of National Socialism indirectly, however, via Spellerberg’s reference to the “third man” and other interlocutor in these only superficially marginal conversations about Benjamin—namely Erik Lunding. Lunding may or may not have been something of an academic anomaly in war-torn Europe. A Dane who earned his doctoral degree in Copenhagen in 1939 with the thesis version of his book on the Silesian Baroque, Lunding did the research for his dissertation in Germany and greater Germany, so to speak, between 1936 and 1939, specifically in Munich, Berlin, and Graz. He would probably not have been immune to National Socialist propaganda or to the winds of anti-Semitism either in Germany or in Denmark, which was finally occupied in the fall of 1940. It may have been for this reason that he does not discuss the work of a Jewish scholar, namely Benjamin, directly in his book on the very same plays that had so fascinated Benjamin a little over a decade earlier.

Despite the overt absence of Benjamin in Lunding’s 1940 book, he is nevertheless there, both literally and somewhat more abstractly, buried deep in Lunding’s bibliography (207), for example, but also and more importantly, woven throughout the argument and texture of the book. The uncanny resemblances between Lunding’s and Benjamin’s arguments about the Baroque tragic drama include chapter epigraphs in Lunding from Calderón and from London’s Globe Theater, traditionally associated with Shakespeare; as noted above, these two non-German playwrights figure prominently in Benjamin’s book as, ironically, the authors of the best examples of the Baroque Trauerspiel. Lunding is fascinated, moreover, with the concepts and genres of the “martyr drama” (14) and the “drama of fate” (78), which are likewise central to Benjamin’s study. Finally, Lunding discusses the indebtedness of the German tragic drama not to ancient Greek tragedy, but to medieval forms and ideas (passim), and highlights the figures of the tyrant (96) and the courtly intriguer that fills the plays (127–28) too. He also taxonomizes the world of the Baroque according to its investments in competing visions of immanence and transcendence (61 and 161). It is difficult not to hear echoes of Benjamin’s 1928 Tragic Drama book here as well. Indeed, looking at Lunding’s bibliography, one could be forgiven for thinking that he may have begun researching his thesis in the footnotes to Benjamin’s earlier study of precisely the same plays. In much the same way, then, as Benjamin seems to have been reborn in the post–World War II era in the interstices of Albrecht Schöne’s 1964 study of the emblem, Benjamin spoke

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5. On the tendency of post-1945 work to reach back for its own origins to the pre-1933 period, see Barner, “Literaturgeschichtsschreibung” passim, but esp. 125.
to Germanists in wartime Europe from between the lines of Lunding's text. As it turns out, Lunding's 1940 study of the Second Silesian school of drama was quite highly regarded by Nazi-identified Baroque scholars in subsequent years.

In 1941, an immense five-volume German literary history was issued by the Kohlhammer Publishing House in Stuttgart and Berlin. Entitled Von deutscher Art in Sprache und Dichtung (The German Way in Language and Poetry), the project had been developed the year before in Weimar at the "Kriegseinsatztagung deutscher Hochschulgermanisten" (Wartime Mobilization Conference of German University Germanists), a meeting called by three prominent professors of German literary studies. One of these scholars, Gerhard Fricke of Kiel University, is especially central to understanding the startling presence of Benjamin's book on the tragic drama in work written or approved of by Nazi-identified scholars. The volumes of The German Way contain some forty essays, most of them written specially for the collection, by leading scholars of German literature from the medieval period to the present. The project was dedicated, according to an announcement in Zeitschrift für deutsche Bildung (Journal for German Education) 16 (1940), to promoting the "cultural and political ethos of National Socialism." 6 In volume 3 of The German Way, Professor Willi Flemming of Rostock weighs in with an essay entitled "Die deutsche Seele des Barocks" (The German Soul of the Baroque) that drips with National Socialist rhetoric about "the German man" of the period and about the "drive" or "will" of Germans to "create" and "achieve" (173).

If we listen carefully to Flemming's analysis, we hear a curious dialogue going on between the lines of the Party-sponsored harangue. Like Lunding, Flemming develops a series of arguments that appear to be nothing short of a kind of commentary on Benjamin's theses about the Baroque. This ghostly debate includes Flemming's interest, again, so similar to Benjamin's, in the courtly "intriguer" (190) and the "feeling of fate" (186), as well as in "Shakespeare" and "the Spanish" (197), albeit in order to highlight— as was appropriate for the volume in which the essay appeared— the "specifically German realization of a more general European phenomenon" (175). (It should be noted here that in his article on Grimmelshausen's Simplicissimus "as a German persona," also in volume 3 of The German Way, the well-known Germanist Julius Petersen makes a similar argument on behalf of German exceptionalism; Petersen's contribution also dialogues eerily with Benjamin's book, especially when he examines the place of eschatology, "creatureliness," and an Ulrician Christian redemptionist frame in the worldview of the Baroque.) 7

