

The University of Manitoba

BÜCHNER'S WOYZECK: AN INVESTIGATION OF THE TEXTUAL DILEMMA

by

Frank James Machovec, Jr.

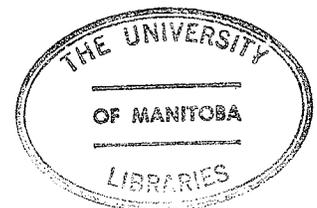
A Thesis

Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree
of Master of Arts

Department of German

Winnipeg, Manitoba

February, 1976



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ABSTRACT

The text of Georg Büchner's Woyzeck has defied precise textual analysis for over 140 years. Many approaches have been used in order to determine whether or not the drama was complete at the time of Büchner's death and, if complete, how its pieces were meant to be linked, but Büchner scholarship has been plagued by many dubious, contradictory, or deceptive conclusions about the Woyzeck manuscripts and their state of completion. This thesis represents an endeavour to critically examine various Woyzeck texts and studies bearing on this textual dilemma. The first segment of the thesis reviews what has been done with the Woyzeck-related Nachlass by various editors of primary texts and other Büchner scholars. The second part of the thesis examines several potentially useful means of resolving textual questions left unanswered by the studies considered in Part One; included here is the study of probable Woyzeck sources and stylistic features which appear to offer clues regarding Büchner's apparent intentions for the drama. The findings presented in the latter two segments of the thesis are summarized in Part Three, which culminates in the

presentation of a list of scenes for a hypothetical Woyzeck text based on those findings. While many doubts about the text remain, it has been established that Woyzeck is probably incomplete and was written in four phases, the last of which is apparently incomplete and includes material revised from scenes in the preceding phases. The construction phase chronology suggested by Werner Lehmann in the Hamburger BÜchner-Ausgabe (H₁-H₂-H₄, with H₃ problematic) seems to be the most likely chronology yet presented. The hypothetical text outlined in the thesis consists of H₄, the final phase, followed by the murder complex from the first phase, and the two gaps in the H₄ phase are filled with appropriate material from H₁ and H₂; the two scenes of H₃ are added as optional scenes because their Entstehung is highly problematic. Final answers to the textual dilemma are obviously not possible since no finalized text has yet been found and no definitive explanation of the intended form of Woyzeck has been presented, but close scrutiny of the presently available text reconstructions, manuscript analyses, and supplementary materials can apparently be used to form fairly reliable conclusions about the meaning and general structure of Woyzeck, as is evidenced by many successful interpretations and realizations which are not compromised by textual problematics.

--NOTE--

The manuscript phase and scene nomenclature suggested by Werner Lehmann in his Georg Büchner Sämtliche Werke und Briefe, Volumes I and II (München: 1972, 1974) will be used throughout this thesis, and references to or quotations from material in the Woyzeck manuscripts or Büchner letters, unless otherwise noted, will be made with respect to the latter work. See Appendix Three for a presentation of this system of phase and scene classification and Appendix Four for a comparison of the Lehmann system with those of other major Woyzeck editors--Bergemann, Bornscheuer, Buch, Krause, and Witkowski.

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INTRODUCTION

Ein unvollendet Lied, sinkt er ins Grab
Der Verse schönsten nimmt er mit hinab.

-- Georg Herwegh¹

Büchner's Woyzeck presents a number of serious textual problems, and these range from fundamental questions of scene order and construction to highly problematic orthographic and appellative considerations. In the many decades since Büchner's death in 1837 about forty Woyzeck or complete Büchner editions have appeared in the German language; within this group of forty or so editions are the works of eight editors who have produced primary editions based on the original manuscripts; yet, despite this seeming wealth of information and high degree of textual scrutiny, Büchner's intended Woyzeck has not been conclusively presented. These years of study, including the analysis of text fragments, Büchner's dramaturgy, apparent sources for characters and action in Woyzeck, letters to and from Büchner, and varied supplemental materials, have not eliminated the aura of doubt which surrounds the Woyzeck text. Büchner study has

¹This verse is on Büchner's tombstone; see Ernst Johann, Georg Büchner in Selbstzeugnissen und Bilddokumenten (Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag GmbH, 1958), p. 159.

indeed been highly systematic since the 1920's, which saw the work of Georg Witkowski, Fritz Bergemann, and others, but truly definitive answers regarding the order of scenes and the precise nature of their construction, Büchner's intended Woyzeck, will probably never be found because of complex problems surrounding the compilation, preservation, and interpretation of the Woyzeck manuscripts and supplemental materials.

