

**Into the Heart of Madness:  
Georg Büchner's "Lenz" and "Woyzeck", Kant's Left and Right Hands**

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*Müdigkeit spürte er keine, nur war es ihm manchmal  
unangenehm das er nicht auf dem Kopf gehn konnte.*

-Georg Büchner, "Lenz"<sup>1</sup>

*immer, immer zu, stich  
todt, todt.*

-Büchner, "Woyzeck"

## Introduction

The above citations from "Lenz" and "Woyzeck" - Georg Büchner's best literary fragments<sup>2</sup> - capture the subtle posing of an urgent question, a question of interpretation executed via madness. This interrogation is essential for framing the entirety of each work and indeed Büchner's whole oeuvre. Bearing that in mind, in this project I address the problem of madness in Büchner's "Lenz" and "Woyzeck" first, and ultimately suggest that Büchner's primary achievement is the truly remarkable expression of insanity<sup>3</sup> in his literature. I suggest that Büchner uses madness ambivalently in "Lenz" and "Woyzeck", challenging both *reality* and *normality* simultaneously, and that through this ambiguity, he engages the urgent, modern questions of *orientation* and *judgment* between the rule and the particular case as arising in Kant's *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (Critique of Pure Reason). "Lenz" and "Woyzeck" function in a similar manner to the way left and right hands operate in Kant as incongruent counterparts, and through these means, Büchner reaches into the depths of madness as somehow alien, while neither reducing this otherness to mere error nor

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<sup>1</sup> "He felt no fatigue, but at times he was irritated that he could not walk on his head" (111). Translations are from Henry J. Schmidt. Cf. Büchner, Georg. *Georg Büchner: The Complete Collected Works*. Trans. and Ed. Henry J. Schmidt. New York: Avon Books, 1977. I discuss the translation of the phrase from "Woyzeck" below in section IV, but Schmidt suggests "On and on!" (194).

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Büchner, Georg. *Sämtliche Werke, Briefe und Dokumente (SW)*. Ed. Henri Poschmann. Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1992. Vol. 1. 225-250 for "Lenz" and 143-219 for "Woyzeck"

<sup>3</sup> For stylistic reasons, it is preferable to alternate "madness" with "insanity" on occasion, but for the purposes of this paper their meaning is entirely equivalent. Furthermore, this paper uses a very general sense of madness, as something outside the order of normal reason. To define it more specifically would betray both the notion of madness in general and as present in Büchner's literature.

treating insanity as simply unintelligible. He draws us into the heart of both madness and modernity, and does not lead the way out again.

The above citations from “Lenz” and “Woyzeck” are paradigmatic examples of madness and a point of departure from which to examine madness in Büchner from a variety of perspectives and using different lenses, exploring which approaches offer the most robust understanding of these two works. To that end, in the first section of this paper, I briefly contextualize Büchner and his two literary fragments historically, and then I present a survey of Büchner scholarship focusing on madness in “Lenz” and “Woyzeck”. In this overview, I locate various approaches to the problem of understanding insanity in Büchner along the axes of engagement with *reality* and *normality*. A few broad methods for understanding madness in Büchner and some of the respective scholarship will be criticized here, in order to better identify the ambivalence with respect to madness present in “Lenz” and “Woyzeck”. According to the results of this survey, I proceed with two of the most compelling approaches to madness in Büchner. These methods take “Lenz” and “Woyzeck” as fundamentally disoriented on the one hand, and as informed by the case history on the other, but both approaches are grounded in problems arising in Kant’s first *Kritik*. Therefore, the second section of this paper will show that these two approaches, which seem to address different problems at first glance, are actually both intimately linked to the distinction between *concept* and *intuition* in Kant. This section helps to account for the special modernity and scope of Büchner’s literature, and explicates a model of “Lenz” and “Woyzeck” as left and right hands. The third section will then examine “Lenz”, detailing how madness works ambivalently, engaging in these fundamental questions of modernity. Insanity will be identified both on the level of textuality and in the principal

figure simultaneously, corresponding to the engagement of “Lenz” with both the real and the normal, and questions of judgment and orientation at the same time. In the fourth section, I then show how madness functions similarly in “Woyzeck”, operating both internal to the figure Woyzeck and externally on the level of the text and in the entire world of the drama. The insight into madness offered here comprises a counterpart to the insights gained through “Lenz”, just as Kant’s left and right hands allow for a sense of subjective orientation in objective geometric space. In the end, Büchner’s expression of madness in these texts excels as an expression of insanity, because madness neglects to allow itself to be wholly accessible to reason. Büchner declines to resolve madness and modernity, and even reveals the limits of reason sharply in these texts. Thus, in the concluding section I discuss avenues of further research, given his works which make acute the limits of a science of literature.

### **I. Context and Criticism**

Georg Büchner (1813-1837) grew up in Darmstadt and studied medicine, following in the footsteps of his father. He began his university studies in Strasbourg in 1831 and then completed his degree in Giessen, studying there from 1833 to 1835. A natural scientist by profession, Büchner’s dissertation on the anatomy of the nervous system of the barbel (a fish) was accepted in 1836, after which he was awarded a Doctorate degree. Shortly thereafter, he was offered a teaching position in Zürich. Then Büchner died in 1837, soon after moving to Zürich, falling fatally ill with typhus or some similar disease. In addition to his studies, he was also active as a political radical and as an author of literature, publishing the revolutionary pamphlet *Der Hessische Landbote* (authored in conjunction with

Friedrich Ludwig Weidig) in 1834, the comedy *Leonce and Leona* in 1835, and the drama *Dantons Tod* in 1836. He completed most of his work on “Lenz” in the summer of 1835, after fleeing Giessen under political persecution for his revolutionary activity, and began work on “Woyzeck” months later, failing to complete either piece before his early death and leaving behind complex and disorderly manuscripts.

The fact that both “Lenz” and “Woyzeck” were left unfinished factors significantly into Büchner scholarship. Their fragmentariness and philological difficulty contributes greatly to the relative importance of Büchner as an author in the German canon, as he stands emphatically as an antipode to Goethe *and his scholarship*. Besides the philological problems that an unfinished text poses, Büchner’s remarkable citation practices, such as his prima facie plagiarism of Johann Friedrich Oberlin’s report on the historical visit by J.M.R. Lenz, and his refracted references to Dr. Johann Christian August Clarus’s *Gutachten* on the historical Johann Christian Woyzeck, factor into both *Textkritik* (textual criticism) and literary criticism of his works.<sup>4</sup> Both texts offer significant editorial difficulties in different ways.

Büchner constructed “Lenz” as if he was writing on top of Johan Friedrich Oberlin’s report,<sup>5</sup> reusing the basic structure of events in the document while both deleting and amending passages. He wrote without clearly marking the cited text, with borrowed and original text running together, so that often it is impossible to distinguish exactly who or

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<sup>4</sup> For general background and Büchner scholarship in this web, cf. Müller-Sievers, Helmut. “Reading without Interpreting: German Textual Criticism and the Case of Georg Büchner.” *Modern Philology*. 103:4. 2006, 498-518. For a further examination of Büchner’s remarkable citation practices, cf. Campe, Rüdiger. “Three Modes of Citation: Historical, Casuistic, and Literary Writing in Büchner”. *The Germanic Review: Literature, Culture, Theory*. 89:1. Apr 2014, 44-59.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Oberlin, Johann Friedrich. “Der Dichter Lenz, im Steinthale”. *Georg Büchner: Lenz. Text und Kommentar*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag 1998. 63-76.

what is the source of a particular word or phrase. “Lenz” was published soon after Büchner’s death, and was immediately recognized in connection with the historical Lenz. On the other hand, he left “Woyzeck” behind in four distinct manuscripts, none of which can be considered polished and ready for publishing. The manuscripts develop towards a finished play, which Büchner clearly intended to provide,<sup>6</sup> but were in such a confused state that the first published version, “Wozzeck”, didn’t appear until 1880, edited by Karl Emil Franzos. Partly due to this gap in time, it wasn’t until almost an additional 40 years later (nearly a century after its initial composition) when scholars connected “Woyzeck” back to the historical case of Johan Christian Woyzeck, especially as presented in Dr. Claurus’s *Gutachten*.<sup>7</sup> Since the first edition, editors have been tasked with constructing a readable version based on a synthesis of the manuscripts, which is made significantly more difficult by Büchner’s often illegible handwriting. Such an editorial project is necessary, irresistible and impossible all at the same time: at every point the editor must already interpret the text on a minimal level, even if it is just deciding which letter Büchner wrote. This editorial nexus of problems partly explains Georg Büchner’s surprising significance within German studies, considering the miniscule quantity of his writings next to an author like Goethe, and perhaps also his disproportionately minor status outside of German studies. That his manuscripts demand philological work almost like a classical text is

