# Chapter 3. Writing and Paper Practices in the Prompt Books of the Hamburg Theater-Bibliothek

Prompt books were not fixed entities; rather, they were revised and updated depending on the circumstances. The content of a play might have had to be changed overnight due to a negative audience reaction; two scenes might have had to be condensed into one in order to reduce the number of lighting changes when a play was taken up again after a decade; a character might have had to be played by an actor of a different build and age, making it ridiculous to address the character as "young man" on stage. These are all examples of updates that we will be discussing in the course of this study. The prompt book had to be reshaped to adapt to all of them: by adding or retracting words (character lines or technical instructions for the lighting, music, and sound effects), sometimes by intervening on a material level (by folding, cutting, or gluing sheets of paper together). The material biography of a prompt book thus consists of what we refer to as the "layers"[1] it accumulated over time. This term must be employed loosely as it is often difficult to tell where one layer of a prompt book ends and another begins. As we will see, the "original" fair copy made for a play's premiere was sometimes heterogeneous from the outset, written in different hands or stitched together from various sorts of paper. Sometimes, a number of writing tools would work in concert during a certain stage of revision, but not necessarily simultaneously. Indistinguishable hands and writing tools were sometimes clearly working against each other. While the prompt books at the Hamburg Theater-Bibliothek are nearly always multi-layered, this study will refrain from providing overviews of the boundaries between the various layers. Instead, it will provide thick descriptions of the writing and paper practices that, in their entanglement, make up the material biography of a prompt book.

1 Cf. Maksimczuk/Möller/Staack/Weinstock/Wolf 2024. For the concept of multilayered written artefacts, cf. Beit-Arié 1993.

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With Dickmann, Elias, and Focken, we define *writing practices* as any act of dealing with written artefacts that is "routinely performed by a large number of people".[2] We will mainly be focussing on operations of what Gumbert calls "enrichment": performing writing operations to add and retract text in a play or to update technical information that concerned the prompter. With Pethes, we understand "paper practices"[3] to be more technical operations by which a written artefact was changed materially, namely by folding, cutting, or gluing paper together within the object. In the following, we will introduce the main operations that can be observed at the Theater-Bibliothek, which we will then elaborate upon in the subsequent chapters.

## I. The Format and Use of Prompt Books

Prompt books can and, indeed, should be viewed as auxiliary means of gaining a deeper understanding of the history of a given production or the stage adaptation of a literary text.[4] Nevertheless, this study proposes taking an additional point of view: when examining prompt books in themselves as part of a manuscript culture, the unique quality and development of each prompt book as a material object comes into view. As we will argue below, the shape that a prompt book took on in the course of its practical use can thus be described as a performance in itself, i.e., performative in the broad sense of being processual rather than static – and also of manifesting on a material level rather than on the level of signification.[5] The material performance of a prompt book can, then, contribute to our understanding of the history of a specific production. The Hamburg Theater-Bibliothek serves as one example of this, although, as stated in the introduction, the practices employed in other German-speaking theatres of that period did not considerably differ. The differences between them had more to do with particular creators and users.

The content of the prompt books at the Hamburg Theater-Bibliothek was usually written down in German cursive handwriting (called *Kurrent*) on folded paper quires and penned in whatever commonplace ink was available at the time. The quires were then bound together between plain cardboard covers. As the books were mere objects of utility in the theatre and of no particular value as artefacts in

2 "Schriftpraktiken", "die mehrere Personen routiniert vollziehen" (Dickmann/Elias/Focken 2015, 139). Dickmann, Elias, and Focken contrast writing practices with a more general concept of "Schrifthandlungen" [writing actions].

3 Cf. Pethes 2019, especially 99–104. While paper tools, according to Pethes, are "sheets, files, or staplers", paper practices are procedures "such as turning, stacking, filing, ripping – as well as including folding and gluing household papers and paper toys" (Pethes 2019, 100f.). These concepts are derived from a general notion of paper technology as developed by Hess and Mendelsohn 2013.

4 Cf. M. Schneider 2021.

5 Cf. Nantke 2017, 77.

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themselves, the materials used to make them were generally fairly cheap. In rare cases, different types of paper were used for one and the same book, apparently for the sake of convenience.[6] When the text of a play performed by the company closely resembled the version of the play that was commercially available in print, a print copy was sometimes chosen as the first layer and then enriched by hand. Approximately one-sixth of the objects stored at Hamburg's Theater-Bibliothek were made on the basis of printed books, i.e., normal print copies targeting the reading audience of the day were used as the fair copy for the respective prompt books. However, there are rare cases of interleafed print copies with extra pages for writing on that seem to have been created as prompt books. These were handy as far as enrichments were concerned but bulky to carry around and use in the prompt box. Either way, everything else was then added by hand, just like in the handwritten exemplars, thus creating hybrid forms between handwriting and print.

Size and colour vary slightly from prompt book to prompt book: some of the dimensions of the written artefacts that will be discussed later include 16.5 × 20.5 cm for *Theater-Bibliothek: 571*, a prompt book for William Shakespeare's *Othello*; 17.5 × 22 cm for *Theater-Bibliothek: 1988a*, a prompt book for Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's *Nathan der Weise* [*Nathan the Wise*]; and 18.5 × 23.5 cm for *Theater-Bibliothek: 1379a*, a prompt book for William Shakespeare's *Viel Lärmen um Nichts* [*Much Ado about Nothing*]. The printed prompt books made by the Stadt-Theater company were generally octavos with dimensions of 10.5 × 16.5 cm.

The visual organisation of the actual writing differs somewhat. Often, everything apart from the actors' lines, i.e., didascalia[7] like information about the character speaking, the setting, and the action taking place, was not written in casual German cursive but in traditional Blackletter/Gothic script. Occasionally, this information was underlined once or twice in the same ink or in a different-coloured one. These distinctions in the visual organisation of the page between didascalia and dialogue ensured that the content of a prompt book was arranged clearly from the outset, as they helped to discern between the different levels of the dramatic text it contained. Changes and updates were added in whatever ink or pencil seems to have been at hand; pages could be cut out or glued over, or additional pages loosely inserted. Since the prompter was part of the process of developing a stage version for a dramatic text (albeit a technical version), prompt books were constantly being modified. They were updated to reflect the changing practical circumstances of a production; each amendment represented the latest state of affairs but was by no means the final one.

6 Cf. Chapter 5, section 4, for an example from *Theater-Bibliothek: 571*.

7 For the concept, cf. Issacharoff 1987, 88: "Didascalia are addressed by a *real person* (the author) to other *real people* (director and actors), and […] are intended to be taken non-fictively."

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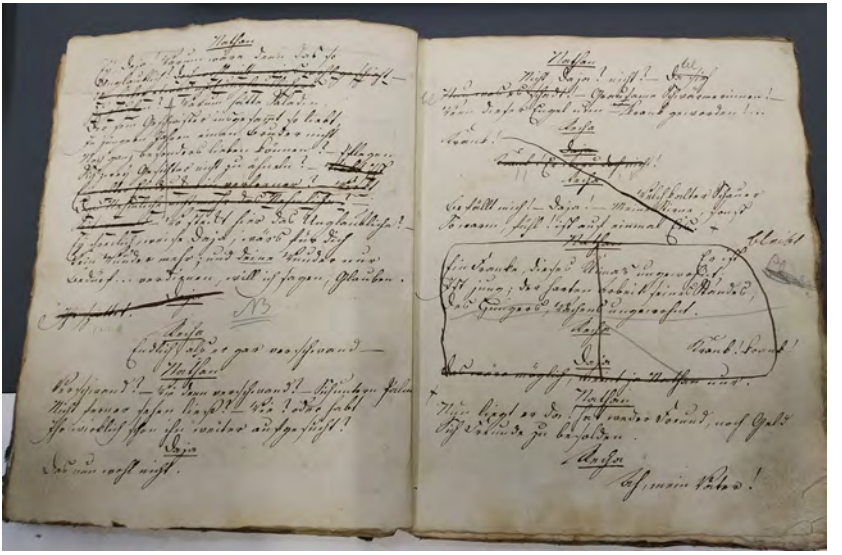
It all started with a fair copy that included the lines that would be spoken by the performers. It is safe to assume that fair copies were set up towards the end of the rehearsal process. Some additional technical cues and annotations that fell within the purview of the user (the prompter or the inspector) were inserted once they had been finally decided. They were changed whenever adjustments needed to be made for a new performance, e.g., when the performance did not have the desired effect on the audience. The changes made with respect to the performers' texts are particularly diverse: additions, corrections, retractions, and comments were made and sometimes altered again when changes were implemented (cf. figure 7).

