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## Carl Schmitt's 'Hamlet oder Hekuba' and the question of a philosophy of history

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**CHAPTER 5**  
**KOMMERELL'S THESIS ON HITLER, ART, AND HISTORY, AND ITS**  
**CONNECTION TO *HAMLET ODER HEKUBA***

Introduction

It is somehow curious that two crucial references for *Hamlet oder Hekuba* are barely mentioned and even omitted from it. Schiller is merely named apropos the difference between modern German authors and Shakespeare's feral social environment. Max Kommerell is not mentioned in *Hamlet oder Hekuba*, although his importance is underlined in Schmitt's prologue to Lilian Winstanley's German translation of her 1921 book. Were both Schiller and Kommerell simply avoided in 1956, for their impact on Schmitt's reflections was purely personal? Or were they simply a spiritual conveyance at the moment of approaching the main themes of *Hamlet*? This last chapter aims to ascertain these questions, that is, how and to what extent Kommerell's interpretation of Schiller—and Schiller himself—was essential to Schmitt's own reflections on *Hamlet* (both methodologically and philosophically). While his correspondence and *Glossarium* are showered with references and meditations regarding these two German thinkers, the reader cannot grasp their place in *Hamlet oder Hekuba*'s conceptual hierarchy—but also their overall importance in Schmitt's scattered considerations of a philosophy of history. Chapter 5, therefore, develops a systematized interpretation on Schmitt's bouts of historico-philosophical thinking in the 1950s via Kommerell and Schiller. This chapter amplifies such an analysis to Schmitt's personal annotations and even some of his correspondence. I argue that Schmitt's work in the 1950s was an ongoing philosophical workshop. The reflections of this decade are unfinished, somewhat obscure but intensively enticing. Schmitt learned from Kommerell's 1934—by way of example—how to account the name that shall not be named. By lingering to Kommerell's interpretation of action and tragedy of Schiller's plays, Schmitt's hoped-for philosophy of history—not another thing that an alternative conception of historical events, which eschewed from Marxism and Spengliarism—became possible. Chapter 5 thus enables a new interpretation of Schmitt's late thinking, and directly addresses Kommerell's 1934 speech on Schiller.

## 5.1 The Internal Genesis of *Hamlet oder Hekuba*

*Politische Theologie II. Die Legende von der Erledigung jeder Politischen Theologie* (1970) is the swansong of Schmitt's oeuvre. As far as both the topic and references acknowledged in it are concerned, this second and final inquiry on the theme of "political theology" was as surprising as it was unnecessary. By the 1970s, the main intellectual debates regarding political philosophy and even theology paid little heed to the views held by a 80-year-old jurist. The trenchant discussions triggered in Germany by Habermas, Luhmann, and Koselleck's sociology of concepts represented the leading intellectual viewpoints regarding philosophy and political science. The juridical discussions were quite detached from that rough division between positivism and the true law once posited by Schmitt. His phenomenological approach to *Hamlet* was undoubtedly bested by the comparative school of Szondi, Jauss, and Bohrer—and by the thought-provoking thesis on myths that Roland Barthes introduced in his *Mythologies* (1957). His well-known concepts of "dictatorship," "state of exception," and his "friend and enemy" criterion would have to wait another twenty years to be newly re-adapted by the editorial success of post-Foucaultian political philosophy. Beyond some minor intellectual circles in Spain, France, South America, and obviously in his native Germany, Schmitt was no longer a reference or a valid voice. The publication of *Glossarium* in 1991 left no doubts that the great jurist of the Weimar years was a rabid anti-Semite. A genius dwelling between the delusional landscapes of a forgotten world and the bitter discontent caused by an out-of-bounds, technology-oriented, and history-free arrow of time. Schmitt's last publications exhibit a painful acceptance of a new world order that, beyond his usual exaggerations, was surprisingly well captured in his brilliant and brief analyses of the figure of the "partisan" and the "state police." Its first seeds were projected by Schmitt into a new dark era.

However, this remains the conventional interpretation of Schmitt's late oeuvre. Chapters 3 and 4 have shown how several of his drafts—developed through different viewpoints—on the philosophy of history indeed aimed to establish a superior theoretical standpoint. This final perspective merged his "concrete" thinking with an existential comprehension of human dynamics. Schmitt made several attempts to achieve this goal, which suggests that *Hamlet or Hecuba* was one of the most important pieces of this epoch.

Schmitt's meditations on *Hamlet* were at the same time a sketch of the political role played by Shakespeare—although the Bard was no politician. Nonetheless, and according to Schmitt, his conscious mirroring of the Elizabethan scandal through the characters of Prince Hamlet, Queen Gertrude, and the infamous King Claudius changed the usual reflections of daily life on stage.<sup>531</sup> What Shakespeare did was create a fictional reality in which the intensity of a concrete moment managed to intrude into *Hamlet*, thereby giving rise to a myth.

And yet, this is only the visible half of the essay on *Hamlet*. By reading the personal reflections that Schmitt recorded in *Glossarium*—but also by reviewing his correspondence or even his other posthumously-published personal diaries—one may note how this merging of history and philosophy was triggered by a long-lost document that most of Schmitt's interpreters have simply ignored. Max Kommerell impressively reflected on the historical importance of Schiller in his welcoming speech at the University of Leipzig in 1934. His idea that the German playwright was a guide [*Führer*] of “men of action” certainly gave Schmitt new ideas regarding the importance of theater for interpreting history—as well as the play and its capacity to grasp concrete events. Kommerell's initial support for Hitler—still visible by 1934—was openly acknowledged in his portrayal of Schiller as a *Führer*. Likewise, Schmitt mirrored the Elizabethan years already mirrored in *Hamlet* in his reflections on Shakespeare, turning *Hamlet or Hecuba* into a retrospective piece on the havoc unleashed after 1945.

Why, then, have most of Schmitt's interpreters simply overlooked this? For example, one cannot find a single mention of Max Kommerell's essay on Schiller in the introductions to the English, French, and Spanish translations of *Hamlet oder Hekuba*. It is only in Carlo Galli's introductory comments to the Italian translation of Schmitt's 1956 monograph that the reader is made aware of the importance that Germany's quintessential playwright and his concepts held for Schmitt.<sup>532</sup> But even these remarks fall short when compared to the key

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531. This is very akin to the forced historical interpretation that Shane Leslie carried out on *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. See Gardner in Carroll 2000, 34: “[T]he tarts represent the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Anglican faith; a ‘knavish Ritualist’ (John Henry Newman) is accused of ‘having removed their natural sense’; and the Hatter (High Church) and the March Hare (Low Church) are called as witnesses against him. Leslie concludes: ‘it is interesting that the King's words to the Knave were exactly those which had been hurled at Newman and at everybody who had tried to equivocate on the Articles.’ ‘You must have meant some mischief or else you would have signed your name like an honest man.’ It is not impossible, of course, that Carroll quietly alludes to Newman in this section, but the real impact of the trial scene in its Kafkaesque absurdity.”