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<sup>6</sup> This is substantiated by a number of letters, such as a letter to his brother Ludwig stating that he was eight days from finishing his drama, presumably meaning *Woyzeck*. Cf. “*Einleitung*” in Büchner, Georg. *Nachgelassene Schriften*. Ed. Ludwig Büchner. Frankfurt a. M.: Sauerländer, 1850. 1-50. Here 39

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Claurus, Johann Christian August. “Die Zurechnungsfähigkeit des Mörders Johann Christian Woyzeck, nach Grundsätzen der Staatsarzneikunde aktenmäßig erwiesen”. *Georg Büchner: Sämtliche Werke und Briefe, Bd. 1: Dichtungen und Übersetzungen mit Dokumentationen zur Stoffgeschichte*. Hamburg, 1967. 487-537.

attractive to German editors.<sup>8</sup> Perhaps not by chance, both of his literary fragments are deeply concerned with madness and are Büchner's most interesting works. This paper therefore acknowledges the complex editorial project involved with "Lenz" and "Woyzeck", while attempting to avoid excessive weight thereby. The fragmentary status of each piece of literature must be considered part of each work as it is, and at the same time, I will show that the madness of both "Lenz" and "Woyzeck" is not a contingency dependent on the early death of their author.

Questions of citation and philology in Büchner are subordinated to the problem of insanity in this paper, since the remarkable expression of madness in each fragment has Büchner as its source. The pivotal sentence of "Lenz" quoted above serves as a paradigmatic example of this. It is both an intense instance of madness, and it cannot be traced back to Oberlin's report, but is Büchner's original work.<sup>9</sup> On the other hand, the "Immer zu" in "Woyzeck" is indirectly derived from Clarus's *Gutachten*, but also recrafted by Büchner.<sup>10</sup> The decision to take madness as fundamental to each work is substantiated both by other scholarship (referring to the moment quoted above from "Lenz", Arnold Zweig pronounced "*Mit diesem Satz beginnt die moderne europäische Prosa*"<sup>11</sup>) and the result that "Lenz" and "Woyzeck" are most subtle and mature when read this way.

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<sup>8</sup> Cf. Müller-Sievers. "Reading without Interpreting" Ibid. Also very important here is Büchner's perceived status as social revolutionary, but as Müller-Sievers argues, this image of Büchner tends to be over-emphasized and fails to appreciate Büchner's literary innovation as such.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Oberlin, Ibid. Here 63.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Campe, "Three Modes of Citation..." Ibid. and Clarus, Ibid. The phrase in Clarus's report is "*immer drauf, immer drauf*" (do it, do it).

<sup>11</sup>"with this sentence, modern European prose begins" [my translation] Cf. Büchner, Georg. *Sämtliche poetische Werke nebst einer Auswahl seiner Briefe*. Ed. Arnold Zweig. München und Leipzig: Rösl Verlag, 1923. Zweig edited and wrote an introduction for this publication. His pronouncement highlights the view of Büchner as distinctly modern- that is, emphatically outside of the *Goethezeit*, and even counter to it.

Now turning to a survey of Büchner scholarship, a few very schematic divisions in interpretive approaches to Büchner's literature (particularly madness in "Lenz" and "Woyzeck", but to some extent, also other aspects of his oeuvre) will be used to examine and organize the following methods 1) according to the extent which they account for Büchner's engagement with problems of the normal and/or the real, and 2) according to where madness is located by these approaches: either within the figures Lenz and Woyzeck, or elsewhere, such as on the level of the texts themselves. To be sure, these categorizations are insufficient to engage the subtleties of any particular approach. Still, they are useful in considering the relative value of different approaches to Büchner.<sup>12</sup>

The first criterion used in this survey delimits methods of understanding "Lenz" and "Woyzeck" as confronting notions of either normality or realism. Privileging madness in Büchner lends itself to an emphasis on the aspect of normality, whereas the aspect of realism in Büchner tends to be tied to emphasizing his remarkable citation practices and use of case-histories. But these apparently disparate aspects are in fact intimately related. For one thing, they overlap in the abnormality of madness: Lenz and Woyzeck are abnormal precisely in so far as they are madmen, and yet both figures' insanity can be characterized as the inability to distinguish the real from the unreal. Furthermore, this prefigures the arguments of the following sections, where I suggest that problems of orientation and judgment, of madness of the text and madness within the text, can best be understood using the language "both/and" rather than "either/or". Thus, these sets of terms represent extreme limits on a continuous, horizontal spectrum, and it is the point of

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<sup>12</sup> I wish to emphasize this shortcoming and to make clear that my intention is to criticize the general thrust of approaches taken by various scholars more so than their writing itself, which often transcends the limits identified in my analysis.



greater emphasis which is at stake. Also, besides the horizontal axis, methods can be compared vertically by their relative depth in understanding of madness as something which is somehow other and yet intelligible. The desiderata for this reading, then, is a subtle, sophisticated appreciation of Büchner's literature.

The second criterion, concerning the locus of madness, considers whether madness can more properly be predicated of Büchner's principal figures, or if it must be limited to the level of textuality, since both "Lenz" and "Woyzeck" are both already deeply problematic as fragmentary texts. This problem is logically prior to the former criterion, because the identification of insanity with the figures Lenz and Woyzeck assumes sufficiently constructed, transparent texts, whereas if the texts themselves are 'mad', then they do not allow for a stable perspective from which meaningful and accurate claims about the figures are possible. This problem will be fleshed out in the third and fourth sections on "Lenz" and "Woyzeck" respectively.

The greater part of Büchner research by far locates madness within Büchner's principal figures, rather than on the surface of each text, perhaps because this is a functional assumption and in some sense necessary for the very project of literary criticism. This is also an intuitive interpretation, since both Lenz and Woyzeck appear to match our general picture of insanity through their unusual actions and speech. Furthermore, within this camp, a greater amount of scholarship from the last century emphasizes Büchner's engagement with reality rather than with normality. Among such readings of "Lenz" and "Woyzeck" which emphasize Büchner as a realist author writing about mad characters are

first roughly Marxist<sup>13</sup> interpretations, secondly psychiatric readings of “Lenz” and “Woyzeck”, and finally readings that take approach Büchner through the case history. There are also symbolic readings in a very general sense, which understand madness metaphorically and existentially. These readings also locate madness within the figures of Lenz and Woyzeck, but tend to emphasize the aspect of normality over reality.

Readings of Büchner which take a basically Marxist, social revolutionary perspective understand Lenz and Woyzeck’s madness as the product of social conditions, or, in a word, oppression of the proletariat.<sup>14</sup> According to this reading, both Lenz and Woyzeck appear driven to madness as especially oppressed members of the working class, struggling against the negative pressures of society. Considered in conjunction with Büchner as a social revolutionary, this reading makes a consistent case, but it treats madness as an effect, a disease caused by social factors. This misses the way which Büchner altogether neglects to identify a definite source of madness for either Lenz or Woyzeck, and also does violence to the very notion of madness as outside of normal reason. This treats madness as an external object of science, whereas Büchner excels precisely by offering insight into the interior of the madman. Hence, understanding madness in this way is akin to taking a psychiatric view of insanity, since the institution of psychiatry purports to bring madness under the domain of science by classifying it and identifying its causes. Unsurprisingly, then, readings such as James Crichton’s book on Schizophrenia in Büchner exemplify a method which employs both a roughly social revolutionary perspective and a psychiatric

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<sup>13</sup> Marxist, used loosely here, means taking literature as a product much like any other, to be understood according to its conditions of production and having a use value, usually something like the education of society.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Lukács, Georg. “Der faschistisch verfälschte und der wirkliche Georg Büchner,” *Georg Büchner*. Ed. Wolfgang Martens. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1965. 197–224.

perspective.<sup>15</sup> Both of these approaches tend to miss the depth of madness expressed by Büchner in these works by claiming to identify the source of madness for Lenz and Woyzeck, although psychiatry goes even further by imposing a scientific perspective which the texts cannot actually support. Nonetheless, the madness expressed by Büchner seems remarkably genuine, and this is best appreciated in reference to psychiatry.

