CHAPTER I

Introduction: the material culture of monarchy

In 1908 Dr. Paul Seidel, Director of the Hohenzollern Museum, proudly announced the addition of underwear to the museum's collection: "the garters of Queen Luise . . . which she wore the day she fell mortally ill." Shortly after the queen's early death in 1810, Friedrich Wilhelm III gave the garters to Luise's *Oberhofmeisterin*, Sophie von Voss, as a memento. Voss passed them on to Auguste von Schoeler, the wife of a Prussian envoy to the Russian court, who had hosted the queen in exile in St. Petersburg while she waited out the Napoleonic occupation of Prussia. In bestowing the garters on Schoeler, Voss insisted that she tell no one about the gift; they were to remain a token of personal affection.[1] When Schoeler's granddaughter presented them to the Hohenzollern Museum a century later, they were no longer objects of private devotion, but had become "national property" (*Nationaleigentum*).[2]

In the museum, founded in 1877, the garters joined a wealth of royal, household possessions – tea cups and toothbrushes, baby shoes and toys, home-made Easter eggs and wedding bouquets – homely objects that overwhelmed the dynasty's more stately displays. Paul Lindenberg, journalist and editor of *Die Deutsche Rundschau*, believed the museum's sentimental tone forged a special bond between the Crown and the public.[3] He claimed that, when the museum caught fire in 1885, Berliners felt "as though the flames had also attacked [their] own possessions, as if a part of [their] own souvenirs, rich with memories, was being destroyed."[4] Read in this way, the public's acceptance of royal tschotschkes as part of its cultural heritage implies that Germans recognized monarchy as their inalienable legacy, that they were, as contemporaries noted, the most monarchically minded people

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[1] Seidel, "Ein Andenken," 263.

[2] Lindenberg, *Hohenzollern-Museum* (1888), 1. The term was commonly used when speaking of the monarchy by the late nineteenth century. See Seidel, "Introduction," *Hohenzollern-Jahrbuch, 1897–1913* (n.d.), 3; Weber, "Königin Luise," *Gartenlaube* (1910), 598.

[3] Luh, "Ruhmreiche," 14.   [4] Lindenberg, *Hohenzollern-Museum* (1888), 1.

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in Europe.[5] Such uncritical loyalism evokes shades of Diederich Hessling, Heinrich Mann's *Untertan*, who adored his sovereign to the point of self-abasement, no matter how undeserving that ruler might be.[6] If this was the case, then where did German monarchic enthusiasm come from, and how different was it from loyalism in other European countries?

The nineteenth century was a challenging time for monarchies across Europe, and some dynasts fared better than others. In France, the monarchic principle suffered dramatic reversals of fortune, swinging between royalist and republican political systems, from absolutism to democracy, to empire and constitutional monarchy, to commune and back again. Even in the relatively stable, secular, and liberal Third Republic, monarchism hovered in the background, giving hope of royal restoration to French conservatives. The British monarchy, by contrast, faced few serious, existential challenges, but at the price of giving up power to parliament, as Queen Victoria was transformed into a figurehead over the course of her long reign. Despite republican movements and embarrassing personal scandals, the British monarchy has managed to remain in place to this day based on its apolitical, sentimental popularity. In Russia, the opposite was the case: the tsar retained virtually unfettered power up to 1914, but relied heavily on political repression. Hence the dramatic collapse of the House of Romanov as a result of Russia's losses in World War I.

The Hohenzollerns (Kings of Prussia 1701–1918; German Emperors 1871–1918) trod a middle course, more resistant to parliamentary change than the British, but more politically inclusive than the Russian tsars; their public profile, though, oscillated widely between high regard and disapproval. Frederick the Great (Friedrich II) was a popular hero already during his lifetime. His great-nephew Friedrich Wilhelm III was initially disgraced because of his pitiful defeat at Napoleon I's hands, but gained sympathy after the death of his beloved consort, Queen Luise. His image as grieving widower helped him avoid constitutional reform without much public protest (although many progressive Prussians silently longed for his death to end Prussia's political stagnation). His son, Friedrich Wilhelm IV, raised great hopes in 1840 as a new Frederick, only to disappoint them just as quickly, becoming the ill-fated king of the Prussian Revolution of 1848. He was succeeded in 1861 by his brother Wilhelm I, the hated symbol of reaction in 1848 who saw a change of fortune with his successful unification of Germany in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870–71. His son, Friedrich III, died after only three months in office in 1888, leaving Victoria, his unpopular English consort (and eldest daughter of Queen Victoria),

