

WOYZECK and LENZ

by Georg Büchner

translated by
Hedwig Rappolt

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WOYZECK

and

LENZ

Georg Büchner

Translated by
Hedwig Appel

1911

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New York, Indiana, Georgia, Illinois

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The first edition of Woyzeck, Büchner's last literary work, consists of a number of scenes from his unfinished drama, whose composition had apparently not yet been determined when he died in February 1811. It was not until 1832 that the first edition of the drama was published. It only came back to print at the end of 1930 at the occasion of 100 years of Büchner's death. The concept of the drama had a long gestation period in Büchner's mind, probably stimulated by his knowledge of the dramatic works of Shakespeare and Goethe.

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Introduction to WOYZECK

The tragic drama¹ *Woyzeck*, Büchner's last literary work, consists of a number of scenes, some unfinished, whose sequence² had apparently not yet been determined when he died in February 1837. It is not known when Büchner had begun to write down the first drafts for *Woyzeck*; it may have been as early as the end of 1835 or the summer of 1836. Certainly the concept of the drama had a long gestation period in Büchner's mind, probably stimulated by his knowledge of three criminal cases, all involving people living in poverty.

The case of the hairdresser Johann Christian Woyzeck probably gave Büchner the original and immediate impetus to write the play. In 1821, in Leipzig, Woyzeck stabbed a woman to death out of jealousy. He was 41 years old.³ After the murder, Woyzeck was examined for soundness of mind by "Dr. Johann Christian August Clarus, Royal Saxonian Court Councillor, Knight of the Royal Saxonian Civil Merit and of the Imperial Russian Order of Vladimir, IV. Class, Professor in Ordinary of the Clinic, the District Court, the University, and District Physician of the town of Leipzig, and Medical Doctor at Jakob's Hospital, etc."⁴ Dr. Clarus's first medical opinion was followed up by a second one; in both he attests to Woyzeck's soundness of mind and full possession of his faculties; this in

1. The German word *Trauerspiel* describes the work better than the word 'tragedy' with its connotation of the traditional Greek structure.

2. It is not known whether Büchner intended to end the drama with a trial or Woyzeck's suicide.

3. Lothar Bornscheuer, ed., *Erläuterungen und Dokumente/Georg Büchner, Woyzeck* (Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam Jun., 1987), p. 58 ff.

4. Werner Lehmann, ed., *Georg Büchner, Sämtliche Werke und Briefe* (Munich, 1974), p. 487.

Dr. Clarus probably was one of the prototypes Büchner used for the Doctor.

spite of obvious instances of strange and hallucinatory behavior, to which several people had been witness. *Woyzeck*, the drama, has numerous similarities of language and situation with Clarus's written opinion.

The other two murder cases also show some similarities with the events in *Woyzeck*.

—In 1817, near Berlin, the 38-year-old tobacco worker Daniel Schmolling stabbed a “young girl” to death. Although the medical report pronounced him *non compos mentis* at the moment of the deed, he was condemned to death but the death penalty was commuted to life imprisonment. In 1825 he murdered a fellow prisoner.⁵

—In 1830, near Darmstadt, the 37-year-old linen weaver Johann Diess killed his lover by stabbing her repeatedly (as did *Woyzeck*). He was sentenced to 18 years in prison where he died four years later.⁶

In Büchner's drama, *Woyzeck's* sanity is of secondary importance to his poverty and the humiliations by others, which ultimately propel him into disaster. The Captain and the Doctor, each in his own way, do everything to devastate a human soul already in danger of disintegrating; the Captain dispensing words of malicious ‘goodness,’ the Doctor inflicting torture in the name of science. Marie, *Woyzeck's* love, falls for the Drum Major's temptations of a kind of luxury she has never had before. In the end, there is nobody left and *Woyzeck* is completely alone. “The crippling military caste system with its bourgeois bathos of ‘virtue’ (the Captain); medical science which degrades man to a guinea pig, and the idealistic doctrine of ‘Freedom’ (the Doctor); the value-blind, open-sesame exchange medium of money (the Jew); and the free competitive struggle in the human sphere (the Drum Major) form *Woyzeck's*

5. Bornscheuer, p. 51 ff.

6. Bornschener, p. 61 ff.

pitiless surroundings, a world of systematic enslavement, as it must be called."⁷

It is interesting that Franz Woyzeck is the only character in the drama whom Büchner has given a full name. Four others have first names: Marie, Woyzeck's love; Andres his friend and companion in the military; Margret, Marie's neighbor; and Karl, the Fool or the Idiot. There is a lithograph of *Unser Karl* (Our Karl) done by a student at the Wilhelmitanum, a college in Strasbourg where Karl did some menial chores. It is likely that Büchner met him when visiting friends there. Karl was *un peu idiot* (a bit idiotic), a misshapen little man who did his lowly jobs without complaining, who was thankful for any hand-me-down, and was truly one of the poorest of the poor.⁸

The other characters in the drama, even the main roles, have no names: the Captain, the Doctor, the Drum Major. These three represent everything that Büchner hated; bourgeois 'virtue', self-satisfaction, condescension toward those 'below' them—traits which were certainly instrumental in driving Woyzeck to the brink. Perhaps Büchner did not find these three men worthy of being honored with a name, an honor he reserved for the poor, the down-trodden, the sufferers.

The poor and the down-trodden are also those to whom Büchner gave poetic folk songs to sing or recite. A significant point in the drama is a fairytale—really an anti-fairytale—told by the Grandmother, which movingly symbolizes the life of the poor, of those who are unwanted and rejected on earth and even in heaven. Büchner's precise and unadorned words bring out the momentum of language—plain and impressive for the poor, ponderous, often maudlin and sometimes witty for those in power. Büchner's language gives *Woyzeck* its great impact.

H.R.

7. Bornschener, p. 94.

8. Heinz Fischer, ed., *Georg Büchner und Alexis Muston* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1987), p. 54, picture p. 55.

CHARACTERS

WOYZECK

MARIE

CAPTAIN

DOCTOR

DRUM MAJOR

SERGEANT

ANDRES

MARGRET

BARKER, *in front of a booth*

BARKER, *inside the booth*

OLD MAN, *singing to the hurdy gurdy*

CHILD, *dancing*

THE JEW

THE INNKEEPER

FIRST APPRENTICE

SECOND APPRENTICE

KARL, *an idiot*

KATE

GRANDMOTHER

FIRST CHILD

SECOND CHILD

THIRD CHILD

FIRST PERSON

SECOND PERSON

BAILIFF

PHYSICIAN

JUDGE

Soldiers, Students, Young People and Children

OPEN FIELD. THE TOWN IN THE BACKGROUND.

Woyzeck and Andres are cutting sticks in the bushes.

WOYZECK Yes Andres, that strip across the grass, that's where the head rolls at night; someone picked it up once, thought it was a hedgehog. Three days and three nights and he was laid out on wood shavings.* *(In a low voice)* Andres, that was the Freemasons, I've got it, the Freemasons, hush!

ANDRES *(sings)* Two rabbits sitting there,
Munching the green, green grass...

WOYZECK Hush! Something's moving!

ANDRES Munching the green, green grass
Till the ground is bare.

WOYZECK It's walking behind me, under me *(stomps on the ground)*, hollow, listen! All hollow down below. The Freemasons!

ANDRES I'm scared.

WOYZECK It's eerie, so still. I feel like holding my breath. Andres!

ANDRES What?

WOYZECK Say something! *(Stares into the distance)* Andres! How bright! A fire is racing along the sky and a great noise is coming down like trumpets. Look how it's closing in! Let's go. Don't look behind you. *(Pulls him into the bushes.)*

ANDRES *(after a pause)* Woyzeck! Do you still hear it?

WOYZECK Quiet, all quiet, like the world was dead.

ANDRES D'you hear? They're drumming in town. We must go.

*The bodies of the dead used to be laid out in coffins on a layer of wood shavings.

THE TOWN

*Marie with her child at the window. Margret.
The retreat marches past, the Drum Major in front.*

MARIE (*bouncing the child on her arm*) Hey little fellow! Ta-rum ta-ra! D'you hear it? Here they come.

MARGRET What a man, strong as a tree trunk!

MARIE He stands on his feet like a lion.

(Drum Major salutes.)

MARGRET My, what friendly eyes, dear neighbor, we aren't used to seeing you like that.

MARIE (*sings*) Soldiers they are handsome fellows...

MARGRET Your eyes are still shining.

MARIE What if they are! Why don't you take your eyes to the Jew and have them polished, maybe they'll be shiny enough to be sold as two buttons.

MARGRET What, you, you? Dear Miss, I am a respectable person, but you, you'll stare through seven pairs of leather breeches.

MARIE Bitch! (*Slams the window.*) Come my little one. Let people talk. You're just a poor whore-child and make your mother happy with your bastard face. There, there.

(Sings) Maiden, what is to be done?

You've no husband but a son.

With me that's alright,

I'll sing through the night.

Hushaby, little fellow, whoopee!

No one gives nothing to me.

Hansel hitch your six white mares,

Give them some more to eat.

Oats they won't eat,

Water they won't drink,

Just cool wine it must be. Whoopee!

Just cool wine it must be.

(A knock at the window.)

MARIE Who's there? Is that you, Franz? Come in.

WOYZECK Can't. Must go to roll call.

MARIE What's wrong with you, Franz?

WOYZECK (*mysteriously*) Marie, something happened again, many things, isn't it written: and lo the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace?

MARIE Man!

WOYZECK It walked behind me up to the town. What will come of it?

MARIE Franz!

WOYZECK I must go. (*He leaves.*)

MARIE That man! In such a state. He didn't even look at his child. He'll end up going crazy with his thoughts. Why so quiet, little fellow? Scared, are you? It's getting so dark, it's like being blind. Other nights at least the lantern shines in. I can't stand it. It gives me the shivers. (*Goes off.*)

BOOTHS, LIGHTS, PEOPLE

Old Man, singing to the hurdy gurdy, Child, dancing.

In this world nothing will endure,
We all will have to die,
Of that we can be sure.

MARIE Hey! Look at this!

WOYZECK Poor man, old man! Poor child! Young child!
Sorrow and feast! Hey Marie, shall I . . . ?

MARIE A person must also have a foolish mind so he can say:
Fool world! Fair world!

BARKER (*in front of a booth, speaking with a French accent:*)
Gentlemen! Gentlemen! See the creature as God made it, is nothing, sheer nothing. Now see art, walks upright, has coat and pants, has a saber! Ho! Take a bow! Now you're a baron. Blow a kiss! (*He blows the trumpet.*) The creature has musical talent. Ladies and gentlemen, you see here the astronomic horse and the little canaille bird, darlings of all potentates of Europe and members of all learned societies, they tell people everything, how old, how many children, what kinds of sickness. Shoots a pistol, stands on one leg. That is education, it has only a beastly reason, or rather a quite reasonable beastiness, is no beastly-dumb individual like many people, the honored public excepted. Come inside. There is the *rapresentation*. The commencement of the commencement will now have its beginning. See the progress of civilization. Everything makes progress, a horse, a monkey, a canaille bird. The monkey is already a soldier, is not much so far, lowest level of the human species!

Begin the *rapresentation*! Begin with the beginning. Right now will be the commencement of the commencement.

WOYZECK Do you want to?

MARIE I don't mind. There may be nice things, like the tassels the man has, and the woman has pantaloons.

Sergeant. Drum Major.

SERGEANT Halt, now! Look at her! What a woman!

DRUM MAJOR Blazes! for reproducing cuirassier regiments and breeding drum majors!

SERGEANT The way she holds her head, you think the black hair would pull it down, like a weight, and those eyes, black...

DRUM MAJOR Like looking down a deep well or chimney. Let's go after her.