Under a psychiatric perspective, the fragments consist in the portrayal of medically consistent cases of mental illness. Scholars who take up this view include James Crighton, Georg Reuchlein, Gerhard Irle, and Sabine Kubik,<sup>16</sup> among many others. However, while Büchner's figures Lenz and Woyzeck do indeed exhibit psychiatrically consistent traits of schizophrenia to an astonishing degree, as before, an understanding of madness on this level is overly limited. Insanity as mere mental illness reduces it to an object of science, on the same level as a physiological lesion, betraying the essence of madness as precisely *not* rational. This excludes the possibility that madness operates by its own logic outside of normal reason. Normal reason is a commitment to the principle of sufficient reason, that every effect has its corresponding cause. Therefore, if madness is defined in opposition to normal reason, how should we expect it to follow the principle of sufficient reason and be subject to cause and effect in just the same way as everything else? Perhaps this is a necessary assumption for the practice of psychiatry, but neither religion (broadly

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<sup>15</sup> Cf. Crighton, James. *Büchner and Madness: Schizophrenia in Georg Büchner's Lenz and Woyzeck*. Bristol German Publications. Lewiston, N.Y.: Edwin Mellen Publications, 1998. Crighton reads Büchner from a psychiatric perspective, but he also concludes that Büchner's innovation in portraying madness is that he accounts for social factors and his reading is committed to the outlines of a Marxist aesthetic.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Crighton, Ibid. Reuchlein, Georg. "'...als jage der Wahnsinn auf Rossen hinter ihm!'. Zur Geschichtlichkeit von Georg Büchners Modernität. Eine Archäologie der Darstellung seelischen Leidens im 'Lenz'". *Jahrbuch für Internationale Germanistik* 28. 1996, 59-111. Irle, Gerhard. "Büchners *Lenz*. Eine frühe Schizophreniestudie." *Georg Büchner: Lenz. Text und Kommentar*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1998, 110-120. Kubik, Sabine. *Krankheit und Medizin im literarischen Werk Georg Büchners*. Stuttgart: Metzler, 1991.

represented by pastor Oberlin in “Lenz”), nor science (broadly represented by the Doctor in “Woyzeck”) succeed in treating insanity within Büchner’s literature. Rather, Büchner’s works surpass many literary depictions of madness due to the depth with which he engages madness, beyond the standpoint of an external observer and into the heart of the experience of madness itself. Psychiatry offers valuable insight into insanity, but Büchner’s literary expression thereof cannot be treated in the same way as insanity in a human being.

Furthermore, Michel Foucault’s analysis of the institution of the asylum and psychiatry shows that psychiatry, especially around the time of Büchner, functioned unlike other medicinal specialties in both theory and practice.<sup>17</sup> That is to say, psychiatry functioned as power long before knowledge, and is not so much interested in comprehending its object as controlling it. The asylum was built to overcome madness seen as a dangerous force by imposing reality on the subject, rather than to identify the source of the problem and repair it. Foucault reveals the limits of a psychiatric perspective in its ability to assess truth. Büchner’s two fragments only confirm and augment this limitation identified by Foucault through continually failing to allow the scientific perspective appealed to by psychiatry to be supported. This is in part what makes “Lenz” and “Woyzeck” interesting. These works appear at a time of transition when psychiatry is beginning to assert itself and demand recognition by the law. The case of Johan Christian Woyzeck marks one of the early instances when a psychiatric evaluation is used to determine the guilt of a criminal. It is no longer a question of whether the accused

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<sup>17</sup> Cf. Foucault, Michel. *Abnormal: Lectures at the College de France 1974-1975*. Trans. Graham Burchell. New York: Picador 2006. ---. *Psychiatric Power: Lectures at the College de France 1973-1974*. Trans. Graham Burchell. New York: Picador 2006. ---. *Madness and Civilization: a history of insanity in the Age of Reason*. Trans. Richard Howard. New York: Vintage Books, 1988. A comparison with Crichton is sufficient to reveal the historical differences between psychiatry in France and Germany, which are superfluous here.

committed the crime, but whether the accused is a rational subject capable of culpability. Kant powerfully informs and manifests this shift as a preeminent Enlightenment figure, articulating succinctly who the modern, rational subject is in his well-known essay “*Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung?*” (Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?).<sup>18</sup> The rational subject thinks for himself and therefore takes responsibility for himself. The Woyzeck-case broadly reflects the shift from the paradigm of madness as spiritual possession treated by a priest, to the paradigm of psychiatry wherein the insane are treated by a medical doctor. But in Büchner’s fragments, neither institution is effective in treating madness at all. Whereas in “Lenz” the institution of religion fails to successfully treat madness, “Woyzeck” displays the failure of science. The insights of psychiatry are not to be put aside lightly, but a medical understanding of madness applied to Büchner’s fragments does not accommodate an appreciation of the mysteriousness of insanity. However, approaching “Lenz” and “Woyzeck” through the lens of the case history widens the scope of understanding Büchner’s literature so as to accommodate a greater diversity and complexity of understanding, while retaining an appreciation of contemporary psychiatry.

Among those scholars whose method begins with reference to the case history are Arne Höcker, Johannes F. Lehmann, and Rüdiger Campe,<sup>19</sup> with many others in recent years

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<sup>18</sup> Cf. Kant, Immanuel. *Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung?* Ed. Friedrich Jodl. Frankfurt am Main: Neue Frankfurter Verlag, 1905. (Originally published in 1784). The well know opening sentence reads, “*Aufklärung ist der Ausgang des Menschen aus seiner selbstverschuldeten Unmündigkeit.*” That is, “Enlightenment is the emergence of a human from his self-incurred immaturity.” [Translation is my own.] Here Kant expresses that a person must emerge from the immaturity of letting others think for him to realize the status of a rational, morally responsible subject. This is another formulation of the same question purportedly answered by Clarus’s *Gutachten*.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Höcker, Arne. “Das Drama des Falls: The Making of *Woyzeck*”. *Tötungsarten und Ermittlungspraktiken: Zum literarischen und kriminalistischen Wissen von Mord und Detektion*. Ed. Hans-Georg von Arburg, Maximilian Bergengruen, and Peter Schnyder. Freiburg: Rombach Verlag, 2015. 189-204. Lehmann, Johannes

applying this approach to both Büchner's work and other early modern literature.<sup>20</sup> To take "Lenz" and "Woyzeck" as literary case histories is still fundamentally concerned with Büchner's engagement with reality, for the case history is a genre that becomes a new, modern means of constructing scientific knowledge about reality in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The purpose of a case history, at least as it was ideally conceived by Karl Philip Moritz<sup>21</sup> (a pioneer of the case history) is to furnish the type of raw data which can then be systematically interpreted by the scientist in order to know truth about the world. But, the expert scientist must make a judgment: to what extent does the present case fit the rule, and to what extent is it an exception? In other words: to what extent is this instance normal or abnormal? Thus, this view accommodates great depth and complexity by the measurements of the first analytical criterion, and its relation to judgement in Kant will be detailed in section II.

The last category of approaches to "Lenz" and "Woyzeck" in this division emphasizes the problematics of normality over those of reality and will be referred to as metaphorical approaches to madness. Such an appreciation of insanity understands the crisis of insanity as primarily existential and symbolic, rather than realistic.<sup>22</sup> Such a metaphorical approach

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F. "Erfinden, was der Fall ist: Fallgeschichte und Rahmen bei Schiller, Büchner und Musil." *Zeitschrift für Germanistik*. 19:2, 2009. 361-380. Campe, Rüdiger. "Von Fall zu Fall. Goethes *Werther*, Büchners „Lenz“." *Was der Fall ist. Casus und Lapsus*. Ed. Inka Müller-Bach and Michael Ott. Paderborn: Fink 2014, 33-55.

<sup>20</sup> For example, these articles on Goethe's *Werther*, to which "Lenz" is strongly connected: Frey, Christiane. "Ist das nicht der Fall der Krankheit? Der literarische Fall am Beispiel von Goethes *Werther*." *Zeitschrift für Germanistik*. 19:2. 2009, 317-329. Martyn, David. "The Temper of Exemplarity: *Werther's* Horse". *Exemplarity and Singularity*. Ed. Michèle Lowrie and Susanne Lüdemann. Routledge: New York 2015. 166-180.

<sup>21</sup> This is the stated intention for Karl Philip Moritz's *Magazin für Erfahrungsseelenkunde*, cf. "Aussichten zu einer Experimentalseelenkunde" in Moritz's *Werke*. Ed. Hörst Gunther. Frankfurt, 1981. Vol 3, 84-99.