532. See Galli in Schmitt 2012, 20–21: “L'insistenza schmittiana sul rapporto immediate, non dialettizzabile, di gioco e serietà, e in ultima istanza di libertà e necessità, è una cosciente polemica contro Schiller, la cui “bella

document; that is, Kommerell's ideas on Schiller as the guiding figure of historical activity. As far as I know, this link between Schmitt and Kommerell has only been developed in an article by Reinhard Mehring in 2005. Mehring reconstructs "a thread of intellectual-historical interpretation that leads to Schmitt's little booklet 'Hamlet or Hekuba' from 1956, which research has so far attributed only marginal importance to the work as a whole." This thread is precisely Schmitt's private notes—that is, *Glossarium* and different parts of his correspondence—but also Schmitt's mirroring exercises carried out in his 1956 essay. "What emerges in the end," adds Mehring, "are two turned figures, Friedrich Schiller and Adolf Hitler."<sup>533</sup> Mehring recalls how before 1945, Schmitt's method was, so to speak, broadly "legal"; that is, the backdrop of most of his reflections was the unstable—and ultimately—doomed Weimar Republic.

However, an obvious question arises. Why did Schmitt approach Hitler through Schiller? Why did he not simply write a straightforward composition or an article expressing his ex-post considerations on Hitler as a "tyrant politician of the mind," as Mehring states? Regardless of the possible answers to these questions, the main connection through which Schmitt reflects on his immediate past is the relationship between "concrete reality" and art. Almost twenty years after the publication of *Glossarium*, eleven years after the publication of his definitive biography, and six years after the scientific edition of *Glossarium*—and the recent posthumous publication of his diaries and correspondence—it is a well-known fact that Schmitt never apologized for his outspoken position during the Hitler years. Likewise, he never addressed the subject explicitly. The postwar years came to him as an opportunity to delve into several subjects in a non-academic fashion, but also as a chance to acknowledge contemporary politics through both an esoteric and a historical scope. Schmitt despised Thomas Mann's radical critique of Hitler broadcasted in an NBC radio address on March 9, 1940—at that time, Mann was living in exile in California. Nonetheless, one can arguably

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parvenza" sviluppava il concetto espresso da Kant nella *Critica del Giudizio* di una finalità senza fine (*Zweckmässigkeit ohne Zweck*) e di una legalità senza legge (*Gesetzmassigkeit ohne Gesetz*) e si concludeva nel progetto di un'educazione estetica dell'uomo, che nello "Stato estetico" realizzava "l'indifferenza per la realtà," e che appunto poteva avere come emblema l'espressione del *Prologo* del *Wallenstein*, citata da Schmitt: "seria è la vita, serena è l'arte" (*Ernst ist das Leben, heiter ist die Kunst*). Galli tackles several problems that are, indeed, essential to *Hamlet oder Hekuba*; that is, the concepts of "play" and "seriousness," the importance of the conference "Was habe ich getan?" and, finally, the hidden references to postwar Germany and the new *nomos* rising over the over-technified future. Nonetheless, Galli does not mention how this quarrel (*polemica*) against Schiller is mediated by Kommerell's interpretation.

533. Mehring 2005, 217.

think that Mann's corrosive remarks<sup>534</sup> elicited in Schmitt a similarly bold, although contrary and delayed response. For instance, in *Ex Captivitate Salus* there is no clear mention of Hitler—nor in *Nomos*. His name is mentioned only in very local opinion pieces or articles—for example, the one written apropos of Ernst Jünger. However, Hitler's name is copiously repeated in his private correspondence and in *Glossarium*. The reader of Schmitt will have to wait until *Hamlet oder Hekuba* to find a statement about Hitler, National Socialism, and subjects related to those years. However, said statement, as has been exposed in the first and second chapters, is an obscure political manifesto. For instance, there is only one reference to Schiller, and it says almost nothing about his views on art and history. As Mehring suggests, Schiller, Kommerell, Hitler, and the question of tyranny can only be assessed by deeply pondering some of Schmitt's commentaries in *Hamlet oder Hekuba*.

This conclusion provides a schematic account of one of postwar Germany's most hidden "intellectual threads." The reader is faced at once with the spiritual defeat of a jurist, the isolated comprehension of art and history of an almost unknown German literary critic, the rising actuality of Schiller in a rogue failed state, and the everlasting enthrallment of Shakespeare's universe amidst the historical bankruptcy of Germany and Europe. Mehring has developed a thorough examination of such themes by retracing both Schmitt's early critique of the bourgeoisie intelligentsia in Berlin and Kommerell's intellectual origins in Stefan George's esoteric household. By contrast, I will solely focus on Schmitt's interpretations of Kommerell's views on Schiller. My main interest is to provide a draft of this connection and its potential impact on a new interpretation of Schmitt. Thus, this perspective could eventually demonstrate why and how the German jurist's intellectual afterlife could dwell beyond the conventional theses surrounding his work.

## 5.2 The Intellectual Origins of *Hamlet oder Hekuba*

I have already demonstrated how Schmitt approached the themes of both Hamlet and Shakespeare. Likewise, Schmitt's theoretical perspective was explicated too. Namely, theater and art offer privileged access to historical comprehension, while the concept of "parallels"

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534. Mann 1939, 31: "Here is a man possessed of a bottomless resentment and a festering desire for revenge; a man ten times a failure, extremely lazy, incapable of steady work; a man who has spent long periods in institutions; a disappointed bohemian artist; a total good-for-nothing."

acts as a spiritual threshold to correctly grasp concrete situations. Lilian Winstanley's approach came to Schmitt as a confirmation of his "concrete-order legal thinking."<sup>535</sup> His comprehension of the work of art can be seen to consciously avoid the prevailing bourgeois interpretation as early as the publication of *Political Romanticism*. In his dramatic conference, "Was habe ich getan?" Schmitt publicly addressed this quarrel. Schmitt's reflections on *Hamlet oder Hekuba* have thus been fully reconstructed and studied.