MARIE What lights, my eyes!

WOYZECK Yes, the brandy wine, a keg of black cat* with fiery eyes. My, what an evening!

Inside the Booth.

BARBER Show your talent! Show your beastly reasonableness! Put human society to shame! Gentlemen, this animal you see here, tail attached, on its four hooves is member of all learned societies, is professor at our university where students learn from it riding and dueling. That was simple reason. Now think with double *raison*. Is there an ass among the present learned *société*? (*The horse shakes its head.*) Now do you see the double *raison*? That is assiognomy. Yes, this is no dumb-ass individual, it is a person. A human, an animalic human and yet a beast, a *bête*. (*The horse acts unmannerly.*) Now make *société* ashamed. You see the beast is still all nature, unideal nature! You can learn from it. Ask the physician, it is most harmful. It has been said: Man, be natural. You are created from dust, sand, dirt. You want to be more than dust,

*black cat: Schwarze Katz is the name of a famous Moselle wine.

sand, dirt? Look at all the reason, it can do numbers and yet can't count on its fingers, why? It just can't express itself, cannot explicate, is a different kind of human! Tell the gentlemen what time it is. Who among the ladies and gentlemen has a watch, a watch?

SERGEANT A watch! (*Pulls the watch from his pocket with a solemn and grandiose gesture*) There you are, sir.

MARIE This I've got to see. (*She climbs over to the first row. The Sergeant helps her.*)

ROOM

*Marie sitting, her child on her lap,
a piece of broken mirror in her hand.*

MARIE (*looking at herself in the mirror*) How the stones sparkle! What kind are they? What was it he said?—Sleep my boy! Shut your eyes, tight (*the child puts his hands over his eyes*), still tighter, stay still or he'll get you.

(*Sings*) Girlie close the blind,
A Gypsy boy's behind,
Will lead you by the hand
Away to Gypsyland.

(*Looks at herself again.*) Surely it must be gold! The likes of us have only a little corner in the world and a little piece of mirror, and yet I have a mouth as red as the grand ladies with their tall mirrors from head to toe and their handsome gentlemen who kiss their hands, I'm only a poor woman.—(*The child sits up*) Be still little boy, shut your eyes, the sleep-angel is running along the wall (*she flashes the mirror*), shut your eyes, or he'll look into them and blind you.

*Woyzeck enters behind her,
startled, she covers her ears with her hands.*

WOYZECK What's wrong?

MARIE Nothing.

WOYZECK But something is sparkling under your fingers.

MARIE A little earring; I found it.

WOYZECK I've never found anything like that. And two of them!

MARIE Am I not human?

WOYZECK It's all right, Marie.—Look at how the boy is sleeping. Lift his little arm, it's squeezed against the chair. Beads of sweat on his forehead; everything under the sun

labors, we sweat even in sleep. Us poor people! Here's some more money, Marie, my pay and something from the Captain.

MARIE God bless you, Franz.

WOYZECK I have to go. Tonight, Marie. So long.

MARIE (*alone, after a pause*) I'm a bad one, sure enough.—I could stab myself.—What a world, in the end we'll all go to the devil, man and woman.

THE CAPTAIN. WOYZECK.

Captain on a chair, Woyzeck shaving him.

CAPTAIN Slowly, Woyzeck, slowly; one thing after the other. You make me dizzy; what am I to do with the ten minutes you save today by finishing off early? Mind you, Woyzeck, you have another blessed thirty years before you, thirty years! 360 months, and days, hours, minutes! What do you want to do with that enormous amount of time? Ration yourself, Woyzeck.

WOYZECK Yessir, Captain.

CAPTAIN I fear greatly for the world when I think of eternity. Action, Woyzeck, action! Eternal, that means eternal, that is eternal, you can see that; but then again it's not eternal and that means an instant, yes, an instant—Woyzeck, I shudder to think how the world turns in one day, what a waste of time, where does it get us? Woyzeck, I can't see a grindstone anymore without getting melancholy.

WOYZECK Yessir, Captain.

CAPTAIN Woyzeck, you always look so harried. That's not the look of a good man, a good man with a clean conscience.—Why don't you say something, Woyzeck. How's the weather today?

WOYZECK Bad, Captain, sir, bad; wind.

CAPTAIN I can sense it, there's some movement outside; such a wind affects me like a mouse. (*Slyly*) I believe we have something out of south-north.

WOYZECK Yessir, Captain.

CAPTAIN Ha!ha!ha! South-north! Oh you're dumb, really terribly dumb. (*Moved*) Woyzeck, you are a good man, a good man—but (*with dignity*) Woyzeck, you have no morality! Morality is when one is moral, understand? It's a good word. You have a child, without the blessing of the Church, as our

right reverend chaplain of the garrison says, without the blessing of the Church; those aren't my words.

WOYZECK Captain, sir, the good Lord will not judge the poor little worm as to whether the amen was pronounced over him before he was made. The good Lord spoke: Suffer the little children to come unto me.

CAPTAIN (*aside*) What is he saying there? What a curious answer is that? I'm all confused by this answer. (*To Woyzeck*) When I say 'he,' I mean you, you.

WOYZECK Us poor people. You see, Captain, sir, it's money, money. When one has no money. Someone should for once put his own kind up to the morals of the world. We, too, are made of flesh and blood. No matter what, the likes of us are wretched in this world and the next; I guess if we went to heaven we'd have to help with the thunder.

CAPTAIN Woyzeck you have no virtue, you're not a virtuous man. Flesh and blood? When I sit by the window, after a rain, and look at the white stockings as they skip across the road—dammit Woyzeck—then I feel love rise in me. I too am made of flesh and blood. But Woyzeck, virtue, virtue! How, then, can I make time pass? I keep telling myself: You are a virtuous man, (*moved*) a good man, a good man.

WOYZECK Yes Captain, sir, virtue! I haven't quite got it yet. You see, us common people, we have no virtue, we just give in to nature, but if I was a gentleman and had a hat and a watch and a frock coat and could speak in refined words, then I would sure be virtuous. It must be nice to have virtue, Captain, sir. But I'm a poor man.

CAPTAIN Good Woyzeck. You're a good man, a good man. But you think too much, it eats away at you, you always look so harried. This discussion has all but worn me out. Go now and don't run so fast; slow, nice and slow down the street.

ROOM

Marie. Drum Major.

DRUM MAJOR Marie!

MARIE (*looking at him intently*) Just take a few steps.—A chest like a bull and a beard like a lion—no one else is like that—I'm the proudest of women.

DRUM MAJOR Wait until Sunday when I wear the great plumed helmet and white gauntlets, dammit, Marie, the Prince always says: by God, what a man.

MARIE (*mockingly*) You don't say! (*Steps in front of him*)
Man!

DRUM MAJOR And you are some woman. Hellfire and damnation, let's breed a race of drum majors. Eh? (*He embraces her.*)

MARIE (*annoyed*) Leave me alone!

DRUM MAJOR Wildcat!

MARIE (*violently*) Just touch me!

DRUM MAJOR Is that the devil in your eyes?

MARIE Who cares? It's all the same to me.

ON THE STREET

Marie. Woyzeck.

WOYZECK (*stares at her, shakes his head*) Hm. I see nothing, I see nothing. Oh, you should be able to see it, to grab it with your fists.

MARIE (*scared*) What's wrong, Franz? You're out of your mind, Franz.

WOYZECK A sin so great and so big. It stinks so bad, it could smoke all the little angels out of heaven. You have a red mouth, Marie. No blister on it? Adieu Marie, you are beautiful as sin.—Can mortal sin be so beautiful?

MARIE Franz, this is feverish talk.

WOYZECK Hell!—Did he stand here, like this, like this?

MARIE As the day is long and the world is old, many people can stand on the same spot, one after the other.

WOYZECK I saw him.

MARIE You can see a lot when you have two eyes and you aren't blind and the sun is shining.

WOYZECK With these eyes!

MARIE (*sassily*) So what!

AT THE DOCTOR'S

Woyzeck. The Doctor.

DOCTOR What's going on, Woyzeck? A man of his word.

WOYZECK What is it, Doctor, sir?

DOCTOR I saw it, Woyzeck; you pissed in the street, pissed on the wall, like a dog. And in spite of twenty pennies a day. Woyzeck, that is wicked. The world is turning wicked, very wicked.

WOYZECK But Doctor, sir, when nature calls...

DOCTOR When nature calls, nature calls! Did I not prove that the *musculus constrictor vesicae* is subject to the will? Nature! Woyzeck, man is free; in man, individuality sublimates into freedom. Unable to hold your water! (*Shakes his head, folds his hands behind his back and paces back and forth.*) Have you eaten your peas yet, Woyzeck?—There'll be a revolution in science, I will blow it sky high. Urea 0.10, hydrochloric ammonium, hyperprotoxide.—Woyzeck, don't you have to piss again? Why don't you go in and try.

WOYZECK I can't, Doctor, sir.

DOCTOR (*emphatically*) But to piss on the wall! I have it in writing, the contract is in my hand. I saw it, I saw it with my own eyes, I was just sticking my nose out the window, letting the sun's rays shine on it in order to observe the act of sneezing. (*Bears down on Woyzeck*) No, Woyzeck, I am not angry, anger is bad for one's health, it's unscientific. I am calm, quite calm, my pulse is its usual 60 and I am telling you this with great composure. God forbid, who could be aggravated at a human being, a human being! If it were at least a *proteus** that had croaked on you! But still, you shouldn't have pissed on the wall...

*Lizard

WOYZECK You see, Doctor, sir, sometimes someone has a kind of character, a kind of structure.—But it's different with nature, you see, with nature (*he cracks his knuckles*) it's something like—how shall I say it—for example. . . .

DOCTOR Woyzeck, you're philosophizing again.

WOYZECK (*confidentially*) Doctor, sir, have you ever seen anything like double nature? Sometimes, when the sun is at midday and it seems like the world is going up in flames, a fearsome voice has spoken to me!

DOCTOR Woyzeck, you have an *aberratio*.

WOYZECK (*putting his finger to his nose*) The toadstools, Doctor, sir. That's where it is. Have you ever seen in what patterns the toadstools grow on the ground? If one could only read them.

DOCTOR Woyzeck, you have the perfect *aberratio mentalis partialis*, second species, beautifully defined. Woyzeck you'll get a raise. Second species, *idée fixe*, with a generally sane state of mind. You still do everything as usual? Shave your Captain?

WOYZECK Yessir.

DOCTOR Eat your peas?

WOYZECK All the time, Doctor, sir. The money for the household goes to my wife.

DOCTOR Do your duty?

WOYZECK Yessir.

DOCTOR You are an interesting case. Subject Woyzeck, you'll get a raise. Keep up the good work. Let me feel your pulse. Yes.

STREET

Captain. Doctor.

*Captain comes panting down the street,
stops, pants, looks around.*

CAPTAIN Doctor, I fear for the horses, when I think that the poor beasts have to get around on foot. Don't run so fast. Don't wave your cane in the air like that. You're really chasing after your death. A good person with a clean conscience doesn't walk so fast. A good person. (*He catches the Doctor by the coat*) Doctor, permit me to save a human life, you're racing. . . Doctor, I feel so melancholy, I'm kind of emotional, I always have to weep when I see my coat hanging on the wall. There it hangs.

DOCTOR Hm! bloated, fat, thick neck, apoplectic constitution. Yes Captain, you can get *apoplexia cerebralis*, but perhaps you'll get it only on one side and then be paralyzed on the one side, or else, at best, be mentally paralyzed and live on as a vegetable; this is more or less what you can expect within the next four weeks. By the way, I can assure you that yours will be one of the most interesting cases, and if God wills that your tongue be partially paralyzed, we shall conduct some immortal experiments.