The covert conversation with Benjamin in which Flemming appears to be most engaged finds further articulation in a polemic against seeing the period of the German Baroque as a period of "decadence," a period "devalued as a degenerate

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6. As cited in Barner, "Literaturgeschichtsschreibung" 144 n. 12.
7. See Petersen, esp. 213.
Renaissance” (171). These are of course the very terms in which Benjamin, following both Heinrich Wölfflin and Alois Riegl, discusses the period of the Baroque both at the end of the “Epistemo-Critical Prologue” and throughout the beginning of the second chapter of his book, as discussed in chapter 1.8 It would be nearly impossible to do more than conjecture about what access Flemming might have had to Benjamin's 1928 book, since, like other contributors to the 1941 Party-sponsored volume, Flemming apparently recognized that the purpose of the project was not to make a substantial scholarly contribution, but rather to co-opt literary history in the name of the Volk. He thus did not annotate his article in any detail. Nevertheless, it could be argued that, in an odd kind of call-and-response format, it was Benjamin's readings that gave shape to Flemming's claims. Moreover, at the very end of the essay, in something that looks like a footnote, even if it is not one, Flemming remarks: "There is no need for a bibliography here, as Erich Trunz recently published a reliable overview of most of the important publications since 1924 in Deutsche Vierteljahresschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte [The German Quarterly for Literary Studies and Geistesgeschichte], number 18, 1940, Essay Volume, pages 1–100" (199). Here, in the margins of Flemming's article and in the reference to Trunz, more hidden conduits of National Socialism's access to Benjamin come into view.

Erich Trunz's 1940 overview of scholarship on the German Baroque, “Die Erforschung der deutschen Barockdichtung: Ein Bericht über Ergebnisse und Aufgaben” (The Study of German Baroque Poetry: A Report on [Scholarly] Results and Tasks Still to Be Done), is one hundred pages long, too long for an article publication today, and extreme even for the time. Perhaps its overt investment in the rhetoric and ideology of National Socialism guaranteed its appearance. As embarrassing as it apparently had been for them, the editors of the German Quarterly had already begun in 1935 to follow Nazi cultural policy by encouraging their authors to “eliminate Jewish authors as much as possible.”9 In his piece, Trunz, now remembered as a major scholar of German Classicism, does the editors of the journal one better and in fact mentions the work of one important “Jewish” scholar, Arnold Hirsch, by name, but only in order to condemn it. Hirsch's work is contaminated by “the old materialist class theory,” Trunz reports (“Die Erforschung” 79), a methodological (and indeed, political) failing perhaps typical of his race. The bulk of the essay goes on to endorse a National Socialist platform, reporting in exhaustive and exhausting detail on all scholarship on the period published since 1924, and

8. Flemming’s description of the place of melancholy in the Baroque (“Die deutsche Seele” 185) nevertheless casts it specifically not as part of a Stoic inheritance, nor as “ataraxia as a kind of phlegmatic behavior,” which is how Benjamin had characterized the melancholics of the Baroque in his chapter on melancholy in the Tragic Drama book. Rather, Warburg-like, Flemming sees in Baroque melancholy a curious kind of “self assertion” (185).

9. Qtd. in Dainat, “Wir müssen ja trotzdem weiter arbeiten” 78.
cataloging the various treatments of the Baroque primarily on the basis of whether or not they demonstrate that “a striving of an essentially German kind” (2) was essential to the period. Good poetry, such as that to be found in Baroque hymns, for example, is good because it is the forerunner of trends that are emerging “today in poetry, particularly in hymnic poetry,” that, like traditional hymns, deals with set themes such as “the Führer, soldiers, the war dead, the blessing of the farmers, the symphony of work, mothers, youth, the festivals of the Volk, etc.” (45). There can obviously be no overt place for Benjamin’s work here. Yet Trunz does refer to a somewhat earlier bibliographic study of scholarship on the Baroque as “an indispensable aid” for his own study (25). Hans Pyritz’s “Bibliographie zur deutschen Barockliteratur” (Bibliography of Work on German Baroque Literature), which was published as an appendix to Paul Hankamer’s Deutsche Gegenreformation und deutsches Barock (The German Counter-Reformation and the German Baroque) (1935), is “fundamental for all research.” Pyritz’s bibliography was some thirty pages in length and is far more schematic than Trunz’s, although not as “entirely independent of Hankamer’s account, which appeared at the same time” as Trunz would have liked (“Die Erforschung” 25). In the present context, what is crucial to note is that Benjamin’s Tragic Drama book is listed by Pyritz with little fanfare (499), and yet also in a somewhat prominent place as the first entry under “The Individual Forms: Mourning Play.” In the margins of the margins, then, Benjamin makes a center-stage appearance in Trunz’s Party-line work.