If one follows *Glossarium*, as Mehring did, there are several allusions to Kommerell as a mediator of German classicism—that is, of Goethe—and Germany's infamous theory of "race" during the National Socialist years. Schmitt here is pondering two different ideas of culture. The transition from one to the other—correctly grasped by Kommerell—was achieved in Hölderlin's new appraisal of poetry. Moreover, such a transition also implied an alternative interpretation of Schiller. Kommerell changed the prevailing hermeneutical view on the author of *The Robbers*. He acknowledged Schiller not as the classic author of edifying plays but as a true disruptor of bourgeois morality—à la Nietzsche, as Mehring reminds us. While Kommerell displayed an unprecedented level of literary expertise in his *Der Dichter als Führer in der deutschen Klassik*, in his commemorative speech, he rejected those skewed interpretations of Schiller. This lecture—first given in 1934 and entitled "Schiller als Führer des handelnden Menschen"—was the starting point for Schmitt's innovative thesis on art and history. Schmitt saw in Kommerell's notion of action—which was uncannily similar to his idea of a "concrete situation"—the hermeneutical threshold for a broader interpretation of history. Actions come first; agents, second. Even more importantly, the agent as such—namely, the politician, but also the political advisor, as Schmitt pondered in *Gespräch über die Macht und den Zugang zum Machthaber*—represents the apex of ambiguity. As he pursues his steadfast mission—whether this is revenge or the complete takeover of Bohemia—he soon discovers that every great achievement is morally stained.

What does "Schiller als Führer des handelnden Menschen" stand for? Kommerell's lecture is certainly complex. As a welcoming speech, it obviously addresses a particular moment in time. One must remember that after Hindenburg passed away, the office of Reich

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535. Some interpreters have wanted to see that therein lies Schmitt's "metaphysical" viewpoint. For example, Ojakangas was too philosophically driven to fully engage with Schmitt's position in the 1950s. His main interlocutors are Heidegger, Benjamin, Foucault, Derrida, and Agamben; that is, the conventional intellectual circuit that in the first two chapters was shown to be misleading and inaccurate. See Ojakangas 2004, 152–153.

President was merged with that of the Reich Chancellor. This meant that the total authority—and thus, legitimacy—of the Reich President was illegally transferred to Hitler. Therefore, Hitler became both Reich Chancellor and Führer at the same time. A plebiscite was then scheduled for August 15. Hitler was voted by 38 million German citizens—95% of the registered voters—which meant 90% of total voters. Absolute power became a reality. This explains Hitler’s infamous words pronounced at the annual Nuremberg Nazi Party rallies: “The German form of life is definitely determined for the next thousand years.”

This was the historical context in which Kommerell pronounced his peculiar thesis on Schiller at Bonn University in 1934. He was clearly signaling Hitler by calling Schiller a *Führer*. Kommerell asserted that “[s]eine Wirkung unter den Deutschen ist von seiner Dichtung nicht ablösbar“. Schiller “ein Wille zu wirken hervorbrachte“. Kommerell thinks that this was quite uncommon. The German playwright became a legend because he thought “poetically.” Moreover, he managed to capture the mortality that dwells amidst “forms of thought that are eternal”. Kommerell stresses that “Er hat die philosophische Bewegung des deutschen Idealismus vereinfacht zu einer Bereitschaft des Gemüts.”<sup>536</sup> How did Schiller accomplish such a thing? While Kommerell’s attention is interspersed across all of Schiller’s oeuvre, he finds in *Wallenstein* the core of Schiller’s considerations on historical—and therefore, political—agency. But before describing this trilogy, Kommerell takes a closer look at the orthodox interpretations of Schiller.

### 5.3 The importance of Schiller

Kommerell scans almost the entirety of Schiller’s oeuvre. His speech lies somewhere between an intellectual biography and a thorough psychopolitical survey of the German playwright. The worn-out yet still current expression “to separate art from the artist” only applies if said art and said artist are exclusively confined within the aesthetic realm. This was not the case of Schiller. The reader should keep in mind the significance of the German word *Gestalter*, which encompasses the creative power of a male agent who both designs and arranges art-like artifacts. If one follows Kommerell, the artifact is nothing less than a

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536. Kommerell 1934, 5.



historical event. This interpretation apparently differs from Schmitt's, who considered that the artifact was politically attuned to its historical reality:

Als Darsteller von handelnden Menschen ist Schiller die Ausnahme der deutschen Poesie. Denn diese macht sonst die Momente des Herzens und deren Er widerungen in der Natur zu ihrem Thema. Der Dichter ist kaum auch der Handelnde und weiß oft wenig von ihm. Seltene Bewegungen seltener Seelen, Bewegungen die selten vom dichterischen Bewußtsein angeleuchtet werden, fanden in Schiller ihren Anwalt, ihren Verherrlicher, ihren Richter und ihren Geheimnisverräter. Vielleicht ist er innerhalb dieser Bewegungen Realist und mitunter Naturalist. Wenn Schiller von Idee handelt, handelt er von Tat, wenn er von Tat handelt, wird er die Idee nicht los. Er begreift den Geist als wirkend auf den Weltstoff hin, sich selbst ebenso. Die Unversöhnlichkeit von Idee und Tat, und die Bedingung der Idee: Tat werden zu *müssen*, dies ist das Schneidende in Schillers Resignation. Die Idee, die sich verschiedenen Denkern verschieden geoffenbart hat, offenbarte sich ihm als Entwurf zur Tat. Diese Erfahrung der Idee ist tragisch.<sup>537</sup>

Who are these “men of action” [*handelnden Menschen*]? Kommerell finds such models, first and foremost, in characters such as Wallenstein—but, then again, also in Fiesko, William Tell, Don Carlos, Demetrius, and even La Valette, from the unsung *The Knights of Malta*. These are men, historical wild cards, both agents and performers. They were designers of fate. Führers, in sum.

These plays cannot be tackled in full here. Moreover, Kommerell does not address them particularly. Instead, he focuses on Wallenstein—but also Octavio and Max Piccolomini—and Demetrius. In order to unravel Kommerell's interpretation of Schiller, one needs to take a brief detour and revisit the main theme of both of these plays.