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[5] Green, *Fatherlands*, 62.   [6] Mann, *Patrioteer*.

side-lined to watch her son Wilhelm II ascend the throne. A mercurial figure, Wilhelm II was by turns admired, criticized, and reviled. Squandering what public sympathy remained in a series of scandals in 1905–9, the Kaiser lost his throne as he lost the Great War in 1918 and fled into exile unmourned in Germany, marking the end of Hohenzollern rule.

The fluctuations in the monarchy's fortunes, its resistance to demands for political change, and the extreme disapproval it suffered at times raise the question why the Hohenzollerns did not face the same fate as the French monarchy: deposition through revolution. Instead, at each pan-European revolutionary juncture – 1789–94, 1830, 1848 – most German reformers envisioned a constitutional system that retained the monarchy. This is where the image of Germans as exceptionally monarchic becomes significant: historians often interpret such steadfast loyalism as a symptom of a peculiarly authority-worshiping, subaltern mentality. They use this assumption to explain why Germans were not ready for political independence and democracy in the Weimar Republic, instead succumbing to the allure of dictatorial, one-man leadership, first by Paul von Hindenburg, then by Adolf Hitler.

Seidel's and Lindenberg's glorification of Queen Luise's garters seems to support such an interpretation. However, theirs was not the only possible response to the monarchy's relics. In his description of the Hohenzollern Museum in 1909, Jeannot Emil von Grotthuss lampooned the inconsequential nature of the display items, which in his view had lost the reverent, sacral connotations implicit in the term "relic":

Dried leaves, plucked from a tree under which a princely couple once sat; the collar of one of Friedrich Wilhelm III's dogs; chipped cups from which Hohenzollern rulers drank; pencils, feathers, scissors that Kaiser Friedrich used, cigar cases, seals, old watch chains with watch keys, lorgnettes, opera glasses. On the wall in Queen Luise's room hangs resplendent a paper calendar, which no doubt some purveyor to the court once gave her as a promotional gift. Furthermore gloves, handkerchiefs, the nightcap of the Queen. Wilhelm the First's, Queen Luise's and Elisabeth Christine's combed-out hairs are preserved; dried laurel leaves from 1840; two laurel leaves, said to have been gathered by Queen Luise, of which only the ribs remain; a handkerchief "that touched old Fritz's brow as it grew cold in death"; old boots that Friedrich wore; a cross of Friedrich Wilhelm III which contains, as an inscription proclaims, an authentic piece of the Cross of Christ! The hoof of a horse that Crown Prince Friedrich was wont to ride in the years 1864–66. Finally a belt buckle that Friedrich Wilhelm I swallowed as a five year old child and that – by what route? – came back out into the light of day.[7]

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[7] Grotthuss, *Dämmerung*, 93–94.

In Grotthuss' account, royal "relics" were little more than the detritus of everyday life, symbols of insignificance, rather than monarchical grandeur. They implied that everything touched by a monarch was worthy of regard, but also that the king, reliant upon mundane objects, had rather too much in common with his lowliest subjects. For indeed, the belt buckle swallowed and shat out by Frederick the Great's father could inspire ridicule and revulsion as much as gratitude for his deliverance from danger.

Who, then, more closely represented public opinion? Paul Seidel, the museum's director, a convinced monarchist and life-long servant of the Hohenzollern dynasty who made his career writing about royal art collections? Paul Lindenberg, the National Liberal journalist who equally made a career writing hagiographic works on European monarchs? Or Jeannot Emil von Grotthuss, the modernist novelist and literary critic? These three authors' biographies point to the difficulty of assessing popular attitudes based on published texts. All three men held normative political convictions, telling people what they should think rather than directly reflecting common views.

