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VOLUME 12

Repopulating the Eighteenth Century:  
Second-Tier Writing in  
the German Enlightenment

*Edinburgh German Yearbook*

## *Edinburgh German Yearbook*

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*Vol. 12: Repopulating the Eighteenth Century:*

*Second-Tier Writing in the German Enlightenment*

Edited by Michael Wood and Johannes Birgfeld

# Edinburgh German Yearbook

Volume 12

*Repopulating the Eighteenth Century:  
Second-Tier Writing in the  
German Enlightenment*

Edited by  
Michael Wood and Johannes Birgfeld



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Rochester, New York

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# Contents

Acknowledgments	vii
Note on the Text	ix
Introduction: Literary Historiography, the Canon, and the Rest <i>Michael Wood and Johannes Birgfeld</i>	1

## Part I. Poetry

Curing Both Body and Soul: The Physician as Poet in the Works of Daniel Wilhelm Triller <i>Kristin Eichhorn</i>	19
Daniel Stoppe's Fables: A "Second-Tier" Version of the Genre in the Early Enlightenment? <i>Stephanie Blum</i>	35
"Nicht unsrer Lesewelt, und nicht der Ewigkeit": Late Style in Gleim's <i>Zeit-</i> and <i>Sinngedichte</i> (1792–1803) <i>Ellen Pilsworth</i>	52

## Part II. The Novel

Difficulties of a Statesman: Johann Michael von Loen and <i>Der redliche Mann am Hofe</i> <i>Ritchie Robertson</i>	71
Expanding the Eighteenth-Century Novel between England and Germany: Sentiment, Experience, and the Self <i>Sarah Vandegrift Eldridge</i>	90
An Unoriginal Modernity: The Novelist-Translator Friedrich von Oertel <i>Leonard von Morzé</i>	107

### Part III. Drama and Theater

- Theater for an Urban Audience: Adam Gottfried Uhlich's *Der Jungfernstieg* and *Der Götterkrieg* 127  
*Johannes Birgfeld*

- Stepping Out of Götz's Shadow: Jacob Maier, the *Ritterstück*, and the Historical Drama 145  
*Michael Wood*

- "You can go to hell with your Chinese bridge": August von Kotzebue's Most Successful Play *Menschenhaß und Reue* and the European Garden Revolution 162  
*Julia Bohnengel*

### Part IV. Philosophy and Criticism

- A Troll Emerges: The Beginning of August Friedrich Cranz's Career as a Provocateur 181  
*Jonathan Blake Fine*

- Second-Tier Writing in Catholic Germany: Eulogius Schneider (1756–1794) as Professor of Aesthetics and Poet 199  
*J. C. Lees*

- Performativity and "Poetic" Epistemology: Ludwig Gotthard Kosegarten's Response to Moses Mendelssohn's Aesthetics 213  
*Joanna Raisbeck*

- Notes on the Contributors 231

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## Note on the Text

THE CONTRIBUTIONS IN THIS VOLUME maintain the orthography found in the editions from which texts are quoted. Where passages are inserted from eighteenth-century first editions, for example, particularities and idiosyncrasies in spelling and punctuation have been maintained. The only exceptions to this rule are the use of hyphenation, which has been modernized from “ſ” to “-” throughout (e.g., “Religions<sup>s</sup> Unterricht” becomes “Religions-Unterricht”), and quotation marks, which have been standardized throughout according to the guidelines in the *Chicago Manual of Style*.

Inevitably, with a volume like this, individual authors have referred to various different works and collected editions. Details of abbreviated references to these editions are given in the individual essays.



# Introduction: Literary Historiography, the Canon, and the Rest

*Johannes Birgfeld and Michael Wood*

THE STUDY OF LITERARY HISTORY comes—as does the closer investigation of any history, be it cultural, economic, social, etc.—with an unavoidable challenge. Trying to understand a historic period undoubtedly demands more than just recounting every document of it that has survived. Often as a result of the enormity of such a task, making sense of a bygone age also requires separating the seemingly important from the apparently irrelevant, the symptomatic from the singular, the influential from the ignored, and the original from the conventional. Yet while they might offer heuristically indispensable starting points and lines of enquiry, the narratives that come about through such processes of selection and rejection risk being incorrect in detail or unjust with regard to the complexity of a period; indeed, in the end, interpretations of historical periods run the danger of ending up as reductive, anachronistic, and falsely generalizing depictions of how and why things were done by whom, for whom, and to whom in another time.