#### 5.4 *Wallenstein*

The *Wallenstein* trilogy is a historical drama written while Schiller was carrying out his early investigation entitled *History of the Thirty Years' War*. Later on, in 1796, he writes

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537. Kommerell 1934, 7.

to his beloved Goethe, telling him that the *Wallenstein* project will cost him “the entire winter and probably most of the summer as well”<sup>538</sup> Schiller states that he has to “handle intractable material, and only by heroic perseverance” can he “gain anything from it.”<sup>539</sup> That Albrecht Wallenstein, duke of Friedland, was Swedish King Gustavus Adolphus’s *bête noire* is something more or less known by the average history connoisseur. To transform this piece of history into one of the most acclaimed plays in Germany is to take both events and historical personas—life itself—to a whole new level. Schiller meddled with primal forces upon the altar of poetry.

This is not a metaphor. *Wallenstein*’s prologue, addressed by Schiller himself at *Wallenstein Camp*’s first performance at the Weimar Playhouse in October 1798, says:

Here at the grave end of our century, where / Even reality has turned to poetry, /  
Where we see mighty nature struggle and / Perceive a weighty goal before us, and /  
Where the great objects of humanity, / Where rule and freedom are contested  
mutually, / There, too, may Art upon a shadow stage / Attempt a higher flight, indeed  
she must, / If she’s not to be shamed by Life’s great stage.<sup>540</sup>

The lofty dramatism of Schiller’s first assertion—a century ends, a new, unknown one commences—rapidly gives way to a both superlative and mysterious sentence: “[e]ven reality has turned to poetry.” What does this mean? Any turn or modification of reality expresses an unreal experience of life. Reality becomes important during unreal—non-real—events; we know this thanks to Hans Blumenberg’s thoughts on the subject.<sup>541</sup> The fact that “even”—which is the keyword—“reality has turned to poetry” means that life itself demands safety, an ultimate asylum for its inner events. The logical contingencies of nature appear to humankind as spiritual challenges. The gap between “rule” and “freedom”—that is, what should be and what simply is—can be resolved at the unflinching ceremony where “art” and “life” meet.

If one now returns to Kommerell’s quote, the concept of “action” immediately bridges the two sets of dichotomies put forward by Schiller. Action is to do. Only through

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538. Dieckman 1994, 157.

539. See Dieckman 1994, 157.

540. Schiller 2017, 20–21.

541. See Blumenberg 2020, 110.

action can one confirm or discredit the rule. That is, by being someone and doing something. Likewise, the acts of life give way to the acts of art—and thus, the art of acting. To become a *Gestalter*, a great designer of worlds buried by and based on actions, Schiller needed to be: (1) a lawyer; (2) a glorifier; (3) a judge; and, finally, (4) a secret traitor. Otherwise put: actions can only be inspired by other actions. Schiller, the *Gestalter*, acted out his thoughts, and his thoughts were concrete designs. Any kind of fiction—it doesn't really matter if the created artifact resembles the Elizabethan era or a "ravaged war-torn Europe in the 17th century"<sup>542</sup>—is embedded in ideas. Ideas—following Kommerell—were acts for Schiller. To betray, to be a "secret traitor" [*Geheimnisverräter*], then, means to surpass the realm of actions; that is, to renounce or bluntly stain the deed—the superior act, the correct performance of an idea.

That "the experience of idea is tragic" can only mean that there is an unfillable gap between the projection of such an idea and its concretion. It seems that the highest deed is inevitably entangled with the very path of treason. This path was walked by Wallenstein. Schiller's colossal triptych—*Wallenstein's Camp*, *The Piccolomini*, and *The Death of Wallenstein (A Tragedy in Five Acts)*—tells the rise and fall of Albrecht Wallenstein. Nonetheless, this murky hero is in an entirely different category than Karl Moor, Wilhelm Tell, or Posa. Schiller's Kantian idealism is dramatically defeated by the political depths of history. Maximum concreteness yields maximum events.

Wallenstein represents the debris of humanity in his excruciating acts. Schiller touched a quite sensible subject when he addressed Wallenstein's doom as the gravitating center of the play. He is disenfranchised from the world—which explains his obsession with Seni's astral guidance. Wallenstein does not know how little it helps to know too much. It is true: *Wallenstein* is an entirely Shakespearean play. Seni's predictions cannot anticipate the voracious march of concrete situations clashing with each other in an endless, unfathomable maze. Art—and thus, theater—asks the compass of history for directions.

Nonetheless, Kommerell stresses the difference between Schiller and Shakespeare. The German playwright is closer to the Baroque than to the Renaissance, for his interest was less fate and character than those "(...) Fälle, an denen die Rechte von Instanzen gegeneinander geklärt werden" (7). Cases, as the individual situations judged in court.

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542. Koser, 2020.

Kommerell thinks of Schiller as a “Psychologe des Tatmenschen” (8). Any action arises locally under specific coordinates. History is made of great actions, indeed. This is what Schmitt—by emphasizing on the mythical aspect of *Hamlet*—called “pieces of reality.” Historical vignettes are the fuel on which art—and hence, theater—runs. In the case of *Wallenstein*, the tension between deed and treason, hero and perpetrator, establishes those “places of discharge” that Schiller was so fond of, according to Kommerell. In the prologue to *Wallenstein*, Schiller writes:

Thus may the play we give today win your ear  
And heart for unaccustomed sounds and voices,  
May it transport you back to that far time,  
Back onto that far theater of war that  
Our hero will soon fill with deeds.<sup>543</sup>

“Theater of war” is a formula that blends history and art perfectly. Moreover, it expresses an inkling of superior knowledge. A science, if the reader wills. This kind of knowledge is the interpretation of history through art. Or, to put it in other terms, a very specific type of philosophy. A philosophy of history, in sum.

The prologue to *Wallenstein* is a unique combination of both metaphysical and artistic concepts. “Truth” and “Art” are the two faces of a diptych that takes an already trite subject to an astounding level of historical awareness. A haiku-like final remark thus commences a multi-layered journey of the deeds as the connection—a meta-Führer link—between man and world. “Our lives are earnest and our art serene” [*Ernst ist das Leben, heiter ist die Kunst*].<sup>544</sup>

### 5.5 Kommerell’s Interpretation of Schiller’s Play

An unmatched classification of human impulses revolving around the inexorable development of deeds is Schiller’s major contribution, finds Kommerell. “Auch für das Menschengeschlecht ein Linnäus auf” declares the extremely right-wing host at his welcoming speech. Acts transform the agent, just as history is transformed by him. This great

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543. Schiller 2017, 123–125.

544. Schiller 2017, 136.

design belongs to the spiritual schemes furnished by Schiller, as only a *Gestalter* could really think how a *Gestalter* really acts. “The deed is a chain,” adds Kommerell. A chain: a set of transmissions passed through generations, bonding meaning through history. Moreover, once the deed takes place, both deed and treason command faith. They rule over the agent, inwardly and outwardly. A moral metric system has commenced.