Earlier on in Trunz’s article, moreover, one of the founders of the “new” Baroque studies is named (5–7). He is Herbert Cysarz, who, as Peter Becher has shown, by 1938 had become “a leader [Führer] of the folkishly predisposed intelligentsia of the Sudetenland and [thus] a supporter of National Socialism” (292) at the German University in Prague (the Czech Charles University was closed soon thereafter on 17 November 1939, some eight months after the occupation of the city). It is no surprise that Trunz spotlights Cysarz as the inaugurator of the new way in his review, for Trunz had been named as Cysarz’s successor in Prague after the latter had departed to take over the chair of his doctoral adviser, Walter Brecht, at the university in Munich in 1938–39. Trunz was already at Prague when his piece in the German Quarterly appeared in 1940. Cysarz, whose work Benjamin of course also knew and cited no fewer than eleven times in the Tragic Drama book (see chapter 1), is one of the central figures in Trunz’s nationalist argument in his “Study of German Baroque Poetry.” Cysarz was the author not only of the 1924 Deutsche

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10. Pyritz’s bibliographic inventory follows Hankamer’s chapter headings exactly. By 1940, Trunz was clearly attempting to downplay Party member Pyritz’s earlier relationship to his doctoral adviser, Hankamer, who had been relieved of his position in 1935–36. On Hankamer’s political “crime” of “un-German Catholicism,” see Harms.

11. See Glettler 15.

12. On Trunz, see Kunisch.
Barockdichtung (German Baroque Poetry), on which Benjamin relies quite heavily in places, but also of a plethora of works reeking of the kind of localist boosterism presaged by the early twentieth-century work of Josef Nadler, who had discussed the Baroque in the third volume of his Literaturgeschichte der deutschen Stämme und Landschaften (Literary History of the German Tribes and Regions), published in 1918; Nadler is showcased along with Cysarz by Trunz (“Die Erforschung” 5–7) in 1940, and had been cited by Benjamin as well. Cysarz’s 1938 Deutsche Front im Südosten: Fünf sudetendeutsche Reden (The German Front in the Southeast: Five Sudeten-German Speeches) was published, as Cysarz notes in the foreword, in “the first year of the Sudeten-German era, the year of the birth of Greater Germany”; in his subsequent book, Das deutsche Schicksal im deutschen Schrifttum (German Fate in German Literature) (1942), Cysarz gives this same “Greater Germany” top billing as having been “Europe’s wartime stage,” also in an earlier era of conflict, namely the seventeenth century of the Baroque (25).

Along with Cysarz, Trunz highlights the contributions to recent Baroque studies of two additional scholars, namely Gerhard Fricke, lead editor of the five-volume The German Way in Language and Poetry (Trunz, “Die Erforschung” 55–57), and the Dane Erik Lunding. Trunz laments in a footnote-like addendum at the very end of his article (99–100) that Lunding’s 1940 book had become available to him too late to be dealt with in detail; the study is nevertheless incredibly “fresh” (100) and clearly presented. Indeed, in its promise for the future of German Baroque studies, Trunz concludes, Lunding’s book resembles no work so much as Fricke’s 1933 Die Bildlichkeit in der Dichtung des Andreas Gryphius (Pictorial Language in the Work of Andreas Gryphius), a book that Trunz had already described as “one of the best pieces of research in Baroque Studies overall” (57). Trunz notes that Fricke’s book is especially useful because of its treatment of the subject of emblems, which is, Trunz writes, “a vast and still entirely unresearched field” (43).

The irony of this claim could not be more apparent, appearing as it does in an article published in 1940, the very year in which the author of the “first” (or at least a very early) study of the emblematic culture of the Baroque, namely Benjamin, committed suicide. Trunz’s specialist readers at the time surely would have noticed the oversight, since Fricke, in the 1933 book so celebrated in Trunz’s essay, writes at great length about the relationship of symbol to allegory, of martyrs and melancholy, and of tragedy and the tragic drama, as well as about emblems, mysticism, and the Kabbalah. Here, he echoes no one so clearly as Benjamin, whose “Baroque book” dealing with precisely these issues had appeared five years earlier. The parallels are not surprising, since, in his 1933 book, Fricke, not yet practicing the exclusionary scholarly methods that were to become so popular in the coming years,

actually cites Benjamin’s 1928 work quite straightforwardly, just as Pyritz was to do in 1935. Had Trunz read Fricke, as he surely did, it would have been difficult to claim that Baroque allegory and emblematics were still completely “unresearched,” for, according to Fricke’s footnote on pages 264–65 (n. 3), Benjamin has done the pathbreaking work on the topic in his “energetic, smart, and stimulating work,” which, although unfortunately written in a “sibylline” language and style, shows “very emphatically” that allegory is the “constitutive factor of Baroque aesthetics.” Although present by name only here and in one other footnote (Fricke 199 n. 7), Benjamin is thus one of the important ghosts in the machine of Fricke’s much-lauded book.