*Figure 7: Nm, 9v and 10r.*



The nature of a prompt book varied depending on who its main user was supposed to be on the night of the performance. In Hamburg, there are often two surviving books for the same performance, both of which were obviously used simultaneously: one with the text version in it and all the technical arrangements the prompter could direct from their fixed position in the box (e.g., some lighting effects), another one with information about additional technical arrangements – everything from remarks about and instructions for the lighting, music, and sound effects to certain positions that the actors were supposed to adopt during the scenes, or indications of where actors were to enter the stage along with stage directions, prop lists, or lists of actors. This latter was used by the inspector, who, during the performance, carried out the tasks of the person who is now

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called the *stage manager* in the English-speaking world.[8] In the case of Schröder's theatre, there were just as many productions with two versions as there were productions for which one seems to be missing, or the two functions seem to overlap in a single book (the user of which might have changed).

Theatrical practices were (and are) ephemeral in nature: depending on the actors' form on the day or the make-up of the audience, tomorrow night's performance might have come to pass in a different fashion than tonight's. However, these practices were organised by convention, memory, oral arrangements, and not least by the written agreements put down on paper in the prompt books. Thus, the transitory practices of the theatre manifest themselves performatively in the materiality of the prompt book. The various handwritten revisions transform each manuscript (or overwritten printed book) into a unique, multi-layered performative artefact, with each layer expressing a new development in a production. None of these developments were necessarily final, but they were prone to being changed again if deemed necessary. The fundamental incompleteness of prompt books is of great importance for their analysis: the content of a prompt book can never be perceived as final because, as long as it was in use, it was subject to the potentially changing pragmatic requirements of the stage. Therefore, the individual material biography of a prompt book is closely related to the history of the respective theatre production. Prompt books were thus "evolving entities"[9] in a peculiar sense. They did not develop in the way that multi-text manuscripts or composites do[10] as they only contained one play, i.e., one codicological unit. Accordingly, their development and evolution took place on a different level of materiality: they were tied to their functional integration into an artistic process, the dynamics of which they put on display in their own performance. Prompt books never (or hardly ever) remained unchanged once they were in use. Rather, they generally grew with the various additions that sometimes both enriched and enlarged them. The parameters according to which this took place could and did change, as did the prompt book users, even if the context of the prompt book's production and utilisation stayed the same. To this effect, prompt books generally started out as monogenetic entities (fair copies) and, over time, became homogenetic and even allogenetic, for instance, when taken up by a different team decades after the original production.[11] Prompt books were used for long periods of time and sometimes served as the basis for a number of theatre productions. Thus, the dynamics of their material performance were also closely related to what Gumbert has called

8 Cf. Düringer/Barthels 1841, 597f. The inspector also assumed overall responsibility for the company that went beyond its performances; cf. Chapter 6.

9 Friedrich/Schwarke 2016, 1.

10 Cf. Friedrich/Schwarke 2016.

11 The terminology we use here is based on Gumbert 2004, 40f.

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"continuous enrichment", as it is not always possible to clearly distinguish between the boundaries of the various layers that were added by "one person, or a group of persons [...] behind or between the existing text(s) during a prolonged period".[12]

As objects of utility, prompt books were the centrepiece of the text-based theatre developing in the eighteenth-century German-speaking world. On the level of content, they served as the basis for theatrical practices such as rehearsing and staging a play. At the same time, those ephemeral practices and processes materially manifested themselves in – and "interacted" with – a prompt book whenever it was updated. Thus, these manuscripts undermine the traditional distinction between text and performance mentioned at the beginning of this study. Both dimensions become intertwined when we regard prompt books in their material performance.

## II. Adding and Retracting Dialogue and Stage Directions

The texts written in prompt books tended to differ from the text versions circulating in print – sometimes considerably. Stage versions needed to be adapted according to the technical possibilities and requirements of the stage as well as to the tastes and expectations of the audience, and, last but not least, to reflect theatrical conventions. Shakespeare wrote for the London stage around 1600, which, for the most part, was devoid of props, for instance. In such a context, a few words could indicate a change of scenery (a device of which Shakespeare's plays made ample use). In contrast, audiences in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Hamburg expected to see and admire elaborate stage sets that looked realistic.[13] To avoid constant interruptions when re-arranging sets, the order of the scenes of a Shakespeare play had to be modified and simplified from the outset. However, modifications like these could always be made at a later point as well. The claim that Stephen Nichols first made in relation to mediaeval manuscripts, and which has provided the basis for manuscript studies ever since, also applies to stage adaptations in the European theatre since the early modern period: "No one version, no matter how complete, may be viewed as authoritative."[14]

Evidently, most modifications were retractions or additions, first in the fair copy, then in the added layers of earlier retractions or additions. The material manifestation of these basic operations, however, turns out to be rather complex.[15]

12 Gumbert 2004, 31.

13 Cf. Malchow 2022, 138–172.

14 Nichols 1997, 17.

15 For an overview of the different forms and functions of crossing-out as well as the potential positioning of new words, cf. Grésillon 2016, 83–87. Taking Grésillon's differentiations as a

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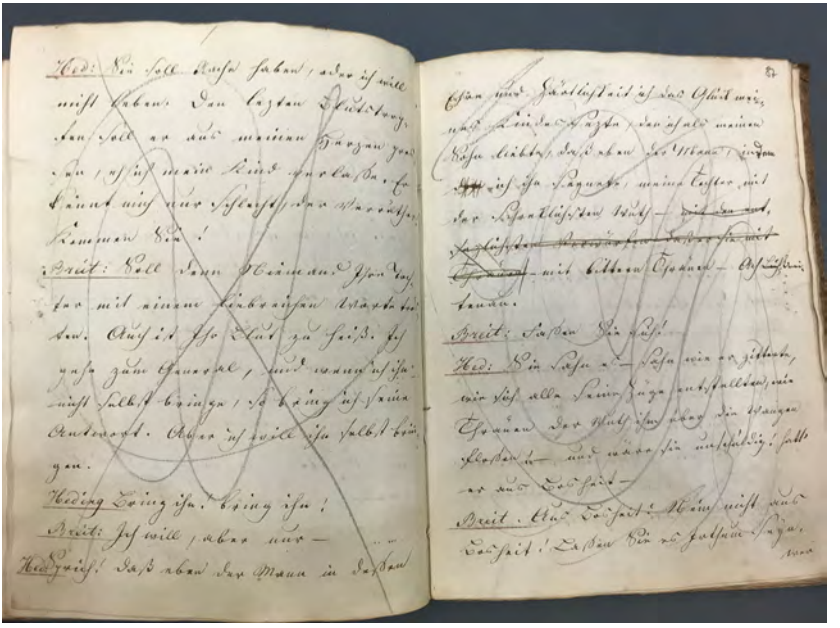
Take, for instance, the retraction of a certain part which had been written down at an earlier point in time: a retraction was often indicated by a simple straight line drawn through the respective passage; it was literally crossed out using a writing tool that often clearly differed from the one that had been used to pen the initial content. Sometimes the line seems to have been crossed out hastily or in passing, but in other cases, frames were carefully drawn around the retracted elements, highlighting the act of cancellation. The writing tool used for this purpose may also have been employed to highlight specific elements and thus to underscore the structural organisation of the passage in question. (Cf. figures 8 and 9.)

*Figure 8:* Theater-Bibliothek: 1379a, *86v and 87r.*



starting point, Uwe Wirth has reflected on the "Logik der Streichung" (Wirth 2011) [logic of the strike-through]. Both authors agree that crossing out writing is an operation that does not simply negate something but materially visualises both the act of negating and what is being negated at the same time. For specific examples, see Chapter 5.