<sup>22</sup> The metaphorical approach is more of a conceptual category than an actual strain of scholarship, inserted here to round out the discussion. Little scholarship of the last century, to my awareness, fits squarely in this category. Paul Celan's acceptance speech "Der Meridian" is the nearest example I've encountered. Cf. Celan, Paul. *Der Meridian: Endfassung, Entwürfe, Materialien*. Ed. Bernhard Böschstein, Heino Schmul, Michael Schwarzkopf, and Christiane Wittkop. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1999.

to understanding madness offers interest and flexibility, but, mirroring social revolutionary perspectives, tends to overlook a key aspect of Büchner's literature if taken at the expense of realism in Büchner. Reading Büchner symbolically, in the same manner as authors like E.T.A. Hoffmann or Goethe, resembles Goethezeit literary criticism and misses the special innovation and modernity of Büchner's literature. Helmut Müller-Sievers' research is a notable exception, which does focus on the aspect of normality in Büchner rather than reality, although this approach first locates madness on the surface of the texts rather than within them.

Müller-Sievers<sup>23</sup> is unique in producing scholarship that argues for an understanding of madness in "Lenz" and "Woyzeck" on the level of the texts themselves, thereby occupying a privileged place according to the second criterion of analysis. At the same time, Müller-Sievers identifies the insanity of the texts by encountering Büchner through his dissertation framed by the problem of spatial orientation.<sup>24</sup> The problem of orientation is essentially a question of normality, for the task of Kant and 18<sup>th</sup> century scientific thought in relation to orientation is the attempt to account for the normal orientation of human beings, to answer questions like why men walk erect and have left and right hands. By taking Büchner's dissertation in the context of orientation as a starting point, he shows how for Büchner, in contrast to *Goethezeit* thinking in general, there is a gap between description of the world and the ability to successfully interpret it. The anatomy of a barbel can be meticulously described, and its place in a theory of species can

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<sup>23</sup> Cf. Müller-Sievers, Helmut. *Desorientierung: Anatomie und Dichtung bei Georg Büchner*. Wallstein Verlag: Göttingen 2003. Also ---. "Of Fish and Men: The Importance of Georg Büchner's Anatomical Writings". *MLN*. 118: 3. Apr 2003, 704-719. The argument which follows is made by Müller-Sievers in both of the above texts.

<sup>24</sup> *Memoire sur le système nerveux du barbeau*. Cf. the German translation in *SW* Vol. 2.: *Schriften, Briefe, Documente*. Ed. Henri Poschmann. Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 2002.

be discussed, but the two moments are fundamentally disconnected for Büchner, as the two halves of his dissertation on the Barbel exemplify. This gap is then argued to be the centrifugal force of Büchner's literature, so that it is not the figure Lenz who is mad, but "Lenz" itself; it is not Woyzeck, but the text "Woyzeck". There is no valid transition between the madness of the text and of the figure, just as there is no valid transition between description of anatomy and interpretation of it for Büchner in his dissertation.

Although this reading is interesting, innovative, and rigorous, citation in Büchner becomes primarily an artistic element of his language and therefore more symbolic than referential. The overall operation of his citation practices minimizes the value of the actual content in a given reference. Müller-Sievers argues that tracing citation in Büchner's works to their source is often impossible and always insufficient to account for meaning. While he makes a convincing argument, the value of other interpretations of referentiality and realism in Büchner's literature yields profoundly fruitful insights. Instead, a major upshot of my reading, and its scholarly contribution, is the juxtaposition of two ostensibly incompatible approaches in order to recover the insights both offer. Therefore, I propose to understand Büchner's fragments via madness first, which is powerfully at work in "Lenz" and "Woyzeck" to such an extent that it is able to operate on multiple levels simultaneously. Through madness, Büchner confronts the notion of normality, expresses and problematizes realism, and forces the question of how it is possible to interpret at all by destabilizing and disorienting textuality. In the next section, then, these last two approaches will be compared and shown to be intimately related expressions of the same problem, just as madness is multifaceted in "Lenz" and "Woyzeck". Büchner draws us into the heart of madness without solving it or leading the way out again.



## II. Orientation and Judgment, Left and Right Hands

Above we saw that reading “Lenz” and “Woyzeck” both against the background of the case history and as disoriented, mad texts would facilitate the greatest width and depth in understanding madness as expressed by Büchner. But Müller-Sievers argues that, since these fragments are fundamentally disoriented as texts, there is no stable perspective from which to make claims about the madness of the principal figures themselves.<sup>25</sup> At the same time, it would seem that references to the historical context such as dates in the fragments can sufficiently orient the texts to make truth-claims about the figures Lenz and Woyzeck possible, since Büchner directly cites historical documents like Oberlin’s journal and Claurus’s *Gutachten*. The current section, therefore, is concerned with addressing this tension by arguing that Büchner’s expression of madness operates on both levels ambivalently and simultaneously: both Lenz and “Lenz” are mad; Woyzeck himself and “Woyzeck” exhibit insanity. This notion can be both fleshed out and philosophically justified by an examination of the distinction between concept and intuition in Immanuel Kant’s philosophy, which in turn points to the depth and scope of Büchner’s modernity.

It is remarkable that both interpretive strategies develop their apparently opposed approaches to Büchner out of Kant’s philosophy, but this is merely a superficial difference as both are in fact rooted in the same problem, the distinction between concept and intuition. In short, Kant’s concern with the problem of spatial orientation leads him to the distinction between concept and intuition in the *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, which distinction, in turn, results in the problem of making a judgment about whether a particular case fits the rule or is an exception. Müller-Sievers discusses the problem of spatial

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<sup>25</sup> Cf. Müller-Sievers, *Desorientierung*, *Ibid.* Especially the sections on “Woyzeck” and “Lenz”, 133-172.

orientation at length in the first section of his book<sup>26</sup>, but here it will suffice to present the contours of the argument using the example of the left and right hands.

The early Kant concerns himself deeply with orientation, especially using the example of hands as *inkongruente Gegenstücke* (incongruent counterparts), an example which recurs throughout his work. He wrote about spatial orientation in “Von dem ersten Grunde des Unterschiedes der Gegenden im Raume”<sup>27</sup> (1768), more than a decade before the first edition of the *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* was published (1781). In the former essay, Kant highlights the importance of the left and right hands as incongruent counterparts: objects of similar structure and size – even symmetrical about the vertical plane of the body – which yet cannot be superimposed on one another. The key claim made by Kant is that this difference, this lack of identity cannot be accounted for by concepts alone, but absolutely requires a notion of experience or intuition. In other words, the terms “left” and “right” are meaningless without a subjective perspective. Additionally, while “hand” is a concept, “left” and “right” are more properly intuitions. Thus, the left and right hands bring a subjective orientation into the notion of objective geometric space, and thereby prefigure the Copernican revolution in Kant’s philosophy.<sup>28</sup> The subject has right and left sides which are both changing and stable, in so far as what was once to my left is now to my right upon turning around, yet my right side remains forever the right side of my body. For Kant, objective space doesn’t make any sense without the subject, just as cognition is not possible

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<sup>26</sup> Cf. Müller-Sievers, *Desorientierung* Ibid. 13-50.

<sup>27</sup> “On the first Reason for Distinctions between Regions in Space” (my own translation)

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Woelert, Peter. “Kant’s Hands, Spatial Orientation, and the Copernican Turn”. *Continental Philosophy Review*. Springer 40:2 (2007) pp. 139-150. This move from spatial orientation to the distinction between concept and intuition is also argued on page 43 of Guyer, Paul. “Absolute Idealism and the Rejection of Kantian Dualism.” *The Cambridge Companion to German Idealism*. Ed. Karl Ameriks. Cambridge University Press: New York, 2000. 37-56.

without the cooperation of the two stems of cognition identified in the first *Kritik*: understanding (concepts) and sensibility (intuitions). Indeed, in the essay “*Was heißt: Sich im Denken orientieren?*”<sup>29</sup> (1783), Kant himself seems to connect his concern with spatial orientation with his work in the first *Kritik*. Furthermore, in his inaugural dissertation, “On the Form and Principles of the Sensible and the Intelligible World” (1770), Kant explains the difference between the right and left hands as dependent on intuitions and explicitly distinguishes intuitions from concepts for the first time.<sup>30</sup>

It would be difficult to overstate the importance of Kant’s distinction between concepts and intuitions, which is the most basic foundation of Kantian doctrine and confronted by all post-Kantian philosophy.<sup>31</sup> In turn, the gap between sensibility and understanding corresponds to the chasm between objects in the world and our mental content, which Hume forcefully identifies and Kant sets out to resolve. The urgent undertaking posed by Hume and the pre-Kantian empiricists might be formulated as the need to justify that our immaterial and universal mental content can adequately correspond to the external world of material and particular objects. Kant accepts the empiricist commitment that external objects must *cause* our ideas to be legitimate, but how can the material world cause the immaterial ideas we have? How can we be sure that the cue ball striking the eight ball will always result in the transfer of energy and motion, necessarily and not simply based on induction? The very notion of necessary causation is at