In 1917 Max Weber gave a radical definition of the scientific mode of operation, claiming that “wer also nicht die Fähigkeit besitzt, sich einmal sozusagen Scheuklappen anzuziehen und sich hineinzusteigern in die Vorstellung, daß das Schicksal seiner Seele davon abhängt: ob er diese, gerade diese Konjektur an dieser Stelle dieser Handschrift richtig macht, der bleibe der Wissenschaft nur ja fern” (anyone who lacks the ability to don blinkers for once and to convince himself that the destiny of his soul depends upon whether he is right to make precisely this conjecture and no other at this point in his manuscript should keep well away from science).<sup>1</sup> On the other end of the spectrum, however, attention to detail might even stand in the way of formulating a historical narrative. In 1918, one year after Weber delivered his lecture on “Wissenschaft als Beruf” (Science as Profession) in Munich, Lytton Strachey remarked in the preface to his *Eminent Victorians*: “The history of the Victorian Age will never be written: we know too much about it. For ignorance is the first requisite of the historian—ignorance, which simplifies and clarifies, which selects and omits, with a placid perfection unattainable by the

highest art. . . . It is not by the direct method of a scrupulous narration that the explorer of the past can hope to depict that singular epoch.”<sup>2</sup> For Strachey, the historian is faced with the dilemma: either to select those aspects of a period that will be most telling or to obscure a historical period through a surfeit of knowledge.

What might at first look like a dilemma, however, is surely none at all. Strachey was addressing a period still very much in living memory and feared his intimate, personal knowledge of that period blocking his view. Although we have arguably more documents and greater knowledge at our disposal than Strachey, in the twentieth century we might be in a better position to gain a wider perspective of the latter half of the nineteenth century than Strachey ever was. Indeed, the eighteenth century, our period of interest, lies some way behind us now, and this distance has enabled us to amass vast quantities of insightful research consisting of grand narratives as well as studies of individual writers, works, genres, motifs, discourses, and networks, all of which feed into our understanding of the period. Yet we still find ourselves in a dilemma of what Strachey calls the “ignorance” that “selects and omits”: scholarship continues to show a preference for a set of “big names” from the eighteenth century (e.g., Brockes, Gellert, Goethe, Gottsched, Klopstock, Lessing, Schiller, and Wieland), while the vast majority of poets, dramatists, and writers of prose—who represent the literary and philosophical side of the “kaum übersehbare Vielfältigkeit” (diversity that can barely be overlooked) that Werner Schneiders finds in the Enlightenment as a whole<sup>3</sup>—remain *terrae incognitae* in the dark of our disinterest and disengagement. Attempting to understand cultural and literary history in its diversity would obviously require detailed knowledge not only of the most admired literary products and creators of that age; but beyond the luminaries of literary history, we surely also need to know about the vast literary field in which, against which, and outside of which the names and works that we now associate with the period came into being.

It is the contention of this book that if we look beyond the leading figures of a period in literary history, we will gain a more nuanced and profound understanding of both the culture of that period and its development. This book sets out to study what Sarah Vandegrift Eldridge calls (in her contribution to this volume) “the fits and starts, the jumps and lags, fractures, misunderstandings, and the difficulties” involved in the development of German culture in the eighteenth century. One starting point for this volume is Romanian philosopher Emil Cioran’s assertion in *The Trouble with Being Born* (1973): “If you want to know a nation, frequent its second-order writers: they alone reflect its true nature.”<sup>4</sup> This statement is, of course, problematic in part: not only does it presume an essentialist notion of national identity; it also provides no concrete notion of what it is to be “second-order.” But through analyses of

largely unexplored works and writers, taken as a whole, the essays in this volume illustrate that this second tier of cultural production refers to a wide spectrum of literary works and networks, including those that were cast to one side in the eighteenth century and were rejected by their now-canonical contemporaries, despite these writers and their works having enjoyed wide popularity and influence at the time. Moreover, as we shall see in many of the essays in this volume, even if they survived the literary marketplace and scholarly discussion of their own time, many works and writers have been subsequently written out of literary history as unworthy of scholarly attention and placed squarely in the second tier. As Michael Hadley writes at the beginning of his study of hundreds of German novels published in 1790, for example: “Literary history has traditionally examined changes in matters of style, form, philosophy, and taste on the basis of generally recognized masterpieces that are deemed representative of an epoch or movement.”<sup>5</sup> Yet, as Stephen Brockman demonstrates in his recent analysis of the infant German Democratic Republic’s literary scene, “second- or third-tier writers form the backdrop against which more prominent authors such as [Bertolt] Brecht or [Anna] Seghers emerged. . . . Indeed, one could argue that anyone who picks only the most outstanding practitioners in examining a nation’s literary or artistic output will likely get a skewed view of that nation’s cultural development.”<sup>6</sup> Brockmann’s study therefore looks to writers such as Eduard Claudius and Willi Bredel, whom we might see as typical for the period, as opposed to focusing purely on the authors of its most historically significant works. Accordingly, this volume will not be concerned with depicting the typicality of the canon of first-tier writers. In this instance, this volume’s ambition of repopulating the eighteenth century is more concerned with moving away from literary historiography’s preference for distinguishing, in aesthetic or intellectual terms, between the supposedly important and serious and the supposedly unimportant and trivial. This volume will investigate the *historically* typical and its value for understanding the German Enlightenment.