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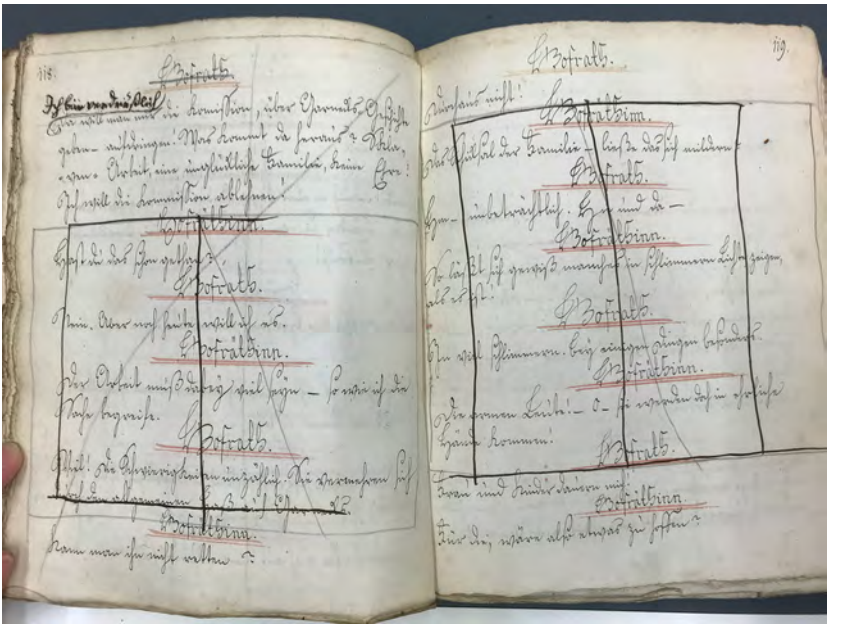
*Figure 9:* Theater-Bibliothek: 215a, *118 and 119.*



The crossing out of content and the various techniques that went along with it could pertain to anything from a single word to an entire scene. Cancellations of this kind could be made to elements of the plot as well as characters that a respective production had decided to exclude, dialogue that needed to be shortened or condensed, or expressions, phrases, or actions that had been deemed inapt or even inappropriate. The reasons might have been of a pragmatic or aesthetic nature. However, social expectations and norms also influenced the changes: retracting a minor scene could tighten up the storyline; a certain turn of phrase might have been too difficult to articulate properly on stage or might have proven to be simply too explicit or drastic. The standards according to which such qualifications were made often originated at the intersection of aesthetic and social values.[16]

16 The most notorious retraction of content in German theatre history, albeit a rather unimposing one, can be found at the Theater-Bibliothek and will be discussed in great detail in Chapter 5. It concerns Friedrich Ludwig Schröder's 1776 adaptation of Shakespeare's *Othello* and consists of six small strokes of black ink that indicate the retraction of three words in the corresponding prompt book *Theater-Bibliothek:* 571. The unobtrusive marks actually indicate a major change in the plot: the stage direction "Er sticht sie" [He stabs her] has been crossed out. The words refer to Desdemona's infamous murder by her husband. After negative reactions from the audience, the six little strokes cancelled out Othello's terrible act: he did not kill her after all.

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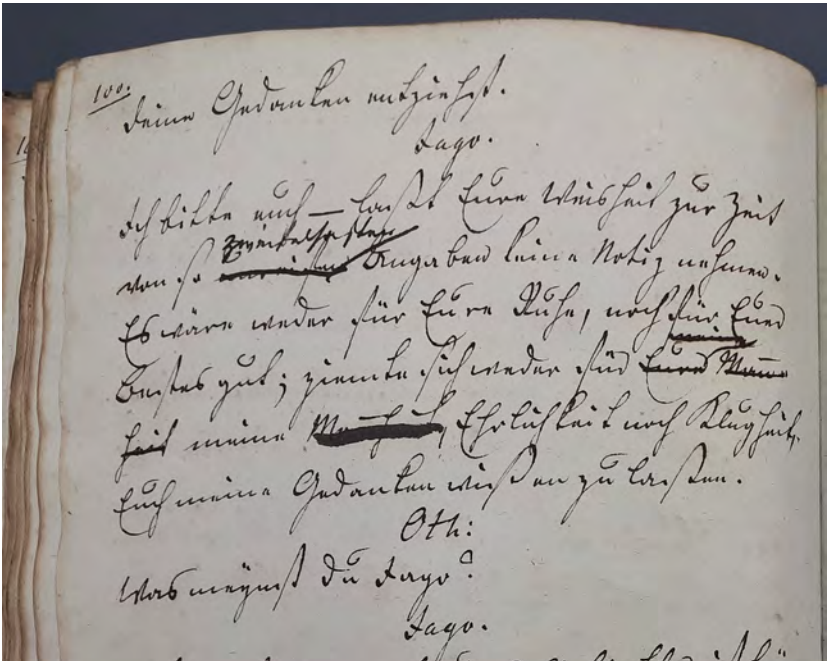
An equally common practice in prompt book manuscripts that often went hand in hand with a retraction was, of course, the addition of handwritten content such as in straightforward corrections (cf. figure 10).[17]

*Figure 10:* Theater-Bibliothek: 586a, *100.*



Although this was to be expected, it does not seem to have been taken into account when creating the fair copies as they generally contained too little blank space for extensive additions to be made. Prompt books were also objects of utility, and it had to be possible to handle them easily and effectively; they could not be too voluminous as that would have made them unwieldy. Additions therefore had to be inserted between the lines in many cases. This was easy enough if the addition was a small one, i.e., a change to just a single word, expression, or response, but things became more complicated when more text needed to be added.

Only a minority of prompt books incorporated potential future changes into their visual organisation. In such cases space was left in the margins from the

17 These manual operations can be subsumed under what Patrick Andrist, Paul Canard, and Marilena Maniaci have categorised as the "[m]odèle de transformation A2: ajout de contenu sans support matériel" (Andrist/Canard/Maniaci 2013, 64) [A2 model of transformation: adding content without material support].

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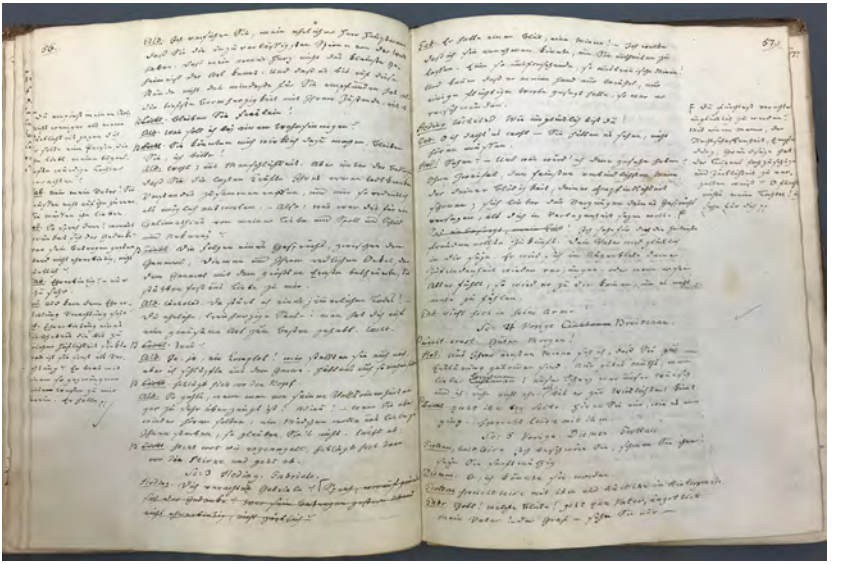
outset to allow more extensive changes to be made next to the section the changes applied to.[18] It was easier to update prompt books like these because they remained perfectly usable, i.e., they were still arranged clearly and legible (cf. figure 11).

*Figure 11:* Theater-Bibliothek: 1379b, *56 and 57.*



This feature can also be found in prompt books that used printed text, where the uniform, standardised layout allowed for all sorts of handwritten annotations and additions to be made. A rarity among the Theater-Bibliothek prompt books is one of the two prompt books for Friedrich Schiller's *Dom Karlos*, *Theater-Bibliothek: 1989b*, where an interleafed copy of the printed book was produced to serve as a prompt book.[19] In the vast majority of cases, saving space and quires seems to have

18 The visual organisation bears a resemblance to manuscript practices in certain scholarly or monastic traditions. The main difference, however, is not just contextual but also functional: the margins in a prompt book were not there to accommodate commentary on the text but to update it (or update the respective stage arrangements) according to the requirements of the theatre production. For the monastic tradition, cf. Treharne 2021, 62–87.