In the same fateful year that Fricke’s study of Gryphius was published, namely 1933, he also made a major speech at the Nazi book-burning in the university town of Göttingen and was much feted for it. This speech, along with the Pictorial Language book, which contained such high praise of Benjamin’s work, ironically appears to have created enough visibility for Fricke to make him a candidate for the lead editor spot on the Party-sponsored project of The German Way that appeared eight years hence. Gudrun Schnabel has described the extent of Fricke’s “devotion to the Party” during the National Socialist period, yet also his successful “de-Nazification” (73) and “confession” of his Nazi-identified past in front of his students in Cologne in 1965. Schnabel’s remark that Fricke never fails to be mentioned as “an exemplary case of National Socialist literary criticism” (84) nevertheless highlights the ways in which the historiography of the disciplines under National Socialism tends to underestimate the complexities of the practice of scholarship at the time. In 1941, and thus at the height of the “wartime mobilization” of literary-historical scholarship, Willi Flemming was able to cite Erich Trunz, Cysarz, Lunding, and Fricke, as completely acceptable. Fricke, Lunding, and Pyritz nevertheless had all endorsed Benjamin’s work and cited it in both discrete and overt ways between 1933 and 1940. Cysarz and Benjamin appeared in their publications from 1924 and 1928, respectively, to have been devoting attention to many of the same ideas and to have cited similar sources, and Lunding, in 1940, seems to have relied on Benjamin’s earlier readings of the Silesian tradition as well. Upon closer examination, uneasy continuity after uneasy continuity emerges into view.

At first sight, it might seem surprising that, in 1933, the soon-to-be enthusiastic Party-men Fricke and Pyritz could openly cite the Jewish Walter Benjamin’s “energetic” work on the Baroque, and that Lunding in 1940 could more discretely and Trunz perhaps even inadvertently follow their lead. Yet we must consider that, even though Benjamin withdrew the manuscript from consideration as his Habilitation by the academic authorities at Frankfurt in 1925, he quickly went on to make arrangements to publish it; the appearance of The Origin of the German Tragic Drama in Berlin in 1928 was, as few scholars have noted, facilitated first and foremost by Walter Brecht, the Germanist in Vienna, who had been the doctoral
adviser of Herbert Cysarz, whose work was so celebrated by Trunz. Brecht read Benjamin’s manuscript and forwarded it to Hugo von Hofmannsthal, who published parts of it in his journal, *Neue deutsche Beiträge* (New German Essays), in 1927. Hofmannsthal subsequently recommended Benjamin’s thesis to the publishing house of Rowohlt in Berlin, where it was finally published the following year. Thereafter, although Benjamin complained about the failure of anyone from the Warburg circle, for example, to review the *Tragic Drama* book, it was reviewed prominently at least nine times. There is therefore good reason to suspect that other scholars of the Baroque would have at least known about it, if not also read it with care. Of these nine reviews, only seven are listed by the editors of the Frankfurt edition of Benjamin’s works on which most scholars rely. The omissions are significant, for as lukewarm as several of the seven are about the complex work, thus allowing for an argument to be made about the rejection of Benjamin’s ideas by an either already or incipiently anti-Semitic (or perhaps merely uninspired) academy, the two other reviews appeared in reputable and widely circulated professional journals and signal a positive reception of Benjamin’s work. They also reveal what kinds of discursive and methodological factors might have allowed his approach to fit well with subsequent Nazi approaches to the Baroque.

In 1930, Günther Müller, a prominent scholar of German literature and subsequent Nazi Party member, captures the significance of Benjamin’s book quite precisely in his review entitled “*Neue Arbeiten zur deutschen Barockliteratur*” (Recent Works on German Baroque Literature) in the Zeitschrift für deutsche Bildung (Journal for German Education). Müller notes that the *Tragic Drama* book is more of a “philosophical treatise” (332) than a book of scholarship and writes that a “critical assessment” of Benjamin’s contribution to the field of Baroque studies would exceed the review genre, indeed, would itself require “a second book.” Nevertheless, Müller states that it is “without question” that Benjamin “could enrich German Baroque Studies with important categories” (332). Readers of the review in 1930 would have thus clearly been steered in the direction of Benjamin’s work. Six years later, Robert Petsch of Hamburg is able, in his review article entitled “Drama und Theater: Ein Forschungsbericht, 1920–1935” (Drama and Theater: The State of Research, 1920–1935), which appeared in the Deutsche Vierteljahrschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte (German Quarterly for Literary Scholarship and Geistesgeschichte) (1936), to devote nearly half a page to Benjamin’s “challenging” book, with its analyses of allegory, emblematics, treatment of “fortuna,” and so on (613–14). The half-page summary may seem worth the oblivion into which it then fell; that Benjamin’s book finds a place at all in an article that ranges for more than a hundred pages over the terrain of Aristotle studies, production studies, and much, much more, is astounding nevertheless. As interesting as he finds Benjamin’s work, however, what Petsch does not like in the book is significant, namely that it tends to wander over disciplinary lines into the neighboring discourse of “art criticism” (614). Petsch’s and Müller’s reviews signal
that there is no question that Benjamin's book on the Baroque could still be read and openly cited as late as 1936. Because of this reception, it is not surprising that he appears in the margins of Nazi-sponsored work up through 1941. Moreover, it may have been precisely the discipline-related and methodological factors to which Petsch objected that allowed it to survive when its author did not.

