Selected Works by J.M.R. Lenz

Plays, Stories, Essays, and Poems

Edited and
Translated by
Martin Wagner
and
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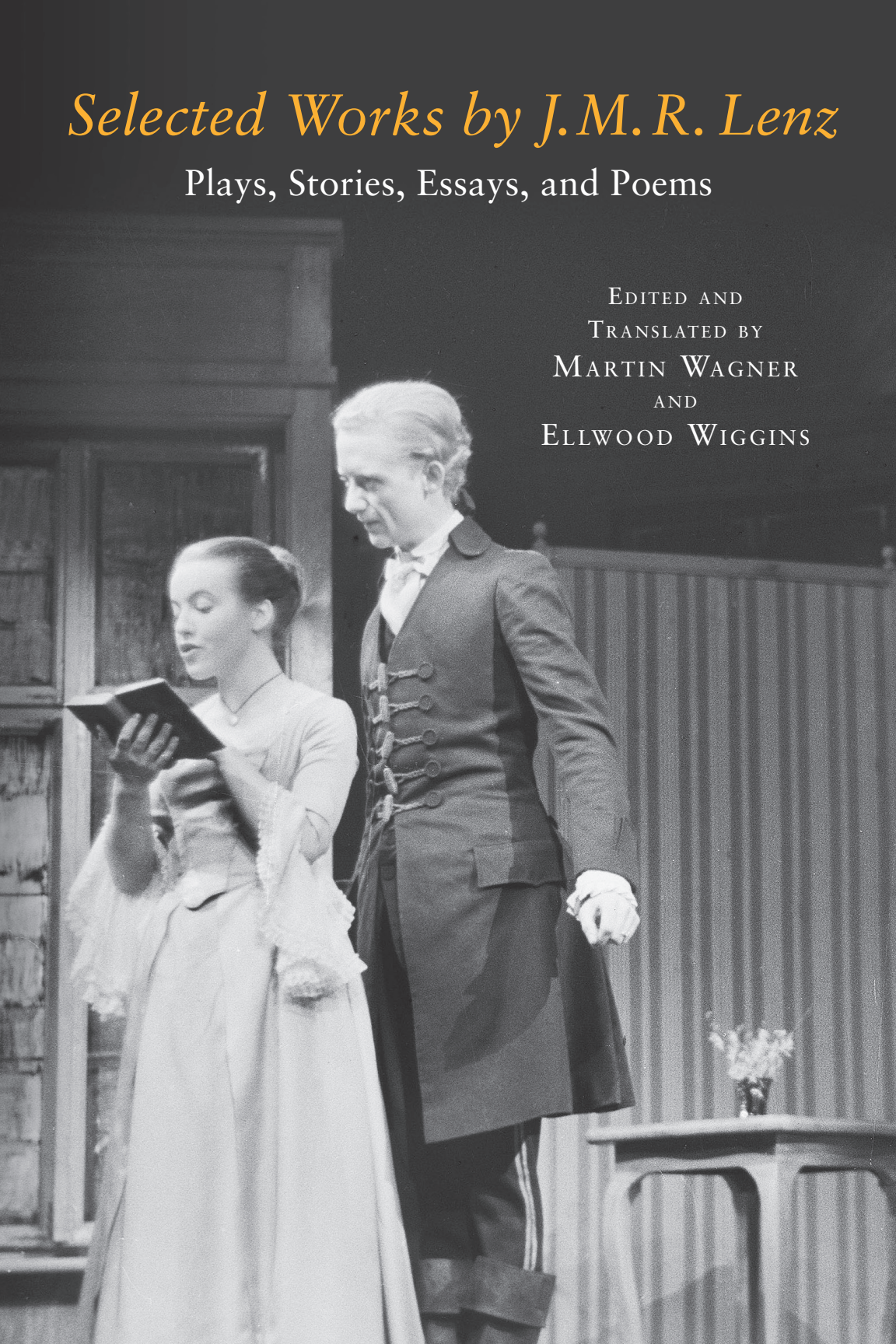

Selected Works by J. M. R. Lenz

Studies in German Literature, Linguistics, and Culture

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A Note on the Translation

Lenz often seems refreshingly modern. Few other eighteenth-century writers are willing to represent speech in such shockingly "realistic" imitation of natural cadence, elliptical phraseology, and vulgar expressions. But Lenz is also a creature of his time and culture. His vocabulary resounds with references to the lifeworld and learning of eighteenth-century Germany, and his syntax still owes much to the elaborate and sometimes convoluted prose style of his contemporaries. It is therefore necessary to resist the translator's temptation to make Lenz fully "our contemporary" (to borrow Jan Kott's compelling but problematic description of Shakespeare).[1] Our goal in these translations has been to convey the sense of Lenz's word choice and syntax as closely as grammatical English allows. We try to avoid obvious anachronisms in our English renderings without adhering slavishly to the usage of eighteenth-century English conventions. We are not translating Lenz for a literary audience in Georgian England, but neither are we converting him into a twenty-first-century American screenwriter. The resulting English texts retain ambiguities and obscurities that would have struck their original German audiences as odd, but offer explanatory notes to provide modern readers with important contexts and background. Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834), the early theorist of translation, gave translators two choices: bring the author closer to the readers, or bring the readers closer to the author. When we have tipped too far in striking the balance that any translation must find between these two extremes, we have tried to fall on the side of the latter option. Our efforts will be successful if some of the often delightful and sometimes baffling strangeness of Lenz's writing comes across to readers of these English texts.

[1] Jan Kott, *Shakespeare Our Contemporary*, trans. Boleslaw Taborski (London: Methuen, 1965).

Introduction

In a short diary entry from August 21, 1912, Franz Kafka wrote: "Read Lenz incessantly and—such is my state—he restored me to my senses."[1] In the index to the English translation of Kafka's diaries, the editors explain the irony of this statement in all brevity: "Lenz, Jacob Michael Reinhold (1751–92), German poet, who went insane."[2] This short entry reads like a caricature of Lenz's popular image. The persona J. M. R. Lenz is indeed indelibly linked to the myth of his early mental breakdown, famously depicted in one of German literature's most influential texts, Georg Büchner's novella *Lenz* (published posthumously in 1839).[3] Kafka must have been in a sorry state indeed—or so one may understand his note—if reading Lenz brought him back to his senses.

And yet one should hope that Kafka did not simply swallow this stereotype hook, line, and sinker, reiterating what has been said about Lenz ever since Goethe dismissed his onetime friend as a "whimsical"[4]

We would like to thank all those who have helped us realize this edition, most of all Susanne Fuchs, whose research and advice importantly informed this project in its initial stages. We are also indebted to the fruitful criticisms and suggestions of Jim Walker and our anonymous reviewers. Finally, we are grateful to Sue Martin for her careful copyediting of the manuscript.

[1] Franz Kafka, *The Diaries, 1910–23*, trans. Joseph Kresh and Martin Greenberg (New York: Schocken, 1988), 207.

[2] Kafka, *The Diaries*, 512.

[3] Lenz's mental illness has repeatedly been studied and, more recently, also called into question. As Helga Stipa Madland and Heribert Tommek argue, critics perpetuated a dramatic image of Lenz's mental collapse that the extant documents of his life do not fully corroborate. Madland, *Image and Text: J. M. R. Lenz* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1994), 1–16; for Tommek, see J. M. R. Lenz, *Moskauer Schriften und Briefe*, ed. Heribert Tommek, 2 vols. (Berlin: Weidler, 2007), 1–3, 45. The protagonist of Büchner's novella, although evidently inspired by the historical Lenz, developed his very own reception history—most notably through Peter Schneider's popular narrative about the left-wing student movement in Germany and Italy, *Lenz* (1973). Schneider's book borrows much more evidently from Büchner than from the historical J. M. R. Lenz. For Büchner's shadow over the reception of J. M. R. Lenz see Madland, *Image and Text*.

[4] Johann Wolfgang Goethe, *From My Life: Poetry and Truth: Parts One to Three*, trans. Robert R. Heitner, introd. Thomas P. Saine, ed. Thomas P. Saine and Jeffrey L. Sammons (New York: Suhrkamp, 1987), 367.

fellow of questionable sanity, who wasted his time on half-baked plans and intrigues. In fact, Lenz's literary and theoretical works—many of them published before he turned twenty-four—contain astonishingly learned and thought-provoking reflections on the literary, theological, economic, and military discourses of his time. Combining his wide reading with an acute observation of the world he lived in, Lenz importantly contributed to the self-critique of the Enlightenment known in literary history as *Sturm und Drang* (Storm and Stress)—a movement that comprised some of Germany's most well-known writers, including Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832) and the theologian and philosopher Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1803), and that is sometimes described as a precursor to both Romanticism and literary realism.[5] Lenz's work, moreover, was instrumental in moving German literature away from rule-bound neoclassical Enlightenment poetics and in setting the stage for a new and critical reflection of social and political reality in a less rigidly bound literary form.[6]

With his new reflection on the relation between literature and reality—and the literary form *of* reality—Lenz had a major impact not so much on his contemporaries (who soon forgot him), as on later generations of German writers. The open-form dramaturgy and social critique in Georg Büchner's proletarian tragedy *Woyzeck* (written 1836) could not be imagined without the innovations in form and content that we find in Lenz's plays *The Tutor* and *The Soldiers*. And both the generation of German naturalists and Bertolt Brecht still turned to Lenz as an important role model for engaging with the sociopolitical reality in Germany. The naturalist Wilhelm Arent (1864–1913) went so far as to publish several poems from his own pen as supposedly newly discovered texts by Lenz. When Brecht moved to the German Democratic Republic and became director of the Berliner Ensemble theater, the first play that he staged by another writer was J. M. R. Lenz's *The Tutor*. For Brecht, Lenz's *Tutor* was a parable of the "sorry

[5] In contrast to the older scholarship, which tended to claim a strong opposition between the rational Enlightenment and the youthful and emotional rebellion of the *Sturm und Drang*, newer scholarship describes the *Sturm und Drang* as a phenomenon of self-critique internal to the Enlightenment. See, for instance, Matthias Luserke, *Sturm und Drang* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2010), 15–17. This view has been adopted by many Lenz scholars; see Alan C. Leidner and Karin A. Wurst, *Unpopular Virtues: The Scholarly Reception of J. M. R. Lenz* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 1999), 118–19.