Despite these textual problems, Woyzeck has been successfully staged on many occasions and has enjoyed considerable popularity since its first performance at the Münchener Residenztheater in November of 1913; additionally, Woyzeck was made into an opera (Wozzeck) by Alban Berg and was first performed in 1925. The performances of Woyzeck have been based on many textual reconstructions which have presented several different settings and outcomes for the drama. Of these varied Woyzeck texts, some have utilized great amounts of arbitrarily rewritten dramatic material while others have been based on close scrutiny of the original manuscripts; thus, great problems exist with respect to the question of textual authenticity--many texts apparently reveal more about their editor or director's dramaturgy than Büchner's. Simply stated, many dramatically effective Woyzecks are possible, as the many texts and well-received stage performances suggest, but not all texts or

performances apparently reflect Georg Büchner's designs for the drama.

The purpose of this thesis is to present an historical and critical review of over one hundred years of Woyzeck textual scholarship, and, through the integration of findings from a variety of areas pertinent to Woyzeck, to answer as many questions as possible about the intended nature of that text. The first two parts of the thesis will evaluate two basic approaches to the textual dilemma; the findings of these approaches will be summarized in the final part of the thesis which will culminate in the presentation of an outline for a hypothetical Woyzeck text based on these findings which, unlike many of its predecessors, includes no material deleted by Büchner and incorporates all of Büchner's apparent scene revisions.

The first part of the thesis, entitled, "The Textual Dilemma," will be an endeavour to briefly review what has been done with Büchner's Woyzeck- related Nachlass in the nearly 140 years since his sudden death on the nineteenth of February, 1837. The first area of concern will be the study of the truly bizarre set of circumstances surrounding Georg Büchner's Nachlass from the time of his death until 1924, when the extant pieces of the Nachlass were given to their present owners, the Goethe- and Schiller- Archiv in Weimar, by the Insel Verlag. The next subject will be the

description and evaluation of the many primary versions of the Woyzeck text from Karl Emil Franzos' version of 1879 to the text in Fritz Bergemann's twelfth Büchner edition of 1974. A review of hypotheses concerning Büchner's pattern of construction for Woyzeck will follow; this includes the review of various scholars' analyses based on the consideration of handwriting, ink, pagination, and apparent chronological/thematic relationships between the 49 scenes and four construction phases of Woyzeck. Part One will end with a critical review of the two leading Woyzeck text reconstructions; this review is intended to show how common textual assumptions have led to the evolution of quite different textual reconstructions with associated interpretational problems, and also to show some of the questions which remain unanswered about the drama's intended form despite years of intensive textual scrutiny.

The second part of the thesis, entitled, "Possible Tools for the Resolution of the Textual Dilemma," as its name implies, will be a consideration of several potentially effective means of answering questions which have defied analysis by the more conventional, manuscript-based approaches reviewed in Part One. This second avenue of textual inquiry is necessitated by the failure of the first to resolve many basic problems of scene and phase order; this second approach is based on the premise that clues to Büchner's dramatic

intentions in Woyzeck may be discernible in the stylistic and thematic minutiae of various phases and scenes. The first area to be investigated here will be the many parallels between three murder cases and the action and characters of the four phases of Woyzeck. It is quite clear that Büchner knew of the historical Woyzeck case, but it is also likely that he knew of the similar cases of Daniel Schmolling and Johann Diess and used elements from the accounts of these cases in the construction of Woyzeck; differential amounts of reliance on material from contemporary accounts of the three murder cases may reveal clues concerning Woyzeck's pattern of development. The implications of the parallels between the cases and the drama, then, will be the subject of the initial segment of Part Two of the thesis. Büchner's apparent use of biblical and other source materials in Woyzeck will next be considered in order to see if his use of this varied material gives apparent clues regarding the pattern of Woyzeck's construction. The final topic of Part Two will be a variety of stylistic features in the manuscript-- Büchner's use of language, characterizations, dramatic form-- which may have useful implications for the resolution of the textual dilemma.

Findings from the two basic approaches mentioned previously have been many, varied, and often contradictory; due to the unfortunate set of circumstances surrounding the

manuscripts, many unlikely hypotheses about the text must be accepted as possible because of the total absence of arguably genuine, negative evidence. The purpose of the third part of the thesis is to review the major findings about the textual dilemma mentioned in the previous parts without reliance on those findings which are highly problematic. These findings will then be used to present and defend a list of scenes for a Woyzeck text which, as far as is possible on the basis of presently available materials, respects Georg Büchner's apparent designs for Woyzeck. Part Three will conclude with the brief consideration of the extent to which Woyzeck's textual problematics compromise its interpretation--the issue of editors' versus Büchner's Woyzeck.