19 So far, we have been unable to find any similar formatting in the manuscript-based prompt books that we have reviewed. The Theater-Bibliothek contains two prompt books from the debut production of *Dom Karlos* (now known as *Don Carlos*) in 1787, which have attracted remarkably little attention as material objects. The handwritten 1787 prompt book (*Theater-Bibliothek: 1989a*) was heavily reworked during rehearsals and the first few performances. At some later point, the theatre swapped the manuscript for an interleafed volume of Schiller's first published print version (*Theater-Bibliothek: 1989b*), which was then used and constantly revised until 1813.

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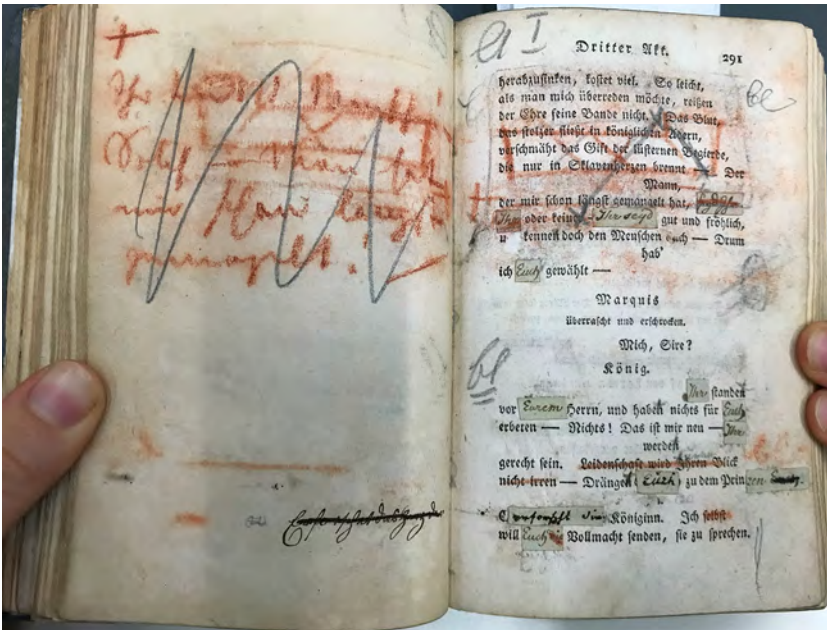
been of the utmost priority. As a consequence, the format usually did not easily allow for more extensive amendments to be made. (Cf. figure 12.)

*Figure 12:* Theater-Bibliothek: 1989b, *291*.



Dritter Akt. 291

herabzusinken, kostet viel. So leicht,
als man mich überreden möchte, reißen
der Ehre seine Bande nicht. Das Blut,
das stolzer fließt in königlichen Adern,
verschmäht das Gift der lüsternen Begierde,
die nur in Sklavenherzen brennt — Der
Mann,
der mir schon längst gemahlt hat,
oder keine
gut und fröhlich,
kennen doch den Menschen
— Drum
hab'
ich gewählt —

Marquis
überrascht und erschrocken.

Mich, Sire?

König.

standen
vor Herrn, und habe nichs für
erbeten — Nichts! Das ist mir neu —
werden
gerecht sein. Leidenschaft wird
nicht treen — Drängen
zu dem Prinzen

Königinn. Ich selbst
will Vollmacht senden, sie zu sprechen.

Despite the lack of space, prompt books were irrevocably tied to the changes that took place in the staging of a performance: amendments added up, and additions were sometimes modified or retracted again. Prompt books could also be so extensive that they left no space for any further changes. At some point, the constant revisions made it more difficult for a prompter to find their way through the pages, especially if they had been heavily revised. This was probably the case when productions were staged with a new prompter after a hiatus of several years. The constant use that a prompt book was intended for could eventually impair how it functioned as a tool.

The illegibility of the various layers of the *Dom Karlos* prompt book is a case in point – even though the (orderly) print version was used as a basis and then interleafed. Anyone other than the prompter, who probably remembered what the various layers of pencil and ink stood for and how they related to each other, might not have been able to make use of the prompt book at all. In cases less prominent than Schiller's, the prompt book in question might have been discarded and replaced with a new copy in pristine condition. In that case, there would not have been any need to keep the prompt book in the company's collection.

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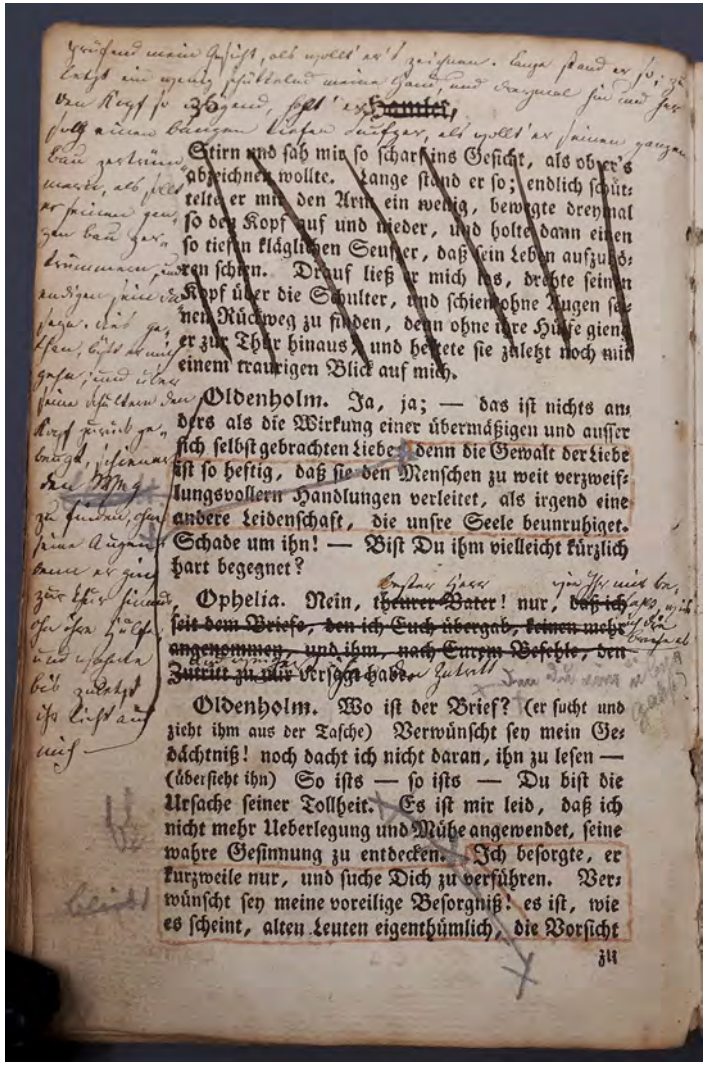
As the *Dom Karlos* sample shows, each modification used up more of the written artefact's material resources. The same goes for a sample page from the prompt book for Schröder's equally well-known adaptation of *Hamlet*, *Theater-Bibliothek: 1982 (1)*, which was based on a print copy of Schröder's own adaptation (cf. figure 13).[20]

*Figure 13:* Theater-Bibliothek: 1982 (1), *36*.



Stirn und sah mir so scharf ins Gesicht, als ob er's abzeichnen wollte. Lange stund er so; endlich schüttelte er mir den Arm ein wenig, bewegte dreymal so den Kopf auf und nieder, und holte dann einen so tiefen kläglichen Seufzer, daß sein Leben aufzuhören schien. Drauf ließ er mich los, drehte seinen Kopf über die Schulter, und schien ohne Augen seinen Rückweg zu finden, denn ohne ihre Hülfe gieng er zur Thür hinaus, und heftete sie zuletzt noch mit einem traurigen Blick auf mich.

**Oldenholm.** Ja, ja; — das ist nichts anders als die Wirkung einer übermäßigen und ausser sich selbst gebrachten Liebe; denn die Gewalt der Liebe ist so heftig, daß sie den Menschen zu weit verzweiflungsvollern Handlungen verleitet, als irgend eine andere Leidenschaft, die unsre Seele beunruhiget. Schade um ihn! — Bist Du ihm vielleicht kürzlich hart begegnet?