It seems, then, that the highest deed is to abandon treason. The two sides of morality meet in the actions of Wallenstein. Indeed, the formal denomination of tragedy implies a paradox. Just like Wallenstein, Fiesko and Wilhelm Tell are also subject to similar circumstances. An act can now become poetry, if by poetry one understands the word-fueled awareness of that which one was given before—and is later seized, historically taken. This consciousness is none other than the moral commissar Schiller, a privileged witness of the depths of history sailing through stylized living artifacts—the works, the theater, the plays whose play goes deepest. Young heroes succumb to tyrants; kindred figures become immortalized by poetry. The young man, the tyrant—revenge drives both art and history. Kommerell continues his speech by stating that the arch of human nature is curved by dreams of justice and an all-too revengeful reality. The constant up and downs of that tortured relation between the state and the individual, one may feel tempted to add, following Schmitt.

Kommerell thinks that the experience of Don Carlos is entirely different from that of Wallenstein. He stresses that such a shift could only be explained by a change of ideas on the part of Schiller. An idea changes as one develops a set of transforming acts. To manage the historical length of Albrecht Wallenstein and Wallenstein himself must have required a monumental mental effort. “Weder Weltanklage noch innere Forderung helfen Geschichte deuten: sie ist sie selbst, irdisches Schicksal der Idee,”<sup>545</sup> adds Kommerell. “Earthly fate”; that is, our concrete destiny. Nonetheless, history, like nature, is difficult to master. Supreme acts are commanded by supreme ideas. In order to possess a supreme idea, one needs to be keenly self-conscious. These are the insights scattered in the inner self of Wallenstein. He obeys his rule. It is a shame that such a rule converges with his crime. Kommerell knows his Goethe well. The former calls such an occasion, simultaneously personal and historical, an *Urmoment*. This originary moment is *Wallenstein’s Camp*. Piccolomini subsequently expands this stage of awareness and transmits it across to other plays by Schiller. The “chain”

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545. Kommerell 1934, 13.

that the deed embodies becomes strained by the generational crush between Max and Octavio. The son knows better than the father; that is, he knows less, but he does more. The moral procrastinator is confronted by the active, quick-heeled doer. At this point in his welcoming address, it seems that Kommerell—like Schiller—cannot be lured by the juridical lattice of reason. He does not think that the German playwright was interested in designing a grand figure of “legal power.” Somehow, all these human endeavors are entangled in a complex and fascinating web. One is fascinated with the place where the monstrous dwells, whether it be a colossal promise of power or partaking in action that leads to or guarantees what is right. Wallenstein is terrible, adds Kommerell, but even his moments of indecision are terribly long. Unlike the abstract deployment of time that affects Prince Hamlet, Wallenstein’s procrastination owes itself to his highly active nature. Wallenstein acts by never acting out. The incalculable deed fascinates him, too. Kommerell once again claims:

Die Tat ist das Erste, der Charakter das Zweite. Vor der Tat ist der Mensch noch unbestimmt, eine mehrfache Möglichkeit, die Tat bestimmt ihn. Von der Tat empfängt er seinen Charakter, wie der Siegel lack den Stempel. Etwas Schauriges hat dieser Monolog. Wesen entscheidet sich.<sup>546</sup>

This is the distance between Shakespeare and Schiller. Such distance has a name: Kant.<sup>547</sup> From this perspective, Prince Hamlet’s tendency to drag things out is the symptom of his youthful mind par excellence. “Metaphysics is the youth of the mind,” remarks Kommerell. Indeed, that “self-incurred immaturity”<sup>548</sup> stressed by Kant in his famous answer in *What Is Enlightenment?* Wallenstein slows his pace before the gleaming apparition of the deed. Contemplation here is transformed into a higher act. A reinforced consciousness enhances its own acts.

Kommerell picks up his thesis of Schiller as a *Gestalter* from different dialogues in *Wallenstein*. Again, these dialogues exhibit a vigorous tension between Max Piccolomini and Wallenstein, or Countess Terzky and Wallenstein. Wallenstein alarmingly depicts the

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546. Kommerell 1934, 14–15.

547. See Rothmann 2005, 78–9.

548. Kant 1999, 33: “Aufklärung ist der Ausgang des Menschen aus seiner selbst verschuldeten Unmündigkeit.” This *Undmündigkeit* possesses a marked psychological nature. Prince Hamlet is a self-impeding agent.

opposition between what is right and the brief bounty rooted in random everyday facts. Such an opposition is not ceremonial at all, as doers such as Wallenstein tackle life stages—from politics to legality—as temporal structures that are soon-to-be vanished by absolute power. Kommerell is aware that this metapsychology is nothing other than the obscure connection between the person and the ongoing direction of the world [*Weltlauf*]. This darkness yearns for light, wherein the unreal guidance of Seni or the desperate voices of both Countess Terzky and Max act like decentralized stars on horrible nights. “Die Astrologie ist der verstockte Glaube eines Menschen, der sich an die Stelle des Ganzen setzt,” states Kommerell (18). Otherworldly signals become important for those who have become the world itself. From this perspective, Heidegger’s redesigned concept of the Greek word *aletheia* should be held in its astrological light. *Aletheia* is not a modal declination of *Being*<sup>549</sup>—a curved, scripted ping-pong between concealment and unconcealment. Rather, *aletheia* is the physical experience of confusion that seeks clarity in dark skies. What is manifested in it is not the “being” as such, but the dynamics of fate streamed in technological artifacts of faith. Wallenstein’s “downfall,” as Kommerell puts it, is certainly polygamical. Every feature of the character casts a different shadow depending on the moral light with which he is pointed at. In all of these cases, he is met with disappointment. Lost after following his stars, Wallenstein’s denouement becomes tragic; he firmly grips the hand of doom, for he has held the course of the world. His is the tragic life of the deed.

Kommerell turns upside down his analysis and asks: “Hat nicht auch für uns die Geschichte in Rückblick und Erlebnis ein wechselndes Gesicht? Manchmal wie ein Gericht, vom tragischen Dichter entworfen?”<sup>550</sup> This would mean, following Kommerell, that the agent is perfectly attuned with the world in the very moment that he knows that his world is already gone. Such painful ambiguity is one of Schiller’s fundamental contributions. It is profound, just like the personal depths of those men who inevitably stained themselves on their personal paths to purity.

