Autopsie von Revolution und Restauration. Georg Büchner und die politische Imagination by Patrick Fortmann, and: *Dichter der Immanenz. Vier Studien zu Georg Büchner* by Ariane Martin und Bodo Morawe (review)

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Readings provides an excellent introduction to the issue, and it offers at least preliminary answers to questions whose relevance extends far beyond the nineteenth-century texts that it uses to map the controversy.

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Autopsie von Revolution und Restauration. Georg Büchner und die politische Imagination.
Von Patrick Fortmann. Freiburg: Rombach, 2013. 354 Seiten. €54.00.

Dichter der Immanenz. Vier Studien zu Georg Büchner.
Von Ariane Martin und Bodo Morawe. Bielefeld: Aisthesis, 2013. 184 Seiten. €28.00.

Can there have been since antiquity so enormous an inverted pyramid of commentary and interpretation balanced on so small an œuvre and so brief a writing career as that of Georg Büchner? I no longer attempt to stay abreast of it, so that I can only open a window on two of the newest contributions to the profusion. Patrick Fortmann's 350-page monograph is an expansion of one chapter (!) of his Harvard dissertation; moreover, it deals only with *Der hessische Landbote*, *Leonce und Lena*, and *Dantons Tod*. It begins in traditional dissertation manner by securing a theoretical foundation, the dichotomy of the French theorist Jacques Rancière, derived in turn from Foucault, between the "police," a metonomy for the oppressive status quo maintained by traditional European governments, and "politics," the resistance to this order and the erasure of its boundaries. This is too abstruse for me to comment on; although Fortmann returns to it at the end, I think the study could have stood as well without it. For Fortmann, perhaps unusually today, engages in a microscopic explication of practically every word and phrase, every implication, every allusion to historical and current events, and to the thought and writings of many others. In regard to the latter, one might wonder whether the harried and speed-writing Büchner could have read and retained such a volume of material, but Fortmann is concerned with him in his larger context. As for the virtually Talmudic assignment of meaning to minutiae of the text, suggesting that Büchner himself has become a sacred text, one might think that it would put a good deal of pressure on intentionality if Fortmann cared anything about it, but the person Büchner is hardly present here except as the *homo faber* of intricate texts.

Fortmann leaves aside some of the conventional issues that have worried interpreters, such as whether Büchner tends more to Danton or more to Robespierre, or the editing of the *Landbote* by Pastor Weidig. He describes this problem in detail but by highlighting the radicality of the text he makes Weidig's revisions less important. He interprets the pamphlet as a unity, including its religious dimension. For all we know, Büchner may have been responsible for some of the biting accusations of the oppressors' violations of the Gospel, what Fortmann calls the "Depastoralisierung der Obrigkeit" (82), in order to reach the horizon of his targeted readership. The revolution, never mentioned, proceeds from "einer eschatalogischen Geschichtskonstruktion" (109). Fortmann considers Büchner in all his intellectual range and takes special note of his scientific and medical studies. The metaphor of the autopsy, which Gutz-

kow introduced in his response to *Dantons Tod*, calls to mind the anatomical theater, which reveals hidden and unpleasant things to the eye, as Büchner does in his decidedly non-Romantic and non-Classical exhibits of salaciousness, meanness, suffering, and pauperization. Fortmann stresses that *Dantons Tod* is full of opened and torn bodies, chopped-up and heaped-up corpses. He treats Büchner less as an activist than as a revealer of unpleasant truths of a world that is in no way harmonious or unitarily interpretable. Thus he is much concerned with difference, of aesthetics and politics, commonality and separation, and juxtaposed oppositions such as that of Danton and Robespierre.

The meticulous detail of Fortmann's explications can only be summarized here. In the *Landbote* he concentrates on, among other things, the disunity of the community, the demystification of the sovereign, the suffering of the common people, and the eschatology and work of the revolution. He sees the *Landbote* as accompanied by skepticism as to its efficacy; the people are potentially revolutionary but apathetic. *Leonce and Lena* is another case, in a wanly comic mode, of the demystification of the sovereign. It exposes sovereignty itself as a façade. Fortmann, incidentally, rejects the attractive notion that the play satirically predicts the succession of the "Romantic" Friedrich Wilhelm IV to the stuffy Friedrich Wilhelm III, identifying it instead with the ostentatious and falsely popular marriage of the Hereditary Grand Duke of Hesse-Darmstadt with a Bavarian princess in 1834. Fortmann shows the identification of the rituals of the court with the fictions of the theater and recognizes that the parody of a happy ending has no genuine utopian aspect.