Petsch's comment about Benjamin's Tragic Drama book in his article in the German Quarterly in 1936 points the way to an initial understanding of the acceptability of Benjamin's ideas, if not of his person, to Baroque studies in the Nazi period. As "challenging" as Petsch finds Benjamin's work, he does not like it when Benjamin strays into the domain of "art criticism." Petsch's objection to this kind of scholarly interdisciplinarity opens a window onto the conceptual world in which we have already seen that Benjamin moved, a world in which his ideas and those of subsequent Nazi academic elites appear to have been able to coexist when they shared, in the first place, a vocabulary and an approach to the Baroque still indebted to the originally Wölfflinian distinction between the Renaissance and the Baroque. In the Tragic Drama book, Benjamin found himself in agreement about this issue with Riegl, who had been one of the first to defend the radically historicist position that "artistic value was relative," and thus that the Baroque was as worthy of consideration as the Renaissance or classicism or, indeed, any period not traditionally defined as having "attained artistic supremacy" over others. 14 For a discipline like literary history in its National Socialist form, such relativism was crucial, as it allowed the German "will" to have found continuous expression in literature over time. Indeed, it was this very logic of continuity that drove the five-volume project of The German Way in 1941. Concepts like Riegl's on periodization, which Benjamin shared, were thus fundamental to Nazi literary history.

But it was also Riegl's contribution to the related art historical and methodological debate about what Michael Jennings has described as "a coherent theory of the historical determination of the cultural object" that was meaningful for both parties ("Walter Benjamin" 77). In his curriculum vitae of 1928, the same year in which the Tragic Drama book appeared, Benjamin describes his debt in his study of the dramas of the Second Silesian school to Riegl as well as to another and very problematic think, namely the legal theorist Carl Schmitt, in the following way:

This task, one that I had already undertaken on a larger scale in The Origin of the German Tragic Drama, was linked on the one hand to the methodological ideas of Alois Riegl, especially his doctrine of the "artistic will" [Kunstwollen], and on the other hand to the contemporary work done by Carl Schmitt, who in his analysis of political

14. One of the earliest articles on Riegl's significance is Zerner's. The quotes here are from Zerner 179.
Benjamin’s relation to Schmitt has been the subject of much debate. In the present context, however, it is the methodological parallels between Schmitt’s “philosophical studies of the state” and Benjamin’s own “art philosophical manner of research” (parallels that Benjamin underscores in a letter to Schmitt in December 1930) rather than the invocation of Schmitt’s theory of sovereignty that are significant.

The curriculum vitae suggests that Benjamin, like Schmitt and Riegl, was interested in undertaking an intense study of diverse individual “artifacts” in order to see how “the structure and proper experience of an epoch,” indeed, the “artistic will” (Kunstwollen) of a period, is “inscribed” in them. In an earlier essay that treats some of the same textual artifacts as the 1928 book, Benjamin writes: “Thus, in the face of history, the task of the poet is absolutely clear; it is to allow the unity of history to emerge in his reproduction [of it, i.e., of history]” (Gesammelte Schriften 2.1: 249). An intensive analysis of works thus permits the unified “artistic volition” and “character of an age” to emerge. Margaret Iversen has written of Riegl that he “recognized . . . that in order for a particular work of art to have meaning, it must be couched in something comparable to a public language” of its time (13). Benjamin articulates his version of this thesis about the imbrication of artistic form and specific historical periods in his essay “The Rigorous Study of Art”: “The new type of research,” whose patron saint and founder is Riegl, Benjamin claims, “is concerned with the correlation that gives rise to reciprocal illumination between, on the one hand, the historical process and radical change and, on the other, the accidental, external, and even strange aspects of the work of art” (Selected Writings 2: 669). Such claims echo both Riegl’s belief in the “cultural unity,” the “basic intentional unity of a social group” (Zerner 184), and Schmitt’s belief in the integration of phenomena with their times.