There is no possible guidance for men of action when they are stubbornly drawn to what they believe is the true direction. Annihilation, destruction, self-destruction, chaos: these are the tragic fates that they meet as they crash into the unwavering course of the world.

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549. Heidegger 1992, 23: “Die Wahrheit, Unverborgenheit, das Aufgedecktsein, richtet sich vielmehr nach dem Seienden selbst und nicht nach einem bestimmten Begriff von Wissenschaftlichkeit.”

550. Kommerell 1934, 19.

Reality is as solid as concrete. Moreover, this concreteness guarantees that, eventually, the actions of the agents will be neutralized by the shrewd authority of the *Weltlauf*. Whether it was treason or the utmost deviant behavior, the canvas depicted onstage by Schiller is nothing other than the course of the world. His pulsating creativity does not differ from the inhuman complexity of reality. This was, according to Kommerell, Schiller's mastery; that is, his historical, deep awareness. In Schiller's work, his actors play their roles in an endless back-and-forth game. These borders of the play are embedded in Schiller's *Wallenstein*. "Jedenfalls regiert über die Spieler dieser Art ein furchtbarer Ernst, denn ihr Spiel ist kein Scheinewollen, sondern ein Scheinenmüssen. Durch Wallenstein kommt ein Zug des Falschen in die Miene des handelnden Menschen."<sup>551</sup>

## 5.6 The Connection Between History and Art

From this point onward, Kommerell's speech drifts toward Schiller's *unsung* fragment on the False Dmitry I affair.<sup>552</sup> This Pseudo-Demetrius became a historical fixation of Schmitt's in 1949. Much of Schmitt's interest in the topic stems from Kommerell's elusive piece on Schiller as Führer. The *Demetrius fragment* tells the story of a delusional impostor who claimed to be the long-lost son of Ivan the Terrible; he quickly rose to stardom thanks to his military expertise, only to be later betrayed by who he claimed was his own mother. It is an unfinished play about the perils of a bastard agent who tried to attain legitimacy. Put differently, Schiller's *Demetrius* plays out the sudden fall of a self-appointed hero accursed in a hall of mirrors. This play surely had a special meaning for Schmitt in 1949. His *Glossarium* abounds in annotations regarding this work of Schiller, as well as reflections about doomed Germany and how the USA had basically seized the whole German political consciousness. Conflating self-righteousness and an out-of-bounds revisionism, *Glossarium* examines the multilayered figure of Hitler through that of Pseudo-Demetrius.<sup>553</sup> Here one

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551. Kommerell 1934, 20.

552. See Brody 1970, 5–45, here at 15: "The immortal torso of *Demetrius* marks the apex of Schiller's artistic growth. We can see the gradual expansion of ideas by a mature and sensitive intellect and notice a sharper psychological lens focused on the lives of his protagonists. Schiller shows a more intimate acquaintance with the living world, problems of his own times and human nature, and expresses the sentiments of his age and country in this drama of contemporary validity."

553. Hohendahl 2018, 44: "This juridical assessment also influences the conception of German history, notably the years of National Socialism. When reflecting on the concept of the tragic in Schiller's work, in particular



confirms the art of interpretation as the friendly face of persuasion. Whoever says hermeneutics intends to deceive, one could say paraphrasing Schmitt's motto regarding Proudhon. In any case, Kommerell's exegesis of the Demetrius fragment is the starting point for Schmitt's compelling ideas on the murky cooperation between art and history through tragedy. Demetrius's mother is Germany, and Demetrius himself, Hitler.

Mutter und Sohn erwarten sich, die Mutter im vollen Glauben an die Echtheit dieses Sohns, dieser im Wissen des Trugs. Die Natur, als Ahnung des Wesens, steht gegen den Willen, der den Schein sein heißt. Da geschieht etwas, was zuerst wie eine gewaltsame Erfindung anmutet, um schließlich eine schlagende Überzeugungskraft am Zuschauer zu beweisen; eine Ahnung steigt in Marfa auf, daß dieser Mann nicht ihr Sohn inst.<sup>554</sup>

Schiller here demonstrates that belief starts by believing oneself to be *other*. True identity begins when one knows whom one wants to be.

Wirf das vergangene von dir, laß es fahren, ergreif das Gegenwärtige mit ganzem Herzen – Bin ich dein Sohn nicht so bin ich der Czar, ich habe die Macht, *ich habe das Glück*.<sup>555</sup>

Demetrius' regal outburst emphasizes how authenticity does not belong to an origin but to actual power. "If I am not your son yet I am the Czar; *I have power, I have fortune*." Nonetheless, social security numbers—even those reserved for members of royalty—are issued only by the Reality Department and its multiple worldwide franchises. Self-consciousness must be in tune with the course of the world. If not, the world is a curse. The agent arranges that which history will sooner or later rearrange. It is a "disposition" [*Gesinnung*], as Kommerell calls it. This means, time and again, that the unnerving nature of the idea will be a divided, lesioned act. Indeed, such a coming to life by coming to terms with life is in itself a tragic experience. "Die Erde selbst, als der Schauplatz der Geschichte ist die

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on the tragic quality of the Demetrius fragment, the diarist touches also on the link between World Wars I and II."

554. Kommerell 1934, 22.

555. Schiller 2004, 452.

erste tragische Bühne, und Schillers Gefühl vor ihr ist Schauer.”<sup>556</sup> One must recall that Marfa’s rejection of her bastard son comes through a sonic betrayal. She remains silent as the crowd questions the identity of this self-appointed messiah and the conspirators come to seize the kingdom. Pierced by Polish swords, murdered and betrayed by silence, Demetrius finally knows his authentic destiny. Death.

### 5.7 Schmitt on Art and History

Kommerell’s long bibliographical stroll across Schiller’s work now pauses to take a closer look at *The Bride of Orleans* and *Don Carlos*. He analyzes the female figures of Schiller’s dramas but also the variations of the unstoppable force of the deed—now turning to *The Robbers* and the hidden gem *The Knights of Malta*. But Schmitt was sold at Demetrius. The connection between “life and art,” according to Kommerell, was wholeheartedly appropriated by the German jurist in the 1950s. The speech ends with medical metaphors, a rhetorical gesture that the reader might rightly frown upon. “Für die Krankheit ‘Modernität’ hat kein religiöses oder metaphysisches System der Erde, hat nur die Kunst das notwendige Heilmittel. Etwas geheimnisvoll Neues und Uraltes kann sie allein in ihm herstellen: die Einheit des Menschen mit sich selbst auf einer höheren Stufe.”<sup>557</sup> But prognoses of these kinds often went unnoticed by Schmitt. Detaching himself from a new democratic world order, he sought a spiritual scope that was great enough to cover immense lengths of historical events. His various sketches of a philosophy of history—strongly ciphered in *Hamlet oder Hekuba*—were encouraged by Kommerell’s interpretation of Schiller. “Dieser Schiller, der im Zwielficht des kämpfenden Zwischenreicher von Idee und Weltstoff heimisch, um die Unentrinnbarkeit des Frevels weiß, und wieder tragisch rein das Unbedingte gegen die Geschichte sichert?”<sup>558</sup>

At this point, a resoundingly obvious question may be troubling the reader. Why, then, did Schmitt not publish a little essay on Schiller instead of one on Shakespeare? *Noblesse oblige*. Lilian Winstanley’s study of the Bard was the document that provided Schmitt with the methodological structure to delve into *Hamlet* as a mirror of his reality.