Fortmann regards *Dantons Tod*, to which half of his book is devoted, as an effort (in the wake of the histories of François Mignet and especially Adolphe Thiers, to which, as is well known, Büchner owed much) to revive the memory of the French Revolution in the present and thus to release the political imagination from the chains of the existing order. Fortmann says that Mignet and Thiers did not judge the Revolution, only described it, and argues that Büchner reproduces the contradictory judgments he found in his sources. He speaks of Büchner's "teils emphatische, teils resignative Teilhabe an den komplexen und sich überlagernden Vorgängen" (17); Büchner adds a psychological complexity to Robespierre that is not in the sources, although there is no indication whether Robespierre's misgivings cast doubt on his program. A section is devoted to the shadow of the guillotine hovering over the whole work; it, too, is a surgical device. Another section treats the object of autopsy, the body, dealing with topics as various as Danton's imposingly heroic physical appearance; the "blood-Messiah" Robespierre; the bulk of the people; feminism, gender, and the eroticism of the "body politic"; and the bodily organism of the political constitution. A particularly acute observation about the competition of the starving people for food points out that the guillotining of overeaters like Danton is expected to increase the food supply. With regard to the erotic, Fortmann comments that the drama is permeated by Heine's doctrine of sensualism, though he pays less attention than one might expect to Camille Desmoulin's apparent paraphrase in I, 1 of a passage in the just-published French version of Heine's *Religion und Philosophie*. As usual, there is no indication of whether Büchner explicitly identifies himself with this doctrine or not.

With all its density, Fortmann's book can be recommended for thoughtful consideration by anyone preparing to teach Büchner. With Ariane Martin's and Bodo

Morawe's essays we come from Fortmann's suspending of what Büchner held in suspension to a more rigid representation and the ascription to him of a more sharply defined program founded "im Sinne der radikalen Aufklärung auf den 'Fels des Atheismus'" and "das babouvistisch aufgeladene Programm der sozialen Revolution." In this introduction, signed by both authors but, I suspect, largely written by Morawe, we are promised no "postmoderne[] Beliebigkeit," no "theologische[] Deutungsversuche," and no "mehr verschüttenden als erhellenden Positivismus," but a materialist perspective "die allem Idealismus ins Gesicht schlägt" (8–9).

Ariane Martin, who edited Büchner's works for Reclam and co-edited a volume, *Georg Büchner und das 19. Jahrhundert*, for Aisthesis (ed. note: see review in *Monatshefte* 106.3, Fall 2014, 511–514), both in 2012, has supplied the first and third papers, Bodo Morawe the second and fourth. In the first paper, Martin treats the relationship of sex and death, taking as her text the jibe of a woman of the people to Danton as he is being driven to the guillotine, "He Danton, du kannst jezt mit den Würmern Unzucht treiben" (IV, 7), which is disrespectful not only to the elitist hedonist but also to literary conventions of propriety. Martin spends some time with the uneasiness editors had with this line and bowdlerizations of Büchner's text. She comments on the frequent references to worms by the prisoners and particularly on a pun in IV, 5 on the French word "vers," which means both "verse" and "worms." The combination of death, hunger, and sexuality is the materialist perspective from below. In the third paper, Martin discusses the scraps of folk songs, mostly of two or four lines, as expressions of the social question, which here as always means the impoverished condition of the common people. The sources to which she refers have been worked out by others, but she seems to have made a discovery of her own: the apparently unconnected stanzas of the song of Louise/Margreth in *Woyzeck* H 2, 2 / H 4, 2 have been believed to have come from separate sources, but Martin has found them together in a song in a collection of 1855, which Büchner possibly noted in his own, lost collection of folk songs. Martin makes much of the claimed relationship of *Dantons Tod* to *Hamlet* and of Lucile as the drama's Ophelia. It is no doubt true that these songs express the feelings and distress of the common people, but it is not as certain as Martin thinks that Büchner fully associates himself with their tone and attitudes.