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<sup>29</sup> “What does it Mean: To Orient Oneself in Thought?” (my own translation)

<sup>30</sup> Kant’s inaugural dissertation was written in Latin, and entitled “*De Mundi Sensibilis atque Intelligibilis Forma et Principiis*”. See paragraph 15 especially, where he talks about left and right hands.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Guyer, *Ibid.* Guyer shows that the distinction between concept and intuition is *the* foundation of Kantian philosophy, and is understood in this way by Hegel. This implies its importance for post-Kantian philosophy beyond Hegel. Cf. also Engstrom, Stephen. “Understanding and Sensibility”. *Inquiry*. 49:1, 2006. 2-25. He elaborates these notions and argues that the version of Kant which is inherited does not do justice to a more rigorous reading of Kant.

stake, which is simply a more precise formulation of the principle of sufficient reason, the principle that every effect has an intelligible cause. A commitment to the principle of sufficient reason is what counts as ‘normal reason’ in this paper, so that madness, in contrast, challenges this principle. Below we will see how madness in Büchner challenges normal reason both internal and external to the madmen Lenz and Woyzeck in subtly different ways. Still, Kant is a bastion of normal reason, and is willing to give up hope of knowing anything definite about things in themselves if he can scientifically secure necessary causation and the principle of sufficient reason in the realm of experience.

Thus Kant distinguishes concepts and intuitions, and this distinction informs the very structure of Kant’s first *Kritik*, where the first section, “*Die transzendente Ästhetik*” (The Transcendental Aesthetic), concerns sensibility, and the second section, “*Die transscendentale Logik*” (The Transcendental Logic), explicates understanding. Then, in “*Die transzendente Analytic*” (The Transcendental Analytic), the first subdivision of “*Die transzendente Logik*”, Kant presents the problem posed by making a judgment about whether something does or does not stand under a given rule in the subsection “*Von der transzendentalen Urteilskraft überhaupt*”.<sup>32</sup> In short, the problem of judgment for Kant is that there is no rule to determine when and to what extent a particular instance can be subsumed under a rule or not. Such a rule would result in regress, since that rule would require another rule, and so on. Instead, Kant says that it is a matter of talent by which the judge, doctor, and statesman successfully make these determinations.<sup>33</sup> This is precisely

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<sup>32</sup> “Concerning Transcendental Judgment in General” [my translation]

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Kant, Immanuel. “Von der transzendente Urteilskraft überhaupt”. *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*. A 133. Also, cf. Campe, “Von Fall zu Fall...” Ibid. 36. As Campe notes, Kant doesn’t simply leave the problem without addressing it (he develops the schemata), but nor does his answer seem entirely satisfying, and this problem is taken up by the likes of Husserl, Derrida, and Foucault.

where the case history enters the stage, especially as developed in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Campe shows that the problem addressed by the case history, as ideally formulated by Moritz,<sup>34</sup> is precisely the same problem which Kant presents, although the vocabulary employed is slightly different. Kant uses the term “rule” (*Regel*) repeatedly, while Campe demonstrates that “case” (*Fall*) is precisely the thing which judgment needs to act upon, the instance to be either subsumed under a rule/concept, or not. *Die Leiden des jungen Werther* (The Sorrows of Young Werther, henceforward *Werther*) by Goethe functions as a helpful example of the way this problem interacts with literature.

According to Campe,<sup>35</sup> The literary case history is the genre that thematizes and observes this problem of making a judgment about whether a case fits the rule or is an exception. *Werther* fits the category of literary case history in so far as *Werther* is looked to as an exemplary piece of modern literature, and yet this is attributed to *Werther's* uniqueness, as if, paradoxically, its exceptionality constitutes its status as the rule.<sup>36</sup> Casuistry is one attempt to elaborate how something can be both exemplary and unique, part of a rule and an exception at the same time. The logic of the case history, therefore, can be classified as a rigorous means of asking questions about what is normal and what is not.

Campe goes on to argue that “Lenz” is simultaneously a case history, referring to both J.M.R. Lenz and *Werther*, and an internal focalization on the experience of Lenz. I suggest that the simultaneity identified by Campe within the text can be described as ambivalence to the interior and exterior of the text achieved via madness in “Lenz”, using a mechanism parallel to the way orientation and judgment are rooted in the distinction

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<sup>34</sup> Cf. Moritz, Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Campe, “Von Fall zu Fall...” Ibid. pg. 33

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Frey, Ibid. and Martyn Ibid.

between understanding and sensibility in Kant. And madness in “Woyzeck” is manifested almost symmetrically, like an incongruent counterpart, via ambivalence toward insanity both within Woyzeck and exterior to him, in the form of the text and in the world around him. Just as spatial orientation and casuistry extend from the distinction between concept and intuition in Kant, the exterior and interior of both “Lenz” and “Woyzeck” proceed from madness. What remains is to show how this mechanism of ambivalence through insanity is at work in each respective text.

### III. “Lenz”

Turning to the narrative fragment “Lenz” with the insight provided by the above approaches to madness in Büchner and their basis in Kant, the keystone sentence cited above comes into view as a complex expression of madness.<sup>37</sup> Nothing about the sentence is simply unintelligible. Its parts are all comprehensible in themselves and there is no grammatical error, and yet this sentence stands literature on its head. The two sense units are disjointed: “*nur war es ihm manchmal unangenehm daß er nicht auf dem Kopf gehn konnte*” doesn’t follow from “*Müdigkeit spürte er keine*” – Lenz’s occasional annoyance that he can’t walk on his head doesn’t follow from lack of tiredness, but seems to appear suddenly without an obvious cause or goal, and therefore his annoyance must arise out of madness. This moment serves as a paradigm for insanity in “Lenz”, as Büchner’s version of the Lenz-story lacks both a proper origin and a proper end,<sup>38</sup> complicating the relation of

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<sup>37</sup> Cf. Büchner, *SW*. This sentence is on lines 10-11, pg. 225. “He felt no fatigue, but at times he was irritated that he could not walk on his head.” (Schmidt 111)

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Edmunds, Kathryn R. “‘Lenz’ and ‘Werther’: Büchner’s Strategic Response to Goethe”. *Monatshefte*, 88:2 1996. University of Wisconsin Press. 176-196 “Lenz seems to lack a plot and a protagonist as these are commonly understood. The narrative doesn’t have a particular goal or direction (other than to return to the point of departure); there is no particular story to tell, and therefore there is no suspense or anticipation.”

cause and effect. Madness in “Lenz” is manifested ambivalently, both intrinsic and extrinsic to the text and as a contrast to normality and reality at the same time. Therefore, in this section I will first demonstrate Lenz’s insanity and then show how the text itself conforms to the object of its discourse, becoming itself mad.

Encountering the narrative fragment first as an expression of madness within the text, of the figure Lenz, a casuistic approach provides profound insight into both its realism and the ways in which notions of normality are engaged. “*Müdigkeit spürte er keine...*”, together with other moments in the text, appears as a remarkably consistent description of schizophrenia, but also as an abnormal expression of the Lenz-case. This interpretive lens draws attention to two aspects: moments in “Lenz” where his madness is portrayed, and secondly, moments of citation and reference. The actual visit by J.M.R. Lenz to pastor Johann Friedrich Oberlin’s home in Waldbach provides the historical background, and a comparison of the text of “Lenz” to Oberlin’s report<sup>39</sup> of the visit demonstrates that Büchner practically wrote his literature on top of it. Thus, Büchner’s Lenz is clearly a case, the case of a *Sturm und Drang* (Storm and Stress) poet gone mad, complete with its basis in an authoritative report, even if this report comes from a pastor and not a scientist. The status of Oberlin’s account is lacking, written as a quasi-scientific report on the ‘facts’ of J.M.R. Lenz’s visit from Oberlin’s own first-hand point of view. Additionally, as a protestant pastor in the pietistic tradition, his account of the visit fails as an objective report to the extent that his journals are a means to better see God and the interiority of his and others’ lives. It is difficult to precisely delimit which text Büchner cites and which is original to Büchner in “Lenz”, but dates seem clearly to come from Oberlin’s report, and his writing

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<sup>39</sup> Cf. Oberlin, *Ibid.*

provides Büchner's narrative with its backbone structure and plot. At the same time, "Lenz" confuses the linearity of narrative through passages which confuse space and time, amending psychological insights, and the omission of a proper origin or end to the narrative. Büchner's "Lenz" is another iteration of the Lenz-case, remarkable for its insight into the internal experiences of a madman, but also an instance which is exceptional. Examining the exceptionality or abnormality of "Lenz" in the midst of its participation in the Lenz-case highlights how Büchner engages with the problematics of normality and judgement, while focusing on the clinical aspects of his madness emphasizes the realism of the fragment.