## Dividing Up the Eighteenth Century

Karl Goedeke is perhaps rightly viewed as the father of the historiography of German literature. His monumental reference work *Grundriss zur Geschichte der deutschen Dichtung aus den Quellen* (Outline of the History of German Literature from the Sources), begun in 1857, charts thousands of names and works and sorts them into periods of success, failure, development, and stagnation. At the beginning of the fourth volume of this work, he states that the story of Goethe and Schiller “ist die Geschichte ihres Zeitalters geworden” (has become the story of their age).<sup>7</sup> Already by the mid-nineteenth century the names of Goethe

and Schiller had come to tower above the rest. The period covered by Goedeke's comment is that half century from the end of the Seven Years War (1763) to the end of the Napoleonic Wars (1815), which, amongst other things, "die Zeit vom Erlöschen der gottschedischen Herrschaft bis zu Schillers Tode umfaßt" (includes the period from the demise of Gottschedian dominance right up to the death of Schiller).<sup>8</sup> Goethe was only born in 1749 and Schiller a decade later, but Goedeke's comment is revealing with regard to how even the latter half of the eighteenth century is seen in hindsight as part of a teleological progression of German life and letters. Georg Gottfried Gervinus makes a telling comment along similar lines in the fourth volume of his *Geschichte der poetischen National-Literatur der Deutschen* (History of the Poetic National Literature of the Germans, 1835–42). Opening his volume on the period from Gottsched to Goethe, he writes: "Wir sind bei dem Zeitraume angelangt, zu dem unsere Erzählung von allem Anfang an als zu ihrem Haupt- und Zielpunkte hingedrängt" (We have arrived at the period to which our story has inexorably striven since its very beginning as its destination and main focus).<sup>9</sup> In an attempt to fashion a positive sense of German national identity in the period between the dissolution of the Holy Roman Empire in 1806 and the failure to bring about national unity in 1848, Gervinus presents a picture of success and independence from foreign influence, in which Goethe and Schiller tower over history as the very apogee of German genius.

Yet if Goethe and Schiller were the predominant figures in the second half of the eighteenth century, then that was only retrospectively. Literary history has taken on what Helmut Kreuzer calls a well-established "Filterfunktion gegenüber der literarischen Vergangenheit" (a filter function with regard to the literary past).<sup>10</sup> With the drastic increases in literacy, readership,<sup>11</sup> and book production throughout the eighteenth century (and particularly after 1760),<sup>12</sup> more and more people took to writing both literary and non-literary texts—including everything from poetry to natural philosophy—and often enough overtook Goethe and Schiller in terms of both productivity and popularity. In 1859 Johann Wilhelm Appell synthesized what he found in Johann Georg Meusel's compendia and drew up the following table for the number of living published writers in the German-speaking world at a given time:

in the 1760s	between 2,000 and 3,000
in 1771	a little over 3,000
ca. 1776	over 4,300
ca. 1784	over 5,200
in 1791	ca. 7,000
in 1795	ca. 8,000
ca. 1799	10,648 <sup>13</sup>

It goes without saying that Appell's use of these statistics is guided by a desire to denigrate the works of the vast majority of these authors and lay the foundations of a negative assessment of what he regards as "trivial" literature. As the statistics indicate, the number of people writing rose exponentially after the novel took off in the 1770s and after dramatic writing was to profit from some newfound freedoms.

The number of people writing is one matter; the number of new works that were being published at the time presents further insights into the dynamics of authorship and popular participation in culture in the German-speaking world:

	Plays	Novels
1751–1760	125	73
1761–1770	304	189
1771–1780	1,069	413
1781–1790	1,135	907
1791–1800	1,002	1,623 <sup>14</sup>

As we can see from these statistics, there was a sharp increase in the quantity of plays being written in the wake of what one might call a revolution in eighteenth-century German theater: a sudden and unprecedented surge in the opening of private and state-funded theaters in nearly every corner of the Holy Roman Empire from the beginning of the 1770s was instigated by the *Nationaltheaterbewegung* (national theater movement), the *Wiener Spektakelfreiheit* of 1776 (Viennese freedom to found a theater)<sup>15</sup> and the rapidly growing amounts of spare time and education among the middle classes. Suddenly, Lessing's *Miß Sara Sampson* (1755) and *Minna von Barnhelm* (1767), Goethe's *Götz von Berlichingen* (1773) as well as August von Kotzebue's and August Wilhelm Iffland's first plays no longer just inspired an imitation here or there, but became the unintentional starting point for an avalanche of *bürgerliche Trauerspiele* (bourgeois tragedies), *Soldaten-* and *Ritterstücke* (soldier and chivalry plays),<sup>16</sup> and *Rührstücke* (melodramas). Around this time, significant numbers of actors also started to contribute to the production of literary drama in order to meet the staggering rise in demand for plays for the many new stages. The sharp uptake in the publication of new novels and translations of novels from other languages such as French and English responded to the desires of an enormous readership that, while clearly consumerist to some degree, was becoming more adept and discerning and therefore ready to change its expectations.<sup>17</sup> It also reflects a transitional stage in the development of the novel in which prose began to take various different forms; the *Lesedramen* or dialogical novels of the likes of Christian

August Vulpius and Leonhard Wächter (writing under the pseudonym of Veit Weber), for instance, provide examples of the extreme end of the demand for character psychologization devoid of a narrator's interference. Needless to say, Wächter and Vulpius—much read and admired in their time—tend to be left to one side in serious discussions of the development of the novel in the German-speaking world.<sup>18</sup> Perhaps seen—like Kotzebue in the realm of dramatic writing—as emblematic of a trend, towards the end of the century, of taking advantage of the new lucrative possibilities of writing as a profession, such writers are not taken seriously as literary figures.