**Ophelia.** Nein, ~~theurer Vater~~! nur, ~~daß ich seit dem Briefe, den ich Euch übergab, keinen mehr angenommen, und ihm, nach Eurem Befehle, den Zutritt zu mir versagt habe.~~

**Oldenholm.** Wo ist der Brief? (er sucht und zieht ihm aus der Tasche) Verwünscht sey mein Gedächtniß! noch dacht ich nicht daran, ihn zu lesen — (übersieht ihn) So ists — so ists — Du bist die Ursache seiner Tollheit. Es ist mir leid, daß ich nicht mehr Ueberlegung und Mühe angewendet, seine wahre Gesinnung zu entdecken. Ich besorgte, er kurzweile nur, und suche Dich zu verführen. Verwünscht sey meine voreilige Besorgniß! es ist, wie es scheint, alten Leuten eigenthümlich, die Vorsicht

zu

20 Cf. Chapter 5, section 2.

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Here, Ophelia's response has been crossed out at the top of the page. The amendment takes up the entire top margin and most of the left margin as well, leaving hardly any space for further changes. The legibility of the page decreases significantly where writing has been added on top of the existing changes to Oldenholm's (the Germanised name for Polonius in the production) response. At this point, the different layers enter into a complex interplay; their back-and-forth extends into the margins. The writing is in a faded reddish ink, and one or two pencils have been used as well. The retraction was later cancelled out with the word "bleibt" (meaning "stays") next to the retracted text. However, the cancellation of the retraction was then crossed out again, after which Ophelia's new text was written more or less around the retracted correction. As a consequence, the amendments to her next response in the middle of the page needed to be added in a different way if they were to remain in close proximity to the section they pertained to. The scribe somehow managed to write them between, next to, and even across the retracted lines. The inevitable consequence was that their arrangement and allocation became harder to make out. Thus, the *Hamlet* prompt book sample exemplifies how the usability of the written artefact could quite literally get pushed to its limits by theatrical processes.

The dynamics of the processes in question regularly manifest themselves materially in several layers of handwriting. While the manuscript page (or the printed page with handwritten additions) could come to look like a work of twentieth-century calligraphic – and graffiti-like – European art,[21] the theoretical hierarchy of these changes was always clear: it was only the latest revisions that counted. The last revisions constituted the version of the text that the production had to adhere to until more changes were made and a new layer added. But the material interplay between the layers gets even more complicated, as it is not always clear which was the latest revision. Pencilled notes were sometimes written over ink and vice versa; black, reddish, or brownish ink were used in a sometimes orderly, sometimes random fashion. We have to reconstruct the succession of different layers by looking at a) the point of reference for the respective operations, e.g., a retraction and its subsequent cancellation, or b) the concrete material layering, as in the case of Ophelia's altered text. The dark ink seems to have written over the graphite pencil that previously referred to Oldenholm's text. The extent to which c) ink analysis can be of help differs from prompt book to prompt book. One example of this will be discussed in Chapter 5 in relation to *Theater-Bibliothek: 2029*.

In order to insert the numerous, extensive amendments made during a number of revisions into the limited page space, which was visually organised in a way that was not always conducive to changes, prompters and other users frequently resorted to using further paper tools as well as paper practices: additional layers

21 Cf. Greub 2018, for example.

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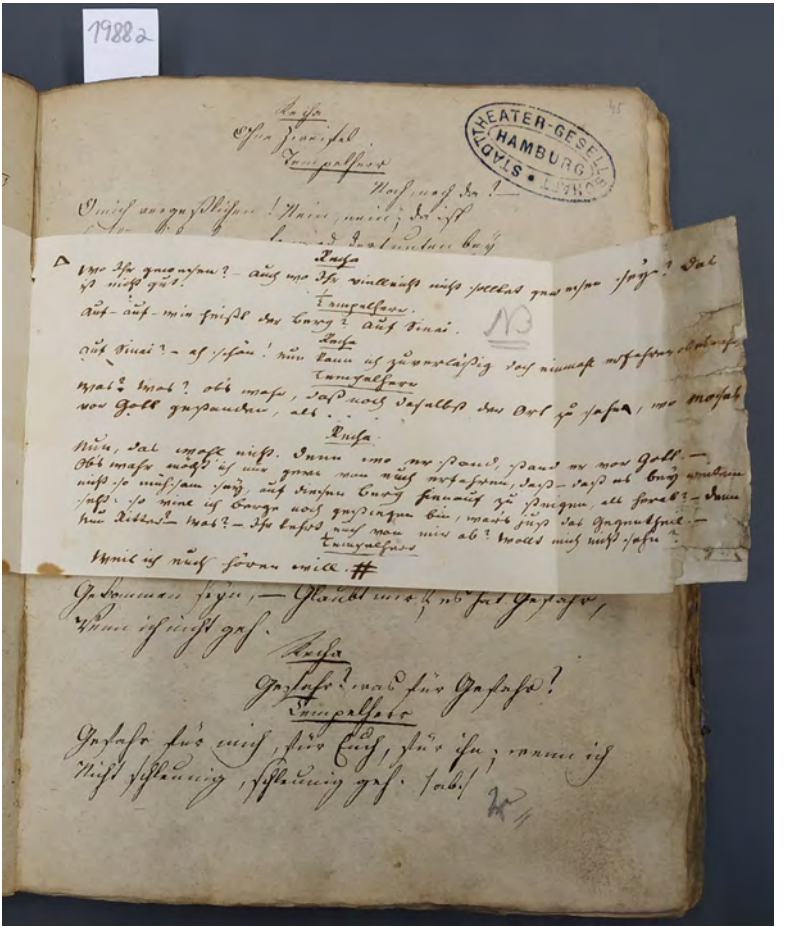
of paper – sometimes even entire pages – were inserted in various ways.[22] In most cases, they were directly pasted over the respective parts with glue. If the amendments were extensive and the sheet of paper required was bigger than the passage it was supposed to cover, it was glued in and then partly folded so that it could be opened out if needed but would still fit inside the book, which we can see here in *Theater-Bibliothek: 1988a*, an inspector's book for Lessing's *Nathan der Weise*, which we will analyse in great detail in a later chapter (cf. figure 14).

*Figure 14: Nm, 45r.*




22 These cases can be subsumed under what Andrist, Canard, and Maniaci have categorised as the "[m]odèle de transformation A1: ajout de support matériel et de contenu" (Andrist/Canard/Maniaci 2013, 63) [transformation model A1: addition of material support and content].

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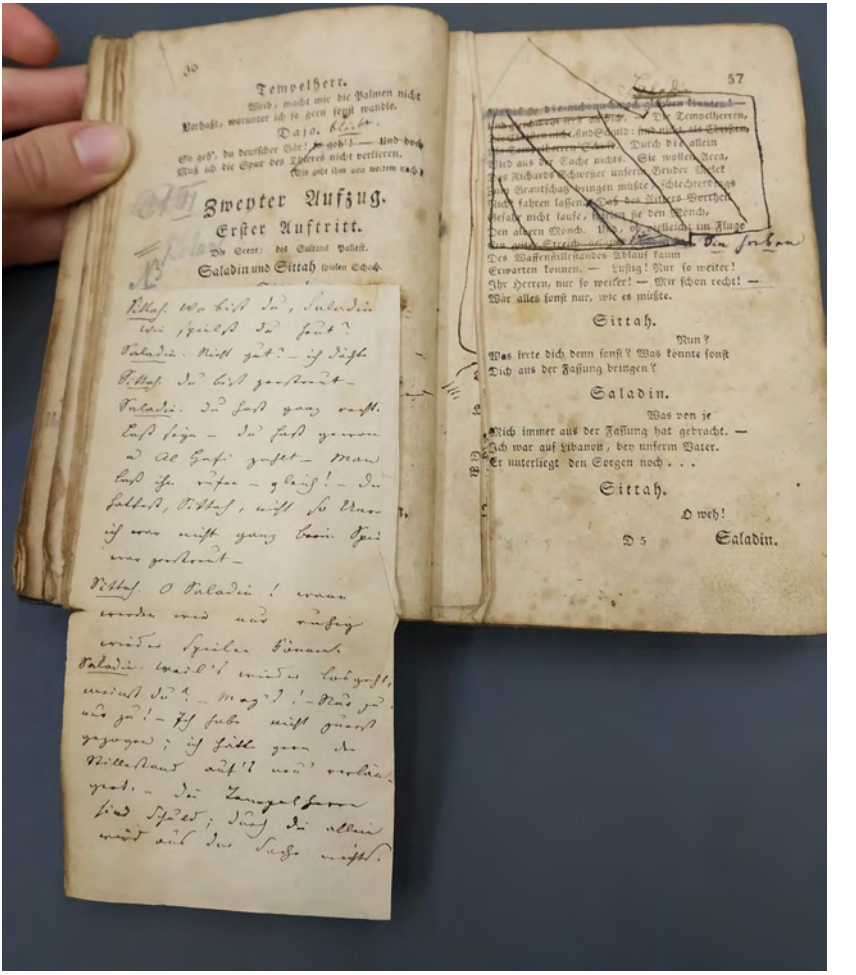
In another sample from the accompanying prompt book *Theater-Bibliothek: 1988b*, we can see how pages were removed right alongside the addition of a new page. Removals appear only infrequently, probably due to their irrevocable character; they did not fit in very well with the "valid until recalled" order of prompt book processes (cf. figure 15).