PART ONE

Chapter One

Büchner's Nachlass

The most perplexing issue relating to Woyzeck is without doubt the element of uncertainty which surrounds many potentially enlightening letters and documents of Büchner as well as the text of Woyzeck itself. While it is clear that the Büchner family and Georg Büchner's fiancée had access to material which has been denied, by their direct or indirect efforts, to all prospective students and editors of Büchner's works (with the possible exceptions of Karl Gutzkow and Georg Zimmerman), the precise nature of the missing material is, obviously, impossible to judge. It is known from various letters, editors' comments, statements, and analyses that the family and Minna withheld or edited pieces of Büchner's Nachlass, and this suppression or destruction of information has led to a wide variety of accounts of the nature of the manuscripts, letters, and miscellaneous writings left by Georg Büchner. Conjecture regarding the extent of interference with material ranges from the suggestion of overt destruction by Minna of the text of the drama Pietro Aretino (suggested primarily by Karl Emil Franzos and still

a controversial subject), to ideas of less deliberate interference through misplacement of material, fire, or the unconventional editorial practices of Georg's brother, Ludwig Büchner.² Simply stated, interference with the Nachlass has been conclusively established, but the extent of this interference defies accurate accounting.

The letters of Büchner, although only a handful survive as originals, are perhaps the best sources of information about his literary projects and their state of completion at the time of his death; the rather vague information given in these letters (approximately 70, many of which are fragments) can be interpreted in the light of other material of Büchner's which has been found, and one can then make assumptions about such things as the possibility of lost texts or documents on the basis of an integration of information from letters and the overall Nachlass.

Büchner revealed the intensity of his interest in drama in a letter written to his family from Strassburg on 1 January, 1836; in this letter Büchner remarks:

Ich gehe meinen Weg für mich und bleibe auf dem Felde des Dramas, das mit all diesen [social and political] Streitfragen nichts zu thun hat; ich zeichne meine Charaktere, wie ich sie der Natur und der Geschichte angemessen halte, und lache über die Leute, welche mich für die Moralität

²See Karl Emil Franzos, "Über Georg Büchner, "Deutsche Dichtung 29 (1901), 195-203 und 289-300.

oder Immoralität derselben verantwortlich machen wollen.³

In a letter of 10 June, 1836 written by Karl Gutzkow to Büchner, reference is made to "Ferkeldramen" which Büchner was supposedly writing; it has been assumed by scholars, through the sort of data integration previously mentioned, that Woyzeck is likely one of these so-called "Ferkeldramen" and was being actively worked on by Büchner in the summer of 1836.^{4,5} An oft-quoted letter from Büchner to his family dated September, 1836 mentions that he is working on two dramas which "sind Arbeiten, mit denen man nicht zu einer bestimmten Zeit fertig werden kann, wie der Schneider mit seinem Kleid."⁶ Another letter, really a fragment, written to Minna just before the onset of Büchner's fatal fever, dated "[Zürich, 1837]" suggests that Büchner would "in längstens acht Tagen Leonce und Lena mit noch zwei anderen Dramen erscheinen lassen."⁷ Scholars have argued about the identity of the dramas mentioned in the latter

³Georg Büchner, Sämtliche Werke und Briefe, Historisch-Kritische Ausgabe mit Kommentar, ed. Werner R. Lehmann, Zweiter Band (München: Carl Hanser Verlag, 1972), p. 452. This work will be hereafter referred to as "H.A." (for Hamburger Ausgabe.)

⁴H.A. II, p. 491.

⁵Georg Büchner, Woyzeck Kritisch herausgegeben, ed. Egon Krause (Frankfurt/M: Insel Verlag, 1969), p. 73.

⁶H.A. II, p. 460.