The latter half of the eighteenth century provides us with clear evidence that more and more people were actively involving themselves in German literature and culture. But we can see this too in the earlier years of the Enlightenment. As a result of safer and more reliable distribution networks within the Holy Roman Empire (and in Western Europe at large) came better access to private communication. In a life that spanned the years 1708–77, Albrecht von Haller, for example, had a total of 1,189 correspondents, and his 16,981 extant communications were sent from 447 different locations. Johann Wilhelm Ludwig Gleim—in his lifetime from 1719 to 1803—established an archive of his own correspondence (now held at the Gleim-House in Halberstadt) consisting of over 10,000 letters and involving more than five hundred correspondents.<sup>19</sup> As Steffen Martus reminds us, this form of creating a society through correspondence “war von elementarer Bedeutung für den Wissenstransfer der Aufklärung” (was of fundamental significance for knowledge transfer in the Enlightenment). And, importantly, Haller's and Gleim's cases were no exception.<sup>20</sup>

As the statistics cited above show, the beginning of the Age of Goethe at the end of the eighteenth century was also the age not only of many writers but also of the *Vielschreiber* (prolific writers).<sup>21</sup> If we consider meeting the demands of a paying public a fundamental aspect defining the course of literary development, the very presence of such a high number of works and writers could not but help to steer cultural change. There is, however, a general aversion to counting most of these works and writers in our literary understanding of the period. Marion Beaujean's study into the so-called trivial novel of the latter half of the eighteenth century, for example, divides the literature of the period in two, with “die epochemachenden Werke” (epoch-making works) on one side, which were “begleitet, ja überstrahlt von einer durchschnittlichen und minderwertigen Produktion, die sich beim Publikum größter Beliebtheit erfreute” (accompanied, even outshone by a form of average, inferior production that enjoyed the greatest popularity with its audience).<sup>22</sup> This division foreshadows the outcome of her study: she finds two separate literary systems at play; one for the learned and the court; the other for the growing middle classes; and never the twain shall meet.

Beaujean's distinction between the supposedly "trivial" and the "literary" is by no means new and has been a mainstay in the historiography of eighteenth-century German culture for almost two centuries. Goedeke readily makes a hard-and-fast distinction between "the best" and "the rest." He divides the latter part of the eighteenth century along a problematic line with Goethe, Schiller, and the very few that learned from them on one side; and the masses of contemporaries who did not follow their lead on the other. Goedeke concedes that playwrights of the time were writing for a public that "von der klassischen Richtung so fern war, wie der gewöhnliche Hausverstand von der idealen Bildung" (was as far from the classical tendencies [of Goethe and Schiller] as the average intellectual levels are from ideal education).<sup>23</sup> Some of the blame may therefore be mitigated. But Goedeke seems to imply that writing for the desires of a paying public leads away from the literary and into the realms of the trivial. Appell commented only a few years later that, while the French could look at their eighteenth century with pride, Germany has to contend with "die Fluth unserer gemeinen Unterhaltungsliteratur" (the flood of our base entertainment literature), going on to denounce the "Tagesbellettristik" (*belles-lettres* of the moment) and "Pfefferdütenliteratur" (printed pages quickly discarded to serve as paper bags for pepper).<sup>24</sup> Appell's wording reveals his decision to write off those works as trivial and shameful that are written for pure enjoyment and can be consumed by anyone, any time of the day. For Appell in 1859, the low-brow should be forgotten and omitted from our understanding of German culture.

In his typically provocative tone, Franco Moretti writes: "readers, not professors, make canons."<sup>25</sup> If that were entirely the case, the works of Carl Gottlob Cramer, Johann Thimotheus Hermes, August von Kotzebue, August Lafontaine, Johann Martin Miller, Joachim Perinet, Emanuel Schikaneder, Johann Gottfried Schnabel, Christoph Heinrich Spieß, and Moritz August von Thümmel would likely have a central position within the canon of the eighteenth century and early nineteenth century—and, at a stretch, might be expected to dominate academic research. If that were the case, literary history would most likely look very different. As a number of contributions to this volume show, in some cases major figures of eighteenth-century German culture played a leading role in pushing contemporaries to one side—and therefore ejecting them from the canon and into obscurity. As Richard Newald writes, these major figures were essential in forming the current canon of works, using means "deren Strenge sie an ihren eigenen großen Werken und an den kleinen der anderen erprobten. Dadurch erhielten die Urtheile der Großen, eines Lessing, Herder, Goethe oder Schiller, Autoritätswert" (whose precision they put to the test on their great works and on the minor works of others. In that way, the

judgments of the greats, such as Lessing, Herder, Goethe, and Schiller gained authoritative status). Indeed, Goethe and Schiller themselves responded to the landscape of cultural production of their time with their fragments on the phenomenon of “Dilettantismus” (dilettantism), written in 1799 and brought together in the form of a schemata covering the emergence and manifestations of dilettantism across numerous disciplines. Even though they were not published at the time, the publication of these fragments shortly after Goethe’s death influenced many of the great critics of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries when they were looking back on the time of Goethe and Schiller. And, for Newald, the opinions of the leading figures have remained influential on the parameters we employ when studying the period even to this day.<sup>26</sup>