*Figure 15: Np, 50 and 57.*




On another occasion in *Theater-Bibliothek: 1988b*, a much less intrusive paper practice was implemented. The pages for a whole scene that has clearly been cut (because it is absent in the complementary inspector's book) was materially retracted by folding over the bottom corner of each page and then folding all the other cor-

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ners over each other, meaning that the user of the prompt book would naturally skip to the next valid piece of text.[23]

Added sheets, however, were not necessarily pasted in and linked to the book materially; sometimes, they were attached to the page with a pin, e.g., in *Theater-Bibliothek: 1460*, the prompt book for Kotzebue's *Die Sonnen-Jungfrau* [*The Virgin of the Sun*]. We can assume that the pin was actually used at the time of the performance and was not inserted later, as the pin clearly places the amendment at the desired position and incorporates it into the written artefact materially. Conveniently, the extra sheet could easily be swapped for another one or rearranged in the event of another revision.[24]

We will examine in detail what seems to have been a trial copy for the subsequent prompt book of *Die Sonnen-Jungfrau*, *Theater-Bibliothek: 728*, in the next chapter. As we will explain, this manuscript is a particularly relevant example of how a retraction was combined with an addition. In *Theater-Bibliothek: 728*, a whole scene was cut in Act I, Scene 6. But parts of the dialogue were then transferred to Act II, with diacritical signs marking several beginnings and ends to the crossed-out passages that needed to be shifted in Act I. As can be seen on the cover of our own book, an insertion mark on the margins of Act II, Scene 2, indicates that, after another textual addition was made, all the pieces cut beforehand were to be placed here, one by one.

## III. Types and Functions of Other Additions and Retractions

Not all characteristic prompt book amendments were made to the content of the play to be performed. Some applied to timing, others to technical tasks that could be performed from the prompt box or, if it was the inspector's book, that were the duty of the person responsible backstage in the first place. Many of them pertained directly to the technical arrangements on stage during a performance. Another Shakespeare adaptation by Friedrich Ludwig Schröder provides examples of both types. Schröder published his version of *König Lear* [*King Lear*] as a printed book shortly after its premiere in 1778. We will examine in a later chapter how, as in the case of *Hamlet*, the manuscript version of the prompt book was exchanged for a print copy at some point during the play's forty-year performance history in Hamburg,[25] which then served as a foundation that was enriched over time.[26]

23 Cf. Chapter 6, section 4.

24 Cf. Chapter 4, section 6.

25 Cf. Chapter 5, section 6.

26 In this case, the production was taken up again in 1812 during the French occupation; cf. Chapter 5.

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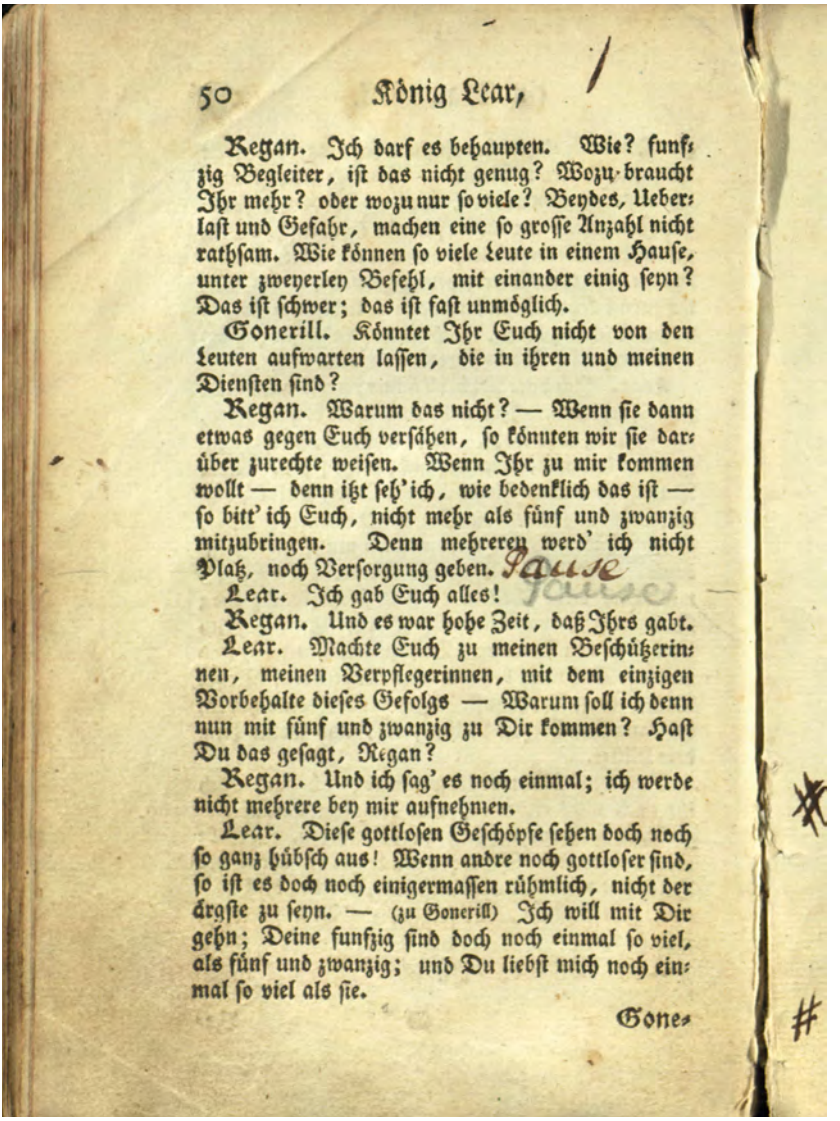
*Figure 16: L, 50.*



50 König Lear,

Regan. Ich darf es behaupten. Wie? funfzig Begleiter, ist das nicht genug? Wozu braucht Ihr mehr? oder wozu nur so viele? Beydes, Ueberlast und Gefahr, machen eine so grosse Anzahl nicht rathsam. Wie können so viele Leute in einem Hause, unter zweyerley Befehl, mit einander einig seyn? Das ist schwer; das ist fast unmöglich.

Gonerill. Könntet Ihr Euch nicht von den Leuten aufwarten lassen, die in ihren und meinen Diensten sind?

Regan. Warum das nicht? — Wenn sie dann etwas gegen Euch versähen, so könnten wir sie darüber zurechte weisen. Wenn Ihr zu mir kommen wollt — denn itzt seh' ich, wie bedenklich das ist — so bitt' ich Euch, nicht mehr als fünf und zwanzig mitzubringen. Denn mehreren werd' ich nicht Platz, noch Versorgung geben. Pause

Lear. Ich gab Euch alles!

Regan. Und es war hohe Zeit, daß Ihrs gabt.

Lear. Machte Euch zu meinen Beschützerinnen, meinen Verpflegerinnen, mit dem einzigen Vorbehalte dieses Gefolgs — Warum soll ich denn nun mit fünf und zwanzig zu Dir kommen? Hast Du das gesagt, Regan?

Regan. Und ich sag' es noch einmal; ich werde nicht mehrere bey mir aufnehmen.

Lear. Diese gottlosen Geschöpfe sehen doch noch so ganz hübsch aus! Wenn andre noch gottloser sind, so ist es doch noch einigermassen rühmlich, nicht der ärgste zu seyn. — (zu Gonerill) Ich will mit Dir gehn; Deine funfzig sind doch noch einmal so viel, als fünf und zwanzig; und Du liebst mich noch einmal so viel als sie.