[6] For an extensive English study of the way in which Lenz inherits and intensifies an eighteenth-century German tradition that prepared the break with neoclassicism, see Helga Stipa Madland, *Non-Aristotelian Drama in Eighteenth Century Germany and Its Modernity: J. M. R. Lenz* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1982).

state of Germany"[7] that had fostered a culture of obedience from the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries.

In the 225 years since his death, Lenz has slowly shed the image of the mentally disturbed underdog, rejected by Goethe. At German schools and universities, Lenz is now widely read, and his plays are regularly performed on stage.[8] English readers, however, still have only very limited access to Lenz's texts. The first translations of Lenz's most important plays (*The Tutor* and *The Soldiers*) appeared as late as 1972.[9] Lenz's essay *Remarks on the Theater*—arguably the single most important theoretical statement of the *Sturm und Drang*—was not published in English translation until 2012.[10] Many of Lenz's essays have not been available in English so far, and we are not aware of any English translations of his stories and poems.

Building on the scholarship of the last decades as well as on the available German editions of Lenz's writings, this volume presents for the first time a representative and carefully annotated selection of Lenz's main works in English. It allows readers to see Lenz's plays in the context of his essays, stories, and poems, and thus to study the intricate relations between theoretical musings, literary form, and political agenda that are a defining feature of Lenz's works.

That being said, every edition of selected works must choose texts based on a specific focus. Our goal was to present Lenz's most influential plays, published between 1774 and 1776 (arguably the decisive years of the short-lived *Sturm und Drang*[11]), in the context of lesser-known texts of roughly the same period. Moreover, we wanted to introduce English

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[7] Bertolt Brecht, "The Tutor," trans. Ralph Manheim and Wolfgang Sauerlander, in *Berliner Ensemble Adaptations*, ed. David Barnett (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 3.

[8] Lenz's play *The Tutor*, for instance, was performed at the Schauspielhaus Zürich in 2010, at the Maxim Gorki Theater (Berlin) in 2013, and at the Deutsches Nationaltheater (Weimar) in 2014.

[9] See the list of previous translations in the selected bibliography at the end of this volume.

[10] We should add here, however, that this essay was actually translated much earlier, in an unpublished 1956 Master's thesis by Mary Louise Jackson at the Rice Institute (today Rice University). Jackson's translation, which remained unduly neglected, thus appears to be the first text by Lenz that ever existed in English.

[11] Roughly these years see the publication of Herder's collection of essays *Von deutscher Art und Kunst* (1773; *Of German Character and Art*), Goethes's drama *Götz von Berlichingen* (1773) and novel *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers* (1774; *The Sorrows of Young Werther*), Heinrich Leopold Wagner's tragedy *Die Kindermörderin* (1776; *The Child Murderess*), as well as Friedrich Maximilian Klinger's tragedy *Sturm und Drang* (1776), which later gave its name to the eponymous literary movement.

readers to Lenz's prose fiction, which offers rich and extremely nuanced reflections on key discourses of the Enlightenment. As a consequence, we had to exclude Lenz's earlier theological essays,[12] as well as the much-neglected works of Lenz's late period (Lenz spent the last decade of his life in Moscow in precarious conditions). Apart from a few brief excerpts in the notes, we have also omitted all Lenz's letters from this edition.[13] All these were regrettable sacrifices. Our goal, however, was not a comprehensive edition of all of Lenz's writings, but rather a corpus of essential texts from the period of Lenz's production that most defined his legacy. English-speaking readers will find in this volume important new material for the study of German literary and cultural history. Indeed, the aesthetics and politics of the *Sturm und Drang*, so essential to the history of German literature and to the German Enlightenment, cannot be fully understood without a proper appreciation of Lenz's main works, which this edition makes possible.

Lenz's Life[14]

At a time when biographical readings of literary works were still fashionable, Lenz was easy prey for the critics.[15] Tracing the influences of Lenz's early life in his literary works poses little difficulty: his upbringing in a Protestant parsonage, the authority of his father (who had a successful career in the Lutheran church), and the early exposure to rather extreme forms of inequality in his native Livonia (today Latvia and Estonia), where a German minority ruled draconically over the local Baltic peasants—all these experiences loom large over Lenz's literary works. But influences from his later life also made their mark in Lenz's literary productions—from his studies under Immanuel Kant in Königsberg and his difficult friendship with the slightly older and much-admired Goethe in

[12] These, however, have been carefully introduced and analyzed in Timothy F. Pope's monograph *The Holy Fool: Christian Faith and Theology in J. M. R. Lenz* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003).

[13] English-speaking readers who wish to read Lenz in the original may choose to seek out Lenz's letter to Goethe's close friend Charlotte Stein from November 3, 1776. The letter is written in English, continuing the English lessons that Lenz had given her. Jakob Michael Reinhold Lenz, *Werke und Briefe in drei Bänden*, ed. Sigrid Damm (Frankfurt am Main: Insel Verlag, 1987), 3:508–10.

[14] See also the chronological table in this volume. For an extensive account of Lenz's life (in German) see Herbert Kraft, *J. M. R. Lenz* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2015). A book-length biography of Lenz in English has yet to be produced.

[15] One of the most extensive biographical readings of Lenz is the Germanist René Girard's study *Lenz 1751–1792: Genèse d'une dramaturgie du tragi-comique* (Paris: Librairie C. Klincksieck, 1968). (The author Girard is not to be confused with the prominent literary and cultural theorist [1923–2015] of the same name.)

Strasbourg and Weimar, to his many unhappy love affairs (we know only of cases of unrequited love in Lenz's life[16]). Several of the works included in this edition are directly inspired by events in Lenz's life, most prominently his play *The Soldiers*, whose central plot about a seduced and abandoned middle-class woman is based on a case that Lenz had witnessed in Strasbourg. But his poems, too, have often been read largely as gateways to Lenz's biography. For instance, traces of Lenz's devotion to Goethe's love interest from his Strasbourg years, Friederike Brion, are evident in the poems "Where are you now?" and "Love in the Countryside" (both of which are included in this edition).

With good reason, however, scholars have moved away from these biographical readings, whose heuristic value remains questionable.[17] Such readings can inform us only little about the ways in which literary works tell particular stories to illuminate questions of a more universal concern; nor can they speak to the quality of a literary text *as text*—shaped by, commenting on, and itself shaping a world of other texts.

And yet this justified suspicion of biographical approaches should not blind us to the fact that it is a cornerstone of Lenz's practice to allow his life and his lived experience of the world around him to enter his writings in a way that was almost unheard of in the generations before him. To be sure, Lenz's life does not hold a simple key to his works, but it shines through every page of his writing, and his works repeatedly ask the question of how to think about the relation between life and literature. It may not be amiss, therefore, to review Lenz's biography in its broad outlines, from his birth in Livonia in 1751 to his death in Moscow forty-one years later.