Morawe in the second paper discusses Büchner's hybrid poetics, that is, the conflation of past and present in *Dantons Tod*. The revolution is a continuing process and remains the same. Morawe complains that scholars have ignored a French debate about Danton in 1832/33, which involved an imprisoned republican, and insists that Robespierre expresses Büchner's own views on permanent revolution; *Dantons Tod* is a "jakobinische[r] Palimpsest" (38). One cannot interpret the drama by reference to the historical figures; it is an example of hybridity that Danton is made sympathetic and Robespierre the "Schreckensmann" (42), while Büchner is on the side of the "Schreckensmann." The fourth paper examines Büchner's "autopsy" (the word occurs here also) of Spinoza, especially the detailed notes made for Büchner's projected lectures on philosophy. Morawe takes Spinoza's philosophy to be strictly atheistic, which I do not believe is the consensus of Spinoza experts. Taking his cue from an essay of Leo Strauss, Morawe suggests that the theological aspect of Spinoza's philosophy was just a mask to protect himself from persecution and he did not mean it. Büchner is here identified with the radical atheism expressed by Thomas Payne in

Dantons Tod III, 1. It is perhaps another example of hybridity that the Spinozan elements are assigned to the Dantonists.

In the past I have regarded Morawe, a radio and television journalist and freelance writer, as an ideologue located outside the discipline of literary scholarship. He has been a plague in the discourse about Heine with an insistence—against all evidence, Heine's denials, and the structure of his thought—that he was a republican, which means, in Morawe's usage, a Jacobin adherent. He disposes of any utterance that does not suit him by declaring it ironic and meaning its opposite, a device that violates any sense of philological integrity. Here Morawe repeats this move by declaring Büchner's disparagement of philosophy to be ironic and mean its opposite, as well as more generally in his rewriting of Spinoza. In this volume there is an advertisement for a book of Morawe's apparently arguing that St. Just's speech to the Convent in *Dantons Tod* II, 7 expresses Büchner's most fundamental views. If this were true, he would be a reprehensible writer, not the model for emancipation and the relief of suffering he has been taken to be. The speech of St. Just, who is shown in III, 6 suppressing the testimony of the Dantonists in order to be sure of condemnation by the tribunal, is fascist and homicidal. It could be the model for a declaration of an ISIS jihadist. Still, Morawe's analysis of Büchner's life-long Spinoza studies, with all its distortions, is learned and probing, and will need to be considered in any further examination of this matter, which is inevitable, for, as Martin and Morawe exclaim at the end of their introduction, "Büchner und kein Ende!" (13).

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Geschichte der deutschen Literatur Band 4. Vormärz und Realismus.
Von Gottfried Willems. Köln: Böhlau-UTB, 2014. 392 Seiten. €19,99.

This is the fourth in a series of five volumes on the history of German literature up to modernism, and it provides a worthwhile introduction to the literature of the nineteenth century. The volume is well suited for graduate students or advanced undergraduates seeking initial orientation to the period, and it likewise is useful for scholars getting to know the field for the first time or seeking a refresher for teaching purposes. Under examination is the time period 1830–1890, and the author seeks to offer a larger cultural history of the nineteenth century through the lens of literary history. This fusing of *Kulturgeschichte* and *Literaturgeschichte* is an ambitious and valuable undertaking, even if Willem's volume does not always deliver. Willem's cultural-historical model relies on something of an anthropological approach that links the experience of modernization—secularization, industrialization, individualization—to experiments with literary form. The volume's revisiting of questions of periodization that have long irritated nineteenth-century literary history (*Biedermeier* vs. *Vormärz*? early vs. late realism? the "long" or the "short" nineteenth century?) is useful for introductory purposes, though the author ends up opting for a relatively standard solution to the periodization dilemma, straddling historical/political categories (Napoleonic-era nationalism, *Vormärz*, and *Gründerzeit*) and literary-aesthetic ones (post-*Goethezeit* and Realism).

The volume unfolds via what the author calls "exemplary studies," extended discussions of single works via multiple longer pull-quotes. The focus on specific