Jennings, Henri Zerner, and others have pointed out that Riegl’s ideas were all the rage in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Europe. What they have not noted, however, is that Benjamin, along with Erwin Panofsky and Wilhelm Worringer, for example, were not the only ones influenced by Riegl’s vocabulary and ideas. According to Jennings, the significance of Riegl’s work for even the

15. Bredekamp makes a fascinating argument for reading Benjamin’s reliance on Schmitt for his definition of the “state of emergency” as also indebted to the status of the exception in his art critical methodology; the individual, phenomenal “exception” and the “borderline concept” are likewise reminiscent of Riegl’s concept of the “unique extreme” that is the “origin” of the idea.

16. For the letter and a reading of Benjamin’s relation to Schmitt, see S. Weber, “Taking Exception to Decision”; Bredekamp.

17. Jennings, “Walter Benjamin” 79-80. See Olin xxii for “artistic volition” as the translation of the Kunstwollen that “informs all artistic manifestations of a given period, and relates artistic form to a wide cultural context.”
pre-Marxist Benjamin can best be assessed in terms of their common interest in “collective forms of experience”; Riegl wanted to understand the concept of “artistic will” in an anti-Romantic, anti-subjectivist way, as a mode of commentary on how “art intensively reflected major shifts in the structure and attitudes of collectives: societies, races, [and] ethnic groups,” Jenness writes (“Walter Benjamin” 84–85). This appeal to the “superindividual,” collective forces of an era or place allows the critic and/or historian of culture to “extrapolate from the individual, concrete detail to the culture at large” (88) and to “overthrow the supremacy of the individual creator” (Zerner 179). But Riegl’s claim for a kind of seamless continuity between the individual and the collective, as well as between the work of art and the “cultural unity” of its origin, may have more troubling afterlives too. Riegl writes: “When we consider not just the arts, but rather any of the other cultural activities and domains of mankind—the state, religion, science—we will conclude that in all of these spheres there exists a relationship between individual and collective unity. But if we were to follow the direction of the will that certain peoples in certain times expressed in these same cultural domains and spheres, it will become unmistakably evident that this direction is fundamentally entirely identical with that of the ‘artistic will’ of that same people” (Gesammelte Aufsätze 63). Thus, although he struggled to define what he meant by “artistic will” over and over again, as noted in chapter 1, it seems clear that Riegl’s claims for organicity and for the relationship between the work of art and the “will” of a particular Volk could have had other implications as well. That it was Hans Sedlmayr of the University of Vienna who wrote the introduction to a volume of Riegl’s essays in 1928–29 may well have enhanced a particular reading of Riegl among the National Socialist crowd. Sedlmayr held the chair in art history at Vienna from 1936 through 1945 and is reported to have been an “ardent supporter” of the Nazi regime (Iversen 14–15).

To assess the similarity of Benjamin’s reliance on Riegl to Riegl’s reception in National Socialist Baroque studies and then extrapolate from it that it was these elements that allowed Benjamin’s ideas to be heard by Nazi ears, we can turn—or return—to some of the best-known theorists and scholars of the German Baroque, whose work has already been cited for its curious inclusion of Benjaminian ideas. In their work, we find additional echoes of Riegl’s ideas. Although neither scholar quotes or cites him by name, the vocabulary of “artistic will” and of the subordination of the individual artist or artistic artifact to the superindividual unity of the Volk is unmistakable in both Gerhard Fricke’s 1933 book on Gryphius, for example, and in the 1940 review article by Erich Trunz. Fricke underscores the importance of the image for an “analysis of the poetic artistic will” (195), and Trunz writes that the charge to the current generation of Germanists studying the Baroque is to discern the period’s “formal will of its own” (2) in its texts; now is the time for “us” to “undertake the task of overcoming the modern, insofar as it is [merely] subjective, and of finding a new supra-individual order” (“Die Erforschung” 87), Trunz writes. In the final note, moreover, of the article in which he
praises the Danish Baroque scholar Erik Lunding, Trunz indicates that Lunding’s argument usefully echoes that of Heinrich Hildebrandt, “whose book, which appeared at approximately the same time, was unknown to Lunding” (100). Trunz had summarized Hildebrandt’s 1939 Die Staatsaufassung der schlesischen Barockdramatiker im Rahmen ihrer Zeit (The Concept of the State of the Silesian Baroque Dramatists in the Context of Their Time) already earlier in his review essay (57–58) as a study that helped “the new Baroque Studies” make visible “the actual will of this art” (58). Hildebrandt’s learned study, which had been his 1938 dissertation at Rostock, works to demonstrate the mutual “inter-penetration of life and thought, politics and ideas, the state and culture” (164) in the Silesian example; the formulation sounds Rieglian in its claim for the embeddedness of the artwork in a larger political and ideological domain. That Hildebrandt’s interests were in harmony with other aspects of their time is not surprising, for his doctoral adviser was none other than Willi Flemming, whose essay “The German Soul of the Baroque” was soon to appear in volume 3 of the 1941 Party-sponsored The German Way.