CAPTAIN Doctor, don't frighten me, there are people who have died of fright, of pure unmitigated fright.—I can already see the people with top hats in their hands, but they will say he was a good man, a good man—you devil of a coffin nail.

DOCTOR (*shows him his hat*) What do I have here, Captain? It's a hollow head.

CAPTAIN (*makes a fold*) What is this, Doctor? It's folderol.

DOCTOR I bid you farewell, most honorable Mister Drill-prick.

CAPTAIN Likewise, esteemed Mister Coffin-nail.

Woyzeck comes running down the street.

CAPTAIN Hey Woyzeck, what makes you rush past us? Stay a while, Woyzeck, you run through the world like an open razor blade, we could cut ourselves on you, you run as if you had to shave a regiment of castrates and would be hanged before the last hair disappeared.—But, speaking of long beards, what was I going to say? Woyzeck—the long beards...

DOCTOR A long beard under the chin, Pliny already mentions it, is something soldiers should give up...

CAPTAIN (*continues*) Eh? About the long beards? How about it, Woyzeck, haven't you yet found a hair from a beard in your soup bowl? You understand, a human hair, from the beard of an engineer, a sergeant, a—a drum major? Eh, Woyzeck? But your wife is a good sort. You don't have to worry like others do.

WOYZECK Yessir! What do you mean to say, Captain, sir?

CAPTAIN The look on the man's face! Doesn't necessarily have to be in the soup, but if you hurry round the corner perhaps you can find one on a pair of lips, a pair of lips, Woyzeck, I too have felt love, Woyzeck.

WOYZECK Sir, Captain, I'm a poor devil and have nothing else in the world, Captain, sir, if you're making fun...

CAPTAIN I make fun so you'll have fun, my boy.

DOCTOR Your pulse, Woyzeck, your pulse, short, hard, thumping, irregular.

WOYZECK Captain, sir, the earth is hellish-hot, I am ice-cold! Ice-cold, hell is cold, I bet. It can't be—God! God! it can't be.

CAPTAIN Hey fellow, you want to be shot, you want a couple of bullets through your head? He gives me dagger eyes and I only want what's best for him because you're a good man, Woyzeck, a good man.

DOCTOR Facial muscles rigid, taut, jerky at times, posture erect, rigid.

WOYZECK I am leaving. Anything is possible. That man! Anything is possible. We're having fine weather, Captain, sir. You see we have such a nice, firm robust sky, you almost feel like driving a stake into it and hanging yourself from it, only because of the dash between yes, and again yes—and no, sir, Captain sir, yes and no? Is the no the yes's fault or the yes the no's fault? I'll think about it. (*Leaves with long strides, slowly at first, then increasingly faster.*)

DOCTOR (*rushes after him*) A phenomenon, Woyzeck, a raise!

CAPTAIN These people are making me all dizzy, how fast, the tall rascal strikes out, the shadow of a spider leg running along, and the short one—he scampers. The tall one is lightning and the little one is thunder. Haha, after them. Grotesque! Grotesque!

THE GUARDROOM

Woyzeck. Andres.

ANDRES (*sings*) The alewife has a bonny maid
Who's in the garden early'nd late,
Her garden she enjoys...

WOYZECK Andres!

ANDRES What?

WOYZECK Fine weather.

ANDRES Sunday-sun weather. Music outside the town. The
womenfolk have already left, people are streaming, things are
moving.

WOYZECK (*agitated*) Dancing, Andres, they're dancing.

ANDRES In the Horse and in the Star.

WOYZECK Dance, dance.

ANDRES I don't care.

Her garden she enjoys
Until the bell chimes twelve o'clock,
She watches for the sol-dier boys.

WOYZECK Andres, I can't find peace.

ANDRES Fool!

WOYZECK I have to go outside. My head is swimming.

Dance. Dance. They with their hot hands. Dammit. Andres!

ANDRES What do you want?

WOYZECK I must go.

ANDRES With that person.

WOYZECK I have to go outside, it's so hot in here.

INN

*Open windows, dancing. Benches in front of the house.
Apprentices.*

FIRST APPRENTICE

I wear a shirt that isn't mine,
My soul it stinks of brandywine...

SECOND APPRENTICE Brother, shall I make a hole in nature for you, out of friendship? Go ahead! I want to make a hole in nature. I'm quite a fellow too, you know, I want to kill all the fleas on his body.

FIRST APPRENTICE My soul, my soul it stinks of brandywine. Even money is decaying. Forgetmenot! This world is so beautiful. Brother, I have to bawl a rain barrel full. I wish our noses were two bottles and we could pour them down each other's throats.

OTHERS (*in chorus:*)

A huntsman from the Alps,
He rode across a forest green.
Hallo, halloo!
How happy is the hunter's life
On greening heath above.
The hunt is what I love.

Woyzeck looks in at the window. Marie and the Drum Major dance by without noticing him.

MARIE (*dancing by*) On with it, on with it.

WOYZECK (*choked*) On with it!—on with it! (*Starts up violently and sinks back on the bench*) On with it, on with it, (*pounds his hand with his fist*) spin around, wallow around. Why doesn't God snuff out the sun, so everything can wallow in lechery, man and woman, human and beast. Do it in broad daylight, do it on our hands, like flies.—Woman.—The

woman is hot, hot!—On with it, on with it. (*Starts up*) The bastard! The way he paws at her, at her body, he—he has her the way I had her in the beginning!

FIRST APPRENTICE (*preaching on the table*) However, when a wanderer who stands leaning against the river of time and/or finds the answer to divine wisdom and says to himself, Wherefore is man? Wherefore is man?—But verily I say unto you, on what could the farmer, the mason, the cobbler, the physician have lived if God had not created man? On what could the tailor have lived if God had not implanted in man a sense of modesty, what would the soldier have done if He had not equipped him with the urge to kill? Take therefore no thought for the morrow, yes yes, how good and how pleasant it is, but all is vanity, even money is subject to decay.—Finally, my dearly beloved, let us piss crosswise so a Jew will die.

OPEN FIELD

WOYZECK On with it! On with it! Quiet, music! (*Stretches himself toward the ground.*) Ha, what, what do you say? Louder, louder—stab, stab the goat-bitch dead, stab the goat-bitch dead. Shall I? Must I? Do I hear it there too, does the wind say it too? Do I hear it on and on, on with it, stab dead, dead.

NIGHT

Andres and Woyzeck in one bed.

WOYZECK (*shakes Andres*) Andres! Andres! I can't sleep, when I close my eyes everything turns and I hear the fiddles, on with it, on with it, and then it speaks out of the wall, don't you hear it?

ANDRES Yes—let them dance! God help us, amen. (*Goes to sleep again.*)

WOYZECK It keeps saying: stab! stab! and touches me between the eyes like a knife.

ANDRES You ought to drink a schnapps with a powder in it, that cuts the fever.

INN

Drum Major. Woyzeck. People.

DRUM MAJOR I am a man! (*pounds his chest*) a man I tell you. Want something? Anybody that's not drunk as a lord better leave me alone. I'll shove his nose up his ass. I'll—(*to Woyzeck*) there you bastard, drink, the man must drink, I wish the world was schnapps, schnapps.

WOYZECK (*whistles.*)

DRUM MAJOR You bastard, shall I pull your tongue out of your throat and wrap it round your body? (*They wrestle, Woyzeck loses.*) Shall I leave you just enough breath for an old woman's fart, shall I?

WOYZECK (*sits down on the bench, exhausted and trembling.*)

DRUM MAJOR That bastard shall whistle till he's blue in the face. Ha! Brandywine that is my life,
Brandywine gives courage.

A PERSON He's had it.

ANOTHER He's bleeding.

WOYZECK One thing after another.

JUNK SHOP

Woyzeck. The Jew.

WOYZECK The little pistol costs too much.

JEW So buy it or don't buy it, what'll it be?

WOYZECK How much is the knife?

JEW It's good and straight. You want to cut your throat with it? So, how about it? I'll give it to you as cheap as the next man will, you'll have your death cheap but not for free. How about it? You'll have an economical death.

WOYZECK This can cut more than bread.

JEW Twenty pennies.

WOYZECK There! *(Goes off.)*

JEW There! Like it was nothing. And it's money just the same.
The dog.

ROOM

Marie. The Fool.

MARIE (*turning the pages of the Bible*) "Neither was guile found in his mouth"—my God! my God! Don't look at me. (*Turns more pages*) "But the Pharisees brought unto him a woman, taken in adultery, and they set her in the midst.—But Jesus said unto her: Neither do I condemn thee, go, and sin no more." (*She clasps her hands*) My God! my God! I cannot. Lord just give me enough [grace] to pray. (*The child cuddles up to her*) The child stabs me in the heart. Karl! He's swaggering in the sun!

FOOL (*lying down, telling himself fairy tales on his fingers*) This one has the golden crown, the Lord King. Tomorrow I fetch the Lady Queen's child. Bloodwurst says: come on Liverwurst! (*He takes the child and becomes quiet.*)

MARIE Franz hasn't come, not yesterday, not today. It's getting hot in here. (*She opens the window.*)

"And stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet and anointed them with ointment." (*Beats her breast*) Everything's dead! My Savior, my Savior, I would like to anoint your feet.

BARRACKS

Andres. Woyzeck rummaging through his belongings.

WOYZECK The Jacket, Andres, doesn't belong to the uniform, you can use it, Andres. The cross is my sister's and also the little ring, and then I have a holy picture, two hearts in beautiful gold, it was in my-mother's Bible, and it says:

Serving God in sorrow's pain,
Serving God will be my gain.
Lord as your flesh was red and sore,
So let my heart be evermore.

The only thing my mother still feels is the sun shining on her hands. It doesn't matter.

ANDRES *(stunned, says to everything:)* All right.

WOYZECK *(pulls out a paper)* Friedrich Johann Franz Woyzeck, soldier, infantryman in the second regiment, second battalion, company four, born Annunciation Day, I'm 30 years, 7 months and 12 days old today.

ANDRES Franz, you belong in the infirmary. Poor man, you should drink schnapps with a powder in it, that'll kill the fever.

WOYZECK Yes Andres, when the carpenter sweeps up the shavings, nobody knows whose head will lie on them.

THE DOCTOR'S COURTYARD

Students down below, the Doctor at the attic window.

DOCTOR Gentlemen, I'm on the roof like David when he saw Bathsheba; but all I can see are the bustles drying in the garden of the young ladies' boarding school. Gentlemen, we have come to the important question concerning the relation of the subject to the object. If we take only one of the things in which the organic self-affirmation of the divine manifests itself on so high a level, and examine its relation to space, to the earth, to the planetary idea, gentlemen, if I throw this cat out the window, how will that creature react to the *centrum gravitationis* and its own instinct? Hey Woyzeck, *(roars)* Woyzeck!

WOYZECK Doctor, sir, it bites.

DOCTOR You handle the beast as tenderly as if it were your grandmother.

WOYZECK Doctor, sir, I've got the shakes.

DOCTOR *(quite pleased)* Well, well, it's fine, Woyzeck. *(Rubs his hands. He takes the cat.)* What do I see, gentlemen, a new species of rabbit louse, a beautiful species, *(pulls out his loupe)* gentlemen—*(the cat runs away)*. Gentlemen, that animal has no scientific instinct. Gentlemen, you can see something else instead, look here, this person, for three months he has eaten nothing but peas, observe the effect, just feel how irregular the pulse is, there, and the eyes.

WOYZECK Doctor, sir, everything is turning black. *(He sits down.)*

DOCTOR Courage! A few more days, Woyzeck, and then it'll be over. Feel him, gentlemen, feel him. *(They examine his temples, pulse, and chest.)* By the way, Woyzeck, wiggle your ears for the gentlemen. I wanted to show you this before. There are two muscles involved here. Come on, get going!