The text is saturated both with moments where Lenz's madness is manifest, such as when Lenz repeatedly bathes in the water trough at night or sees hieroglyphs, and with moments of reference and citation. This is perhaps never more explicit than the moment when the term "*fixe Idee*" enters the text. It reads, "*Am dritten Hornung hörte er, ein Kind in Fouday sei gestorben, er faßte es auf, wie eine fixe Idee.*"<sup>40</sup> Büchner's language is important here, as "*fixe Idee*" (fixed idea) was a technical term in psychiatry at the time, used to classify monomania.<sup>41</sup> This term is not present in Oberlin's report, although about half of the sentence retains the language of the report word for word.<sup>42</sup> On these grounds, then, it is clear that Büchner references contemporary psychiatry directly and at the same time complicates the Lenz-case by amending information on Lenz's psychological state to Oberlin's account, the basis of Büchner's fragment as a case history.

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<sup>40</sup> *SW* 1,241. "On the third of February he heard that a child had died in Fouday, he took this up like an obsession." (Schmidt 125)

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Crighton, *Ibid.* 237

<sup>42</sup> Cf. Oberlin, *Ibid.* 66. This case also functions as an example of the difficulty in distinguishing exactly the extent to which Büchner is citing Oberlin, referencing something else, and being original.



Büchner's expression of madness goes far beyond a psychiatric, external description of Lenz's psychological state in the context of a case history. "Lenz" excels as an expression of madness because it is fundamentally constructed through tensions which resist explicit delimitation. For example, in the moment of the *"fixe Idee"*, Lenz seems to actively acquire this fixed idea (*"er faßte es auf"*, 'he grasped it' - the verb form is active), but often in the text he seems powerless against a madness which pursues him, *"als jage der Wahnsinn auf Rossen hinter ihm."*<sup>43</sup> Even assuming that the text is sufficiently constructed to make such claims about Lenz, it is difficult to pin down madness as arising from within Lenz or as arising from an outside force. Yet further, the text is full of moments expressing the interior experience of insanity, held in tension with external description, especially in moments where Lenz himself speaks or where there are interjections in the text. For example, the interjection *"aber tot! tot!"*<sup>44</sup> seems very immediate to Lenz. And Lenz says: *"Hören Sie denn nichts, hören Sie den nicht die entsetzliche Stimme, die um den ganzen Horizont schreit, und die man gewöhnlich die Stille heißt... hör ich's immer, es lässt mich nicht schlafen, ja Herr Pfarrer, wenn ich wieder einmal schlafen könnten."*<sup>45</sup> Lenz is tormented because he cannot stop hearing silence, which is, of course, the absence of sound and therefore cannot properly be heard, just as one does not properly 'see' darkness. Thus, the text expresses not merely that Lenz is mad, but it focuses on *how* he experiences madness.

Scholars usually refer to the interior insight offered in "Lenz" when they praise Büchner for his remarkable depiction of schizophrenia, depicting the symptoms with

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<sup>43</sup> SW 1,226. "As if insanity were pursuing him on horseback" (Schmidt 112)

<sup>44</sup> SW 1,241. "but dead! Dead!" (Schmidt 125)

<sup>45</sup> SW 1,248. "Don't you hear anything, don't you hear the terrible voice, usually called silence, screaming around the entire horizon? ...I always hear it, it won't let me sleep, yes, Pastor, if only I could sleep once again." (Schmidt 133)

astounding consistency well before schizophrenia was identified by psychiatry. This internal focalization is also what Campe refers to most directly when he shows how “Lenz” develops the genre of a literary case history beyond its relation to *Werther* and its relation to the Lenz-case in general. Campe claims that this aspect of interiority occurs simultaneously with objectivity in “Lenz”, as the case history is a genre which requires an objective standpoint to be valid.<sup>46</sup> On the other hand, it isn’t entirely clear whether this perspective is even available, if “Lenz” itself is mad – if it is fundamentally disoriented and insufficiently constructed as a text.

Stepping back and shifting lenses, “*Müdigkeit spürte er keine...*” also reveals the madness of disorientation in “Lenz” on the surface level of the text. This moment shows us that Lenz is mad at the beginning of the story, he arrives already insane, and so Büchner narrates no origin to Lenz’s insanity. Nor does madness really come to an end in “Lenz”, as the fragment stops – whether or not it was intended to *end* – with, “*So lebte er hin.*”<sup>47</sup> As Müller-Sievers argues, it is rather difficult to understand a text which can neither be oriented by a beginning nor an end.<sup>48</sup> Again, Lenz’s occasional annoyance that he cannot walk on his head seems to arise out of nowhere, with no grounds nor any final goal, contrary to normal reason and therefore seemingly out of madness. The text’s philological problems only increase the sense of disorientation created by the fragment. Citations and references are not marked as such by Büchner, making impossible the attempt to precisely distinguish cited and original text. Perhaps most importantly, the narratorial perspective is constantly shifting. As we have already begun to see, there are times when it seems clear

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<sup>46</sup> Cf. Campe, “Von Fall zu Fall...” Ibid. 48.

<sup>47</sup> *SW*, 1,250. “So he lived on.” (Schmidt 134)

<sup>48</sup> Cf. Müller-Sievers, *Desorientierung* Ibid. 151.

that a 3<sup>rd</sup> person observer is narrating the text, such as when dates come into the text, and yet there are moments when time and space cease to make sense, such as the description of Lenz's journey through the mountains in the first paragraphs of the text. These first paragraphs create a sense of disorientation in the reader which seems analogous to what Lenz must be experiencing in his insanity, but noticing this does not simplify the localization of this disorientation either within Lenz himself, or in the text.

Both Müller-Sievers and Campe agree that it is often impossible to adequately distinguish the perspective from which the story is narrated, whether the narration is internal or external to the figure Lenz.<sup>49</sup> This aspect is perhaps the fundamental expression of the ambivalence of madness in "Lenz". The deepest moments of this ambivalence arise with the construction, "*es war ihm...*" (it was for him...) which recurs about twenty times throughout the fragment. This impersonal construction, permeating the entire text, collapses the distinction between inner and outer, passive and active – a language which is indifferent to sanity and insanity.<sup>50</sup> Here we are brought into the heart of madness, where we see madness before our eyes and even encounter an analogous experience by reading "Lenz". The madness of a text may not be identical to human insanity, but the reader is given at least a robust analog to the experience of madness by experiencing the disorientation of the text. In the first few pages, it is clear that "Lenz" is not a normal narrative, as it avoids a linear plot and distorts space and time. Below we will see that "Woyzeck" also appears as an abnormal drama, presenting a world full of disorientation, a world fragmented and broken, where normal reason fails. Through these two fragments,

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<sup>49</sup> Cf. Müller-Sievers, *Desorientierung* Ibid. 156 and Campe, "Von Fall zu Fall..." Ibid. 53.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. Müller-Sievers, *Desorientierung* Ibid. 156.

we encounter a robust expression of madness that retains its resistance to the order of normal reason.

#### IV. "Woyzeck"

Above I have shown that madness in "Lenz" is fundamental and ambivalent, so that the insanity of the subject extends to the very text itself. "Woyzeck" is also permeated by madness, both within the text and on its surface, in the figure Woyzeck himself and in the world around him. Büchner likewise engages with the same nexus of problems in "Woyzeck", presenting insanity to engage notions of reality and normality through a mechanism of ambivalence. And yet "Woyzeck" is a drama fragment rather than a narrative, with different historical and institutional contexts from "Lenz". Therefore, I will first highlight significant aspects of the context of "Woyzeck" in contrast to "Lenz". Then I proceed to raise and respond to the objection that the apparent formal madness of "Woyzeck" is a result of the circumstances of its production and not essential to the work. This will lead to a demonstration of how madness is fundamentally at work in "Woyzeck", first externally and formally, and then internally. The insight provided by the above analyses will again prove useful to read madness both through disorientation and in reference to casuistry. Finally, to take this argument one step further, I will show that other characters within the text beyond Woyzeck are also steeped in the madness of disorientation, as the entire world of the drama is outside of normal reason.