Lenz spent much of his childhood and youth in the towns of Sesswegen (today Cesvaine, Latvia) and Dorpat (today Tartu, Estonia). When he was seventeen, his father sent him to Königsberg, Prussia (today Kaliningrad, Russia) to study theology. While at university, Lenz attended the lectures of Immanuel Kant (who at that time, however, had not yet published any of the three *Critiques* that brought him his great renown). In 1770, when Kant was finally appointed full professor after fifteen years as a private lecturer, Lenz published a laudatory poem for his teacher (included in this volume).[18]

In 1771, without finishing his studies and against the wishes of his father, Lenz moved to Strasbourg to serve as the private tutor of the

[16] Five of these loves are listed in the chronological table at the end of this volume.
[17] A strong criticism of the dominance of biographical readings motivates, for instance, Gert Vonhoff's study of Lenz's poems, *Subjektkonstitution in der Lyrik von J. M. R. Lenz: Mit einer Auswahl neu herausgegebener Gedichte* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1990).
[18] On Kant's influence on Lenz, see Bert Kasties, *J. M. R. Lenz unter dem Einfluß des frühkritischen Kant: Ein Beitrag zur Neubestimmung des Sturm und Drang* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2003).

brothers Friedrich Georg and Ernst Nikolaus von Kleist, two young officers in a German regiment of the French army (decades later, Goethe noted in his autobiography dryly: "[They] could hardly have made a more unfortunate choice of mentor"[19]). In Strasbourg, Lenz became part of a literary circle, met the slightly older Goethe, started to correspond with Herder and the Swiss theologian and physiognomist Johann Kaspar Lavater (1741–1801), and began to make his name as an author. During these Strasbourg years (1771–76), many of Lenz's most well-known works were published, including the plays *The Tutor* and *The New Menoza*, and the essay *Remarks on the Theater*. The publication of this essay also contained a translation of Shakespeare's comedy *Love's Labour's Lost*. Lenz, like Goethe and Herder, held Shakespeare in high esteem as an alternative to the French neoclassicists Racine, Corneille, and Voltaire. How Shakespearian Lenz's own plays really are, however, remains a matter of dispute.[20]

In March 1776 Lenz followed Goethe to Weimar, where his friend was well connected to the local court. Lenz likely hoped for employment there. He brought a draft for reforming the military (the essay *On the Marriages of Soldiers*) along with him to Weimar, and in the next few months he continued to work on these plans. His hope to thus make his name at the local court, however, remained unfulfilled. As early as November 1776 Lenz was banned from Weimar. Apparently he had publicly ridiculed Duchess Anna Amalia (1739–1807) at a ball by reading a satirical pasquil aloud.[21]

Over the next three years, Lenz stayed with various friends in Germany and Switzerland, notably with Goethe's brother-in-law Johann Georg Schlosser, in whose house Lenz wrote the story *The Country Pastor* (published 1777). Lenz notes in this text that Schlosser—at that time the leading civil servant of the county Hochberg in the southwest of today's Germany—was an important model for the Enlightenment reformer Johannes Mannheim, the protagonist of the story.

During Lenz's years of wandering after his expulsion from Weimar, his mental health deteriorated significantly. The famous two-week episode in the home of the reform pastor Johann Friedrich Oberlin, which Georg Büchner describes in his novella *Lenz*, also falls in this period. The nature and seriousness of Lenz's breakdown during this time, however, have been subject to debate in recent years. The popular image of the utterly

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[19] Goethe, *Poetry and Truth*, 441.

[20] See, for instance, John Guthrie, "'Shakespeares Geist': Lenz and the Reception of Shakespeare in Germany," in *Jakob Michael Reinhold Lenz: Studien zum Gesamtwerk*, ed. David Hill (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1994), 39–42.

[21] For a reconstruction of this episode including Goethe's and Herder's roles in it, see Kraft, *J. M. R. Lenz*, 250–53.

insane writer whose works after 1778 can safely be discounted certainly does not hold.

In the summer of 1779 Lenz returned to his native Livonia. As was probably the case before, in Weimar, his goal was to find employment. Again he had little success. His attempt to become the principal of a school in Riga, where his father now lived as the superintendent of the Lutheran Church of Livonia, failed. (Herder, who had formerly taught at that school and was now a highly ranked church functionary in Weimar, was asked for support in the matter, but declined.)[22] Early in 1780 Lenz went to Saint Petersburg. Although he was reasonably well connected there, he again could not find work, though he may have served a brief stint as the secretary of a general in the spring of 1781.

In the late summer of 1781 Lenz left Saint Petersburg for Moscow, where he spent the remaining eleven years of his life. During this time he worked as a private tutor, as a teacher in a boarding school for children of the nobility, and as a translator.

Contrary to longstanding prejudice, Lenz remained productive after his mental breakdown in 1778 and continued writing poems, stories, plays, and essays until his death in 1792. Few of these texts, however, received any attention—either by his contemporaries or by scholars of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. A comprehensive and carefully annotated edition of the so-called Moscow Writings, filling some five hundred pages of text in German, French, and, occasionally, Russian, did not appear until 2007.[23]

Although still relatively young, Lenz apparently suffered from significant health problems in his final years. Whether these led to his premature and mysterious death in May 1792, however, remains unclear. For a long time, scholars perpetuated the story that he was found dead one night in the streets of Moscow. But this somber anecdote, too, is based on little evidence.[24]

His death became known through a newspaper announcement in August 1792. The obituary, here translated in its entirety, already contains the myth of Lenz as a tragically failed artist—a narrative that shaped the reception of Lenz in the following centuries:

> Moscow, May 24. Jac. Mich. Reinh. Lenz, author of *The Tutor*, *The New Menoza*, etc., died here today, mourned by few, missed by no one. This unfortunate scholar, whose most beautiful intellectual career was halted halfway through by an illness of the soul that paralyzed his powers and inhibited the flight of his genius, or

[22] See Kraft, *J. M. R. Lenz*, 297–98.
[23] Lenz, *Moskauer Schriften und Briefe*.
[24] Ibid., 43.

> at least distorted its direction—this man spent the best part of his life in a useless bustle, without real vocation.—He was mistaken by everyone; far from everything dear to him, he struggled with need and poverty—and yet he never lost the sense of his own worth. Countless humiliations made his pride even more prickly so that it eventually degenerated into that sullen contrariness that is usually the companion of noble poverty. He lived off alms, but he did not accept everyone's charity, and he felt insulted if one offered him money or support that he had not asked for—when indeed his figure and entire appearance were the most urgent call for charity. A more detailed description of his last years would be most interesting from a psychological and moral standpoint—and the author of this notice[25] will perhaps realize this idea, if time and duties allow it.
>
> He reached the age of forty-three [*sic*], and his funeral was paid for by a benevolent Russian nobleman in whose house Lenz had lived for quite a while.[26]

Lenz's Plays

As the obituary indicates, Lenz is remembered largely for his plays: he is the "author of *The Tutor*, *The New Menoza*, etc." If these plays made their mark, this is likely not only because they provocatively defy the neoclassical demands for unity of time (the action must not last longer than twenty-four hours), place (the entire play must be set in one location), and action (the play must focus on only one plotline), but also because of their explicit reflections on the political and economic realities of contemporary society. To be sure, Lenz was not the radical social critic he has sometimes been called. For all we can tell, Lenz remained committed, for instance, to a division of society into separate classes—each with its own duties and rights. Texts such as *On the Marriages of Soldiers* cannot be understood without an awareness of these conservative elements in the *Sturm und Drang* writer Lenz. When Lenz, for instance, envisions all of the soldiers' children to be automatically drafted in the military, this is in line with his traditional thinking in stable, clearly defined, and self-reproducing classes.

Despite these lingering elements of conservatism, however, Lenz's literary works contain an unprecedented amount of critical observation of his contemporary sociopolitical reality, including facets of its class system. This is evident from the first scene of Lenz's first published play, *The Tutor, or Advantages of Private Education* (1774), in which the title character muses on the career opportunities (or rather lack thereof) for a young college

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[25] The author is unknown. Concerning the assumption that the text was written by the pastor Johann Michael Jerzembsky see Lenz, *Moskauer Schriften und Briefe*, 43.

[26] *Intelligenzblatt der allgemeinen Literaturzeitung*, August 18, 1792, 820–21.

graduate. His "choice" to take up the position of a private tutor in a rather modest noble family far from Prussia's commercial and political centers is the effect of clearly delineated socioeconomic constraints: he becomes a tutor because this is the only thing that appears to be left for him.

In general, Lenz shows great awareness in this play for the ways in which not only job choice, but also language, aesthetics, diet, and hygiene are effects of the contemporary socioeconomic hierarchy. With Lenz's *The Tutor*, the most mundane everyday practices—what food is eaten when, by whom, and in whose company; who practices what form of dental hygiene—become stageworthy and meaningful as markers and results of the socioeconomic organization of society. The fact that such detailed explorations of everyday life in extended genre scenes cannot always be easily contained in traditional dramatic forms demonstrated for Lenz only the inadequacy of these forms. With all this in view, it is not amiss to see Lenz as a realist in a profound sense: recording the details of everyday life and revealing their underlying power structures. This at least implicit awareness of social structures in Lenz's plays attenuates some critics' cautionary reminders that Lenz—a child of his time—aimed many of his criticisms at the moral behavior of the individual rather than at any social or political frameworks.[27]

All this new engagement with reality notwithstanding, Lenz's plays—and none more so than *The Tutor*—are also thoroughly literary, part of a vast and varied network of texts from antiquity through early modernity to the height of the Enlightenment and Sentimentalism. Lenz's works are both more political *and* more obviously enmeshed in the textuality of literature than the writings of previous generations in Germany. It is remarkable that the most visibly political and "realist" of Lenz's major plays—namely, *The Tutor*—is at the same time likely also the most crowded with literary references. This curious doubling of realist observation and dense intertextuality is fully on display in a character such as the schoolmaster Wenzeslaus from *The Tutor*. Contemporary reviewers praised the author for his vivid depiction of this character, and yet some of his speeches are almost entirely sequences of citations.[28] Characters such as Wenzeslaus force us to rethink the relation between textuality, literariness, and reality.