As we saw in the examples from Gervinus and Goedecke cited above, periodization plays an important role in forming canons and sorting works and writers into tiers. The eighteenth century is a case in point. For Harold Bloom, the answer to what makes authors and works canonical is “strangeness, a mode of originality that either cannot be assimilated, or that so assimilates us that we cease to see it as strange”; and as a result, the canon is there to “impose limits” and to “set a standard of measurement.”<sup>27</sup> A narrative of continuous growth requires both innovation, strangeness, originality, and quality at every turn. Therefore those works whose function appears to be either to pacify or educate readers and audiences using well-worn tactics tend to be denoted as trivial and second-tier and are treated as a secondary category of works that should be analyzed using non-literary lenses.<sup>28</sup> Hans-Joachim Althof writes of nineteenth-century scholarship on the eighteenth century: “Die Literaturwissenschaft dieser Zeit sah, je weiter das Jahrhundert fortschritt, die Geschichte der deutschen Literatur als einen evolutionären Prozeß ablaufen, der in der klassisch-romantischen Epoche seinen krönenden Abschluß erfuhr” (as the century continued developing, the literary studies of the time saw German literature proceeding as an evolutionary process that reached its culmination in the classical-romantic epoch); because of this evolutionary interpretation of German literary history, the standards and measures used in evaluating the works of Goethe and Schiller were deployed to assess the literariness of more recent works of literature.<sup>29</sup> Teleological views of the eighteenth century have, however, died out neither quickly nor entirely. Indeed, at the beginning of the 1970s, Max Wehrli found himself in the company of the likes of Gervinus and Goedecke when he characterized the German Enlightenment as a period of “growing up” in literature: that is, “the literature that lies between baroque and the age of Goethe” does not represent a unity that can be pointed to, but constitutes necessary steps that both lead to and help us make sense of the *Sturm und Drang*, Weimar Classicism, and, eventually, Romanticism.<sup>30</sup> As Ruth-Ellen Boetcher Joeres argues in her essay in the *Cambridge History of German*

*Literature* (1997), such “illusions” about the German Enlightenment have not been entirely overcome and should give over to an interpretation of the epoch as one full of contradictions and paradoxes.<sup>31</sup>

Literary historiography’s part in forming canons and tiers of cultural production is cemented in curricula and publishing agendas. In his highly influential study *Cultural Capital* (1993), John Guillory argues that “canonicity is not a property of the work itself but of its transmission, its relation to other works in a collocation of works in the syllabus in its institutional locus, the school.”<sup>32</sup> For Guillory, the curriculum of education creates the canon in its desire to embody a notion of what constitutes cultural literacy. This literacy requires completeness, so the syllabus is geared towards giving the impression that literary development can be seen as a linear whole. Guillory writes: “The canon achieves its imaginary totality, then, not by embodying itself in a really existing list, but by retroactively constructing its individual texts as a *tradition*, to which works may be added or subtracted without altering the impression of totality or cultural homogeneity.”<sup>33</sup> What doesn’t contribute to this narrative isn’t worth knowing—and, as in the case of Kotzebue and others, shouldn’t be known about. Many writers and works that were once influential and popular are therefore absent from numerous curricula. For instance, it is rare to find Gellert’s *Leben der schwedischen Gräfin von G\*\*\** (Life of the Swedish Countess of G\*\*\*, 1747) or anything by Gleim or Kotzebue on a university syllabus. Moreover, despite widespread digitization projects by Google Books, the Hathi Trust, and De Gruyter (to name just a few) and publication series such as Röhrig’s *Kleines Archiv des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Small Archive of the Eighteenth Century) that focus on publishing now-forgotten or marginal works, the work of many eighteenth-century writers still lies in obscurity.

