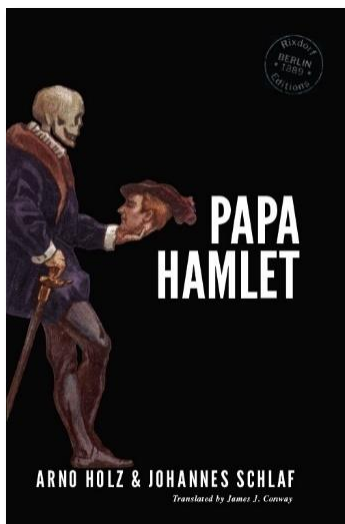


*October 2021: a revolutionary event in German literature available in English for the first time*

## PAPA HAMLET by Arno Holz & Johannes Schlaf



Adultery, vulgarity, disordered lives on the brink of collapse: the feverish existence of failed actor Niels Thienwiebel shocked German readers when *PAPA HAMLET* was first published in 1889. In declaiming the soliloquies of his most famous role, ‘the great Thienwiebel’ finds delusional refuge from the squalid room he shares with despondent wife Amalie and infant son Fortinbras. But it was the radical style as much as the moral outrage of this novella that so confounded contemporaries. Reflecting their own bohemian Berlin milieu, Arno Holz and Johannes Schlaf showed the dream of the self-authored life turning to nightmare through apathy and self-absorption. Originally credited to a fabricated Norwegian writer, *PAPA HAMLET* signalled the explosive arrival of Naturalism while also pointing ahead to Modernism; its appropriations, irony and play of identity even foretold Postmodernism. Appearing for the first time in English, it is teamed here with an

early incarnation of the same narrative by Schlaf alongside further collaborations with Holz. Together their fearless candour and anarchic ingenuity reveal another side to German Naturalism that is well overdue for rediscovery.

Just four years in duration, the collaboration between **ARNO HOLZ** (1863-1929) and **JOHANNES SCHLAF** (1862-1941) created a revolution in form and content which exerted a huge influence on German literature. As well as *Papa Hamlet* their partnership produced the play *The Selicke Family*, a number of shorter prose works and an autobiographical comic. After living and working in bohemian isolation just outside Berlin, the pair split acrimoniously in 1892 and continued sniping at each other for decades as they moved on from their Naturalist origins. Arno Holz was something of a tragic figure, consumed with bitterness; works like his verse collection *Phantasmus* were years head of their time yet security eluded him. The more amenable Johannes Schlaf enjoyed greater success but his posthumous reputation suffers from his later embrace of the Nazis. Neither writer has previously appeared in English.

### Arno Holz & Johannes Schlaf

*Papa Hamlet*

Translated by James J. Conway

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Described by the *TLS* as an ‘exciting new list’, **RIXDORF EDITIONS** is a Berlin-based press which is introducing forgotten German classics to a contemporary English-language readership, focusing on the Wilhelmine period (1890-1918), when daringly innovative writers defied a reactionary mainstream. The Rixdorf roster of original translations include *Berlin's Third Sex* by Magnus Hirschfeld and Anna Croissant-Rust's *Death*, plus works by August Endell, Franziska zu Reventlow, Hermann Bahr and Ilse Frapan. *Papa Hamlet* will be followed in spring 2022 by a major collection of prose works by **ELSE LASKER-SCHÜLER**, acclaimed as one of Germany's greatest 20th century writers.

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