Gone-

Until 1798, Schröder played the old king himself despite his own young years. As an actor, Schröder worked effectively with the interplay of speech and silence when portraying Lear's inner conflicts and troubles. When the old king is rejected by his two daughters Goneril and Regan, Lear slowly realises their fundamental betrayal. Schröder considered this to be a psychological process and took his time before uttering, "Ich gab Euch alles!" (L, 50) [I gave you everything!] in shocked disappoint-

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ment.[27] In the respective passage of the prompt book, the word "Pause" [pause] has been inserted twice, once in pencil and again in dark ink – apparently by the same hand and seemingly referring to Lear's line both times. As the pencilled-in addition remains rather ambiguous as to the timing of the pause (before or after Lear's reply), it seems the ink addition was made afterwards so as to leave no doubt. The insertion seems to have served as a reminder to the prompter that the actor, and the other actors that followed in Schröder's footsteps until 1827, would deliberately remain silent for a moment as part of his role, not because he had forgotten his lines. Obviously, the last thing that the company wanted to happen on stage in such a situation was for the audience to hear the prompter's semi-audible whisper. (Cf. figure 16.)

As far as notions of place and atmosphere were concerned, instructions and cues in the prompt book referred to the technical dimensions of the performance. In the prompt book for Schröder's *Lear* adaptation, *Theater-Bibliothek: 2029*, the opening of the third act is littered with technical annotations presumably made by various users at different times. The location changed after the second act: from a setting in front of a castle, the stage became a "Heide mit einer Hütte" [heath with a shack], indicated by the word "Verwandlung" [transformation] written in pencil. Other handwritten insertions refer to the lighting. This can be safely assumed with regard to the word "blau" [blue], which was written in pencil but then crossed out – it probably referred to a specific colour or quality of light. Two additional annotations determined the time and atmosphere for all of the following scenes: "Nacht" [night] was written in pencil and then again in red ink; and "ohne Mondschein" [without any moonlight] was written in a darker ink, apparently by another hand.

The likely reason for the crossing-out of "blau", the initial lighting mood, only becomes apparent at second glance: the header "Dritter Akt" [third act] was crossed out in pencil and the Roman numeral "II" was written next to it in black ink. The first scene in Schröder's third act had originally been taken out of the middle of Shakespeare's second.[28] Despite the obvious dramaturgical dissonances, it seems to have been transferred to the beginning of Act III in Schröder's adaptation because using similar scenery would have eliminated the need to change the set. However, at some point during the long history of Schröder's *Lear* on the Hamburg stage, the scene was reincorporated into the second act – this time as its ending. At that point, there may not have been enough time to change the lighting effect back to "blue" again,

27 A particularly detailed description of Schröder's depiction of Lear was published by Johann Friedrich Schink in 1790 and combined with interpretations and assessments he made. Schink worked as a librettist and dramaturge at the Hamburg theatre at that time; cf. Schink 1790, 1087–1142.

28 See *Theater-Bibliothek: 2029*, 54 for Schröder's adaptation. In both Schröder's templates and current editions of Shakespeare's works, this scene is the third one in the second act; cf. Eschenburg 1779, 82.

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although there does seem to have been enough time to dim the brightness to the level of a "night without any moonlight". The fall of the curtain and the customary musical interlude were thus delayed for a few minutes in the performance – and shifted to the next page in the prompt book (cf. figures 17 and 18).

*Figure 17: L, 54.*

54 König Lear,

Dritter Aufzug.

Erster Auftritt.

(Haide mit einer Hütte)

(Ungewitter, welches bis zum siebenten Auftritte dauert)

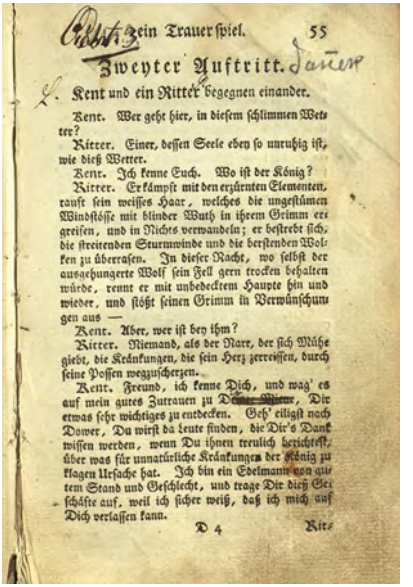
Edgar. (als ein Wahnsinniger verkleidet.)

Ich habe gehört, daß man einen Preiß auf meinen Kopf ausgerufen hat, und bin durch die glückliche Höhlung eines Baums vor der Nachstellung gerettet. Kein Seehasen ist frey; kein Ort, wo nicht Wachen und ungewöhnliche Aufmerksamkeit darauf lauren, mich zu ergreifen. So lang' ich entkommen kann, will ich mein Leben retten, und ich habe deshalb die niedrigste und armseligste Gestalt angenommen, wodurch nur jemals die Dürftigkeit den Menschen demüthigte, und ihn bis zum Vieh hinabsetzte. Mit offner Blösse hab' ich den Winden und den Verfolgungen des Wetters Troß geboten. Armer Turlupin! Armer Tom! Das ist doch immer etwas; als Edgar bin ich nichts. Hu! der Sturm verdoppelt sein Geheul. Hinein in deine Hütte!

(geht in die Hütte)

Zwey-

*Figure 18: L, 55.*



Zweytes Trauerspiel. 55

Zweyter Auftritt.

Kent und ein Ritter begegnen einander.

Kent. Wer geht hier, in diesem schlimmen Wetter?

Ritter. Einer, dessen Seele eben so unruhig ist, wie dieß Wetter.

Kent. Ich kenne Euch. Wo ist der König?

Ritter. Er kämpft mit den erzürnten Elementen, rauft sein weisses Haar, welches die ungestümen Windstösse mit blinder Wuth in ihrem Grimm ergreifen, und in Nichts verwandeln; er bestrebt sich, die streitenden Sturmwinde und die berstenden Wolken zu überrasen. In dieser Nacht, wo selbst der ausgehungerte Wolf sein Fell gern trocken behalten würde, rennt er mit unbedecktem Haupte hin und wieder, und stößt seinen Grimm in Verwünschungen aus —

Kent. Aber, wer ist bey ihm?

Ritter. Niemand, als der Narr, der sich Mühe giebt, die Kränkungen, die sein Herz zerreissen, durch seine Possen wegzuscherzen.

Kent. Freund, ich kenne Dich, und wag' es auf mein gutes Zutrauen zu Dir, Dir etwas sehr wichtiges zu entdecken. Geh' eiligst nach Dover, Du wirst da Leute finden, die Dir's Dank wissen werden, wenn Du ihnen treulich berichtest, über was für unnatürliche Kränkungen der König zu klagen Ursache hat. Ich bin ein Edelmann von gutem Stand und Geschlecht, und trage Dir dieß Geschäfte auf, weil ich sicher weiß, daß ich mich auf Dich verlassen kann.

D 4 Rit-

Creating a specific atmosphere or situation, or performing certain actions backstage, called for appropriate sounds and sound effects. These were indicated by cues in some of the prompt books. As we see in the *König Lear* example, a number or diacritical sign was used. On page 54, the cue written in dark ink and the other two cues written in pencil refer to the "Ungewitter" [thunderstorm] that rages during the first seven scenes of the act, or rather, to the claps of thunder that resounded every now and then. Generally, a # symbol was added to the prompt book whenever any kind of sound originating off stage was to be heard that was connected to the actions being shown.