WOYZECK Doctor, sir, please!

DOCTOR You bastard, shall I wiggle your ears for you, do you want to act up like the cat! Well, gentlemen, these are the links with the donkey, and often the consequences of a female upbringing and the mother tongue. How much hair has your mother pulled out as a tender memento? It has thinned out noticeably in the past few days, yes, the peas, gentlemen.

MARIE WITH GIRLS IN FRONT OF THE HOUSE

GIRLS The sun shines bright on Candlemas,
The corn is full in bloom.
They were walking down the street,
Were walking two by two.
The pipers walked in front,
In back the fiddlers too.
They wore red socks...

FIRST CHILD That's not a nice song.

SECOND CHILD You always want something!

THIRD CHILD What did you start it for?

SECOND CHILD Why?

FIRST CHILD Because.

SECOND CHILD Why because?

THIRD CHILD She must sing—? (*Looks questioningly round the circle and points to the first child.*)

FIRST CHILD I can't.

ALL CHILDREN Marie, you sing to us!

MARIE Come you little mites!

(Ring around a rosy. King Herod.)

Grandmother, tell us a story.

GRANDMOTHER Once upon a time there was a poor child and had no father and no mother all were dead and no one was left in the world, and she went out and wailed day and night. And since no one was left on earth, she wanted to go to heaven, and the moon looked at her so friendly-like and when she finally got to the moon, the moon was a chunk of rotten wood and so she went to the sun and when she got to the sun it was a dead sunflower and when she got to the stars, they were little golden bugs stuck on like the shrike sticks them on the sloe bush, and when she wanted to go back to earth, the earth

was an upside-down crock, and she was all alone and so she sat down and cried and is still sitting there and is all alone.*

WOYZECK Marie!

MARIE (*startled*) What is it?

WOYZECK Marie, let's go. It's time.

MARIE Where to?

WOYZECK How do I know?

*"The child"—*das Kind* in German has a neutral gender. In English, 'he' or 'she' has to be used instead of 'it.' In the old German tale, on which the Grandmother's story is based, the child is a little girl.

EVENING

THE TOWN IN THE DISTANCE

Marie and Woyzeck.

MARIE Well, the town is over there. It's dark.

WOYZECK You must stay awhile. Come sit down.

MARIE But I've got to go.

WOYZECK You won't run your feet sore.

MARIE What's got into you!

WOYZECK Do you know how long it has been now, Marie?

MARIE Two years on Pentecost.

WOYZECK And do you know how much longer it will be?

MARIE I must go make supper.

WOYZECK Are you chilly Marie? And yet you're warm. What hot lips you have! (hot, hot whore's breath and yet I'd give all of heaven to kiss them once more) and when you're cold you're no longer chilly. The morning dew won't chill you.

MARIE What are you saying?

WOYZECK Nothing. (*Silence.*)

MARIE How red the moon is rising.

WOYZECK Like a bloody blade.

MARIE What's on your mind? Franz, you are so pale. (*He pulls the knife*) Franz don't! In the name of Heaven, Help!— Help!

WOYZECK Take that, and that! Can't you die? There! There! Ha, she's still twitching, not yet, not yet? Still going? (*Plunges the knife in*) Are you dead? Dead! Dead! (*People are coming, he runs off.*)

PEOPLE APPROACHING

FIRST PERSON Hold it!

SECOND PERSON Do you hear? Quiet! There!

FIRST PERSON Oooh! Over there! What a sound!

SECOND PERSON It is the water, it's calling, nobody has drowned for a long time. Let's go, it's not good to hear it.

FIRST PERSON Oooh! now-again. Like a person dying.

SECOND PERSON It's eerie, so murky, fog everywhere, grey, and the buzzing of the beetles like cracked bells. Let's get out of here!

FIRST PERSON No, too clear, too loud. Up this way. Come along.

INN

WOYZECK Dance, all of you, on with it, sweat and stink, he'll get you all in the end.

(Sings) The alewife has a bonny maid
Who's in the garden early'nd late,
Her garden she enjoys
Until the bell chimes twelve o'clock,
She watches for the soldier boys.

(He dances.) There, Kate! Sit down! I feel hot, hot *(he takes off his jacket)*, that's the way it goes, the devil comes for the one and lets the other go. Kate you're hot! But why? One day you'll be cold, too. Take care. Can't you sing?

KATE I won't go to a Swabian town,
And I won't wear a fancy gown,
For gowns and pointed shoes and pearls
Are never meant for servant girls.

WOYZECK No, no shoes, one can go to hell without shoes.

KATE *(dances)* For shame my love, what ugly tone,
Just keep your cash and sleep alone.

WOYZECK Yes indeed! I don't want to get all bloody.

KATE But what do you have on your hand?

WOYZECK Who? Me?

KATE Red, blood! *(People gather around them.)*

WOYZECK Blood? Blood.

INNKEEPER Ugh, blood.

WOYZECK I guess I cut myself, there on my right hand.

INNKEEPER But how did it get on your elbow?

WOYZECK I wiped it off.

INNKEEPER What, with your right hand on your right elbow? You are clever.

FOOL And then the giant said: I smell, I smell, I smell the flesh of a human. Phew! It stinks already.

WOYZECK Hell, what do you want? Is it any of your business? Make room! or the first—Hell! Do you think I killed somebody? Am I a murderer? Why are you staring? Look at yourselves. Make room! (*Runs outside.*)

EVENING

THE TOWN IN THE DISTANCE

Woyzeck alone.

The knife? Where's the knife? That's where I left it. It'll give me away! Closer, still closer! What kind of place is this? What do I hear? Something's moving. Hush! There close by. Marie? Ha Marie! Quiet. All quiet! (How pale you are, Marie. How come you have a red string around your neck? From whom did you earn that necklace for your sins? You were black with them, black! Now I've made you pale. How come your black hair hangs so wild? Didn't you braid it today?) Something lies there! cold, wet, still. Away from this place. The knife, the knife, have I got it? Oh! People.—There. (*He runs away.*)

WOYZECK AT A POND

This way, down there! (*He tosses the knife in*) It sinks into the dark water, like a stone. The moon is like a bloody blade! Does the whole world want to give it away? No, it's too far in front—when they go bathing—(*he wades into the pond and tosses it far away*) that's it—but in summer when they dive for mussels—never mind it'll be rusty. Who can recognize it?—if only I had broken it! Am I still bloody? I must wash myself. Here's a spot and here's another.

STREET

Children.

FIRST CHILD Let's go! Marie!

SECOND CHILD What is it?

FIRST CHILD Don't you know? They've all left already.
Someone's lying out there!

SECOND CHILD Where?

FIRST CHILD To the left over the trench in the woods, at the
red cross.

SECOND CHILD Let's go so we can still see something, before
they carry it in.

BAILIFF. PHYSICIAN. JUDGE.

BAILIFF A good murder, a genuine murder, a beautiful
murder, as beautiful as anyone could wish for. We haven't
had one like it in a long time.

THE IDIOT. THE CHILD. WOYZECK.

KARL (*holding the child on his lap*) This one fell in the water, this one fell in the water, this one fell in the water.

WOYZECK Christian, my boy.

KARL (*stares at him*) This one fell in the water.

WOYZECK (*wants to pet the child who turns away and screams*) Good God!

KARL This one fell in the water.

WOYZECK Christian, you'll get a horsy, there, there. (*The child resists. To Karl:*) Go buy a horsy for the boy.

KARL (*stares at him.*)

WOYZECK Gallop! gallop! Horsy.

KARL (*cheering*) Gallop! gallop! horsy! horsy! (*Runs off with the child.*)

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Introduction to LENZ

Jakob Michael Reinhold Lenz (1751-1792) was the first in German literature to write about "little people" (the lower classes) with whom he occasionally identified. In his best-known pieces for the theater, *The Soldiers* and *The Private Tutor*, he was sharply critical of bourgeois society. He was not highly regarded in his own time nor during the 19th century. In fact, it was not until our century that his works were rediscovered and performed again and his importance was recognized, especially by Bertolt Brecht. For a short time Lenz was a member of Goethe's circle in Strasbourg and Weimar; it was the high point in his life. But he incurred Goethe's disfavor in Weimar and had to leave town. After spending some time in Strasbourg he left to walk across the Vosges Mountains, arriving in Waldbach (Alsace) at Pastor Oberlin's, who received him with kindness. At that time Lenz showed signs of mental stress and confusion but it is not known how long this had been going on. It is conjecture whether his derangement was a breakdown caused by deep personal and professional disappointments, or whether it was an illness which would today be called schizophrenia.

Pastor Oberlin was a true shepherd to his flock of needy parishioners, isolated people making a meager living off the land with mostly poor soil, who depended on his active support and advice on the most vital matters such as schooling, roads, canalization, family problems. His fame had spread far and wide; even an American college was named after him.

* * *

At the beginning of Büchner's novella, Lenz is crossing the mountains, his state of mind constantly adjusting to the changing moods of the wild landscape. Then, without warning, comes a sentence almost like a blow: "...now and then he found it unpleasant that he could not walk on his head." We are drawn

into the tortured mind of a man fighting for survival, a man who is trying to flee from the sinister forces rising from out of his own depths.—He finds refuge with Pastor Oberlin whose loving care and simple faith seemed to soothe Lenz's suffering—but not for long. In the end, even Oberlin could help no more, he had to give in to forces stronger than he.

Büchner's novella follows a diary kept by Oberlin, who faithfully recounted his experiences and his struggle to help Lenz regain his equilibrium. It is obvious that in spite of his love and good will, Oberlin was incapable of understanding the complexities of Lenz's mind. While Oberlin's language is to the point, Büchner, though he sometimes follows the diary verbatim,¹ fleshed out the story with words of deep insight into the tortured soul of a man, dead for twenty years before Büchner was born, with whom he felt a strong affinity and who had a decisive influence on his thinking. Büchner's and the historical Lenz's views on idealism were almost identical, hence *Lenz's* impassioned discourse on art—realism over idealism (p. 62)—which expresses Büchner's own convictions.

The novella, however, does not deal with Jakob Michael Reinhold Lenz's literary oeuvre. Instead, it shows his suffering,

1. Oberlin wrote, for instance (p. 72): "At supper he was somewhat pensive yet we talked about various things. We finally parted in good spirits and went to bed—at midnight I was suddenly awakened; he was running through the yard, in a harsh, hollow voice he called out some syllables that I couldn't understand; but since I now know that his beloved was called Friedericke, it seems to me that it was this name,—uttered with extreme rapidity, confusion and despair. He hurled himself, as usual, into the fountain trough, splashed in it, climbed out and upstairs to his room, down again into the trough and so on several times—finally he quieted down. My maids, who sleep in the nursery below him, said that they had often heard a growling sound, but that same night especially, that reminded them of nothing as much as that of a barn owl. Perhaps it was this moaning, in a hollow, ghastly, despairing voice."

his sinking into the depths of despair. Before the word schizophrenia was ever coined, Büchner described the gradual deterioration of the mind with an insight so vivid that to this day *Lenz* has been used as a textbook case for medical students.

But Büchner's word-painting of landscapes gives the novella its greatest impact. Landscapes seem to be a physical part of Lenz's moods, they become one with him. He wants to "draw the storm inside his body"; walking through freshly fallen snow, "the essence of things was speaking to him"; after a great disappointment "the sky was a stupid blue eye, and the moon was in it, quite ridiculous, foolish."