Beyond these writers' personal agendas, press conditions in Prussia generally pushed authors toward monarchism. In contrast, when studying British history, textual analysis may offer a more representative range of public voices, as Britain had a longer tradition of freedom of the press and republican criticism of monarchy. Already in the eighteenth century, English readers enjoyed cartoons ridiculing the royal family, while musical plays satirizing the Crown and its ministers, from *The Beggar's Opera* to *Polly*, were runaway successes even as they elicited royal displeasure.[8] Prussia, by contrast, retained proactive censorship well into the nineteenth century, as unauthorized, critical tracts and caricatures were seized and their authors punished for their impudence. Even with the end of outright censorship after 1871, lèse-majesté laws continued to suppress criticism of the monarchy by holding publishers as well as authors legally responsible for negative press.[9] It was only in 1908, with the media storm surrounding Wilhelm II's scandals, that lèse-majesté laws lost their power to intimidate, even though they remained on the books.[10]

With or without such legal underpinnings, journalistic practices inclined authors toward hagiography, or at least cooperation with the monarchy.

[8] Colley, *Britons*, 200, 209–210.
[9] Piereth, "Propaganda." For *Majestätsbeleidigung* specifically: Daniel, "Politik," 49–50; Anderson, *Practicing Democracy*. For an instance in which the publisher was prosecuted – although acquitted – see the case of Julius Rodenberg and *Die Deutsche Rundschau* in Haacke, *Rodenberg*.
[10] Kohlrausch, *Skandal*, 69–70.

Authors with more access to the royal family, who seemed "in-the-know," were more likely to be sought out by publishers as experts on royalty. In order to gain access to the royal house, authors first had to demonstrate their loyalty, creating a system that favored "agenda-setting," royalist journalists like Lindenberg. At the same time, the Hohenzollerns required that writers and photographers apply for press passes to attend royal festivities, and used this as a mechanism to reward those who wrote glowing stories about the dynasty. The Prussian state also took an increasingly proactive press stance after 1848, leaning on editors of semi-independent newspapers to publish authorized, though often unattributed, pro-monarchic articles, and blurring the lines between official and impartial texts.[11]

If journalists were too professionally invested to be objective observers, what other sources can historians draw upon to assess the views of private individuals, few of whom wrote overtly about their experience of the monarchy? The material culture of monarchy offers one such alternative source, especially if understood according to Arjun Appadurai's conception of "the social life of things." As Appadurai notes, objects in motion, like Luise's garters, can "illuminate their human and social context" in the way they moved between individuals.[12] How and to whom the objects were transmitted, and what was done with them after they changed hands, gives insight into the motivations of those who collected, owned, and circulated them.[13] This, then, is the topic of this book: who was selling royal memorabilia, who was buying it, and with what incentives; what collectors did with the objects; how the monarchy responded; and what social practices were involved in these exchanges. It is, in a nutshell, a reception history of monarchy read through material culture. The book's goal is to plumb the meaning of German loyalism. Which aspects of monarchy did collectors and consumers endorse? As a corollary, which competing royal myths did they create through their manipulation of dynastic goods?

[11] Weise, "Pressefotografie III" and "Pressefotografie IV," 13–36 and 27–40 respectively; Daniel, "Politik," 54–55; Piereth, "Propaganda," 21–43; Kohnen, *Pressepolitik*, 135–172. Green, *Fatherlands*, 155–156. In the face of republican criticism, the British monarchy developed a more formal relationship with the press. Similar normative and institutional factors also prompted German journalists to report on the Franco-Prussian War according to how it was "supposed" to look, not as it was really experienced by soldiers. Kelly, "Whose War?," 304.

[12] Appadurai, "Introduction," 5.

[13] For theoretical approaches to material culture studies: Appadurai, *Social Life*; Chilton, *Material Meanings*; Graves-Brown, ed., *Matter*; Hartmann and Haubl, eds., *Dingen*; Kingery, ed., *Learning*; Lubar and Kingery, *History*; Miller, "Alienable Gifts"; Pearce, ed., *Experiencing*; Pocius, ed., *Living*. For audience reception and media studies: Cruz and Lewis, eds., *Viewing*; Dickinson *et al.*, eds., *Approaches*; Ettema and Whitney, eds., *Audiencemaking*.