⁷Ibid., p. 464.

three important letters, especially since most originals of Büchner's letters have been lost and the copies made by Ludwig Büchner for his, clearly incomplete, Nachgelassene Schriften (1850) are dubious, but Woyzeck is probably one of the dramas; the implied third drama may well be the controversial Pietro Aretino of which the Büchner family allegedly said "dass es sein bestes gewesen sei."⁸ These letters lack the clarity of reference vis-à-vis individual literary projects of Büchner which one might hope for, but they do chronologically place Leonce und Lena and Woyzeck to a certain extent--January 1836 to February 1837; the issue of the third drama, however, is hopelessly clouded by lack of evidence. It appears that Woyzeck was worked on for a rather long period of time; the long delay in its construction is quite easily explained by Georg Büchner's simultaneous involvement with "Dichtungen, naturwissenschaftlichen und philosophischen Studien...mit der Vorbereitung einer Probevorlesung und mit Vorbereitungen auf die Dozententätigkeit while residing in Strassburg and Zürich."⁹

⁸Cf. Georg Büchner, Werke und Briefe, ed. Fritz Bergemann (München: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1965), pp. 347-348 and p. 345; Heinz Fischer, Georg Büchner: Untersuchungen und Marginalien (Bonn: Bouvier Verlag Herbert Grundmann, 1972), pp. 89-90; Krause, pp. 73-74; Walther Kupsch, Woyzeck Ein Beitrag zum Schaffen Georg Büchners (Berlin: n.p., 1920; reprint ed. Nendeln, Liechtenstein: Kraus Reprint Limited, 1967), pp. 10-11.

⁹Krause, p. 74.

Caroline Schulz, wife of a friend of Büchner, left "Tagebuchaufzeichnungen über Büchners letzte Tage" which give a great deal of information about the course of Büchner's illness and allude to some Büchner material which has never been found.¹⁰ This Tagebuch states that Büchner's illness started on the second of February, a fact which enables one to suggest the date of the final letter fragment of Büchner, and that Minna arrived from Strassburg on the seventeenth of February, but the most important revelation of this Tagebuch lies in the entry for February 20, the day after Büchner's death. In this entry Caroline Schulz states that "wir lasen in einer Art Tagebuch, das sich unter Büchners Papieren gefunden hatte und reiche Geistesschätze enthält," and it also mentions the reading of "seine treffende Satire."¹¹ This Tagebuch of Büchner's was apparently only seen by Schulz and Minna Jaegle, the "wir" of Caroline's reference; it presumably remained in Minna's hands and has never been found, causing much speculation among Büchner scholars.¹²

The Nachruf of Caroline's husband, Wilhelm, gives a brief account of Büchner's literary Nachlass. This Nachruf, written for the Schweizerischer Republikner for 28 February,

¹⁰Bergemann, pp. 317-323.

¹¹Ibid., pp. 322-323.

¹²See, for example, Bergemann, pp. 347-348 and Fischer, pp. 89-90 concerning Minna.

1837, mentions Büchner's Victor Hugo translations from the Strassburg period (1836), but goes on to relate:

In derselben Zeit und später zu Zürich vollendete er ein im Manuskript vorliegendes Lustspiel, Leonce und Lena... Ausserdem findet sich unter seinen hinterlassenen Schriften ein beinahe vollendetes Drama, sowie das Fragment einer Novelle, welche die letzten Lebenstage des so... unglücklichen Dichter Lenz zum Gegenstande hat. Diese Schriften werden demnächst im Druck erscheinen.¹³

Woyzeck is certainly the drama mentioned here, but the existence of the third drama mentioned in Büchner's letters and the contents of the Tagebuch mentioned in Caroline Schulz' Tagebuch are matters not clarified in the piece.

Another Nachruf concerning Büchner was written by Gutzkow and appeared in the Frankfurter Telegraf for June, 1837. This piece contains much information about Dantons Tod and the relationship between Gutzkow and Büchner, but it concludes with some interesting statements about Büchner's Nachlass:

Die schönste Belohnung, die ich für diesen Nachruf erhalten konnte, waren die sauberen Abschriften des poetischen Nachlasses Büchners von der Hand seiner Verlobten. Es ist ein vollendetes Lustspiel "Leonce und Lena"... Dann das Fragment des "Lenz" und ein Heft von Briefen, die ohne Absicht geschrieben und doch voll künstlerischen und poetischen Wertes sind.¹⁴

Gutzkow's information, significantly, came from Minna Jaegle; the absence of a reference to Woyzeck is striking

¹³Bergemann, p. 325.