The novella is unfinished, a fragment; it has several gaps, a major one among them.² Still, in its unfinished form, it is a

2. Short synopsis of Oberlin's report filling the major gap (p. 78): The nursemaid reported that Lenz had hurled himself out the window, but before Oberlin could reach him, he had already returned to his room. His clothes were wet and covered with mud; he had apparently tried to drown himself before coming home. Later he made an attempt at stabbing himself, but all his suicidal attempts were half-hearted. Oberlin saw that he could no longer cope with the situation and told Lenz: "You were a complete stranger to us, we did not know you at all; we had heard your name mentioned only once before we met you; we received you with love... and you ill-rewarded us, giving us one fright after the other."

Meanwhile Oberlin had sent for two men to come and help him restrain Lenz. The two guards stayed with him during the night but had to ask for the help of a third person to keep him from hurting himself and hitting his head against the wall. Oberlin had his carriage put in readiness early in the morning and asked schoolmaster Scheidecker and two others to accompany Lenz to Strasbourg. Lenz, finally persuaded to leave, "thanked the people most tenderly, his guards too, and went to see my wife and the maids who had been keeping still and hiding from him since shortly before he had flown into an even greater rage whenever he heard, or believed he heard, a woman's voice." ... After thanking everyone and asking for forgiveness, "this unfortunate young man departed from us, accompanied by three attendants and two drivers."

perfectly integrated piece. It seems that Büchner had said everything there was to say and there was no need for him to fill in the gaps. In the end, only resignation is left:—"So he lived on."

* * *

After a stay in Strasbourg with Schlosser, the widower of Goethe's sister, Lenz returned to his native Livonia. He found occasional work as a tutor, but his spirit was broken and he never wrote another word. He was found dead on a street in Moscow in 1792. He was forty-one years old.

H.R.

LENZ

On the 1st of August, 1882, I left my home in
 the city of Zurich, Switzerland, and went to
 the town of Lenz, in the Canton of Aargau.
 The distance is about 15 miles, and the
 journey is made by rail. I arrived in Lenz
 at 10 o'clock in the morning, and found
 that the town was very quiet. I had
 heard that it was a very lively place,
 but it was all dead. I went to the
 hotel, and found that the proprietor
 was a very kind man. He showed me
 the town, and I saw that it was
 a very beautiful place. I stayed
 in the hotel for a few days, and
 then I went to the country. I saw
 many beautiful views, and I was
 very much pleased. I returned to
 Zurich on the 5th of August, and
 I was very much pleased with my
 journey. I had a very good time,
 and I was very much pleased with
 the result. I had a very good time,
 and I was very much pleased with
 the result. I had a very good time,
 and I was very much pleased with
 the result.

On the twentieth [of January] Lenz walked across the mountains. The summits and high slopes covered with snow; down toward the valleys grey stone faces, green inclines, rocks and pines. It was cold and wet, water trickled down the rocks and leapt across the way. Pine branches hung heavy in the damp air. In the sky, grey clouds were drifting, but everything so close, and then the fog steamed up and billowed heavy and moist through the brush, so sluggish, so plump. He walked on, indifferent, not concerned about the way, now uphill, now downhill. He felt no tiredness, but now and then he found it unpleasant that he could not walk on his head. At first he felt constricted when the stones bounced off, when the grey forest below him shuddered and the fog swallowed the shapes and then again unveiled part of the mighty limbs; an urge was inside him, he searched for something as though for lost dreams, but he found nothing. Everything was so small to him, so near, so wet, he would have liked to place the earth behind the stove; he didn't understand why it took him so long to climb down a slope, to reach a distant point; he thought he should be able to measure everything with a few steps. Only at times—when the storm hurled clouds into the valleys, and steam rose up into the forest, and voices awakened on the rock faces, now like distantly fading thunder, now coming near with a mighty roar as though they wanted to sing praises to the earth in wild exultation, and the clouds came charging like wild, neighing steeds, and the sunshine broke through between them and came to draw its glittering sword along the snow-covered slopes so that a bright dazzling light cut across the summits into the valleys; or when the storm drove the clouds downward, seizing a limpid-blue lake on the way, and then the wind died down and hummed upward from the deep gorges, from the tops of the pines, like a lullaby and the sound of bells, and a soft red reached up to the deep blue, and little clouds drifted by on silver wings, and all the mountain peaks, sharp and rigid, gleamed and flashed far across the land—something tore inside his chest, he stood, panting, his

body bent over, eyes and mouth wide open, he felt he had to draw the storm into his body, contain it all within him, he spread himself wide and lay on top of the earth, he dug into the universe, it was a lust that hurt; or he stood still and rested his head on the moss and half-closed his eyes, and then things drifted far from him, the earth gave way under him, became small like a wandering star and immersed itself in a rushing stream whose clear waters surged beneath him. But these were only moments, and then he rose, sober, firm, calm, as though a shadow play had passed in front of him, he remembered nothing. Toward evening he reached the highest point of the mountain chain, the snowfield from where one had to climb down again to the plain in the west; he sat down at the summit. It had turned calm toward evening; the clouds, firm and motionless, hung in the sky, as far as the eye could see, nothing but mountain peaks from which wide slopes were leading down, and everything so still, grey, dusky; he began to feel the terror of loneliness, he was alone, all alone, he wanted to talk to himself but he couldn't, he hardly dared to breathe, the flexing of his foot sounded like thunder below him, he had to sit down; he was gripped by a nameless fear in this nothingness, he was in the void, he tore himself loose and flew down the incline. It had turned dark, heaven and earth melted into one. It was as though something were following him, as though something horrible were going to catch up with him, something that humans cannot bear, as though madness on horseback were hunting him down. At last he heard voices, he saw lights and felt relieved, he was told it would be another half hour to Waldbach. He walked through the village, lights were shining through the windows, he looked in while passing by, children at the table, old women, young girls, restful quiet faces all, it seemed to him that the light must be radiating from them, he was feeling easier, and soon he was at the parsonage in Waldbach. They were at table, he went in; blond curls framed his pale face, his eyes and mouth twitched, his clothes were torn. Oberlin welcomed him, he took

him for a workman. "Welcome to my house, although you are a stranger to me."—"I am a friend of Kaufmann's and bring you his regards."—"Your name, if I may ask?"—"Lenz."—"Ha, ha, ha, hasn't he appeared in print? Haven't I read several dramas ascribed to a gentleman by that name?"—"Yes, but I beg of you not to judge me by them." They talked on, he groped for words and spoke rapidly, but in torment; gradually he was calmed by the cozy room and the quiet faces that emerged from the shadow, the bright child's face on which all light seemed to rest and which looked up in wonder and trust, and the mother sitting in back, in the shadow, in angel-like stillness. He began to talk about his home country; he sketched a few national costumes; they crowded round him in sympathy, soon he felt at home, his pale, childlike face smiling now, his lively narration; he calmed down, he felt as though familiar figures, forgotten faces were stepping out of the dark, old songs were awakened, he was far, far away. Finally it was time to leave, he was taken across the street, the parsonage was too crowded, he was given a room in the schoolhouse. He went upstairs, it was cold there, a large room, empty, a tall bed in back, he placed the light on the table and paced up and down, he reflected on the events of the day, how he had come here, where he was, the room in the parsonage with its lights and the dear faces, it seemed like a shadow to him, a dream, and he felt the same emptiness again that he had felt on the mountain, but nothing was left to fill it, the light was extinguished, the darkness devoured everything; he was gripped by an unspeakable fear, he leapt up, he ran through the room, down the stairs, out of the house; but in vain, all was dark, nothing, he was a dream to himself, single thoughts flickered up, he held on to them, he felt as though he had to keep saying "Our Father"; he could no longer find himself, a dark instinct drove him to save himself, he knocked against stones, he lacerated himself with his nails, the pain began to bring him back to consciousness, he flung himself into the stone fountain but the water was not deep, he splashed in it. Then people came, they

had heard him and called out to him. Oberlin came running; Lenz had come to his senses again, he was faced with the full awareness of his situation, he felt relieved, now he was ashamed and sorry for having alarmed these good people, he told them that it was his habit to take cold baths and he went upstairs again; his exhaustion let him find rest at last.

The next day went well. With Oberlin through the valley on horseback; broad mountain expanses narrowing from great heights to a close, winding valley that extended in many directions high into the mountains, great masses of rock widening at the base, not much forest but all in grey somber hues, a westerly view into the land and up into the mountain chain which stretched in a straight line from south to north, and whose mighty peaks stood grave or silently motionless like a dawning dream. Vast masses of light, at times welling up from the valleys like a golden stream, then again clouds hovering on the highest peaks and then slowly drifting down along the forest toward the valley, or sinking and lifting in shafts of sunlight like a flying silvery web; no noise, no movement, no bird, nothing but the blowing of the wind, now nearby, now distant. Some specks also appeared, skeletons of huts, boards thatched with straw, black, somber in color. The people, silent and grave as though they were afraid to disturb the stillness of the valley, gave a quiet greeting as they rode by. Inside the huts things were lively, people crowded round Oberlin who guided, advised, comforted; everywhere trusting looks and prayers. There was talk of dreams, premonitions. Then quickly on to practical life, road building, canalization; a visit to the school. Oberlin was untiring, Lenz his steady companion, now involved in conversation, now in business, now in the contemplation of nature. It all had a wholesome and soothing influence on him, he often had to look Oberlin in the eye, and the powerful tranquillity which overcomes us in the presence of nature in repose, in the deep forest, in moonlit melting summer nights, seemed to him even nearer in this restful eye, this venerable

grave face. He was shy, but he made remarks, his conversation was very pleasant to Oberlin who took great delight in Lenz's charming, childlike face. But only as long as the sunshine lay in the valley were things bearable for Lenz; toward evening he was haunted by a strange fear, he would have liked to run after the sun; as the objects turned shadowy by degree, all seemed dreamlike to him and repugnant, he was gripped by fear like children who sleep in the dark; he felt as if he were blind; now the fear grew, the demon of madness sat at his feet, the desperate thought rose up before him that it all was nothing but a dream, he clung to every object, figures and shapes were rushing past him, he pressed against them, they were shadows, life was drained from him and his limbs were rigid. He spoke, he sang, he recited passages from Shakespeare, he reached for everything that used to make his blood flow faster, he tried everything, but cold, cold. Then he had to get out into the open, the few spots of luminosity, diffused by the night, made him feel better once his eyes had got used to the dark, he flung himself into the fountain, the harsh shock of the water helped him, he also secretly hoped for a sickness, he did his bathing now with less noise. Still and all, the more he adjusted to his life, the calmer he got, he assisted Oberlin, he sketched, he read the Bible; old abandoned hopes rose in him; the New Testament became real here. . . . When Oberlin told him how an invisible hand had held him on the bridge, how a radiance had dazzled his eyes on the mountain top, how he had heard a voice, how something had talked to him in the night, and how God was dwelling within him so fully that he would draw lots, childlike, to find out what to do,—this faith, this everlasting heaven in life, this being in God—only then did he begin to understand the Holy Writ. How nature came so close to people, all in heavenly mysteries; not powerfully majestic, but still familiar! — One morning he went outside, snow had fallen during the night, the valley was filled with bright sunshine, but farther away the landscape was half hidden in mist. He soon went off the path and up a gentle slope, no more footprints, a

pine forest on one side, the sun reflected in crystals, the snow was light and flaky, here and there tracks of game softly impressed in the snow, leading into the mountains. No motion of the air other than a soft breeze, or the flutter of a bird lightly dusting the flakes off its tail. Everything so still, and the trees far into the distance with swaying white feathers against the deep-blue air. He felt more and more comfortable, the monotonous vast expanses and lines which sometimes seemed to speak to him in mighty voices were shrouded, he was overcome with an intimate feeling of Christmas, at times he thought that his mother was about to step forward from behind a tree, large as life, and tell him that all these were Christmas gifts from her; as he went downhill he saw that a rainbow of rays was forming round his shadow, he felt as if something had touched him on the forehead, the essence of things was speaking to him. He went back. Oberlin was in the room, Lenz went to him cheerfully and told him he wouldn't mind giving a sermon once. —“Are you a theologian?” —“Yes!” —“Very well, next Sunday.”