Flemming’s early work is praised fulsomely by Trunz in Rieglian terms in his review essay of 1940. The introduction to Flemming’s edited volume of the Silesian plays, which is volume 1 in his six-volume Barockdrama (Baroque Drama) (1930–33), is especially “illuminating,” for example, on “the particular artistic will” of the Baroque poets, Trunz claims (“Die Erforschung” 7). Flemming devotes considerable space in his introduction to that volume (Das schlesische Kunstdrama 15–19) to explaining exactly what the fundamental values and desires of the period were. Not surprisingly, the section is entitled “The Artistic Will” (“Das Kunstwollen”) (15). Although Flemming does not cite Riegl here, he does devote the section to describing the turbulent and emotional period that produced plays designed to disturb and overwhelm their audiences in decidedly unclassical ways. The use of Riegl’s term in the heading of the section, without any commentary or note regarding its provenance, suggests that, by this time, readers would understand and approve of the methodology on which a section on “the artistic will” of the Baroque would be based.

As Hans-Harald Müller has effectively shown (Barockforschung 169–77), Willi Flemming later used the culture of the German Baroque as a field on which to play out the ideological positions of National Socialism via a methodology that sought to locate an emphatically nationalistic “artistic will” (Kunstwollen) in all literary artifacts in even crasser ways than he had done in his “German Soul” essay. Flemming’s Wesen und Aufgaben volkhafter Literaturgeschichtsschreibung (The Essence and Tasks of Folkish Literary-Historical Scholarship) (1944) has as its main thesis, for example, that the new literary history can be based only on a “folkish view of

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18. Hildebrandt does not cite Benjamin in his notes, but his bibliography, like Lunding’s, is nearly a mirror image of Benjamin’s sources; one cannot help but wonder if Hildebrandt did not also know that Benjamin’s book, like his own, was intimately concerned with the question of the theory of sovereignty.
history" (20) and that a Volk can be defined only in terms of its “racial . . . components” (8). The method of such a history, Flemming writes, will be the “examination of the artistic will” that “lives unconsciously in the heart of the poet and directs his hand” (47). And elsewhere: “The artistic will is native to its time at an unconscious level” (52). Riegl’s term, the “artistic will,” which appears to have been so widely understood already a decade earlier as to not need further explanation, is thus in ample evidence here, but in a far more deliberately politicized way. Flemming’s constant references in the 1944 volume, written and published at the height of the war, to an earlier publication, namely a coffee-table book entitled Deutsche Kultur im Zeitalter des Barock (German Culture in the Age of the Baroque) (1937), reveal that he had been making arguments about the necessity of studying the “racial characteristics of style” (Deutsche Kultur 19) of the period as well as its “Germanic sensibility” (82) already for quite some time.

Flemming’s tendency to indulge in a liberal sprinkling of Riegl’s term “artistic will” around the overtly propagandistic 1944 Essence and Tasks volume nevertheless predated the Nazi rise to power. It already underlies his methodology in the very much earlier Andreas Gryphius und die Bühne (Andreas Gryphius and the Stage) (1921), for example, which was his doctoral dissertation. In the section entitled “Kunst und Kultur” (Art and Culture) in that book, Flemming develops an argument that could be straight out of Riegl, especially insofar as it polemicizes against a strictly “materialist” understanding of the origin of the work of art in a way reminiscent of Riegl’s attacks on Gottfried Semper’s explanation of aesthetic evolution in terms of the material conditions of its production. Flemming argues instead that a kind of totalizing agenda will characterize all artworks of a given time and place. He writes:

Relatively favorable economic conditions are the precondition that must in fact be present. We can nevertheless not measure what emerges out of them with any exact mathematical formulae. Since the human will— if perhaps unconsciously— lies at the foundations of the relations of production, it is not only understandable, but also even necessary, that a certain total spiritual [geistig] character emerge together with the economic relations, a spiritual character that is not determined by economic conditions, but rather springs out of the fertile soil of the conditions of willing at the time. The determining power of the will cannot be mistaken in the history of the arts. That works of art are produced of course does not depend on this collective will; yet, its impact is to be seen in the individual field of art to which the interests of the majority of the younger artists turn. Every epoch depends on a single artistic problematic, on the representation of space, for example, on the painterly, on drama or lyric. All hands lay hold of a single oar in the ship of art to propel it forward. (Andreas Gryphius 2)