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[27] For a critical view on claims of Lenz as a social critic see David Hill, "Das Politische in *Die Soldaten*," *Orbis Litterarum* 43, no. 3 (1988): 299–315.

[28] Contemporary reviews of Lenz's plays are included in Jacob Michael Reinhold Lenz, *Werke in zwölf Bänden: Faksimiles der Erstausgaben seiner zu Lebzeiten selbständig erschienenen Texte*, edited by Christoph Weiß, 12 vols. (St. Ingbert: Röhrig, 2001). For a brief summary of the initial reception see Leidner and Wurst, *Unpopular Virtues*, 1–19.

As Lenz moved on to write *The New Menoza* (1774) and *The Soldiers* (1776), literary references become slightly fewer and the plays in general are shorter, more focused around one main plot, and relatively more economic in their use of time and place (admittedly, this may not be immediately obvious in the case of *The New Menoza*). Compared to *The Tutor*, Lenz now allows less room for genre scenes of the kind we see in the depiction of student life or of the village school in *The Tutor*.

But we still find the characteristic mixture of social realist observation and pronounced intertextuality in these two later plays as well. This is easy to see in the case of *The New Menoza*. The play's main theme is the critique of European Enlightenment culture by a traveling outsider. But this social critique is at the same time clearly marked as part of an Enlightenment literary genre that consists precisely in such critical observations from supposedly inferior outsiders: the title of Lenz's play refers to Erik Pontoppidan's Danish novel *Menoza, an Asiatic Prince* (1742), which itself follows in the footsteps of Montesquieu's *Persian Letters* (1721).[29] Through these intertextual references, the borders between Enlightenment literature and the realist critique of a misled Enlightenment discourse become blurry.

In Lenz's *Soldiers*, the artful play of literary references becomes comparatively less important. And yet there is probably no other play in which the relation between life and literature is of such eminent concern as in *The Soldiers*. Starting at least with the programmatic fourth scene of the first act, in which the officers discuss the benefits of theater, the play is set up as an extended reflection on the status of literature. But the question of life and literature has yet another dimension here. For in the play's final scene, when the actual plot has already come to a close, Lenz has the character of the colonel suggest concrete political measures to address what he takes to be at the root of the play's central conflict around a middle-class woman who is seduced and abandoned by a noble officer. To keep the soldiers, who were generally unmarried and needed their superior's permission if they wanted to wed, away from the women in their garrison town, the colonel suggests employing some women to become the professional mistresses of the military. It is a fantastically inappropriate and under-complex solution for a conflict that the play itself reveals to be deeply rooted in a much more fundamental system of social and

[29] For Lenz's work with Pontoppidan's novel see Erich Unglaub, "Ein neuer Menoza? Die Komödie *Der neue Menoza* von Jakob Michael Reinhold Lenz und der Menoza-Roman von Erik Pontoppidan," *Orbis Litterarum* 44, no. 1 (1989): 10–47. With the play's subtitle, *History of Prince Tandi of Cumba*, moreover, Lenz was alluding to a fictional narrative in Carlantonio Pilati's critical treatise *Riflessioni di un italiano sopra la chiesa in generale* (1776; *Reflections of an Italian about the Church in General*)—a text that is so marginal to the German tradition that the reference has escaped the attention of all Lenz's editors so far.

economic inequality, as well as in a dangerous mixture of moral rigidity and recklessness.[30] But what is crucial here is that Lenz, however awkwardly, deployed his play as the vehicle for a political agenda. Immediately after finishing work on this play, he embarked on a larger project on the reform of the European armies. In a first draft of his plans—the essay *On the Marriages of Soldiers*—Lenz actually refers back to his own play *The Soldiers* as evidence of the current state of the military. This citation reveals once more the extent to which Lenz's plays complicate the boundaries between literature and reality. The point for Lenz is not that these boundaries are simply nonexistent, but that he shows in great complexity the ways in which literature and the experience of reality shape each other and become functional elements of one another.

Lenz's Stories

Reflections on the relation between life and literature also figure prominently in Lenz's stories—here alongside an even more pronounced engagement with the intellectual discourses of his time. With the story *The Hermit: A Pendant to Werther's Sorrows* (written 1776 during Lenz's stay in and around Weimar), for instance, Lenz takes on the discourse of subjectivity, which had been brought to a new level in Germany through Goethe's first novel, *The Sorrows of Young Werther* (*Die Leiden des jungen Werthers*, 1774). Goethe's monoperspectival epistolary novel creates the world as the product of the subject's perception and thinking. The sorrowful passions of this world-creating lover fascinated many contemporaries and found a wide readership. But parodies of this subjectivity were not long in the waiting. As early as 1775 the influential critic and publisher of the Berlin Enlightenment Friedrich Nicolai released his own *Joys of Young Werther* (*Freuden des jungen Werthers*). Lenz's text is part of this emerging "Werther literature." But in contrast to Nicolai, Lenz did not write a parody. His *Hermit* is a *pendant* in the strict sense: a work of art that complements and stands alongside the original. Lenz embraces Werther's subjectivity, and he unmasks it at the same time—thus accentuating tensions that are arguably already present in Goethe's original.

[30] A frequent subject of scholarship has been the extent to which the colonel's suggestions do justice to the conflicts laid out in the play, as well as the extent to which his views reflect those of the author Lenz. See for instance Hill, "Das Politische in *Die Soldaten*" and Elystan Griffiths, "Action, Communication and the Problem of Form: J. M. R. Lenz's Social and Political Thought," *German Life and Letters* 59, no. 1 (2006): 1–24. See also the critical edition of Lenz's reform plans, Jacob Michael Reinhold Lenz, *Schriften zur Sozialreform: Das Berkaer Projekt*, ed. David Hill and Elystan Griffiths (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2007), esp. 2:420–26.

On the one hand, Lenz clearly encourages a positive identification with the protagonist. A certain affinity of the passionate character Herz (literally, heart) with Lenz has often been suggested—especially given the more obvious resonance of Herz's adversary Rothe with the name of Lenz's friend and foe Goethe (by the time Lenz wrote this story, Goethe had started a career at the court of Weimar and begun to distance himself from fellow *Sturm und Drang* writers such as Lenz and Friedrich Maximilian Klinger). The life of Herz, the hermit who pursues his pure love (of a woman whom he knows only through letters and who stands socially too far above him to allow him any realistic hopes), is celebrated as the radical alternative to the insincere sociability embodied by the smooth and popular Rothe.

At the same time, however, Lenz turns Herz's sincere passion into a comedy in a very Lenzian sense. In the *Remarks on the Theater*, Lenz observes that while in tragedy characters determine the actions, in comedy, actions prevail over character. A comedy of subjectivity in precisely this sense is realized in Lenz's narrative. In letter after letter it becomes ever clearer that Herz's supposedly pure and productive self is in fact deeply manipulated by the sociable world of intrigue from which he sought to distance himself.

In *The Country Pastor*, written early in 1777 during Lenz's stay with Goethe's brother-in-law, Johann Georg Schlosser, Lenz presents a kind of inversion of *The Hermit*. Here, for the first and only time in Lenz's works, we have a main character who seems in charge not only of his own life but also of his environment. Critics have even wanted to see in this text a break with Lenz's *Sturm und Drang* phase. And, indeed, his hero seems to be much more the embodiment of a traditional Enlightenment ideal. Johannes Mannheim masters the various economic and theological discourses of his time, and he spreads this knowledge among his parishioners and beyond through a vast intellectual and economic network. What Mannheim stands for is the enlightened improvement of society—which can proceed without questioning any of the basic power structures of that society.

And yet this positive depiction of Mannheim is broken by an irreducible irony. The sacrifices and shortcomings of the hero—notably, his somewhat troubled relations with women and his inability to produce literature—remain prominent themes of the text. More importantly still, the text reveals its discontent with a simple heroification of Mannheim at the end, when we hear about Mannheim's son's strange ceremonies in his father's honor. These celebrations brutally underscore much that was broken in the father's work: his inability to emancipate himself from the nobility, and his awkward, power-laden relationships with women. In the end, it appears possible to claim *The Country Pastor* both as a sincere celebration of Enlightenment agency and as a satire. The result here, as

in *The Hermit*, is perhaps not so much that Lenz's stories are ambiguous (a commonplace that conveniently evades the difficult imperative to form judgments), but that they are extremely nuanced and require much finer categories than the simple identification with—or rejection of—the ideologies and forms of life represented by the protagonists.

Lenz's Essays

The rich complexities of Lenz's stories are amplified by his theoretical writings. Though most of the essays collected here are ostensibly about the theater, they provide categories and rubrics that are helpful for thinking through Lenz's prose fiction and poetry as well. The essays' observations on life, philosophy, and politics are critically engaged in the historical moment from which they emerge, while offering enduring insights about the performative situations they necessarily involve.