While the use of the # symbol was common in the prompt book manuscripts of the time, the written artefacts also worked with handwritten letters, signs, and icons that are part of the traditional repertoire of Western scholarly manuscript cultures. Time and again, there are cues in the prompt books that did not primarily refer to a certain event that was supposed to take place on stage, but rather addressed those who worked with the manuscript: a "nota bene" ligature ("NB") may have drawn attention to a certain dialogue or to a certain response or action that

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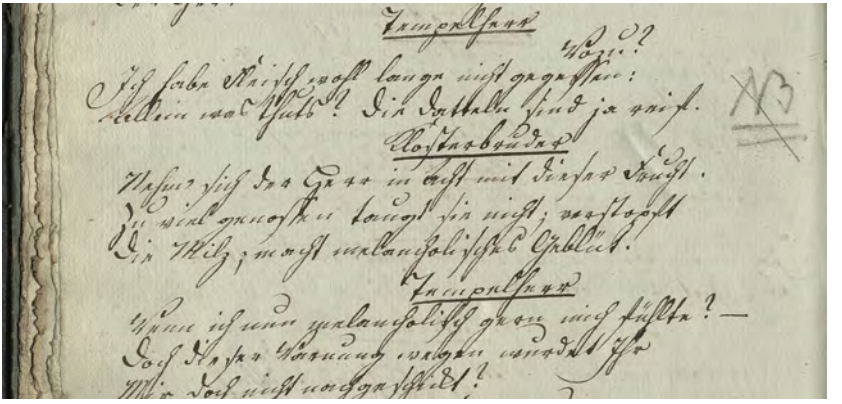
was likely to happen on stage at that moment. It is not always possible to tell why the prompter or inspector needed to be on their guard on such occasions; however, an actor might have had trouble with their text, or a candle might have been lit on stage that had to be prevented from going out. The need to draw attention to an action could subside again at a later point, of course; the "nota bene" might well have been crossed out again, as can be seen in the prompt book for Lessing's *Nathan der Weise* (cf. figure 19).

*Figure 19: Nm, 15v.*



The manicule is another traditional icon of Western manuscript and book practices that can be found in the Hamburg prompt books. In Schröder's *Othello, Theater-Bibliothek: 571*, which we will discuss in a later chapter, a manicule points to a scene that has been added in a blank space on the following page in the course of the prompt book's fundamental revision.[29] It not only reminds the user that the amendment is there but also visually directs them to the continuation of the act that had ended earlier in the fair copy.[30]

29 For an overview of the tradition of the manicule, see the chapter "Toward a History of the Manicule" in Sherman 2008, 25–52.

30 Cf. Chapter 5, section 3.

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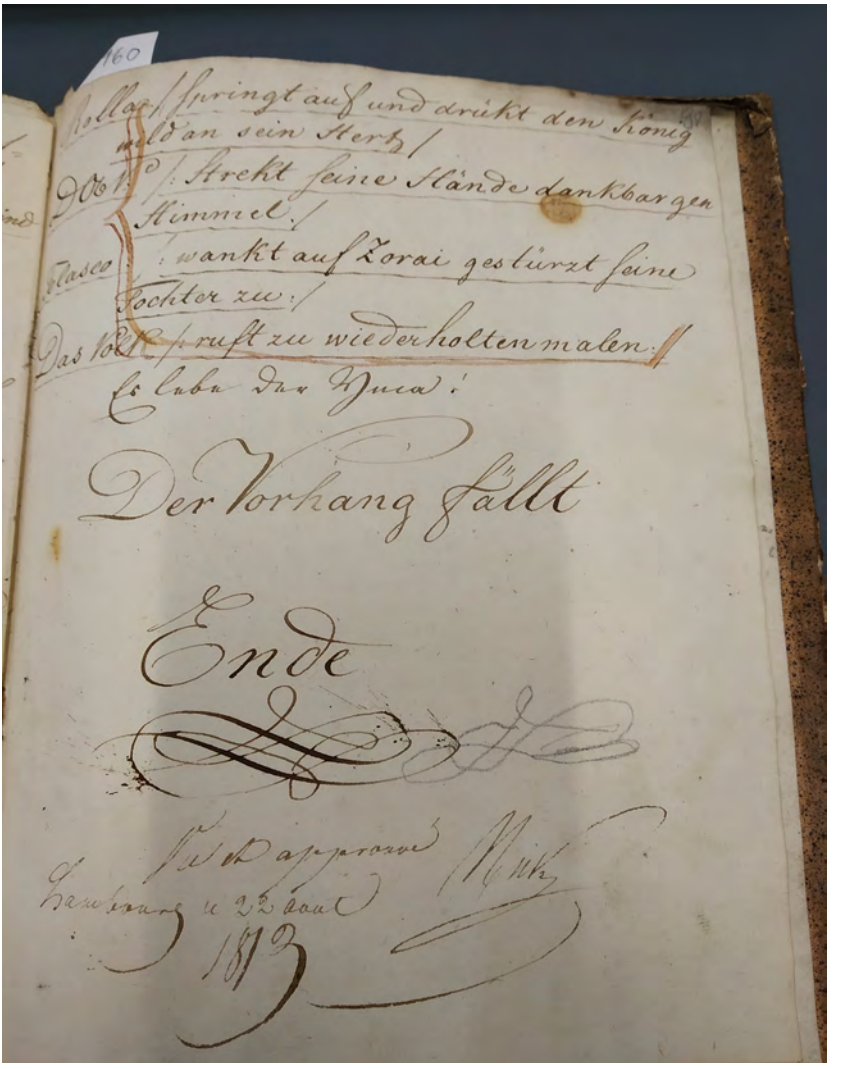
*Figure 20: S2, 98r.*




The various phenomena presented so far all relate to the theatrical processes that a prompt book was immersed in. They were the result of decisions made in the theatre context during a production run on the basis of pragmatic assumptions about the feasibility of staging a given dramatic text. Practical matters such as the capabilities of the technical equipment and personnel at hand, as well as aesthetic norms and anticipated public expectations, were taken into account. However, revisions were also made that had nothing to do with these intra-theatrical dynam-

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ics. On the contrary, they signified the intrusion of outside factors. This is the case in the plays staged during the latter part of Hamburg's French period (1806–14), when the city was first occupied by the French army and then became part of the French Empire in 1811. After 1810, only plays that had been approved by the censor could be performed. As we will discuss in Chapters 4 and 5, the permission of the censor can be found in various prompt books: on the last page of the text, there is a censor's note that consists of an approving phrase, mostly "vu et approuvé" [seen and approved] along with a date and signature, e.g., in *Theater-Bibliothek: 1460*, the prompt book for Kotzebue's *Die Sonnen-Jungfrau*. Sometimes, a seal of approval of this kind was only granted if parts of the text were changed, mainly unfavourable references to France or the French army, although they could also include negative assessments of the current social or political status quo. Even though they are materially indistinguishable from other corrections and cancellations, these alterations differ completely in terms of their origin: they did not emanate from the internal artistic and pragmatic practices of the theatre. Rather, they represented the influence of extra-theatrical agencies and political power. (Cf. figure 20.)

## IV. The Material Performance of Prompt Books

Judging by the variety of material forms, paper practices and writing operations, and the procedures, techniques, and tools used in conjunction with them, prompt books were clearly intersections between complex material and historical circumstances: aesthetic, pragmatic, social, and even political factors affected the entire process of a theatre production from the outset, and it is this process that manifests itself in the material performance of a prompt book. Each written alteration, each amendment, addition, or retraction of text, each pasting over or cutting out of pages, and each cue or note made about technical matters expresses the individual dynamics of a written artefact that was treated as a means to put on a performance of a specific production – even if the last performance had taken place years ago. These revisions not only transformed the respective manuscript (or hybrid) into a unique, multi-layered written artefact organised by the principle of "latest amendment valid until revoked"; rather, in the way that they emerge, react to one another, and build up layers of writing, these edits also put a specific material performance on display. This material performance is the mode in which the material biography of a prompt book evolved over the course of its use; it must be observed, reconstructed, and analysed. Doing so sheds light on the material biography of a given written artefact while allowing us to gain a more general understanding of the material point of contact that undermines the traditional distinction between a text and its staging. When we regard a prompt book with respect to its material performance, the entanglement between the literary text, its stage performance, and a

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host of other cultural practices in the theatre manifests itself on a material level. To this end, the full spectrum of manuscript practices must be considered and related to the various intra- and extra-theatrical contexts that motivated them. In doing so, it becomes possible to conceive of prompt books as the centrepiece of a particular manuscript culture. Indeed, by examining and retracing "the milieu in which they were produced, used and transmitted",[31] it is also possible to describe the ways in which that milieu uniquely interacted with the materiality of each prompt book.

The following three chapters set out to do just this. They will present case studies which examine some of the prompt books that we have already introduced from different angles: with respect to their creation and use, their connection to the "age of print" in which they were embedded, their relationship to the paying audience and the censor as an "audience of one", the interdependence of prompting and stage-managing, and not least the status of the literary dramatic text as soon as it was written down as content in a prompt book and then enriched. By writing thick descriptions and conducting analyses of selected prompt books, we will point out the often overlooked but important role they played in the entangled histories of theatre, literature, and (manuscript) culture.

31 Quenzer 2014, 2.

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