19. On Riegl versus Semper, see Zerner 178; Iversen 22.
Flemming's argument here that it is in the artwork that the collective will is expressed allows the work its aesthetic autonomy to be sure, yet also links it to the “total character” of the epoch. In a kind of reversal of the argument I have been making, it should come as no surprise that Walter Benjamin himself cites this book, Flemming's 1921 study of the plays of Andreas Gryphius, four times in his Origin of the German Tragic Drama of 1928, since he too was trying to develop a method whereby one could gain an understanding of the “meaning of this epoch” (i.e., the Baroque) through an analysis of its works. For Benjamin, it is next to impossible to grasp the full “prospect of the totality” of the Baroque; this goal must initially be shunned or at least approached only indirectly through a disciplined analysis of its “details” and “extremes.” The reversal—and the parallels between the two men's work—only proves the point, however. Both Flemming and Benjamin were speaking similar enough “dialects” of a common Rieglian language of the “artistic will” in the 1920s that one can see how Benjamin could cite Flemming and then how Flemming, in a later variation, could be cited by the likes of Trunz, who also cited Fricke, Lunding, and Pyritz, all of whom, coming around full circle, had relied on and, in the case of Pyritz, even praised Benjamin in turn. There are nuances, to be sure, in the respective deployments of Riegl's ideas in Benjamin's book and in the work of these National Socialist scholars. It is nevertheless clear that his vocabulary and historical-critical method were appealing enough for them to work their way out of the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century contexts and discussions on which both sets of individuals cut their intellectual and theoretical teeth, so to speak, and into two sets of writings: the writings, that is, of the Jew Walter Benjamin, soon to be victim of the Gestapo, and of men like Fricke, Trunz, and Flemming, whose university careers took off between 1933 and 1945. Richard Wolin has written eloquently about Benjamin's conservatism and its relation to right-wing ideologies in the interwar years. The uneven legacies of Riegl's approach to the concept of the “artistic will” of a people and period suggest an additional genealogy for the acceptability of Benjamin's ideas about the Baroque to an academy operating under the National Socialist regime.

In René Wellek's encyclopedic article, “The Concept of Baroque in Literary Scholarship,” published in the Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism in 1946, the hugely learned Czech émigré gives an account of the debates about the Baroque that begins with Wölfflin in 1888 and extends up through 1946. The article covers the research in six European languages over the course of twenty pages of densely documented prose. Even though Benjamin's Tragic Drama book is—oddly—not included in Wellek's review, the earlier parts of Wellek's bibliography read much like an inventory of Benjamin's own “library” of studies of the Baroque—Strich, N adler, W alzel, H übscher, and Cysarz, among others. The famous statement with which Wellek's piece opens—“All students of English will realize that the use of
the term ‘baroque’ in literature is a recent importation from the continent of Europe” (77)—acknowledges the provenance of these debates while also depicting the Baroque as a “general European movement” (87), “a general European phenomenon,” which “was not confined to a single profession of faith” nor “limited to one national spirit or one social class.” “It seems to me . . . impossible,” Wellek muses, “to claim one nation as the radiating center of the baroque or to consider the baroque a specific national style” (92–93). Wellek’s desire in 1946 to imagine a time when at least aesthetically the continent was not either subdivided into nationalist domains or split against itself (as it was to be in the post-Potsdam era), indeed, when the “European” heritage was whole, is reminiscent of Erich Auerbach’s project in Mimesis (also first published in 1946) to create an integral Europe out of the shards of the national civilization that he, like Wellek (whose colleague at Yale he would become in 1950), had had to leave behind.20 Wellek was of course aware that the seventeenth century on the European continent had been nothing if not a dry run for future, modern eras of conflict and catastrophe, and notes that the vogue for studying the Baroque in Germany in the 1920s was driven by perceived similarities between the seventeenth century and the “aftermath” of the Great War (79–80). It was probably for this reason that Wellek insisted that his version of the Baroque would differ from the heretofore “frankly ideological” (92) ways in which the period has been understood, as the origin, that is, of an alternative modernity to the one that had torn Europe apart, both in the seventeenth century and more recently as well. Benjamin’s claim that “works” contain in themselves both their pre- and their posthistories, histories that make up the “origin” of the work in constellated form, echoes here. Benjamin’s Baroque was perhaps not “frankly” ideological, but it was unmistakably the “origin” of a peculiarly German modernity all the same. Because of their common cause in discerning the fundamentals of the German “artistic will,” National Socialism-era Baroque scholars could thus both directly and indirectly reference Benjamin’s work. The Baroque that existed in these several early to mid-twentieth-century iterations of the period across two world wars in Germany may well be the one to which Wellek wanted to imagine his as an alternative. Future versions of the Baroque may provide other afterlives as well.

20. On Auerbach’s view of Europe, first from Istanbul and then from the United States, see Damrosch; Said; Landauer; Newman, “Nicht am falschen Ort.”