¹⁴Karl Gutzkow, Werke, ed. Peter Müller, Volume III (Leipzig: Bibliographisches Institut, n.d.), p. 129.

and serves to raise questions about Minna, who almost certainly had the Woyzeck material for several months, and her role in the Büchner editorial dilemma.¹⁵

From letters of Minna written after Büchner's death, it is possible to glean some information about the existence of documents exclusively in her hands, but this information is neither detailed nor conclusive. A letter to Büchner's friend Eugen Boeckel of 5 March, [1837] verifies Caroline Schulz' account of Minna's arrival in Zürich and helps to give credence to the overall Schulz account; it is a letter written years later, however, that has stirred the most controversy regarding Minna's role.¹⁶ The letter was written to Karl Emil Franzos in 1877 after he had requested Minna to send him any Büchner material which he had; she stated quite categorically:

dass ich durchaus keine moralische Verpflichtung fühle, die besagten Papiere zur Öffentlichkeit zu bringen; teils sind es solche, die nur mich persönlich angehen, teils sind es unvollständige Auszüge und unvollendete Notizen. Das Andenken an Georg Büchner ist mir zu teuer, als dass ich wünschen könnte, etwas Unfertiges von ihm der Kritik der Rezensenten aussetzen.¹⁷

Franzos suggests that Minna's memories of Georg Büchner were

¹⁵Krause, p. 80.

¹⁶Bergemann, pp. 327-328.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 335.

so dear that the notion of "etwas Unfertiges" also extended to material (like Pietro Aretino and perhaps a complete Woyzeck) which she thought displayed atheistic tendencies which she felt would tarnish the reputation of her late fiancée.¹⁸ Additionally, Minna apparently had a falling out with the Büchner family and, according to Franzos, was unwilling to deliver some of her papers (including Pietro Aretino) because of her desire to deprive the Büchner family of any additional royalties which would be received from the publication of the "new" material held by her.¹⁹ The vehemence and vagueness of the letter, the element of uncertainty about the contents of Büchner's Tagebuch, together with Franzos' allegations, have combined to create an aura of suspicion about Minna Jaegle; the Tagebuch was never found and no new pieces of Büchner material were found after Minna's death in 1880 despite extensive searches. The following observations by Ronald Hauser is a good summary of the possible extent of Minna's interference:

Unfortunately, Wilhelmine, who never married, refused access to her treasured mementos. When she died in 1880, not a single document of Büchner's could be found among her effects. Presumably she had destroyed everything. Besides the drama Pietro Aretino, and the final manuscript of Woyzeck, an undetermined number

¹⁸ Franzos, pp. 200-201.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 201.

of letters and, perhaps most unfortunately, Büchner's diary, which, according to Caroline Schulz, contained "rich intellectual treasures," were thus lost.²⁰

After many years of debate, the question of Minna's role as an obstructor of Büchner study has remained unanswered; unless new material comes to light--a seemingly unlikely event--this controversy will continue to plague Büchner scholarship.

With the exception of the Tagebuch and whatever other material was kept by Minna, Büchner's manuscripts remained with the Büchner family from sometime in 1838, when Minna returned some of the material she had taken while in Zürich, until July, 1875 when they were temporarily loaned to Karl Emil Franzos.²¹ Starting in late 1837, Karl Gutzkow attempted to compile a volume of Büchner's collected works, including Pietro Aretino of which he supposedly had a copy, but he was only able to publish a Nachruf, an essay on Büchner, part of Briefwechsel with Georg, and excerpts from Leonce und Lena (1838) and Lenz (1839); he had the support of Minna, but, because of political and financial problems, ran afoul of Büchner's father, resulting in an impasse.^{22, 23} Georg

²⁰Ronald Hauser, Georg Büchner (New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1974), p. 23.

²¹Franzos, pp. 290-291; Krause, p. 80.

²²Hauser, p. 22.

²³Fischer, p. 90.

Zimmermann, a school friend of Büchner, had the support of the father, but was unable to complete his planned edition which was intensively worked on in 1838. The Nachgelassene Schriften of 1850, edited by Ludwig Büchner, was the first Büchner edition, but it was far from a complete version of Georg Büchner's Nachlass; Woyzeck, found undecipherable by Ludwig, is not in the edition and many letters are either not included or edited in an extremely conservative, family-image-serving fashion which seems highly questionable by virtue of its deliberate withholding of information about Georg Büchner.²⁴

A fire in the Büchner house in the 1850's destroyed many of the original letters of Büchner's; this fact, coupled with the mystery of Minna's holdings, the allegations about Pietro Aretino, and the peculiarity of Ludwig Büchner's editing of the 1850 edition has prepared the groundwork for violent controversy about the nature of possible differences between what we have of Büchner's work and that which was indeed written by him.

The first presentation of the Woyzeck material, albeit a poor deciphering containing 20 scenes, was the result of painstaking, chemically-aided interpretation of the Woyzeck material done by Karl Emil Franzos, and it appeared in the

²⁴Ibid.