With two exceptions,[31] the essays chosen for this volume were first presented as lectures to the learned society in Strasbourg of which Lenz became an enthusiastic and influential member. The fact that they were originally delivered orally helps explain the strikingly innovative style of Lenz's prose. The first contemporary reviewers of the essays remarked on the peculiar way that Lenz's sentences and paragraphs often break off elliptically in mid-thought, leaving the reader to furnish transitions and conclusions. Friedrich Nicolai, for instance, found Lenz's style "nearly crazy" (*beynahe närrisch*).[32] Yet even the essays that did not originate as performance pieces bear the stamp of Lenz's conscious choice to imitate the choppy rhythms, associative cadences, and seemingly haphazard organization of oral speech. This "rhapsodic form"[33] is integral to Lenz's critical strategy in the essays: they prompt readers not to be passive receptacles but rather to engage actively and almost dialogically in the problems discussed. In this way, Lenz anticipates the stylistic and theoretical program of the early Romantics (as in Friedrich Schlegel's fragments or Adam Müller's speeches), who fetishize the presence of the spoken word and try to harness its generative immediacy even in the medium of the printed page.

Lenz's *Remarks on the Theater*, likely delivered orally in the winter of 1771–72 before their anonymous publication in 1774, is the most programmatic text of *Sturm und Drang* dramatic aesthetics. The essay's opposition of action and character turns conventional categories on their heads and articulates a modern poetics for which the representation of

[31] Namely, "Review of *The New Menoza*" and *On the Marriages of Soldiers.*
[32] "Anmerkungen übers Theater, nebst angehängtem übersetztem Stück Shakespears," Review in *Allgemeine deutsche Bibliothek* 27 (1776): 377.
[33] See the opening apology in *Remarks on the Theater*.

character supersedes the construction of the plot. In a complete reversal of Aristotelian precepts and French theatrical practice, Lenz maintains that the main point of tragedy is to celebrate strong, free personalities, while comedy should be governed by the dictates of action and the complexities of plot. Curiously, this generic distinction means that Lenz himself never wrote a tragedy: his plays all demonstrate the inability of characters to rise above circumstance and determine their own fates in the face of social determinants. All the traumas and disasters depicted in The *Tutor* and *The Soldiers* are necessary elements of their classification as comedies. The only fiction included in this volume that might qualify as a tragedy according to Lenz is his novella, *The Country Pastor*, in many ways his text most closely associated with the values and aspirations of the Enlightenment. This story amounts to a biographical sketch of a character who manages to effect lasting change in the social world around him.

Remarks on the Theater is also significant for its engagement with other texts. Often misquoted and misleadingly paraphrased, Aristotle's *Poetics*, for instance, serves as a foil against which Lenz can contrast his own programmatic ideas about the theater. Even where a more balanced interpretation of Aristotle would be in line with Lenz's concepts, he prefers to pose as the iconoclastic opponent of tradition by opting for readings of the *Poetics* that cut the strongest possible contrast with his own claims.[34] This practice is the mirror image of many seventeenth- and eighteenth-century critics, who misread Aristotle in order to *support* their own pet theories (for example, Corneille, Lessing). From Lessing's *Hamburg Dramaturgy* (1767–68) to Brecht's "anti-Aristotelian" theater in the twentieth century, rebels and traditionalists alike relied on the authority of Aristotle to formulate new aesthetic concepts that reflect the innovative theatrical practices of their own times.

Lenz's reliance on a largely imaginary Aristotle is made all the more ironic by the sensitivity he demonstrates to the embeddedness of art in its historical moment and social circumstances. Like his friend Herder,

[34] Lenz, for instance, insists on a strict and thoroughgoing separation between what he translates as "custom" (*Sitten*) and "character" (*Charakter*). The two senses are closely aligned in Greek (both are renderings of ēthos), however, and if one attends to their relation, many of Lenz's objections to Aristotle disappear, while the Aristotelian conception of character between free choice and necessity can even be seen to support Lenz's views. Aristotle champions Sophocles's *Oedipus the King*, for instance, not because it demonstrates the power of fate in human affairs, as Lenz assumes, but rather because it beautifully represents a character aiming at one result but missing the mark (*hamartia*), resulting in a reversal that inspires fear and pity. Oedipus's tragedy is determined by his *choice*, not by the gods' will. This Aristotelian reading of the play, together with the conceptions of character and action it supports in the *Poetics*, can easily fall into line with many of Lenz's pronouncements about the importance of character.

Lenz is an early proponent of understanding and evaluating great works of philosophy and literature according to the cultural conditions under which they were composed.[35] He explains Aristotle's insistence on the primacy of action in tragedy by claiming that ancient Greek religion held humans to be playthings of the gods whose whims determine their destiny.[36] In all times, Lenz writes, "human perceptions, motions of the soul, and passions" are built upon "man's religious concepts."[37] Thus the ancients required tragedies of fate; while the moderns, who are destined by Christianity to believe in free will, must demand tragedies of character that represent a strong personality struggling valiantly against the illiberal strictures of society.

In Goethe's groundbreaking drama *Götz von Berlichingen* (1773) Lenz found a tragedy that precisely fits this programmatic formula. The opening paragraph of Lenz's speech on *Götz* is a bleak vision of life in which humans are cogs in the machine of society. As an antidote to this deterministic existence, Lenz ends his speech with a stirring call to produce an amateur drama. By rehearsing a play celebrating a strong, autonomous character, Lenz hopes that he and his friends will rekindle the mystery of life within. No matter that the hero of Goethe's play asserts his "freedom" with reactionary stubbornness by clinging to feudal rights and prerogatives in the face of a changing society. In fact, Götz as an upholder of traditional values is an interesting tragic counterpart to Lenz's "comic" Prince Tandi, the hero of *The New Menoza*, whose critique of European society can be summed up as a dislike of hypocrisy and inactivity and a desire to return to the familial and religious precepts that everyone professes but few practice. Lenz's review of his own play claims that "the comic writer creates the audience for the tragic writer."[38] Perhaps Lenz's plays, like *Menoza*, can thus be seen as pedagogical tools to prepare society for the refined yet active appreciation of tragedies such as *Götz*.

If Aristotle and the French neoclassicists seem to be the foes of Lenz's dramaturgy, Shakespeare appears to be its hero—even more so than Goethe. Curiously, however, Lenz's speech "On Scene Changes in Shakespeare" also reveals some significant differences between Lenz's theater and that of the English playwright (and some surprising affinities to the neoclassicists). Lenz's defense of the frequent and drastic scene changes in Shakespeare's plays does not mention the fact that Elizabethan

[35] See, for instance, Herder's essay "Shakespeare" in *On German Character and Art* (1773). Significantly, Lenz claims in an introductory note to his *Remarks* that his own speech was delivered before the publication of *On German Character and Art*.

[36] Curiously, today's scholars identify Aristotle's *secularization* of Greek drama as one of the defining features of his *Poetics*.

[37] Lenz, *Remarks on the Theater*, in this volume.

[38] "Review of *The New Menoza*," in this volume.

theater made very little use of scenery and backdrops. As the prologue in *Henry V.* declaims, actors rely on the poet's words and the imaginations of the audience to paint the settings of their dramas. Yet Lenz here insists that "the theater is a show of *the senses*, not of *memory* or *the imagination*."[39] Just as the French neoclassicist prescription to limit dramas to one setting is intended to avoid straining the senses with their illusion, Lenz here wants theater to rely more on sensory immediacy and presence. But Lenz also surprisingly reveals that Shakespeare still actually speaks more to the senses than the neoclassicists themselves, whose systematic adherence to only one setting forces them to rely heavily on mere narrative for parts of the action.

The only essay included here that is not ostensibly about the theater is *On the Marriages of Soldiers*, yet it shares with all of Lenz's writings a consummate awareness of its performative gestures. This detailed policy piece was prompted by the same experiences that inspired Lenz's play *The Soldiers*, and, as noted above, even cites the drama as evidence to illustrate its points. As Lenz admits in the first sentence, he writes here "for kings," but he does not know whether they "will ever read [him]." The tension caused by this ambiguous audience becomes apparent at several important junctures in the essay, which sometimes flatters the princes who are Lenz's desired readers and sometimes berates them for their stupidity. Lenz's performative playfulness culminates in the treatise's final paragraph, which claims to make its case *not* as a polished orator or rhetorician, but as a passionate amateur: "more stuttering than persuasive."

This claim is reminiscent of Socrates's disavowal of eloquence in the *Apology*, and its irony is downright Platonic in its knowing wink toward its own mediality. Just as Plato's dialogues constantly refer to the limitations and contradictions of their medium of representation, Lenz's essay calls attention to the paradox of its own construction. The text repeatedly desires the "ear" of a prince, yet there is no imaginable scenario in which the author would deliver its content orally before a regal audience. Full of facts, figures, and footnotes, this is an emphatically *readerly* document. The text's final disavowal of the "orator" and its self-assertion as "stuttering" together gesture toward its ultimate impossibility: for surely it is *only* as an orator, and pointedly *not* with the written word, that one can stutter at all.

Lenz's Poems

In contrast to the stylistic and formal innovations of his plays and essays, Lenz's poetry may seem quaint and conventional. Yet like his

[39] "On Scene Changes in Shakespeare," in this volume.

other works, Lenz's poems are painstakingly and instructively aware of the performative scenes they project. For this volume, we have selected poems that showcase this self-referentiality across a wide spectrum of genres (lyrics, ballads, and odes) and themes (spiritual crisis, death, love, theater, and art).