ROYAL MEMORABILIA

Royal memorabilia entered circulation in numerous ways. Most relics first left royal hands as financial bonuses meant to acknowledge loyal retainers' dedication and service, such as when Luise presented the classicist Alois Hirt a gold snuff box for organizing a particularly attractive court ball.[14] Unlike cash gifts, such royal baubles avoided the opprobrium of bribery, while still offering the recipient a monetary premium when sold on the open market.[15] Other objects started life as incidental souvenirs, ordinary household things that took on the sheen of relics when they came into contact with the monarch. Luise's life trajectory in particular stimulated the creation of such souvenirs. Forced into exile in eastern Prussia after the defeat at Jena in 1806, Luise encountered her subjects more frequently and informally than was usual for royalty.[16] Deprived of her fortune, she rewarded supporters with her own possessions (tea cups, personal jewelry) rather than more formal gifts. To continue her benevolent activities, she auctioned off other personal belongings (table services, glassware) to raise money for the poor. Objects that she used along the way (serving bowls out of which she ate, pianos upon which she played) were further reinterpreted by their owners as impromptu "relics."

Once the objects entered the public realm, collectors bought and sold them through newspaper advertisements, auctions, and booksellers, as well as to brokers in Great Britain and France where trade in historical artifacts was brisk. After mid-century, this informal relic-exchange was folded into a more professionalized collectibles market with institutionalized, market-driven mechanisms of sale: auction houses, official price lists, and trade journals. As commodities, relics joined a wide-ranging industry of commemorative memorabilia produced by private entrepreneurs, who capitalized on the fact that they did not need official permission to reproduce the monarch's portrait on consumer goods.

In private hands, relics were used by their owners as tools to express social and political views. In the eighteenth century, local notables, officials, and members of the educated middle class (*Bildungsbürger*) began to articulate their assessment of the monarchy through sermons, journal articles, political petitions, and local ceremonies.[17] For ordinary Germans,

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[14] Anon., "Kleine Abhandlungen und Notizen," *Mittheilungen* (1892), 67.
[15] Falcke, *Geschenkwesen*, esp. 213.   [16] Stamm-Kuhlmann, *König*, 285–286.
[17] For written texts: Wienfort, *Monarchie*; for local ceremonies and petitions: Büschel, *Untertanenliebe*. Derek Beales argues that petitions from common folk, including peasants, should also be regarded as part of the public sphere, since they often addressed common policy issues: Beales, "Joseph II," 249–268.

though, collecting, exchanging, and crafting royal souvenirs offered a more accessible way to communicate their idealized vision of the king (and queen). And when they donated relics to the royal museums, they expressed those visions directly to the royal house. As Raymond Firth notes: "To make a gift is self-defining; it is an index to idea of personality of giver and recipient."[18] Through their relic-gifts, and the manner in which they presented them to the sovereign, donors signaled what kinds of objects they considered appropriate to the king's character and the dignity of his office. In response, the monarch either validated or rejected this assessment by accepting or declining the gifts. Moreover, by their very nature, relics are fragments, isolated and unmoored objects in need of narratives to give them meaning. Souvenirs in particular function to give physical proof of an individual's experiences – that he or she was "really there" to experience a significant event.[19] As such, the stories that subjects projected onto relics and souvenirs also "personalized" the objects, showing the outside world the collector's sense of self. Royal memorabilia thus allowed collectors to participate vicariously in the great events of the day. When subjects donated relics to the Hohenzollern Museum, for instance, they inserted themselves, in their donation letters, into the plot of German unification, and drew the boundaries of their self-perceived relationship to the monarchy.

Privately owned memorabilia thus represented an independent source of meaning, often in competition with the official dynastic image – a challenge to which the monarchy was slow to respond. Of course, like other princes, Hohenzollern rulers used royal iconography as a tool for "explaining, justifying, impressing, and mediating" their rule, for "in a revolutionary age effective monarchical authority required both ideological programmes and propaganda offensives."[20] Still, when it came to royal propaganda, Prussia was a belated nation compared to France's Second Empire or Victorian Britain. In Britain in particular, greater freedom of the press and republican criticism was accompanied by concerted, state-led efforts to manipulate public opinion.[21] Already in the early eighteenth century, English political

[18] Firth, *Symbols*, 381, and chapter 11: "Symbolism in Giving and Getting" more generally. Daniel Miller notes that gifts can be more symbolic of the relationship between giver and recipient, than of the personality of either party individually. Miller, "Alienable," 91–115.

[19] Stewart, *On Longing*, chapter 5: "Objects of Desire," and esp. 135–137.