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556. Kommerell 1934, 23.

557. Kommerell 1934, 30.

558. Kommerell 1934, 31.

Shakespeare managed to crack the artistic sense that lies inside the normal set of rules of reality. The myth was found within. Likewise, Kommerell's speech on Schiller was the intellectual force that lured him to establish the main concepts of his ideas on art and tragedy, both mediated in his great comprehension of life according to law. From this perspective, *Hamlet oder Hekuba* acts as the first stage of Schmitt's hall of mirrors. A second stage—esoteric, following the jurist—surrounds the first. So, the logical dyad of Hitler/Demetrius turns into a triad: Hitler/Demetrius/Schmitt. Moreover, the twofold *mater dolorosa* Marfa/Germany not only weeps, but also betrays. And so emerges the triad Marfa/Germany/Queen Elizabeth. Simultaneously, red-hot glass spews different variations of a single event onto different reflecting surfaces; the year 1848 imploding through different historical events, all politically linked.

If Schmitt was drawn to Kommerell, it was mainly due to his rejection of Goethe's comprehension of art—and thus, of life. Schmitt had little interest in the subject of the genius disrupting everyday politics. A genius is a complex, almost incomprehensible individual—and therefore, an avant-garde product of a liberal bourgeoisie society. Schmitt's anti-liberalism logically eschewed such a figure; he much preferred Kommerell's phrase “youth without Goethe”<sup>559</sup> and its revolutionary meaning. Nonetheless, Schmitt paraphrases a concept of “the greatest German poet”; namely, that of the “primal image” [*Urbild*]. This expression, one of the key notions of *Hamlet oder Hekuba*, was already grasped by Schmitt in 1949, the year in which he acknowledged the importance of both Schiller and the *Demetrius* fragment. In sum, the obscure title *Hamlet oder Hekuba* aimed to express how human—male—agency goes hand in hand with performance and deceit if a deed must be carried out. “The fake Demetrius as the primal image of every agent,” Schmitt laconically asserts in his *Glossarium*.<sup>560</sup> It really does not matter if the player is mediocre—Hitler—or astounding—Demetrius—as long as self-deception alerts the agent's tainted consciousness along his path to justice. Schmitt here masters self-righteousness, which is a well-known moral gesture. Cynically, he denounces any other view as moralism. “One will be taken by these words by the annoyed moralists.”<sup>561</sup> Hyperbolically, he adds: “Law is infinitely greater

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559. Schmitt 2015e, 115.

560. Schmitt 2015e, 180.

561. Schmitt 2015e, 169.

than morality.”<sup>562</sup> But only a great moralist could track so well the slightest hint of moralism. History and art are bridged together by tragedy.

## 5.8 Parallels and Intrusions

With his thesis on “parallels” and “intrusions,” Schmitt intended to add something new to the vocabulary of the “philosophy of history.”<sup>563</sup> “Parallels” mean the political traffic between art and reality. This concept was used by Schmitt already in 1948, apropos Toynbee and Spengler’s theory of history<sup>564</sup>. Likewise, “intrusions” are the outbreaks of concreteness that perform as existential structures in great art. Both “parallels” and “intrusions” determine the intellectual structure of Schmitt’s comprehension of art and history through a philosophy of history. This scope is philosophical, as its rationale is housed in the ontological dimension of agency. Such a dimension is also a matter of utmost seriousness due to its awareness of the exceptional nature of life—there is no safe spot in existence beyond the realm of death. A consciousness like this, trained in acting, meets tragedy precisely when it commits itself to carrying out what ought to be done—the deed.

Schiller—via Kommerell—and Shakespeare—via Winstanley—were the beacons with which Schmitt illuminated his own defeat—and that of his country. Schmitt chose Shakespeare as it was the safer option; Schiller would have implied greater difficulties in the context of the democratic intellectual policies that dominated the German public sphere in the 1950s. Time and again—and turning back to the aforementioned metaphor—Schmitt’s hall of mirrors depicted in *Hamlet oder Hekuba* posits “intrusions” as the invisible script that every “human brain” unavoidably abides by. The reader would be right to think that such dynamics work in both directions; that is, that reality also follows invisible rules. Tragic, as the beginning of every rule and the end of every decision.

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562. Schmitt 2015e, 206.

563. Sloterdijk has recently traced the psychopolitical sources of such a dear expression for German thinkers. See Sloterdijk 2020, 146–147: “In its highest political form, the philosophy of history was the cognitive model for the transition from a feudal to a bourgeois society. It formulated the matrix for the processes of emancipation that were supposed to lead from the reign of peoples to the reign of law, from the psycho-politics of command and obedience to the psycho-politics of the self-determination of equal and free individuals.”

564. Schmitt 2015e, 95.

## 5.9 Doomed Impressions

By the late 1940s and throughout the 1950s, Schmitt's diary entries are written with hateful resentment. He started to dabble in esoteric literature and his interest in literature widened. In a letter to Ernst Jünger in 1957, he describes himself as a "destiny burdened elder."<sup>565</sup> One year later, he insists to Jünger: "I believe that what we call 'history' is not an ongoing flow, but rather an accumulation around a center (often fixed for centuries), which then suddenly passes through another center (another epoch)."<sup>566</sup> Schmitt here rejects any philosophy of history based on theories of lengthy temporal cycles. If Hegel thought history was the becoming of liberty, Schmitt considered it to be the mere drafts of a defeated consciousness.