Lenz's lyric poetry explores the subject's inability to connect to an object of desire. Its seeming conventionality has often been unfavorably compared to Goethe's powerful new lyric forms of representing subjectivity. As David Hill has argued, however, Lenz's poems are masterful expressions of the deficiencies inherent in communication.[40] The four-line "Just to Hang upon Her Glance," for instance, is representative of the passivity involved in the speaking subject's relations to the desired other. The lyric voice claims to want nothing but to *receive* light from the beloved, yet the form of this short poem belies the passive self-sufficiency of the subject. The links created by the enclosed rhyme scheme work against the ostensible message of the poem: *hangen* (to hang) is at odds with the much more active and receptive final word *fangen* (to catch); while the inner rhymes *nichts* (nothing) and *Lichts* (of light) connect the desired illumination with emptiness. Hence the interiority of a subject who only receives and does not give back is an unreflecting void. Importantly, the love relationship portrayed here is a tableau of voyeurism.

In "Impromptu in the Audience," Lenz recasts this same passive love dynamic in a scene of theatrical spectatorship. In fact, despite the high hopes for the efficacy of art expressed in his aesthetic essays, Lenz's poems that feature drama, music, and the visual arts reiterate the unbridgeable divide between artist and audience. "Pygmalion," a poem that invokes the primal myth of lifelike artistic imitation, enumerates the vampiric, enervating effects of aesthetic appreciation and connects art's desire to its ultimate disappointment: "that was my wish—that is my grief—." Even "Shakespeare's Ghost," a monologue that seemingly celebrates the life-giving potency of great drama, undermines its empowering message in its very setting. By having the ghost of Shakespeare return during a staging of the "ghost scene in *Hamlet*," the poem invites readers to receive the author's pronouncements with the same skepticism to which Hamlet subjects his father's shade. Even more disturbing, the speaking author opens his speech by calling the spectators specters: "How? what crowd? what stillness? / As if they were ghosts." The haunting disconnect between audience and artist is a two-way street.

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[40] David Hill, "Problems of Identity in the Poetry of J. M. R. Lenz," *Lenz-Jahrbuch* 12 (2002/3): 7–29. Another interpretation of Lenz's poetry well worth reading is Vonhoff's *Subjektkonstitution*. In contrast to Hill's pessimistic reading of communicative failure in Lenz's poetry, Vonhoff identifies in it not only subject-affirmation but also incisive social critique.

The poem in which artistic production and human empowerment appears to be most incontrovertibly aligned is the "Song to the German Dance." In true *Sturm und Drang* style, the poem affirms an apotheosis of the human. The liberating message is quite clear: lose yourself in art (here: dance and music), and you will find yourself a god. Yet the poem opens with an invocation of fear ("Oh, Angst!") and ends with an alarmingly amoral pronouncement: "Oh, we gods do whatever we please." This final line interrupts a long series of dimeters to become the one and only pentameter in the entire poem. It thus seems acoustically to enact the rebellious Promethean freedom that the poem claims before ("Everything disappeared / That kept us bound"). Yet a second look reveals a lingering bond: the last word of the entire poem picks up on the B-rhyme from the first stanza. Thus the very expression of freedom ("was uns gefällt," whatever we please) turns out to be rule-bound and tied to the world ("Welt"). So too are the dance moves and musical measures on which the song is based. Again and again, Lenz's poetry thus performs the curtailment of its own desires with technical and creative aplomb.

Though the analyses of these poems turn again and again to rhyme and meter, the translations included in this volume do not attempt to reproduce these formal elements. To do so would have been to create new poems: at best a living fusion of Lenz's music with the translator's; at worst, trite doggerel. Neither would accurately convey the sense of Lenz's word choice and syntax as closely as grammatical English allows, which is the aim of these translations. Nevertheless, the acoustic elements of rhyme and rhythm are equal (or greater) partners with lexical denotations and the logic of grammar in the generation of a poem's significance. We therefore encourage readers to consult the original German to fully appreciate the beauty and import of Lenz's poetry.[41]

Lenz's Reception[42]

The reception of very few other German writers remains as closely linked to Goethe as that of Lenz. Goethe's impact is already palpable in the publication history of Lenz's works, from his first published play in 1774 to the first edition of Lenz's collected works in 1828. Not only did Goethe

[41] German versions of Lenz's poems, even the first published editions on which these translations were based, are readily available through the internet.

[42] There are several larger studies on the reception of Lenz and his works. The following section owes much to Karin A. Wurst and Alan C. Leidner's *Unpopular Virtues: The Critical Reception of J. M. R. Lenz*. The most exhaustive collection of source texts has been compiled by Peter Müller in his book *Jakob Michael Reinhold Lenz im Urteil dreier Jahrhunderte: Texte der Rezeption von Werk und Persönlichkeit*, 3 vols. (Bern: Lang, 1995).

arrange the (anonymous) publication of Lenz's *The Tutor* and *Remarks on the Theater* (both 1774), but some critics even believed *The Tutor* to be a work by Goethe himself—which likely accounts for at least a portion of the positive reviews. Later, after Lenz's death, Goethe helped Schiller publish several of Lenz's poems, as well as the story "The Hermit," in Schiller's own journal *Die Horen*. Finally, when the leading Romantic Ludwig Tieck produced a first collected-works edition of Lenz in 1828,[43] he added as an introductory essay fragments from his biography not of Lenz but of the great idol Goethe (then still alive). To truly understand Goethe, Tieck notes in this essay, one also has to understand marginal figures such as Lenz. Thus Lenz was reintroduced to German literature as a curious by-product of—and footnote to—the so-called "Age of Goethe."

But likely the greatest impact on the first century of Lenz's posthumous reception was made by Goethe's critical remarks in his autobiography *From My Life: Poetry and Truth* (*Aus meinem Leben: Dichtung und Wahrheit*, published 1811–33). When Goethe first mentions Lenz in book 11 of his autobiography, he speaks of him still in a seemingly friendly tone as a "strange but talented person."[44] He lauds Lenz's translation of Shakespeare's *Love's Labour's Lost*, and offers a rare portrait of Lenz's character and looks:

> Short, but trimly built, he had a charming small face, whose delicate shape conformed perfectly to his pleasant, somewhat stubby features. Blue eyes, blond hair—in short, a little person of a type I have occasionally encountered among youths from the north; a soft, and, as it were, cautious tread, a pleasant, slightly hesitant way of talking, and a demeanor that was very becoming to a young man, being somewhere between reserve and shyness. Shorter poems, especially his own, were read aloud by him very well, and he wrote a flowing hand. The only word I would know to describe his disposition would be the English "whimsical," which, as the dictionary indicates, combines many oddities into one concept. (367)

But by book 14, when Goethe returns to Lenz with some more extensive remarks, it becomes clear that the ambiguous words "strange" and "whimsical," which Goethe employed before, could be read with less positive valences. Goethe now speaks of how he "kept emphasizing that [Lenz] should abandon his formless ramblings, discipline himself, and use his inborn creative gifts with artistic restraint" (442). Moreover, Goethe

[43] We should not fail to acknowledge the work of the largely unknown scholar Georg Friedrich Dumpf (1777–1849), who encouraged Tieck to publish Lenz's works and who supplied Tieck with many of Lenz's texts (see Leidner and Wurst, *Unpopular Virtues*, 25–27).

[44] Goethe, *Poetry and Truth*, 367.

complains of the ways in which "Lenz surpassed the other idle or semi-idle fellows" (440) in fruitless and misguided "self-observation" (440), and bemoans Lenz's tendency to intrigue, which was only salvaged by the fact that Lenz never brought his schemes to fruition:

> He adopted the most preposterous means in his attempt to lend reality to his inclinations and disinclinations, and himself continually destroyed what he had done. And so he never benefited anyone he loved, or injured anyone he hated, and on the whole he only seemed to sin so that he might punish himself, and to intrigue so that he might graft a new fiction on an old one. (440–41)

Goethe's critical comments in his autobiography had a major impact on the image of Lenz in the nineteenth century and stood in the way of an unbiased approach to Lenz's works in their own right. Georg Gottfried Gervinus's *History of the Poetic National Literature of the Germans* (*Geschichte der poetischen National-Literatur der Deutschen*, 1835–42) is a case in point. Influenced by the old Goethe's views, Gervinus criticizes Lenz as a writer of immoral and unenjoyable works who failed to mature from *Sturm und Drang* to Weimar Classicism as Goethe and Schiller had done.[45]

The shadow that the few pages from Goethe's autobiography cast over Lenz's legacy is due not only to the authority that Goethe wielded over the study of German literature for more than a century after his death; nor is it simply due to the conservative leanings of many critics and chaired professors who, echoing Goethe, patronizingly dismissed the "whimsical" works of a talented but undisciplined writer. It is likely also caused simply by the vividness of Goethe's short portrait of Lenz, to which history has provided no comparable alternative. Moreover—even though it may provoke the ire of some Lenz enthusiasts to say so—Goethe's critical evaluation should not be dismissed out of hand as entirely unfounded. Whoever reads a play like *The Tutor* or *The New Menoza* or an essay such as *Remarks on the Theater* for the first time will likely sympathize with Goethe's wish for Lenz to "use his inborn creative gifts with artistic restraint." Even the progressive twentieth-century writers who admired Lenz enough to write adaptations of his plays—noteworthy in addition to Brecht's *The Tutor* (1950) is Christoph Hein's *The New Menoza* (1982)—produced much more conventional plays, with fewer characters and a more concentrated plot.