[20] Barclay, *Frederick William IV*, 10, 55. For examples of ceremonial: Sösemann, "Zeremoniell"; Sösemann, "Hollow-sounding"; Andres and Schwengelbeck, "Zeremoniell." Hubertus Büschel takes issue with the assumption that early nineteenth-century monarchs used royal ceremonial to win over the public, arguing that, at least up to 1830, ceremonial was directed at the court alone, with little thought to its pedagogical potential vis-à-vis the broader public. Büschel, *Untertanenliebe*.

[21] For the radical critique of Queen Victoria: Plunkett, *Victoria*; Williams, *Contentious*; Taylor, *Down*.

parties had promoted their agendas in the press while the government had given financial support to loyal newspapers, a media technique adopted in Prussia in the 1840s, and perfected only under Bismarck's chancellorship.[22] The British monarchy also had more "handlers" to mold the royal image, especially during Victoria's reign. When Walter Bagehot published *The English Constitution* in the 1860s, a tract famous for advocating royal spectacle as a public relations tool, he was simply the most outspoken of the queen's managers, among whom figured Prince Albert, Baron Christian Friedrich von Stockmar, and prime ministers Lord Melbourne and Benjamin Disraeli.[23] Across the Channel, Napoleon III likewise used a wide range of press, photographic, and spectacular techniques to bolster public support for his regime.[24]

Without a similar coterie of public relations advisors, the Hohenzollerns tended to remain within the bounds of traditional royal publicity, and strayed only haphazardly into the realm of modern propaganda, at least until Wilhelm II's reign (1888–1918). For much of the nineteenth century, the dynasty relied on state portraiture, royal ceremonial, and military maneuvers to shape its image. Although inflated to the point of invention at times, such self-representational techniques were aimed more at a traditional elite of courtiers, diplomats, and notables than the general population.[25] The broader public, both middle and working class, was served early in the century by state-sponsored public works (hospitals, schools, museums, and theaters) and traditional festivities, which the monarchy assumed would be enough to cement public loyalty. The dynasty only intermittently crafted souvenirs for popular consumption and only slowly began to shape its royal celebrations to allow public participation.[26]

The Prussian dynasty also waited until the late 1870s to present an accessible, public-friendly face in the Hohenzollern Museum. Before then, royal relics were displayed first in the Kunstkammer in the Berlin Schloss and then in a series of smaller exhibition spaces. None of these venues capitalized on the relics' full ideological potential. As the displays changed with each new installation – with some objects omitted from the new exhibits,

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[22] For Britain: Wienfort, *Monarchie*, 68. For Prussia: Piereth, "Propaganda," 21–43; Kohnen, *Pressepolitik*, 135–172.

[23] Homans, *Royal Representations*, 101–115; Plunkett, *Victoria*, 64–67; Munich, *Secrets*, 7–8.

[24] Truesdell, *Spectacular*.

[25] This was a tradition famously perfected by Louis XIV, and copied by monarchs throughout Europe. Burke, *Fabrication*, 4–6. For the traditional use of symbolic power: Klingensmith, *Utility*; Cannadine, "Divine"; Ehalt, *Ausdrucksformen*; Blanning, *Culture*; Duindam, *Vienna*. For Prussia specifically: Gestrich, *Absolutismus*; Paulmann, *Pomp*; Büschel, *Untertanenliebe*.

[26] See the example of the Fireworks Riot of 1835 in Chapter 9.

more added in, still others regrouped and juxtaposed in novel ways – the
relics reflected changing museal goals, influenced by the monarchs' and
museum curators' private agendas, as well as trends (and challenges) com-
ing from a public of memorabilia consumers. Through all of these changes,
the monarchy rarely used the relics proactively to promote a vigorous, loy-
alist propaganda, but followed the public's lead in royal myth-creation,
often with great reluctance.