Lenz went to his room in good spirits, he thought about a text for his sermon and got absorbed in meditation, and his nights became restful. Sunday morning came, the thaw had set in. Clouds drifting by, blue in between, uphill on a ledge stood the church, surrounded by the churchyard. Lenz was standing up there as the bell pealed and the churchgoers, women and girls in their grave black costumes, the white folded handkerchief and a sprig of rosemary on their hymnbooks, were coming from all directions, uphill and downhill, on narrow paths between the rocks. A glance of the sun lit up the valley now and then, the mild air stirred slowly, the landscape was floating in fragrance, a distant tolling of bells, it was as if everything was dissolving in a wave of harmony.

In the little churchyard the snow was gone, dark moss under the black crosses, a belated rosebush leaning against the wall of the churchyard, other belated flowers punctuating the moss, at one moment sun, then shadow again. The service began, human

voices met in clear, bright sound, an impression like that of looking into a pure translucent mountain spring. The song faded out, Lenz spoke, he was shy, with the sound of the music his inner spasms had given way, now his whole suffering woke up and settled in his heart. He was filled with a sweet feeling of infinite wellbeing. He talked to the people in plain words, they all suffered the same as he, and it was a comfort to him to bring sleep to a few eyes tired from weeping, or peace to a few tormented hearts, to guide these dull sufferings heavenward, beyond a life tormented by material needs. He had become steadier as he closed, then the voices set in again:

Let my holy sufferings
Open up deep inner springs;
Suffering be all my gain,
To God I dedicate my pain.

The urge within him, the music, the pain affected him profoundly. He saw the universe in wounds; it made him feel deep, nameless pain. Now, another Being, divine quivering lips bent over him and attached themselves to his lips; he went to his solitary room. He was alone, alone! Then the spring gushed forth, his eyes were streaming, he doubled over, his limbs twitched, he felt as though he had to dissolve, he could find no end to his ecstasy; at last the night lifted inside him, he felt a soft deep pity with himself, he wept over himself, his head sank down on his chest, he fell asleep, the full moon hung in the sky, locks of hair fell on his face and temples, tears were on his lashes and dried on his cheeks, thus he lay there alone, and all was quiet and still and cold, and the moon shone all night and hung above the mountains.

The following morning he came down, he told Oberlin quite calmly how his mother had appeared to him during the night; wearing a white dress, she had stepped forth from the dark wall of the churchyard, and she'd had a white and a red rose fastened to her breast; then she had sunk down in a corner and the roses

had slowly grown over her, he was sure she was dead, he felt quite calm about it. Oberlin told him in reply how he had been alone in a field when his father died, how he had heard a voice so he knew that his father was dead, and when he came home it was so. This led to other things, Oberlin talked about the people on the mountains, about girls who divined water and metal underground, about men who had been seized on certain mountain heights and had wrestled with a spirit; he also told how he once had been transported into some kind of somnambulism by staring into the void of a deep mountain pool. Lenz said that the spirit of the waters had come over him, that he had thus experienced some of his own essential being. He continued: The simplest, purest being was closest to elemental nature, the more refined a person's intellectual power and way of life; the more this elemental sense would become dulled; he did not consider it an exalted state, it wasn't sufficiently independent, but he thought it must be a feeling of infinite rapture to be privy to the essential life of each form; to have a soul open to rocks, metals, water, and plants; to absorb, dreamlike, each species of nature the way flowers absorb air with the waxing and waning of the moon.

He elaborated how everything had within it an indescribable harmony, a cadence, a blissfulness which in the higher forms reached out, sounded, perceived with more organs but was therefore also affected that much more deeply, how in the lower forms everything was more repressed, more confined, but therefore the inner repose was that much greater. He pursued this further. Oberlin cut him short, it led him too far afield from his simple ways. Another time Oberlin showed him color cards, he explained to him the relation of each color to man, he brought out the Twelve Apostles, each represented by a color. Lenz took it all in, developed the thought further, fell into fearful dreams and began, like Stilling, to read the Apocalypse, and he spent much time studying the Bible.

At about this time Kaufmann and his fiancée came to the Steintal. At first Lenz did not appreciate this meeting, he had just found his niche, a measure of peace and quiet was most precious to him, and now he was faced with someone who reminded him of so much, to whom he had to speak, to talk, who knew his circumstances. Oberlin knew nothing of all this; he had taken Lenz in, had nursed him; he considered it the hand of God that had sent him the unfortunate man, he loved him dearly. Lenz's presence also filled a need for everyone, he was one of them as though he had always been with them, and nobody asked whence he had come and where he would go. At table Lenz was in good spirits again, the talk turned to literature, he was on his own ground; the period of idealism was beginning at the time, Kaufmann was its follower, Lenz disagreed vehemently. He said: Those poets who supposedly represent reality actually have no notion of it, but they are still easier to tolerate than those who aim to glorify reality. He said: I suppose the Good Lord made the world as it was meant to be, and we can't scribble anything better, our sole endeavor should be to recreate a little bit in His manner. I demand in everything—life, the possibility of existence, and then it is good; and then we don't have to ask whether it is beautiful, whether it is ugly, the feeling that a thing is created and has life is above beauty and ugliness, it is the sole criterion in matters of art. However, we encounter it only rarely, we find it in Shakespeare and it rings out fully in folk songs, and occasionally in Goethe. The rest can be thrown into the fire. People can't even draw a doghouse. They clamor for ideal figures, but all I've seen of them are wooden puppets. This idealism is the most shameful contempt for human nature. Just try and involve yourself in the life of the humblest of people and reproduce it in the twitchings, the intimations, in all the delicate, barely noticeable facial expressions; he himself had made an attempt of this kind in *The Private Tutor* and *The Soldiers*. These show the most prosaic persons under the sun; but the vein of emotion is the same in

almost all people, only the covering through which it must break varies in thickness. One only needs eyes and ears for it. Yesterday, when I walked up the valley, I saw two young girls sitting on a rock, one of them was tying up her hair, and the other was helping her, and the golden hair was hanging down, and a grave pale face and yet so young, and the black apparel, and the other one so carefully attentive. The most beautiful, most moving paintings of the Early German School barely give a hint of it. Sometimes one would wish to be a Medusa's head in order to turn such a group into stone, and to call people's attention to it. The young girls got up, the beautiful group was destroyed; but as they were climbing down between the rocks there was another picture again. The most beautiful pictures, the most haunting shades gather and dissolve. Only one thing remains: an infinite beauty that steps from one form into another, eternally open-leaved, eternally changing, but of course one cannot always capture it and place it in museums and express it in music, and then call in old and young and have the young and the old discuss it and be enraptured by it. One must love mankind in order to grasp the essence of each individual, no one may be too humble, no one too ugly, only then is it possible to understand all; the most insignificant face makes a deeper impression than the mere perception of beauty, and one can let the figures take on substance without copying into them the externals which will transmit and emanate no life, no muscles, no pulse. Kaufmann countered by saying that in real life, after all, he would not find any model for an Apollo of Belvedere or a Madonna by Raphael. What does it matter, Lenz answered, I must admit that I feel very dead with all this. When I work at it, I may well be able to feel something but I myself do the best part of it. My favorite poets and artists are those who render nature in its most real form, so that their creations make me feel; all else irritates me. The Dutch painters appeal to me more than the Italians, they are also the only comprehensible ones; I know only two pictures, both by Netherlanders, which could impress

me like the New Testament; one of them, I don't know by whom, is of Christ and the Disciples at Emmaus. When one reads how the Disciples went forth, all of nature is already in those few words. It is a gloomy, dusky evening, an unbroken streak of red on the horizon, the street in semi-darkness, a stranger joins them, they talk, he breaks bread, then they know him, in a simple human way, and the divine suffering features speak to them clearly, and they are frightened, for it has become dark, and they are approached by something incomprehensible, but it is not a ghostly dread; it's as though a beloved departed were coming near you in the twilight as he used to do, such is the picture, overlaid with a monotone brownish tint, in the dusky, still evening. Then another one. A woman is sitting in her chamber, the prayer book in her hand. Everything is tidy for Sunday, clean sand on the floor, so homely, neat and warm. The woman has not been able to go to church, and she is doing her devotions at home, the window is open, she is turned towards it, and it is as if the bells from the village were drifting to the window across the wide level landscape, as if the song of the faithful were floating past her from the nearby church, and the woman is following the text.—He went on in this manner, they listened, he touched on many things, his face had become flushed with talking, and now smiling, now serious, he was shaking his blond curls. He had forgotten himself completely. After dinner Kaufmann took him aside. He had received letters from Lenz's father, his son should return, should be a help to him. Kaufmann told him that he was wasting his life here, squandering his time uselessly, he should set himself a goal, and so on. Lenz tore into him: "Away from here, away! Go home? Go mad there? You know I can't stand it anywhere but here, in these surroundings; if I couldn't climb a mountain now and then and see the landscape, and then back down to the house, walk through the garden and look into the window, I'd go mad, mad! Why don't you leave me in peace! Just a little peace, now that I'm beginning to feel more restful! Away from here? I don't

understand it, with these three words the world is ruined. Everybody needs something; if he can be at peace, what more does he need! Always to move uphill, to struggle, and so eternally to throw away everything the moment gives and always to starve in order to be gratified some day; to thirst while bright springs are leaping across the way. Things are bearable for me now, and that's why I want to stay here; why? why? Precisely because I feel comfortable; what does my father want? Can he give more? Impossible! Leave me alone." He became agitated, Kaufmann left, Lenz was disturbed.

The next day Kaufmann wanted to leave, he persuaded Oberlin to come along with him to Switzerland. The wish to make the personal acquaintance of Lavater, whom he had known by correspondence for a long time, helped Oberlin in his decision. He accepted. They had to wait another day because of the necessary preparations. Lenz's heart felt heavy, he had fearfully clung to everything so he could rid himself of his endless torment; at some moments he felt deeply that he was only deceiving himself; he treated himself like a sick child, only with the greatest fear was he able to free himself from certain thoughts and overpowering feelings, then he was driven back to them with infinite force, he trembled, his hair almost stood on end until the enormous exertion left him exhausted. He found refuge in an image that was ever before his eyes, and in Oberlin; his words, his face were a never-ending comfort to him. Thus he fearfully anticipated Oberlin's departure.

Lenz had an eerie feeling about staying in the house alone now. The weather had turned mild, he decided to go along with Oberlin into the mountains. They separated on the far side where the valleys ended in the plain. He walked back alone. He wandered across the mountains in several directions, broad expanses sloped down into the valleys, few forests, nothing but mighty lines and the wide hazy plain in the distance, a powerful blowing in the air, nowhere a trace of human life except here and there a deserted hut leaning against the slopes,

where herdsmen spent their summers. He gradually felt tranquil, perhaps almost dreamlike, everything dissolved into one line, like a rising and falling wave, between heaven and earth, he felt as though he was lying near an endless, softly undulating ocean. Now and again he sat down, then he walked on, but slowly dreaming. He looked for no path. It was black night when he came upon an inhabited hut, on the slope toward the Steintal. The door was locked, he stepped to the window where a glimmer of light shone through. A lamp lit up not much more than one spot, its light fell on the pale face of a girl who was resting in back of it with half-open eyes, her lips softly moving. Farther back in the dark an old woman was sitting, singing from a hymnbook with a rasping voice. He knocked long until she opened the door; she was half deaf, she served Lenz some food and showed him where to bed down, all the while continuing her song. The girl had not moved. Some time later a man entered, he was tall and lean, a few strands of grey hair, a troubled bewildered face. He stepped over to the girl, she gave a start and became restless. He took a dried herb off the wall and placed its leaves on her hand, so that she calmed down and hummed intelligible words in slow-moving, strident tones. He said that he had heard a voice in the mountains and had then seen summer lightning over the valleys, he had also been touched by something and wrestled with it like Jacob. He fell on his knees and prayed softly and fervently while the sick girl was singing in drawn-out, softly fading tones. Then he lay down to rest.