It was only in the course of the long twentieth century that Lenz slowly emerged from Goethe's shadow and that scholars paid more attention to Lenz's works in their own right. To be sure, well into the 1960s

[45] Leidner and Wurst, *Unpopular Virtues*, 32–33.

studies of German literature appeared that based their portraits of Lenz on Goethe's autobiography.[46] And not only in the German West, but also in the East, Lenz long remained marginalized. Brecht's famous staging of *The Tutor* in 1950 occurred at a time when plays by Lessing and Goethe dominated the theaters of the German Democratic Republic (GDR). In a curious and significant move of cultural politics, the socialist part of Germany chose to identify not with the realist and critical impulses of the *Sturm und Drang*, but instead with Weimar Classicism (a decision prepared by the Marxist critic Georg Lukács).[47]

But this lasting dismissive attitude toward Lenz in East and West is not fully representative of his reception in the twentieth century. As early as 1909, the Russian scholar M. N. Rosanow published the first comprehensive biography of Lenz.[48] From 1909 to 1913, Franz Blei produced in five volumes what remains the most comprehensive edition of Lenz's writings (a complete critical edition of Lenz's works still does not exist).[49]

Starting with the 1960s, then, there was increasing interest in the aspects of social and political critique in Lenz's works, which also allowed Lenz to be positioned as a viable alternative to the authority of Weimar Classicism, embodied in Goethe's and Schiller's later works. Around this time, we also see a positive revaluation of Lenz as an early realist in the GDR, reflected in the state's main literary history, *Explanations of German Literature* (*Erläuterungen zur deutschen Literatur*).[50] Moreover, from the 1960s on, we also find significant publications on Lenz in France, England, and North America. From around 1990, finally, works that until then had been sidelined received more attention—Lenz's poems, stories, and theological essays.[51] Far from the concerns of a traditional Goethe-centered *Germanistik*, these newer studies have deepened the discussion of the themes to which Lenz contributed most—notably a conception of individual agency in the aesthetic and political context of the late Enlightenment.[52] Moreover, previously neglected aspects in

[46] Ibid., 74–75.
[47] Ibid., *Unpopular Virtues*, 76–79.
[48] M. N. Rosanow, *Jakob M. R. Lenz: Der Dichter der Sturm und Drang Periode; Sein Leben und seine Werke*, trans. Carl von Gütschow (Leipzig: Schulze, 1909).
[49] Jakob Michael Reinhold Lenz, *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Franz Blei, 5 vols. (Munich: Georg Müller, 1909–13).
[50] Leidner and Wurst, *Unpopular Virtues*, 78.
[51] See, for instance, Vonhoff, *Subjektkonstitution*; Pope, *The Holy Fool*; and Karin A. Wurst, *Das Schlaraffenland verwilderter Ideen: Narrative Strategien in J. M. R. Lenz' Erzählwerk* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2014).
[52] See, for instance, Martin Rector, "Seven Theses on the Problem of Action in Lenz," in *Space to Act: The Theater of J. M. R. Lenz*, ed. Alan C. Leidner and Helga S. Madland (Columbia, SC: Camden House, 1994), 60–76; Thorsten Unger,

Lenz studies—for instance, Lenz's depiction of gender relations—were now also considered.[53]

While academic discussions of Lenz have thus begun to look at Lenz's works in and of themselves, the same is not necessarily true for the literary and popular reception of Lenz. Here Lenz is viewed not so much through the eyes of Goethe as through the lens of Georg Büchner. In recent decades, most readers will have encountered Lenz first through Büchner's eponymous novella, *Lenz*. The historical Lenz is thus reduced to a fictional account of a two-week episode in his life, and the author of early social realism is most closely associated in the public imagination with this seminal work of "psychological" fiction.

But if Lenz *scholarship* can proceed relatively undisturbed by the constant question of Lenz's relation to other writers, this is not due only to an increasing understanding of the independent historical and intellectual interest of Lenz's works. It also has to do with a more profound restructuring of the concepts of canonicity and education in Germany and beyond. Goethe has lost much of his authority at a point when the authority of canonical literary learning has itself been called into question and when the institutional preservation of a German national literature has lost legitimacy. This also has an impact on Lenz. There will never be gilded editions, monuments, and large literary societies for Lenz, as they exist in Germany for most writers of comparable rank. Lenz's star began to rise only at a point when the veneration for canonical writers started to wane. His legacy will neither be supported nor impeded by the authority that traditional literary education used to wield. Instead, his texts will have to be judged for what they are: testing grounds of the European project of Enlightenment, and attempts to reflect, produce, and perform a literature for the present.

"Contingent Spheres of Action: The Category of Action in Lenz's Anthropology and Drama," in Leidner and Madland, *Space to Act*, 77–90. See also Leidner and Wurst, *Unpopular Virtues*, 116–17.

[53] See, for instance, Roman Graf, "'Die Folgen des ehlosen Standes der Herren Soldaten': Male Homosocial Desire in Lenz's *Die Soldaten*," in Leidner and Madland, *Space to Act*, 35–44; Martin Kagel, "*La chercheuse d'esprit*: Gender, Mobility, and the Crisis of Authorship in J. M. R. Lenz's Conception of Soldiers' Marriages," *German Life and Letters* 61, no. 1 (2008): 98–117.

Part One

Plays

The Tutor
Or
Advantages of Private Education
A Comedy[1]

Names[2]

Herr von Berg.[3] Privy Councilor.
The Major. His brother.
The Major's wife.
Gustchen. Their daughter.
Fritz von Berg.
Count Wermuth.[4]
Läuffer.[5] A tutor.
Pätus.[6] } students
Bollwerk.[7] }
Herr von Seiffenblase.[8]
His tutor.
Frau Hamster. A town councilor's wife.
Jungfer[9] Hamster.
Jungfer Knicks.[10]

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[1] Our translation follows the (anonymous) first printed edition: *Der Hofmeister oder Vortheile der Privaterziehung: Eine Komödie* (Leipzig: Weygandsche Buchhandlung, 1774).

[2] The title "names" (*Namen*) of the list of characters is rather unusual. More common in the eighteenth century was the rubric "characters" (*Personen*), which also appears in Lenz's later plays *The New Menoza* and *The Soldiers.*

[3] Berg is a common German name; literally, it means "mountain."

[4] Wermuth is the German word for the plant "wormwood"; it also indicates the alcoholic drinks made from this plant (vermouth, *Wermuthtrank*).

[5] The name Läuffer (literally, runner) indicates, among other things, a type of servant who is trained to run next to his master's horse or carriage.

[6] Latin (paetus), squinting.

[7] Literally, bulwark.

[8] Literally, soap bubble.

[9] Jungfer, literally virgin. Historic form of address for unmarried middle-class women.

[10] Literally, curtsey.

Frau Blitzer.
Wenzeslaus, a village school teacher.
Marthe, an old woman.
Lise.
The old Pätus.
The old Läuffer. A town pastor.
Leopold. The major's son. A child.
Herr Rehaar.[11] A lutenist.
Jungfer Rehaar. His daughter.

First Act

First Scene

In Insterburg in Prussia.

LÄUFFER: My father says I am not suited to be a pastor's assistant.[12] I believe the fault lies in his purse; he doesn't want to pay for the post. I am, anyway, too young, too handsome, and I have seen too much of the world to become a pastor. And in the municipal school, the privy councilor didn't want to accept me. So be it! He is a pedant; and to a pedant, of course, the devil himself is not learned enough. Within half a year I would have reviewed what I have acquired in school, and then I would still have been much too learned for a school teacher; but the privy councilor must know better. He always calls me just Monsieur Läuffer,[13] and when we speak of Leipzig, he asks about Händel's cake garden[14] and Richter's coffeehouse.[15] I'm not sure: is he trying to mock me, or—I have heard him discourse profoundly enough with our deputy headmaster from time to time; he probably doesn't take me seriously.—There he comes with the major; I don't know why, but I fear him worse than the devil. The fellow has something in his face that I find unbearable. (*He passes the privy councilor and the major, scraping and bowing profusely.*)

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[11] Literally, deer-hair.
[12] Pastor's assistant. The original "Adjunkt" generally refers to any form of assistantship, typically in a public office, university, or church. In the context of the scene and the play, it is likely that Läuffer is meant to refer to a "Pastoraladjunkt" (pastor's assistant). Läuffer could be the assistant of his father, the local pastor. The father, however, would then have to give about a third of his income to Läuffer. See Herbert Kraft, *J. M. R. Lenz* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2015), 103.
[13] By using the French address Monsieur, the privy councilor is likely meant to be mocking Läuffer's pretensions to (superficial) French culture and his lack of serious scholarly learning.
[14] A public garden in which cake is served. Leipzig had a small and a big Kuchengarten (cake garden); the baker Händel (or Hendel) worked in the latter.
[15] Well-known coffeehouse in Leipzig.