CONSUMER CULTURE

The public experienced these royal relics not just in museum contexts,
but also against the background of the nineteenth century's burgeoning
consumer culture. Consumerism reached some parts of Europe earlier than
others, with Britain leading the way in the early eighteenth century. By
the 1780s, consumerism arrived in the German states as well, even ahead
of Germany's industrialization, as new fashion journals like the *Journal
des Luxus und der Moden* and the *Zeitung für die elegante Welt* opened
the world of British and French consumption to Germans discursively
and vicariously.[27] As consumption lost the opprobrium of wastefulness
around the turn of the nineteenth century, and was redefined not as sinful
but as productive and reflective of economic well-being, the display of
consumer goods in the home became a cornerstone of middle-class identity.
It also became a vehicle for individual self-expression, for instance when
admirers of Goethe's *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers* imitated his famous
blue and yellow suit as an outward sign that they shared his inner passions.[28]
The consumerist ethos grew steadily until, by the late nineteenth century,
Germany represented a fully fledged consumer society with "large numbers
of people staking a real portion of their personal identities and their quest
for meaning – even their emotional satisfaction – on the search for and
acquisition of goods."[29]

   The Hohenzollerns, too, were drawn into the consumerist worldview.
While Berliners in the first half of the nineteenth century encountered the
monarchy through the objects they produced, as purveyors to the court or
artisans selling their wares to the king, in the second half of the century
the majority experienced the dynasty as consumers. There was, however,

[27] Wurst, *Fabricating*, 11; also Purdy, *Tyranny*.
[28] See the shift in the definition of consumption from wasteful to productive in Wurst, *Fabricating*,
81–90. For *Werther*: Purdy, *Tyranny*, 154, and in general the chapter "The Veil of Masculinity."
[29] Stearns, "Stages," 105. On late nineteenth-century consumerism: König, *Konsumgesellschaft*; Haupt
and Torp, eds., *Konsumgesellschaft*; Hamlin, *Work*.

a great deal of ambiguity in what royal goods meant to consumers. Sub-jects could purchase Frederick the Great rings, handkerchiefs, and snuff boxes to broadcast their political allegiances, just as British liberals could buy Anti-Corn Law tea sets to promote their free trade agenda.[30] Even so, souvenirs did not always carry such weighty political significance, but were part of a broader celebrity culture. The material celebration of Frederick the Great did not differ significantly from that of the Viganos, two dancers who took Vienna by storm in the late 1790s: "After eight to ten days, everyone had snuff boxes, rings, bracelets, fans, etc. with the portrait of La Vigano."[31] Such souvenirs were as much a matter of novelty and momen-tary enthusiasm as respectful admiration: the arrival of the first giraffe in Paris in 1827 also spawned "giraffe soaps, cake molds, paper-weights, toys, ointments, wallpaper, parasols and toothpick holders."[32] As mere fads, sou-venirs moved easily into the realm of triviality, with little political meaning or hegemonic potential. The art magazine *Der Kunstwart* expressed this fear of debasement in 1910 when it criticized mundane Goethe memo-rabilia – daily tear-off calendars with Goethe verses, cookbooks adorned with Goethe poems – as demeaning to the great poet and the ideals he represented.[33]

That royal relics also supported a range of possible reactions, and not only reverence, is evident in two historic houses dedicated to Frederick the Great. One house displayed the desk Frederick used during his campaigns in Saxony in 1756.[34] Preserved just as the king had left it, the desk and its implements recalled his strategic genius and hard work. The other display, which "preserved in commemoration" the bathtub Frederick used at Bad Landeck, did not conjure up such noble visions, but rather physicality, humanity, and illness, not to mention the vulnerability (if not shame) of nakedness. The emotions evoked by imagining the king sitting at a desk, or bathing in a tub, were rather different.[35] Finally, whatever the relics' overt symbolism, the way collectors handled the objects once in their possession left room for self-expression. As Michel de Certeau notes in *The Practice of Everyday Life*, consumers routinely formulate tactics of appropriation, adapting commodities to their own interests and thus, in Certeau's evocative term, "poaching" on the symbolic products made by social elites.[36] As this study shows, collectors also used royal souvenirs in ways that diverged from the intentions of the objects' producers. As they

[30] For free trade memorabilia: Briggs, *Victorian Things*, 144.   [31] Tanzer, *Spectacle*, 176.
[32] Croke, *Ark*, 140.   [33] Beaulieu, "Goethekultur," *Kunstwart* (1910), 359–362.
[34] Rödenbeck, *Tagebuch*, I:302.   [35] Rödenbeck, *Tagebuch*, II:259.
[36] Certeau, *Practice*. For a concise summary of his theories, see the chapter "General Introduction."