Dreaming, Lenz fell into slumber, and then heard the clock tick in his sleep. The rushing of the wind sounded now close, now distant, past the girl's soft singing and the simultaneous voice of the old woman, and the moon, now bright, now veiled, cast its changing light, dreamlike, into the chamber. At one time the tones grew louder, the girl spoke clearly and distinctly, she said there was a church on the cliff across from the hut. Lenz looked up, and she was sitting erect behind the table, her eyes wide open, and the moon cast its quiet light on her features

which seemed to radiate an eerie glow, at the same time the old woman was rasping, and over this changing and fading of lights, of the songs and voices, Lenz finally fell into a deep sleep.

He woke up early, everybody was asleep in the twilight of the room, the girl, too, had grown quiet, she was reclining, her hands folded under her left cheek; the ghostliness of her features had disappeared, she now had an expression of infinite suffering. He stepped to the window and opened it, the cold morning air rushed at him. The house was at the end of a narrow, deep valley that was open toward the east, red rays were shooting through the grey morning sky into the dawn-shrouded valley which lay in a white haze, they flashed on the grey rocks and struck the windows of the huts. The man woke up, his eyes met a lit-up picture on the wall, they fastened on it firmly and fixedly, now he began to move his lips and to pray softly, then louder and ever louder. Meanwhile, people entered the hut, they knelt down in silence. The girl lay in convulsions, the old woman rasped her song and chatted with the neighbors. The people told Lenz that the man had come to this area a long time ago, they didn't know whence, he was in the odor of sanctity, he saw the water underground and could exorcise spirits, and he was the object of pilgrimages. Lenz also learned that he had strayed farther from the Steintal, he left with some timbermen headed for that area. He was glad to have found company; now he had a dread of the powerful man whose tone of voice seemed terrifying to him at times. Besides, he was afraid of himself in lonely places.

He got home. But the past night had made an enormous impression on him. The world had been bright for him, and now he felt in himself a stirring and teeming toward an abyss to which a relentless power was dragging him. He was churning inside himself. He ate little; half the nights spent in prayer and feverish dreams. A violent surge, and then defeated in exhaustion; he lay in the hottest tears, and then suddenly he had the strength to rise, cold and uncaring, now his tears were like ice to him, he had

to laugh. The higher he dragged himself up, the deeper he plunged down. Everything came to a head again. Reminiscences of his former state flashed through him, casting fleeting lights onto the abysmal chaos of his mind. During daytime he usually sat downstairs, Madame Oberlin went to and fro, he sketched, painted, read, clutched at every distraction, hastily going from one thing to the next. But he now felt especially close to Madame Oberlin, the way she was sitting there, the black hymnbook in front of her next to a plant raised in the house, the youngest child between her knees; he also paid quite some attention to the child. Thus he was sitting one day when he became fearful, he jumped up, paced up and down. The door was ajar, that's when he heard the maid sing, indistinct at first, then the words came:

For me the world is never gay,
My lover is too far away.

This weighed on him, the sounds almost made him swoon. Madame Oberlin looked at him. He took heart, he could be silent no longer, he had to talk about it. "Dearest Madame Oberlin, can't you tell me what the young woman is doing whose fate weighs so heavily on my heart?"—"But Herr Lenz, I know nothing about it."

He was silent again and hastily paced back and forth in the room; then he began once more: "You see, I want to leave, my God, you're the only people left with whom I could stand living, and yet—yet, I must be off, to her—but I cannot, I must not.—" He was violently moved and went outside.

Toward evening Lenz returned, the room was dusky; he sat down next to Madame Oberlin. "You see," he began again, "when she walked through the room, sort of singing to herself, and each step was music, there was such happiness within her, and it flowed over into me, I was always at peace when I looked at her, or when she leaned her head against me, and God! God—I haven't been at peace in a long time [. . .] All child; it was as if

the world were too wide for her, she withdrew within herself, she sought out the smallest nook in the whole house, and there she sat as though her entire happiness were just in one tiny spot, and then I felt the same way; I could have played like a child. Now it all feels so tight, so tight, I sometimes feel as if my hands were pushing against the sky, oh I am suffocating! Often it seems as if I were feeling a physical pain, here on the left side, in the arm that used to hold her. But I cannot see her before my eyes any longer, the image slips away, and this torments me, only sometimes, when I feel quite lucid, do I get a feeling of wellbeing." —Later he often talked about it with Madame Oberlin, but mostly in fragmented sentences; she had little to answer him, yet he felt better for it.

Meanwhile his religious torments continued. The emptier, the colder, the more dying he felt inside himself, the greater was his urge to rekindle an inner glow, he remembered times when everything in him was surging, when all his emotions made him pant, and now so dead. He despaired of himself, he threw himself down, he wrung his hands, he stirred up his whole inner being, but dead! dead! Then he pleaded with God to give him a sign, then he searched within himself, he fasted, lay on the floor dreaming. On the third of February he learned that a child in Fouday had died (her name was Friederike), this became an obsession with him. He retired to his room and fasted for one day. On the fourth he suddenly entered Madame Oberlin's room, he had rubbed ashes all over his face, and asked for an old sack; she was startled, and he was given what he wanted. He wrapped himself in the sackcloth, like a penitent, and went on his way to Fouday. The people in the valley were used to him by now; all sorts of strange things were being told about him. He came to the house where the child was laid out. The people went about their tasks indifferently; they showed him to a chamber, the child, dressed in a shirt, was lying on straw atop a wooden table.

Lenz shuddered as he touched the cold limbs and saw the half-opened glassy eyes. The child seemed so forsaken to him, and he

so alone and lonely; he threw himself down on the dead body; death frightened him, he was gripped by violent grief, these features, this still face were doomed to decay, he prostrated himself, he prayed in all misery of despair that he was weak and unhappy, that God should give him a sign, and bring the child back to life; then he sank completely into himself and gathered all his will into one point, thus he sat for a long time, rigid. Then he rose and grasped the child's hands and spoke, loud and firm: "Arise and walk!" But the walls unfeelingly echoed his voice, as though mocking him, and the corpse remained cold. With that, he hurled himself down, half mad, then he leapt up like one driven, out into the mountains. Clouds were swiftly drifting across the moon, now leaving everything in darkness, now revealing the hazily receding landscape in the moonlight. He ran up and down, a triumphal song of hell in his chest. The wind sounded like a chorus of titans, he felt as if he could shake a huge fist at the sky and tear God out of it and drag Him through His clouds; as if he could crush the world between his teeth and spit it into the Creator's face; he cursed, he blasphemed. Thus he got to the summit of the mountains, and the uncertain light extended down to where the white masses of rock lay, and the sky was a stupid blue eye, and the moon was in it, quite ridiculous, foolish. Lenz had to laugh out loud, and with this laughter, atheism gripped him and held him fast and secure and safe. He knew no longer what had agitated him so much a while ago, he was chilled, he thought he wanted to go to bed now, and he walked through the eerie darkness, cold and impassive—everything was empty and hollow for him, he had to run, and went to bed.

The following day he was overcome with a great horror of his condition the day before, he was now at an abyss where an insane desire was driving him to look down again and again, and to repeat this self-torment. Thus his fear was heightened, he was face to face with the sin against the Holy Spirit.

A few days later Oberlin returned from Switzerland, much sooner than expected. Lenz was dismayed about it. But he cheered up when Oberlin told him about his friends in Alsace. While talking, Oberlin went back and forth in his room, unpacking and putting things away. He told him about Pfeffel, praising the life of a country pastor. At the same time he admonished Lenz to give in to his father's wish, to live in a way that fits his profession, to return home. He told him: "Honor thy father and thy mother" and other such things. During the conversation Lenz became extremely agitated; he sighed heavily, his eyes filled with tears, he spoke in fragments. "Yes, but I cannot bear it, do you wish to reject me? The way to God is only through you. But I am doomed! I'm an apostate, damned in eternity, I am the wandering Jew." Oberlin told him that this was what Jesus had died for, he should turn to Him with all fervor, and He would show him His mercy. Lenz raised his head, wrung his hands, and said: "Alas! Divine consolation." Then he suddenly asked in a friendly voice what the young woman was doing. Oberlin said he knew nothing about it, but he wanted to help and advise him in everything; Lenz, however, would have to tell him about the place, the circumstances, and the person. Lenz had nothing but confused words for an answer: "Alas she is dead! Is she still alive? you angel, she loved me—I loved her, she was worthy of it, oh you angel. Damned jealousy, I renounced her, she also loved someone else—I loved her, she was worthy of it—oh my dear mother, she, too, loved me. I am a murderer." Oberlin countered: that perhaps all these persons were still alive, perhaps in good spirits; be it as it may, once he was converted to God, He could and would answer his prayers and tears and do so much good to those persons that the benefits they would then reap through Lenz would perhaps far outweigh the hurt he had done them. Thereupon he gradually calmed and went back to his painting.

In the afternoon he came back, on his left shoulder he had a piece of fur and in his hand a bundle of switches which had been

given to Oberlin for Lenz, besides a letter to him. He handed the switches to Oberlin with the request that he whip him. Oberlin took the switches from his hand, pressed a few kisses on his mouth and said, those were the lashes he had to give him, he should be at peace and settle things with God alone, any number of lashes would not redeem a single sin of his; Jesus had taken care of that, to Him Lenz should turn. He left.

At supper Lenz was a bit pensive, as usual. Yet he talked about various things, but in anxious haste. At midnight Oberlin was wakened by a noise. Lenz was running through the court, in a hollow, harsh voice he called the name Friederike, uttering it with extreme rapidity, confusion and despair, he then hurled himself into the fountain trough, splashed around, climbed out and upstairs to his room, down again into the trough, and so on, several times, finally he quieted down. The maids, who slept in the nursery below him, said they had often heard a growling sound—but that same night especially—that reminded them of nothing as much as of a barn owl. Perhaps it was his moaning, in a hollow, ghastly, despairing voice.

The following morning Lenz did not come down. Finally Oberlin went up to his room, he lay in his bed, quiet and motionless. Oberlin had to ask for a long time before he got an answer: at last Lenz said: "Yes Pastor Oberlin, you see, it's boredom! oh! so boring, I really don't know what to say anymore, I have already drawn all the figures on the wall." Oberlin told him he should turn to God; he only laughed and said: "Yes if I were as lucky as you in finding such a cozy pastime, yes, one could surely spend one's time like that. All out of idleness. Because most people pray out of boredom; others fall in love out of boredom, a third group is virtuous and a fourth, wicked, and I am nothing, nothing at all, I don't even feel like doing away with myself: it is too boring!"

God, in the surging of Thy light,
The glowing of Thy noonday shine,

All weary are these eyes of mine.
Oh will it ne'er again be night?"