## Studying the “Second Tier”

Near the very beginning of his history of the eight decades from the publication of the first part of Klopstock’s *Messias* (Messiah, 1748) to Goethe’s death in 1832, Newald points to the limits of the teleological school of literary history in which he too is writing: “Die zwei Menschenalter deutscher Literatur dieses und des folgenden Bandes lassen sich als Entwicklung der schöpferischen Dichterkraft aus dem Chaos einer Revolution zum wohlgefügteten Kosmos klassischer Harmonie und deren späterer Aufhebung ansehen. Doch hält diese Betrachtung nur leuchtende Entwicklungsfäden fest, nicht das verschlungene Gewebe des Hintergrundes, vor dem sich vielleicht das großartigste und immer wieder neu zu deutende Wunder der deutschen klassischen Dichtung entfaltet” (The two generations of German literature covered in this volume and the next can be regarded as the development of creative poetic power from

the chaos of a revolution to the well-formed cosmos of classical harmony and its subsequent annihilation. Yet this observation only records shining threads in this development, not the tangled web of the background against which perhaps the greatest and always reinterpretable wonder of German classical literature unfolds).<sup>34</sup>

This volume seeks to deepen our understanding of literary culture in eighteenth-century Germany by taking a look at what Newald calls the “verschlungene Gewebe des Hintergrundes.” That is, by looking at precisely those works and writers who have been consigned to the second or third tier and written out of the canon, we hope figuratively to add to the population of eighteenth-century German literary culture. Paying attention to failed attempts at innovation or indeed studying those works and writers that held sway *at the time* may indeed ask us to turn away from seeing cultural development as linear and goal-oriented.<sup>35</sup> This is not to topple those writers who have deserved their status in the canon; and we will not end up re-writing the narrative of the development of German culture from the end of the seventeenth century to the present; but we will attain a more nuanced view of it in all its complexity and diversity. Such a view will take into consideration when both major and minor writers failed in their attempts to reach an audience; or when now-forgotten writers sought to bring about literary innovations or responded to those of their peers. It is an account of literature that recognizes cultural production as a story of competition for space within the literary marketplace, from which rivals are often excluded by the leading figures of literary history; it is also a story of major writers and thinkers tapping in to wider, more popular markets and learning from reading many of the works that we now regard as derivative and inconsequential—Schiller’s *Geisterseher* (The Ghost-Seer, 1787–89), for example, would be unthinkable without the gothic novels and the developments in narrative that he will have seen in the seemingly trivial works around him. And as Hans Robert Jauß argues, we can avail ourselves of a more varied and historically significant impression of the very people who were reading and receiving culture and even, at times, helping to direct the production of literature itself.<sup>36</sup> To borrow Kreuzer’s words, studying the second tier “sollte die traditionelle Literaturgeschichte nicht ersetzen, sondern ergänzen” (should not replace the traditional history of literature, but add to it).<sup>37</sup>

As cited at the beginning of this introduction, Lytton Strachey favored ignorance as the basic starting point for the historian. After the passage quoted above, Strachey goes on to write that the historian “will attack his subject in unexpected places; he will fall upon the flank, or the rear; he will shoot a sudden, revealing searchlight into obscure recesses, hitherto undivined. He will row out over that great ocean of material, and lower down into it, here and there, a little bucket, which will bring up to the light of day some characteristic specimen, from those far depths,

to be examined with a careful curiosity.”<sup>38</sup> The twelve contributions in this book seek to add to our understanding of German literary culture in the eighteenth century by doing something akin to what Strachey recommends, albeit without the ignorance. The perspectives offered here are wide and varied, picking up on and examining works, authors, and trends in this period, whether they fall under the various banners of the *Frühaufklärung* (early Enlightenment), Enlightenment, or the *Sturm und Drang*. It goes without saying that the periods represented by the terms *Aufklärung* and “Eighteenth Century” are not coextensive. Although we might hold that both the Enlightenment and the “long” eighteenth century begin around the same time in Germany (in around 1680), we might argue that the Enlightenment finishes around 1784.<sup>39</sup> And even if we were to use the word *Aufklärung* to signify a single *literary* period within the eighteenth century, it would overlap with *Sturm und Drang* and Weimar Classicism, which, although to some extent its immediate historical, literary, and philosophical successors, are often regarded as distinct periods in themselves.<sup>40</sup>

By choosing a numerically defined century, however, we hope to avoid both teleology and distinctions between periods that may be more connected or even more disconnected than we had previously thought. Moreover, by dividing this volume according to genre, we hope to enable readers to recognize diversity and complexity even within single literary forms. Each section attempts to be roughly chronological within itself. Thus the three contributions on poetry, from Kristin Eichhorn, Stephanie Blum, and Ellen Pilsworth, study various forms of and roles for verse, from the early work of seemingly neglected poets Daniel Wilhelm Triller and Daniel Stoppe to the “late style” of one of the foremost poets of the latter half of the period, Gleim, whose work as an old man at the tail end of the century has hitherto been overlooked. The essays on the novel provide insights into pivotal yet largely overlooked moments in the genre’s development: taken together, Ritchie Robertson, Sarah Vandegrift Eldridge, and Leonard von Morzé provide an intriguingly circular narrative of the “rise of the novel” as one both distinctly international and peppered with failures. The three contributions on drama and theater likewise study works and writers that have been written out of literary history yet were all engaged in projects for which their creators would ultimately receive no credit: Johannes Birgfeld and Julia Bohnengel study how playwrights sought to communicate with their new audiences (at almost opposite ends of the century) by crossing both class boundaries and disciplines; while Michael Wood turns to the relationship between the *Ritterstück* and historical drama. The final three essays in this volume study individual responses to the cultural and philosophical landscape. Jonathan Blake Fine’s essay illustrates how one writer, August Friedrich Cranz, sought to take on the leading writers of his day, while J. C. Lees’s