Schmitt's doomed impressions from the 1950s—mostly private—found in *Hamlet oder Hekuba* an opportunity to be safely broadcasted to a limited public—scholars, most of them friends and new, young "informelle Schüler"<sup>567</sup>. Even his apocalyptic landscapes presented at the end of *The Theory of the Partisan*<sup>568</sup> were already foreshadowed in the 1950s. His meditations on art and history; that is, how history tragically develops, were riddled with caged-in views, inner-fear, and self-deception. All of these qualities are featured in that strange performance entitled "What have I done?" Just as the fake Demetrius, Schmitt felt the cold embrace of untruthfulness. He retreated toward a spiritual scheme where history was driven by political singularities and incalculable energies, entangled in a dark yet fathomable organization.

## 5.10 Ultra-history

The concept of "ultra-history" belongs to George Dumézil, who in his *Mythe et épopée* asserts: "[m]on effort n'est pas d'un philosophe, il se veut d'un historien, d'un historien de la plus vieille histoire et de la frange d'ultra-histoire qu'on peut raisonnablement essayer d'atteindre..."<sup>569</sup>. In the case of Dumézil, the "fringe of ultra-history" is connected to the

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565. Schmitt 2012i, 382.

566. Schmitt 2012i, 382.

567. Tielke 2020, 17.

568. Schmitt 2017f, 93–94.

569 Dumézil 1981, 14.

comparative studies of Indo-European languages. Dumézil aimed to establish a methodological system of interpretation, that is, a historical model that could trace back to greater grammatical stadiums linguistic correspondences. Thus, and in its formal aspect, one could say that Schmitt performs the very same methodological gesture of Dumézil, as his “philosophy of history” ended up being—after several reflections and theoretical transformations along the 1950s—a two-faced model of historical analysis. Namely, a both formal and spiritual device; a system of reading for great historical events, and, finally, a political compass to guide oneself at the moment of confusion and social misguidance. Schmitt knew quite well that he stumbled upon something essential when he registered everyday world news in his *Glossarium* according to the “Hamlet curve”, that is, a particular model of historical analysis of the present. Schmitt wanted to achieve social intelligibility without depending on philosophical ideologies, such as Marxism or Spengliarism.

#### 5.11 Schmitt in the 21st Century

Schmitt has undoubtedly become an intellectual trademark in contemporary philosophy. His conceptual contribution has outstripped his unreserved political zest—although these two dimensions are more connected than most of his interpreters wish to admit. Books, essays, and theses on Schmitt’s thought simply increase every year worldwide. Schmitt’s original contributions to the themes of political theology and dictatorship have been warmly welcomed by post-Foucaultian philosophers and Walter Benjamin advocates. That is, his work has been enclosed under very specific intellectual coordinates. Put differently, most contemporary authors aim to prove their notion of Schmitt, not find something in his thought and then carefully reconstruct it. Minor works, most of them by German specialists, tackle Schmitt’s theoretical value. Regarding his “philosophy of history” years and the significance of *Hamlet*, there are barely three or four monographs on the subject.

It is not my intention by any means to provide a redemptive depiction of Schmitt’s persona. On the contrary, my investigation simply aims to correctly reconstruct the theoretical scope of his thinking in the 1950s and to critically reconstruct his intellectual place within the broad field of contemporary debates—namely, the possibilities of interpreting history through an artistic lens and of championing the question of tragedy as a

key theory for contemporary political philosophy. I consider Schmitt's thesis on this subject to be quite significant. Likewise, his introspective personal diaries—*Glossarium* and a good amount of his private correspondence during those years—transcend the realm of mere psychological or spiritual mourning. His provisional concepts regarding a “philosophy of history”—examined in detail in the previous chapter—offer to the contemporary reader a solitary yet brilliant interpretation of a long tradition of thinking; that is, the Aristotelian tropes regarding tragedy and history. From this perspective, in the 1950s, Schmitt carried out a subterranean, esoteric intellectual effort. Schmitt set in motion his own vocabulary and fundamental thesis and then amplified it outside the historical limits of Weimar and his political situation in the 1920s and 1930s. History is better grasped through its different mirrorings.

1848 became the center of Schmitt's historical attention following Germany's defeat in World War II. He fully engaged in a philosophy of history by developing his thought in different stages and through connections with various interlocutors—Lucan, Löwith, Jünger, Schiller, Kömmerell. His prideful, stubborn temperament prevented him from carrying out a self-critique. Schmitt saw his crestfallen postwar days—and that of his country and perhaps all of Europe—as an opportunity to demonstrate ex-post the real causes of such a defeat. He wanted to prove silently how right he was in being wrong. By rejecting time and again the main historical scopes—that is, Marxism and liberal progress (and all its variants)—Schmitt was convinced that the most compelling interpretation of history came by acknowledging that history mirrors great events through chained political singularities. *Hamlet oder Hekuba* is a reversed image of postwar Germany. Likewise, its intellectual source—namely, Schiller interpreted via Kommerell—proved this to be right. His use of the term *apocrypha* in several entries in his diaries and some minor opinion pieces ciphered his esoteric intention to expand the comprehension of the forces that guide history.

Therefore, the results from the last chapter are as follows:

1. *Hamlet oder Hekuba*'s origins are to be found in Schmitt's awe-struck reaction to Max Kommerell's speech “Schiller as Führer des Handelnden

Menschen.” Schmitt aimed to draw up a cryptic political manifesto just as Kommerell did in his signaling of Hitler in 1934.

2. Schmitt sought to establish a supreme comprehension of history that could best the simple notion of historical progress and the cycles theory—that is, Marxism, progressive liberalism, and Spenglerianism.

3. A true comprehension of history through art demands the interpretation of objective real-life events through the spiritual dynamics of ultra-history. Namely, the cultural, political, and human energy curves that intensify or decrease in line with historical singularities.

In days when almost any moderately educated citizen can notice the eerie similitudes between the Weimar days and contemporary populism,<sup>570</sup> the cryptic words regarding history and art proffered by an old yet still insightful German jurist surprisingly take on a new relevance. If two colossal playwrights were able to scan the political DNA of history, then it might not be so preposterous to think that modern-day Führers aim to establish unprecedented parameters of what is authentic and what is not. Even if they are impostors. Even if they are no longer in command. Nonetheless, what is true and what is not when a technologically-driven world has flooded reality with its own limits?

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570. See Bloch 1991, 59: “Thus these people are spellbound, something rages and dreams murkily within them. A piece of German brutality strikes up in them again, has in fact a subconscious or unconscious impetus, instead of a class-conscious one; posits not only folk and fatherland as a substitute for their own sinking caste, but fills the frame with very old pictures.” Trump’s farewell address at Joint Base Andrews in his last speech as president: “We will be back in some form.”