Oberlin looked at him with displeasure and wanted to leave. Lenz flitted after him, and looking at him with weird eyes: "You see, something did come to me just now, if I could only tell whether I'm dreaming or waking: you see, that is very important, let us investigate it"—then he flitted back to bed. That afternoon Oberlin wanted to pay a visit in the neighborhood; his wife had already left; he was about to leave when there was a knock at his door and Lenz entered, doubled over, his head hanging down, his face completely and his clothes partially covered with ashes, his right hand holding his left arm. He asked Oberlin to pull his arm for him, he had dislocated it, he had flung himself out of the window, but since nobody had seen it he didn't want to tell anybody about it either. Oberlin was very alarmed, yet he said nothing, he followed Lenz's wishes, at the same time he wrote a note to the schoolmaster (Sebastian Scheidecker) in Bellefosse, asking him to come down, and gave him instructions. Then he rode off. The man came. Lenz had seen him often and had formed an attachment to him, who pretended he had come to talk to Oberlin and wanted to leave again. Lenz asked him to stay, and so they stayed together. Lenz then proposed a walk to Fouday. He visited the grave of the child he had tried to revive, he knelt down several times, kissed the earth of the grave, he seemed to pray but in great turmoil, he tore off some of the flowers on the grave, as a remembrance, he went back to Waldbach, turned around again and Sebastian with him. At times he walked slowly and complained of great weakness in his limbs, then again he walked with desperate speed, the landscape frightened him, it was so narrow that he feared colliding with everything. He was overcome with an indefinable feeling of discomfort, at last he got tired of his companion, he also possibly guessed his intentions and looked for an opportunity to get rid of him. Sebastian seemingly gave in but secretly found

means to notify his brother of the danger, and now Lenz had two attendants instead of one. He resolutely dragged them along, finally he returned to Waldbach and when they were close to the village, he turned around with lightning speed and leapt back toward Fouday like a deer. The men went after him in hot pursuit. While they were searching for him in Fouday, two peddlers came along and told them that a stranger, who claimed to be a murderer but certainly could not be one, was in a house, shackled. They ran to this house and found it was so. A young man, in fear, had bound Lenz upon his urgent entreaty. They untied him and took him safely back to Waldbach, where Oberlin and his wife had meanwhile returned. Lenz looked bewildered, but when he saw that he was received with love and friendliness, he regained courage, his face changed for the better, he thanked his two companions kindly and tenderly, and the evening passed in peace and quiet. Oberlin pleaded with him not to bathe anymore, to spend the night peacefully in bed, and to talk with God if he couldn't sleep. He promised, and did so the following night, the maids heard him pray almost all night long.—The next morning he came into Oberlin's room with a cheerful face. After they had talked about various things, he said with exceeding friendliness: "Dearest Pastor Oberlin, the young woman about whom I told you has died, yes died, the angel."—"How do you know?"—"Hieroglyphics, hieroglyphics—" and then a look toward heaven and again: "yes died—hieroglyphics." There was no more to be gotten out of him. He sat down and wrote a few letters, then gave them to Oberlin, asking him to add a few lines. (See the letters.)*

Meanwhile his condition had become more and more hopeless, gone was all peace of mind that he had drawn from Oberlin's presence and the stillness of the valley; the world he had wanted to profit by had a huge rift, he had no hate, no love,

*Büchner's note, perhaps referring to letters that no longer exist.

no hope, a terrible void and yet a tormenting anxiety to fill it. He had nothing. Whatever he did, he did consciously, still he was compelled by an inner instinct. When he was alone, he felt so fearfully lonely that he constantly and loudly talked and called to himself, and then again he was frightened and felt as though a strange voice had spoken to him. In conversation he often faltered, an inexplicable fear seized him, he had lost the end of his sentence; then he thought he had to remember the last word he had said and continue saying it, only with great effort did he suppress these impulses. It caused the good people much grief when he sometimes, in quiet moments, sat with them and talked naturally, and then faltered and an unspeakable fear distorted his features, when he convulsively grabbed the persons sitting next to him by the arm, and only gradually came to again. When he was alone or when he was reading, it was even worse, at times all his mental activity was stuck on one thought; when he thought of another person or acutely visualized him, it was as though he were turning into that person, he was totally confused and had at the same time an infinite urge arbitrarily to manipulate in his mind everything around him: nature, people, although not Oberlin, everything dreamlike, cold; he entertained himself by turning houses upside down, by dressing and undressing people, by thinking up the most insane pranks. On occasion he felt an irresistible impulse to carry out the thing he had on his mind at the moment, and then he made ghastly grimaces. Once he was sitting next to Oberlin, the cat was lying on a chair across from him, suddenly his eyes began to stare, he looked fixedly at the animal, then he slowly slid off the chair, so did the cat, it seemed spellbound by his look, it got into a state of terror, it bristled in fear, Lenz made the same noises, his face horribly distorted, the two flew at each other as though in despair, until at last Madame Oberlin rose to separate them. Then he felt deeply ashamed again. The incidents at night became dreadfully intensified. Only with the greatest effort could he fall asleep after having attempted to fill the grim void.

Between sleeping and waking he got into a terrifying state; he touched something ghastly, horrible, madness seized him, he jumped up with bloodcurdling screams, he was bathed in sweat, and only little by little did he find himself again. He then had to begin with the simplest things in order to come to his senses. It wasn't really he himself who did it but a powerful will of self-preservation, it seemed as though he were double and one part sought to save the other, he called out to himself; he told stories, he recited poetry in violent fear until he came to again.

Even by day he had these attacks, they were more fearful still, because up to then he had been protected by the light. He felt as though he alone existed, as though the world had reality only in his imagination, as though there were nothing but he, he was the eternally damned, the Satan, alone with his tormenting fantasies. He raced through his life with frantic speed, and then he said: "logical, logical"; when somebody spoke: "illogical, illogical"; it was the abyss of madness beyond help, of madness into eternity. The urge to preserve his mind would start him up; he flung himself into Oberlin's arms, he clung to him as though he wanted to press himself into him, Oberlin was the only being alive for him, and through whom life would be revealed to him again. Gradually Oberlin's words brought him to his senses, he knelt before him, his hands in Oberlin's hands, his face, bathed in cold sweat, in Oberlin's lap, his whole body trembling and shaking. Oberlin felt deep pity, the family knelt and prayed for the unfortunate man; the maids fled and took him for someone possessed. And when he calmed down it was like the grief of a child, he sobbed, he felt deep, deep pity for himself; those were still his happiest moments. Oberlin talked to him about God. Lenz calmly freed himself and looked at him with an expression of infinite suffering, and finally said: "But I, if I were all powerful, you see if I were that, I could not bear the suffering, I would save, save, I truly want nothing but peace, peace, only a little peace, and to be able to sleep." Oberlin said this was sacrilege. Lenz shook his head disconsolately. Yet the half-

hearted attempts at suicide, which he continued to make, were not completely serious, they were expressions not so much of a death wish, since for him there was no peace and hope in death, but rather of a wish to come to his senses through physical pain in moments of the most dreadful fear or of a dull quiescence bordering on non-being. The happiest moments still were those when his mind seemed preoccupied with one of his insane ideas. At least there was some rest, and his distracted look was not as ghastly as the dread that thirsted for salvation, the eternal torment of anxiety. Often he hit his head against the wall, or he inflicted some other severe physical pain upon himself.

On the morning of the 8th he stayed in bed, Oberlin went upstairs; he was lying on the bed almost nude, extremely agitated. Oberlin wanted to cover him, but he lamented how heavy everything was, so heavy, he thought he could not even walk, now he was finally able to feel the enormous weight of the air. Oberlin reassured him. But he stayed the way he was and remained so for the better part of the day, he also refused all nourishment. Toward evening Oberlin was asked to come to Bellefosse on a sick call. The weather was mild, the moon was shining. On the way back he met Lenz who seemed quite rational and talked with Oberlin in a calm and friendly manner. Oberlin asked him not to walk too far, he promised; while leaving he suddenly turned around and stepped quite close to Oberlin again, and said quickly: "You see, Pastor Oberlin, if only I didn't have to hear this anymore I'd be helped."—"But what, my dear?"—"Don't you hear it, don't you hear that horrible voice screaming along the entire horizon, a voice commonly called stillness? I heard it from the moment I came to this still valley, it won't let me sleep, yes Pastor Oberlin, if only I could sleep again." Then he went on, shaking his head. Oberlin returned to Waldbach and was about to send somebody after Lenz when he heard him walk up the stairs to his room. A moment later something crashed in the court with a concussion so strong that Oberlin thought it impossible to have been caused

by the impact of a human body. The nursemaid came, deathly pale and trembling all over.

[*Major gap in the text*]

He sat in the carriage in cold resignation as they were riding westward out of the valley. He didn't care where they were taking him; several times, when there was danger to the carriage because of the bad road, he calmly remained in his seat; he was completely indifferent. In this state of mind he traveled back through the mountains. Toward evening they got to the Rhine valley. Gradually they left the mountain chain behind them; it was now set off against the sunset like a deep-blue crystal wave on whose warm flood the red evening rays were playing; at the foot of the mountains across the plain lay a gossamer bluish sheen. It got dark the closer they got to Strasbourg; a high full moon, all distant objects dark, only the nearby mountain sharply outlined, the earth was like a golden goblet brimming with the effervescent gold waves of the moon. Lenz stared quietly ahead, no foreboding, no urgency; only a dull fear was growing in him the more all objects were swallowed in darkness. They had to stop for the night; again he made several attempts to do away with himself but was too closely guarded. The following morning he arrived in Strasbourg in dismal, rainy weather. He seemed quite reasonable, he talked with people, he acted the way others did, but inside him there was a terrible void, he felt no more fear, no longing; his existence was a necessary burden to him.—So he lived on.

DATES IN GEORG BÜCHNER'S LIFE:

- 1813 October 17, Karl Georg Büchner born in Goddelau, Grand Duchy of Hesse-Darmstadt. Father: Ernst Karl, physician; mother: Caroline, née Reuss. Brothers and sisters: Mathilde, Wilhelm, Louise (writer and feminist), Ludwig, Alexander (German revolutionary in 1848).
- 1816 The family moves to Darmstadt.
- 1825 March 25, enrollment in the gymnasium at Darmstadt.
- 1831 March 30, graduation from the gymnasium; Büchner gives speech in Latin.
November 9, matriculation at the school of medicine, University of Strasbourg.
- 1833 October 31, matriculation as student of medicine at the University of Giessen.
- 1834 March, founding of the *Gesellschaft der Menschenrechte (Society for Human Rights)* in Giessen.
May, first draft of the pamphlet *Der Hessische Landbote (The Hessian County Herald)*.
August 1, arrest of Büchner's friend, Minnigerode, carrying 158 copies of the *Herald*.
August 4-5, on the return to Giessen, Büchner finds his desk sealed and his papers searched. Between August and September several members of the *Society* are arrested.
October, Büchner studies Spinoza, Rousseau, and several works on the French Revolution.
- 1835 January, hearings before the courts of inquiry in Offenbach and Friedberg.
End of January to end of February, writing of *Danton's Death*.
February 21, Büchner sends the manuscript to his publisher Sauerländer. One week later he receives a summons to appear at the Darmstadt court of inquiry.
March 9, Büchner flees across the French border into Strasbourg.
June 13, issue of a warrant of arrest against Büchner.
July, Büchner finished his translation of Victor Hugo's *Lucretia Borgia* and *Maria Tudor*.
October, studies of the historic figure of Lenz, writing of the novella.
Winter, Büchner studies natural sciences and philosophy.

1836 June, work on *Leonce and Lena*.

Summer, work on a lecture on German philosophy for the University of Zurich.

September 3, Büchner earns Ph.D. from the University of Zurich for his research on the barbels (fish).

October 18, moves to Zurich.

November 5, Bü give his trial lecture *On the Nerves of the Skull* and is confirmed as lecturer, made a member of the faculty. He schedules lectures on the comparative anatomy of fishes and amphibians for the coming winter semester.

Fall, Winter. Büchner works on *Woyzeck*.

1837 February 2, Büchner is taken ill.

February 14, typhoid fever diagnosed.

February 19, Büchner's death.

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