contribution looks at how Roman Catholic Germans were told that they might reach the heady heights of that same largely protestant “establishment”; and Joanna Raisbeck’s essay rounds off the century with an analysis of the move from Wolffian-Leibnizian system to a performative epistemology that sought to unite philosophy and poetics, ultimately leading into Romanticism. Running through all of the essays presented in this book is a concern for why the writers and works examined here have been consigned to the second tier of cultural production in the eighteenth century; by whom and when; and what benefits a further study of each of them will bring to our understanding of the period as a whole.

A selection of twelve essays is hardly going to provide an exhaustive account of literary culture in eighteenth-century Germany, let alone of the full extent of the so-called second tier. Indeed, there is not one single contribution here that offers further insights into the various and important roles of now-forgotten women writers in the eighteenth century.<sup>41</sup> Methodologically, most contributions included in this volume prefer to focus on either one author or a small set of works rather than following the Morettian lead in undertaking the “distant reading” of large sets of data;<sup>42</sup> this methodology, while problematic in many respects, promises new insights about the larger dynamics of the period that will greatly add to and possibly even challenge our understanding of literary history.<sup>43</sup> There are many figures not touched upon in these essays that might, after all, provide us with further perspectives on eighteenth-century culture. For all of its practical limitations, however, this volume hopes to show that studying second-tier writers and works with the literary lens that we would usually afford the canon promises to give us a more vivid impression of German literary and cultural life in the eighteenth century. And by choosing a past century as a definable object of study, it hopes to point to some of the benefits and limitations of looking beyond the so-called “masterworks” of any period in discussing, doing, and teaching literary history.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Max Weber, *Wissenschaft als Beruf* (Leipzig and Munich: Duncker & Humblot, 1919), 10. English translation: “Science as a Vocation,” in *The Vocation Lectures*, ed. David Owen and Tracy B. Strong, trans. Rodney Livingstone (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2004), 8.

<sup>2</sup> Lytton Strachey, *Eminent Victorians* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 5.

<sup>3</sup> Werner Schneiders, “Einheit und Vielfalt der Aufklärung,” in *The Enlightenment in Europe: Unity and Diversity/Les Lumières en Europe: Unité et Diversité/Aufklärung in Europa: Einheit und Vielfalt*, ed. Werner Schneiders (Berlin: Berliner Wissenschafts-Verlag, 2003), xxi.

<sup>4</sup> E. M. Cioran, *The Trouble with Being Born*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Arcade, 1998), 108.

<sup>5</sup> Michael Hadley, *The German Novel in 1790: A Descriptive Account and Critical Bibliography* (Bern and Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 1973), 1.

<sup>6</sup> Stephen Brockmann, *The Writers' State: Constructing East German Literature, 1945–1959* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2016), 341–42. For further consideration of writing the history of the literature of the GDR see, for example, Wolfgang Emmerich, *Kleine Literaturgeschichte der DDR*, rev. ed. (Berlin: Aufbau, 2009), 28.

<sup>7</sup> Karl Goedeke, *Grundriss zur Geschichte der deutschen Dichtung aus den Quellen*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., ed. Edmund Goetze et al., 18 vols. (Dresden/Berlin: Ehlermann/Akademie, 1884–1998), vol. 4.1, 2.

<sup>8</sup> Goedeke, *Grundriss*, vol. 4.1, 1.

<sup>9</sup> Georg Gottfried Gervinus, *Geschichte der poetischen National-Literatur der Deutschen*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., 5 vols. (Leipzig: Engelmann, 1846–52), vol. 4, 3.

<sup>10</sup> Helmut Kreuzer, “Trivilliteratur als Forschungsproblem. Zur Kritik des deutschen Trivialromans, seit der Aufklärung,” *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte* 41, no. 2 (1967): 174.

<sup>11</sup> For details of the so-called “Leserevolution” (reading revolution), see, for example, Reinhard Wittmann, *Geschichte des deutschen Buchhandels: Ein Überblick* (Munich: Beck, 1991), 143–99, especially 171–99; and Erich Schön, “Geschichte des Lesens,” in *Handbuch Lesen*, ed. Bodo Franzmann et al. (Munich: Saur, 1999), 1–85.

<sup>12</sup> On increased book production, see, for example, Wittmann, *Geschichte des deutschen Buchhandels*, 111–13.

<sup>13</sup> Johann Wilhelm Appell, *Die Ritter-, Räuber- und Schauerromantik: Zur Geschichte der deutschen Unterhaltungs-Literatur* (Leipzig: Engelmann, 1859), 11. It is surely notable that Appell provides such differing degrees of accuracy in his numbers. This can most likely be explained by his desire to stress and therefore criticize just how widespread authorship had become in the final years of the 1790s.