Second Scene

Privy councilor. Major.

MAJOR: But what do you want? Isn't that quite a well-behaved little man?
PRIVY COUNCILOR: Well-behaved enough, only all too well behaved. But what is he supposed to teach your son?
MAJOR: I don't know, Berg; you always ask these strange questions.
PRIVY COUNCILOR: No, honestly! You must have some purpose in mind when you take on a tutor and open your purse wide enough for three hundred ducats to fall out. Tell me, what do you think you'll achieve with the money; what will you demand from your tutor in return?
MAJOR: That he—what I—that my son shall, in all arts and sciences and civilities and manners of all countries—But I really don't know what you always have in mind with your questions. It will all be sorted out; I'll tell him everything in due course.
PRIVY COUNCILOR: In other words, you want to be your tutor's tutor; but are you really considering what you are taking on yourself?—What is your son supposed to become, tell me that.
MAJOR: What he . . . A soldier, that's what he's supposed to become; a man such as I was.
PRIVY COUNCILOR: You'd better leave out the last part, my dear brother. Our children should not and must not become what we were. Times change—manners, conditions, everything. And if you had become nothing more and nothing less than the living image of your grandfather——
MAJOR: Dammit! If he becomes a major and a fine fellow as I am, and if he serves the king as loyally!
PRIVY COUNCILOR: Very well, but in fifty years we may have a different king and a different manner of serving him. But I already see that there's no point in getting into these things with you; I would have to digress too far and still wouldn't achieve anything. You never look beyond the straight line that your wife draws with chalk on your beak.
MAJOR: What are you trying to say by that, Berg? Don't meddle in my domestic affairs; I don't meddle in yours either.—But look! Here comes the young gentleman, your son, running out of the school with two scoundrels. Excellent education, Herr Philosophus! That will turn out very nicely indeed! Who in the world should believe that this street urchin is the only son of his Excellency, the king's privy councilor——
PRIVY COUNCILOR: Just let him be.—His merry playfellows will corrupt him less than an idler in a braided coat,[16] aided by a vain mistress.
MAJOR: You are taking liberties.—Adieu.

[16] I.e., a tutor.

PRIVY COUNCILOR: I pity you.

Third Scene

The room of the major's wife.
The major's wife (on a sofa). Läuffer (sitting next to her in a very obsequious posture). Leopold (standing).

THE MAJOR'S WIFE: I have spoken with your father and come to an agreement concerning the 300 ducats of fixed salary—minus some 150 ducats. But in return I will demand, Herr—what's your name?—Herr Läuffer that you will keep your clothes clean and that you don't bring discredit on our house. I know that you have good taste; I had already heard of you when you were still in Leipzig. You know that these days people pay attention to nothing as much as whether a man knows how to comport himself.
LÄUFFER: I hope my lady will be satisfied with me. At least, I haven't missed a single ball in Leipzig, and I have likely had more than fifteen dancing masters in my life.
THE MAJOR'S WIFE: Indeed? But let me see. *(Läuffer stands up.)* Don't be timid, Herr . . . Läuffer! Don't be timid. My son is mousy enough; if he gets a shy tutor, it'll be the end of him. Why don't you try a bow from the minuet, just as a sample, so that I can see.—Well, well, that's good enough. My son won't need a dancing master for now! A *pas* as well, if you please? Yes, it'll do; all of this will be good once you have attended one of our *assemblées*. . . . Are you musical?
LÄUFFER: I play the violin, and the piano if need be.
THE MAJOR'S WIFE: All the better. When we go to the country and Fräulein Milchzahn[17] happens to visit us . . . So far I've always had to sing for them when the dear children fancied dancing. But this will serve us better.
LÄUFFER: My lady leaves me aghast. Where on earth would be the virtuoso who may hope to match your voice on his instrument?
THE MAJOR'S WIFE: Ha, ha, ha, but you haven't heard me yet . . . Wait! Do you know this minuet? (*Sings.*)
LÄUFFER: Oh . . . oh . . . Pardon the rapture, the enthusiasm that carries me away. (*Kisses her hand.)*
THE MAJOR'S WIFE: And yet I have a cold; I must sound like a crow today. *Vous parlez françois sans doute?*
LÄUFFERL *Un peu, Madame.*
THE MAJOR'S WIFE: *Avez Vous deja fait Vôtre tour de France?*
LÄUFFER: *Non Madame. . . . Oui Madame.*

[17] Literally, milk tooth.

THE MAJOR'S WIFE: *Vous devez donc savoir, qu'en France on ne baise pas les mains, mon cher. . . .*[18]
SERVANT (*enters*): Count Wermuth . . .
(*Count Wermuth enters.*)
COUNT (*after some mute greetings, he sits down on the sofa next to the major's wife. Läuffer remains standing awkwardly*): Has my lady already seen the new dancing master who has arrived from Dresden? He is a marchese from Florence and his name is. . . . Honestly, on my travels, I have seen only two men who were preferable to him.
THE MAJOR'S WIFE: Indeed, only two! You really make me curious. I know how delicate a taste Count Wermuth has.
LÄUFFER: Pintinello . . . right? I have seen him dance in the theater in Leipzig; he doesn't dance extraordinarily . . .
COUNT: He dances—*on ne peut pas mieux.*[19]—As I am telling you, my lady, in Petersburg I saw a certain Beluzzi, whom one would prefer to him;[20] but the man here has a lightness in his feet, such an ease and divine carelessness in his posture, in his arms, in his turns——
LÄUFFER: At Koch's theater, he was hissed at the last time he made an appearance.[21]
THE MAJOR'S WIFE: Remember, my friend, domestics must not join conversations among people of rank! Go to your room. Who asked you?[22] *(Läuffer takes several steps backward.)*
COUNT: Presumably the tutor whom you have chosen for the young gentleman. . .?
THE MAJOR'S WIFE: He comes fresh from university.—Now go. You can hear after all that we are talking about you; all the less proper is it to remain standing here. *(Exit Läuffer with a stiff bow.)* It is insufferable

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[18] We reproduce the text as it appears in the first edition. Lenz's French spelling does not conform to modern standard usage.

THE MAJOR'S WIFE: You doubtlessly speak French?
LÄUFFER: A little, Madame.
THE MAJOR'S WIFE: Have you already made your journey through France?
LÄUFFER: No, Madame. . . . Yes, Madame.
THE MAJOR'S WIFE: Then you must know that one doesn't kiss the hand in France, my dear.

[19] French, one cannot do it better.

[20] The dancer Carlo Beluzzi performed in Petersburg in 1758.

[21] Heinrich Gottfried Koch (1703–75), director of a theater group in Leipzig since 1750.

[22] The German form of address here resists translation. The major's wife addresses Läuffer at this moment suddenly in the third person singular ("he shall remember"; "who asked him?")—a form of address that was also used to speak to servants. Earlier in this scene, the major's wife used the polite third person plural to address Läuffer.

that one cannot find proper people for one's money anymore. My husband must have written three times to a professor in town, and this is supposedly still the most polite man at the entire university. But you can see it from his clothes, with these awkward trimmings. Just imagine: two hundred ducats in traveling expenses from Leipzig to Insterburg and an annual salary of five hundred ducats. Isn't that horrendous?
COUNT: I believe his father is the preacher here in town.
THE MAJOR'S WIFE: I don't know—It's possible, I didn't inquire about that; but yes, I almost believe it: his name is also Läuffer, after all. Well, in that case, he is of course still well-behaved enough. Because his father is a real bear. His shouting, at least, made me shun church once and for all.
COUNT: Is he Catholic?
THE MAJOR'S WIFE: But no, of course not. Don't you know that there is no Catholic church in Insterburg? He is Lutheran; or Protestant is what I meant to say; he is Protestant.
COUNT: Pintinello dances. . . . It is true, my dancing has cost me some thirty thousand gulden. But I would give just as much again if . . .

Fourth Scene

Läuffer's room.
Läuffer. Leopold. The major.
(The former two are sitting at the table with a book in their hand when the major surprises them.)

MAJOR: That's right; that's how I like it; nice and diligent—and if the scoundrel won't remember, Herr Läuffer, then hit him with that book so hard on the head that he forgets how to stand up—or in that case you may always come to me with your complaints, I meant to say. I'll teach you, you haiduk![23] Look, there he's frowning again. Are you so sensitive when your father speaks to you? Who else is supposed to tell you? You'll change, or I'll flog you until your guts crack open, you coward. And you, sir, be diligent with him; that much I ask of you; and no vacations, breaks, or recreation; I can't stand that. Blast it, no one will get the *malum hydropisiacum*[24] from working. That's just an excuse from you

[23] Originally referring to Hungarian foot soldiers, the term was also common in the eighteenth century for servants dressed in a livery resembling those of Hungarian soldiers. Strikingly, the main occupation of a haiduk (servant) was very similar to that of a "Läuffer," namely to walk alongside his master's coach. The major's use of the term here, however, presumably implies a lack of civility or culture.
[24] Probably referring to the Latin medical term "hydropisis" (dropsy). Note also that the major uses here a grammatically incorrect form (a non-existent inflection), revealing his own weak Latin.