Although written around the same time as "Lenz", Büchner's drama fragment "Woyzeck" engages with a different historical and institutional context since it is set in a moment almost half a century later. Whereas the Lenz-case refers to a late 18<sup>th</sup> century

case of madness handled by a protestant pastor, the Woyzeck-case refers to an early 19<sup>th</sup> century criminal case at the precise moment when forensic psychiatry begins to assert itself. The principal interest of the Woyzeck-case is in the question of a subject's accountability before the law (*Zurechnungsfähigkeit*), and therefore Büchner's iteration of the Woyzeck-case references legal case files rather than a personal journal. As mentioned previously, this is principally the Clarus *Gutachten*, but the drama is evidently conscious of other contemporary legal cases such as the Daniel Schmolling-case and the case of Johann Dieß.<sup>51</sup> These references are less direct but equally as problematic as Büchner's reference to Oberlin's report, since Büchner again neglects to mark cited text and does not identify his sources. The sources themselves are also problematic, despite being generated by scientists, as Foucault's research on Psychiatry at this time reveals its severe limits as a science.<sup>52</sup> Büchner's version of the Woyzeck-case draws heavily on these sources, but his text remains largely outside of their discourse, in so far as the text refuses to answer the questions raised by them. The best example of this concerns Woyzeck's legal accountability (*Zurechnungsfähigkeit*) in the drama. Büchner makes it impossible to definitively decide whether his Woyzeck should be held accountable or not, since there is insufficient textual evidence to attribute accountability to Woyzeck in the drama. While Woyzeck is certainly mad, there is a prominent thread of jealousy in the drama, offering a strong and consistent case that his murder should rather be attributed to envy and anger, perhaps exacerbated by insanity but ultimately apart from it. This shows that "Woyzeck" is fundamentally a work of literature, and therefore its casuistic context only goes so far to support an

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<sup>51</sup> These are very similar criminal cases with various features that Büchner seems to draw on for his plot. Cf. Campe, "Three Modes of Citation..." 2014. Ibid. Here pg 53.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. note 17 above.

understanding of the text. Still, the philological context of “Woyzeck” is also a limited foundation for interpreting Büchner’s “Woyzeck”.

Both “Lenz” and “Woyzeck” refer to inadequate sources in problematic ways, but the difficulties of the editorial project involved in reading “Woyzeck” reach even deeper than the problems presented by “Lenz”. Büchner left behind three longer manuscripts and one very short manuscript, all clearly connected to the same drama. But even the long and presumably most nearly finished manuscript (the third in *SW*) is far from a finished product. This already expresses a level of insanity on the level of form in the drama, since the raw text comprises a set of fragmented scenes that reader or editor must actively and significantly orient to arrive at a single drama, all with little help from the author. Büchner did not divide his drama into acts, and, although some scenes in the later manuscripts are certainly based on an earlier version of the scene, the order of scenes between manuscripts differs. The relatively greater mess of the “Woyzeck” manuscripts relative to “Lenz” make it more susceptible to the objection that the perceived disorientation in the form of the drama is a result of circumstances surrounding the work and not the text itself.

This objection is not to be overlooked. If the fragmentary and disorienting mode of “Woyzeck” is accidental rather than essential to the drama, then the text itself is not mad in the way which I argue, but is only a distanced description of madness among many. Indeed, it seems that the drama would have coalesced into a solid and more traditional form had not young Georg Büchner died untimely, for he expressly intended to publish “Woyzeck” alongside his complete dramas *Dantons Tod* and *Leonce und Leona*,<sup>53</sup> which, though innovative in their own ways, are not driven by madness at the very core as “Lenz” is. This

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<sup>53</sup> Cf. Note 6 above.

objection is reasonable and its consequences severe, but ultimately following this challenge leads to the elucidation of the profounder and more interesting madness in Büchner's writing. As Müller-Sievers argues, the fragmentary nature of "Woyzeck" is manifested by other textual evidence which demonstrates that even a published version would have remained fragmented.<sup>54</sup> "Woyzeck" lacks any sufficient criteria to order the scenes, whether by dramatic technique or inner logic of the story. This is demonstrated by two facts of the drama: first, that many important scenes have little or nothing to do with the plot, and second, that many scenes which do directly relate to the plot still do not have a necessary sequence and could be displaced without contradiction.

To the first point, there are many scenes to choose from. Scenes like <1,2> which covers the display of the intelligent horse, or <1,14> containing the much emphasized fairytale, do nothing to drive the action forward.<sup>55</sup> They certainly flesh out the world of the drama, but they have no definite place in the action and therefore could occur at any point. To look at another example more closely, scene <3,17> shows that Woyzeck's full name in the drama is actually Friedrich Johann Franz Woyzeck, unlike the historical Johann Christian Woyzeck. This is a remarkable detail and the scene helps develop both Woyzeck and Andres as characters, but it is entirely extraneous to the plot. The main action of the scene consists in Woyzeck reading his name from a paper which tells him his identity. He reads "*Friedrich Johann Franz Woyzeck, geschworne Füsilir im 2. Regiment, 2. Batallion 4. Companie geb. – d. – d. ich bin heut Marie Verkündigung d. 20. Juli alt 30 Jahr 7 Monat und 12*

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<sup>54</sup> Cf. Müller-Sievers, *Desorientierung* Ibid. 133 ff.

<sup>55</sup> Another way to reduce the weight of this objection is to take the manuscripts more or less as they were left by Büchner. Therefore I cite scenes below according to their manuscript as edited by Henri Poschmann in *SW*. In <1,14> the first number refers to the manuscript (*Entwurfstuf*) and the second to the scene.

*Tage*.”<sup>56</sup> The paper contains not only his full name, but his rank, date of birth, and exact age as if these facts comprise his personal identity and recalling them might bring him to his senses. At the same time, his birthday is an unspecified placeholder while the present date is specified with careful exactitude. With his birthdate unknown, the connection between the present moment and the past fades, just as various scenes in the drama have little causal connection between them. The Woyzeck in the drama is not sufficiently accounted for by his rank, age, or origin, nor do these details do anything to explain why or how Woyzeck murders his lover.

As to the second point, that even many of the scenes which do advance the plot lack a necessary sequence, a good example is scene <3,15> when Woyzeck purchases a knife from the Jew. Although this scene reasonably precedes the murder, Woyzeck clearly has access to a knife without needing to purchase one: he cuts branches, he shaves his captain, and he is a soldier. Another example is the scene where we find Woyzeck alone in an open field, <1,6> and <3,12>, one of the central scenes. He hears the ground and the wind commanding him, “*Hör ich’s immer, immer zu, stich, todt, todt.*”<sup>57</sup> This scene naturally follows after Woyzeck sees Marie dancing with the Drum Major in <3,11> (or an unspecified ‘him’ in <1,5>) and before the murder, but it could fall elsewhere without contradiction. For one, the scene of the murder only appears in the earliest manuscript at <1,15>. This is the sole point of reference around which the play must be oriented, so its omission in later manuscripts seriously obfuscates the proper order of scenes.

Furthermore, as a madman, there is no reason that Woyzeck couldn’t still be tormented by

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<sup>56</sup> SW 1,216-217. “Friedrich Johann Franz Woyzeck, soldier, rifleman in the second regiment, second battalion, fourth company, born... Today I’m thirty years, seven months and twelve days old.” (Schmidt 198)

<sup>57</sup> SW 1,214 <3,12>. “It goes on and on – stab her to death ... to death.” (Schmidt 195)



voices after murdering Marie. Thus the fact that these scenes could almost appear in any order without inconsistency makes manifest the deep fragmentation and disorientation of the drama, reflecting the breakdown of normal reason and causality as presented above in reference to Kant. Even if Büchner had published a version and therefore a definitive order of scenes, the lack of causal connection between scenes exemplified by their lack of necessary sequence demonstrates just how deeply the madness of the drama permeates the formal level of the play.