<sup>14</sup> The figures here were compiled by Jochen Schulte-Sasse in *Die Kritik an der Trivilliteratur seit der Aufklärung* (Munich: Fink, 1971), 46.

<sup>15</sup> On March 23, 1776 in a surprise decree Joseph II allowed every Viennese citizen “auf was immer nur erdenkliche Art, sowohl in- als vor der Stadt das Publikum zu unterhalten, und sich einen Nutzen zu verschaffen” (to entertain audiences for their own profit within the city walls and beyond and in every imaginable way): quoted from: Jürgen Hein, *Das Wiener Volkstheater* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1997), 25.

<sup>16</sup> For overviews of output at the time, see Karl Hayo von Stockmayer, *Das deutsche Soldatenstück des XVIII. Jahrhunderts seit Lessings Minna von Barnhelm* (Weimar: Felber, 1898), and Raymond Heitz, *Le drame de chevalerie dans les pays de langue allemande: fin du XVIIIe et début du XIXe siècle; théâtre, nation et cité* (Bern et al.: Lang, 1995), 530–610.

<sup>17</sup> Compare, for example, discussions of readerships in Michael Hadley, *The Undiscovered Genre: A Search for the German Gothic Novel* (Bern: Lang, 1978), 9; and Sven Aage Jørgensen, Klaus Bohnen, and Per Øhrgaard, *Aufklärung, Sturm und Drang, Frühe Klassik 1740–1789* (Munich: Beck, 1990), 228.

<sup>18</sup> Two very important exceptions to this trend are Edward J. Weintraut's excellent essay on the *Lesedrama*: "'Islands in an Archipelago': The German Dramatized Novel," *German Quarterly* 70, no. 4 (1997): 376–94; and Hans G. Winter, *Dialog und Dialogroman in der Aufklärung: Mit einer Analyse von J. J. Engels Gesprächstheorie* (Darmstadt: Thesen-Verlag, 1974). See also: *Andere Klassik: Das Werk von Christian August Vulpius (1762–1827)*, ed. Alexander Košenina (Hanover: Wehrhahn, 2012).

<sup>19</sup> Diana Stört, *Johann Wilhelm Ludwig Gleim und die gesellige Sammlungspraxis im 18. Jahrhundert* (Hamburg: Kovač, 2010), 90.

<sup>20</sup> Steffen Martus, *Aufklärung: Das deutsche 18. Jahrhundert: Ein Epochenbild* (Berlin: Rowohlt, 2015), 548–49. Martus also presents statistics for Johann Caspar Lavater in the latter half of the century, who was in contact with about 1,655 correspondents from 470 different locations.

<sup>21</sup> Regarding the phenomenon of the *Vielschreiber*, see Johannes Birgfeld and Claude D. Conter, "Das Unterhaltungsstück um 1800. Funktionsgeschichte und gattungstheoretische Vorüberlegungen," in *Das Unterhaltungsstück um 1800: Literaturhistorische Konfigurationen—Signaturen der Moderne*, ed. Johannes Birgfeld and Claude D. Conter (Hanover: Wehrhahn, 2007), vii–xxiv; and Marianna Borysiak, *Das deutsche Trivialdrama in der Zeit der Romantik* (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 1988), 3–11.

<sup>22</sup> Marion Beaujean, *Der Trivialroman in der zweiten Hälfte des 18. Jahrhunderts: Die Ursprünge des modernen Unterhaltungsromans* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1964), 1.

<sup>23</sup> Goedeke, *Grundriss*, vol. 5, 237.

<sup>24</sup> Appell, *Ritter-, Räuber- und Schauerromantik*, 3.

<sup>25</sup> Franco Moretti, *Distant Reading* (London and New York: Verso, 2013), 67.

<sup>26</sup> Richard Newald, *Von Klopstock bis zu Goethes Tod 1750–1832*, 2 vols. (Munich: Beck, 1957), vol. 1, 1. For a more in-depth treatment of tier formation in the eighteenth century—with particular reference to Goethe, Schiller, and Moritz—see Schulte-Sasse, *Kritik an der Trivialliteratur*.

<sup>27</sup> Harold Bloom, *The Western Canon: The Books and School of the Ages* (New York: Riverhead Books, 1995), 3 and 33.

<sup>28</sup> See Hans Robert Jauf, *Literaturgeschichte als Provokation der Literaturwissenschaft* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1970), 146–47; and Hermann Bausinger, "Wege zur Erforschung der trivialen Literatur," in *Studien zur Trivialliteratur*, ed. Heinz Otto Burger (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1968), 7. See also Wolfgang Schaer, *Die Gesellschaft im deutschen bürgerlichen Drama des 18. Jahrhunderts: Grundlagen und Bedrohung im Spiegel der dramatischen Literatur* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1963). Here, Schaer defines the object of his study as follows: it will not be "um literarische Kunstwerke, sondern um zweit- und drittrangige Gebrauchsliteratur für die damaligen Bühnen" (2; not about literary works of art, but about second- and third-tier literature for the utility of the stages at the time).