Above I attributed the possibility for various sequences of scenes in “Woyzeck” partly to Woyzeck’s status as a madman. While this point is fairly uncontroversial, the force of demonstrating insanity within the figure Woyzeck is that this recovers the *prima facie* localization of madness in the character Woyzeck, which most scholars identify and Müller-Sievers denies in accordance with his argument (much like the one in the previous paragraph). Müller-Sievers shows that the text of “Woyzeck” is ‘mad’ and therefore argues that it is insufficiently constructed as a text to allow truth-claims about the figure Woyzeck. But just as the problems of orientation and judgment are both rooted in the distinction between concepts and intuitions in Kant, the insanity of the text “Woyzeck” is rooted in madness in general, extending to every level of the text. Reasons for construing Woyzeck as insane are numerous, but this is especially secured by both Büchner’s case-historical references and the portrayal of Woyzeck’s madness even in individual scenes. The above mentioned scene <3,12> demonstrates both of these points powerfully. It presents Woyzeck alone in an open field:

Immer zu! Immer zu! Still Musik. – *Reckt sich gegen d. Bod<en>*. He was, was sagt ihr? Lauter, lauter, stich, stich die Zickwolfin todt? stich, stich die Zickwolfi<n> todt.

Soll ich? muß ich? Hör ich's da auch, sagt's der Wind auch? Hör ich's immer, immer zu, stich, todt, todt<sup>58</sup>

By stretching himself against the ground, Woyzeck is not merely making a dramatic gesture but ascribes the voice he hears to the earth and the wind in all earnestness. As Campe notes, this scene also contains the most quotes from the various accounts of the historical Christian Woyzeck's case history, and is the moment when Büchner clearly ascribes a "*fixe Idee*" to his Woyzeck.<sup>59</sup> As was noted above in reference to "Lenz", the fixed idea was the primary indicator of monomania at the time.<sup>60</sup> The Doctor diagnoses Woyzeck with a fixed idea in scene <2,6> (recurring at <3,8>), and Woyzeck repeatedly manifests madness through other actions like his constant running, pissing on the wall, and generally failing to participate on the same level of conversation as his interlocutors.

Oddly, the Doctor doesn't specify the content of Woyzeck's fixed idea in the aforementioned scene, which brings us back to insanity both in Woyzeck and on the level of the text. Instead of just Woyzeck, the text itself is fixed on the "*immer, immer zu, stich, todt, todt*" expressed by the truly excessive repetition of the theme of cutting in almost every scene throughout the drama, in conjunction with the repetition of the phrase "*immer zu*". This is paradigmatic for "Woyzeck" in the same way that the other citation quoted at the paper's opening is paradigmatic for "Lenz". The ambivalence of madness operates powerfully in this phrase, as it is both borrowed from Clarus's report and modified by

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<sup>58</sup> *SW* 1,214 <3,12>. An earlier version of the scene is at <1,6> "On and on! On and on! Shh! Music! (*Stretches out on the ground.*) Ha – what – what are you saying? Louder, louder ... stab – stab the bitch to death? Stab – stab the bitch to death. Should I? Must I? Do I hear it over there, the wind saying it too? It goes on and on – stab her to death ... to death." (Schmidt 194-195)

<sup>59</sup> Cf. Campe, "Three Modes of Citation..." 2014. *Ibid.* Here pg 54.

<sup>60</sup> Cf. Crighton, *Ibid.* 237

Büchner – the phrase in the report is “*immer drauf, immer drauf*”<sup>61</sup> – therefore representing succinctly the madness of both Woyzeck and “Woyzeck”. On the one hand, in so far as it reflects the historical Woyzeck-case by borrowing “*immer*”, the phrase recalls the madness which is essential to any version of the Woyzeck-case. On the other hand, in so far as Büchner’s “*zu*” is a modification, it expresses the madness Büchner imparts on the form of the text through his convoluted citations and fragmentation. The use of the fixed idea combined with the consciousness of other criminal cases involving madness in the text leaves no doubt that madness saturates “Woyzeck” at every point.

Moving on to the last point in this section, besides bringing together these two disparate approaches through the ambivalence of madness, Müller-Sievers and Campe’s insights can be augmented further through one additional step. Finally, after “Lenz” and “Woyzeck” have pointed the way to madness like Kant’s left and right hands, it now becomes evident that “Woyzeck” is so thoroughly permeated by madness, that it is not only operating within Woyzeck and on the level of the text simultaneously, but it also operates in the remaining space: the area within the text and outside of Woyzeck. The entire world of the drama is insane, at every point it dissolves into ambivalence and shows that the stable perspective on which normal reason is built is not available in the drama. This can be most directly demonstrated through the Doctor and the Captain in the drama, since they occupy a privileged status through the institutions of Medicine and the Military. As a scientist and an officer, both figures should ostensibly be the very rational subjects for whom Kant calls, the persons who can think for themselves. But we have already seen an

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<sup>61</sup> Cf. Campe, “Three Modes of Citation...” Ibid. and Clarus, Ibid. The phrase in Clarus’s report translates ‘do it, do it’.

intimation of the Doctor's failure to meet this standard in the scene at <2,6> and <3,8>. The Doctor compromises himself as doctor when he fails to adequately identify and respond to Woyzeck's condition, although he constantly appeals to Latin names and classifications whenever he speaks. He conducts an experiment on Woyzeck, feeding him nothing but peas for months, but resolves to continue the experiment, disregarding the well-being of his subject (and the potential risk for society) even after he diagnoses Woyzeck with an "*aberratio mentalis partialis*".<sup>62</sup> All the while the Doctor is suppressing an angry excitement, and his repeated assertions of calmness are unsettling rather than confidence-inspiring. The objective gaze of the scientist is not actually available to the Doctor in his passion. Thus the Doctor fails to fulfil his role as both an expert of medicine and science, just as the Captain displays the emptiness of morality and is no more free than Woyzeck.

Woyzeck shaves his Captain at <3,5> , revealing the Captain's broken relationship to normal reason. As a military officer, the Captain is free to give commands which Woyzeck must follow, but in this scene it is clear that he cannot actually think for himself and is no more free than Woyzeck. The captain always asserts that Woyzeck is a good man, but finds it difficult to articulate this further. He says that "*er hat keine Moral!*"<sup>63</sup> When he attempts to open up the content of morality for Woyzeck, he finds that it is only an empty tautology for him: "*Moral das ist wenn man moralisch ist*".<sup>64</sup> The Captain is only capable of understanding morality via authority and appeals to his pastor to substantiate his judgment of Woyzeck's character. But appeal to authority is valueless in normal, scientific reason, and so the Captain is almost as disoriented as Woyzeck. This is evident, for

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<sup>62</sup> SW 1,210.

<sup>63</sup> SW 1,206-207. "you have no morality!" (Schmidt 187)

<sup>64</sup> SW 1,206. "Morality-that's when you're moral" (Schmidt 186)

example, when the Doctor utterly fails to understand Woyzeck just at the moment when Woyzeck bypasses institutional authority and quotes the gospels in <3,5> . This is perhaps a different kind of authority, but the Captain fails to grasp the scriptures on his own, without the guidance of his pastor.

The Doctor and the Captain don't express a clinical mental illness with the same remarkable clinical consistency as Woyzeck, but they do demonstrate the extent to which the entirety of the drama falls outside the standards of normal reason. Neither live up to the standard of rational subjectivity according to Kant, as everything else in the drama resists assimilation to the order of normal reason. The drama dissolves into ambivalence at every point, and nothing is certain but this: madness lies at the heart of "Woyzeck" even as "Woyzeck" approaches the heart of modernity.

### **Conclusion**

Throughout this paper I have demonstrated the fundamental nature of madness in "Lenz" and "Woyzeck", and how Büchner's fragments engage with a complex web of problems through their expression of insanity. Both pieces are 'based on a true story' and therefore challenge notions of reality, and yet both are deeply disoriented as texts, falling outside normal generic standards in their stories about abnormal persons. They thematize the problem of making a judgment about the extent to which each text fits the rule (through both borrowed and original story elements), and the problem of orientation (through their destabilization of plot and narrative). At the same time, using Kant as theoretical background I have been able to juxtapose two leading but apparently apposed methods of reading Büchner's fragments and place them in productive conversation.

This sets up “Lenz” and “Woyzeck” neatly as incongruent counterparts like left and right hands, but this analogy perhaps doesn’t go much beyond the obvious similarity between the two fragments. Also, there are a number of ironies in this paper which have not escaped my notice and bear mentioning. First, this paper has proceeded largely by way of examples, while at the same time, examples are called into question by Kant and casuistry. Secondly, the elaboration of the ambivalence of madness uses a model in Kant, and therefore, in some sense, a model rooted in the strictest reason. And finally, I have identified a notion of madness in “Lenz” and “Woyzeck” that is essentiality outside the grasp of rationality, in a project which by its very nature is ordered towards understanding its object through reason. Perhaps, then, this method of reading Büchner’s fragments both attempts too much and too little. However, it does seem fitting that such a project would likewise conform to the object of its discourse and itself be a little mad.

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