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Research Article

Woyzeck is Back!: A Comparative Reading of Traumatised Soldiers in Georg Büchner's *Woyzeck* and Anthony Neilson's *Penetrator*

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ABSTRACT

Following its official recognition by the American Psychiatric Association in 1980, posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) has paved the way for modern trauma studies. Since the diagnosis was primarily framed around war-related experiences of veteran soldiers, PTSD subsequently dominated literary war narratives in portraying soldiers' lives in the trenches and life post-discharge. Long before it was diagnosed and entered the literature, German playwright Georg Büchner delineated a character who embodied PTSD in his masterpiece *Woyzeck* (1913). Although the character had long been impeached for madness in literary circles due to his bizarre behaviours, this paper argues that Woyzeck, the protagonist who is constantly abused, is actually a victim of PTSD. Indeed, 157 years after *Woyzeck*, British playwright Anthony Neilson introduced another deranged soldier who can similarly be surmised as a victim of PTSD in his play *Penetrator* (1993). Building on this common ground, the present study aims to offer a comparative analysis of these two traumatised soldiers by drawing on the symptoms of PTSD resulting not from war but from ill-treatment in the army. By reflecting on these plays, the study comments on the deleterious effects of army life on soldiers, and how, as victims of different forms of violence, these soldiers become perpetrators of violence themselves.

Keywords: PTSD, *Woyzeck*, *Penetrator*, trauma, soldier

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Introduction: Legacy of Army Life and PTSD in Theatre

The men came back
As little clay jars
Full of sharp cinders, war is a pawnbroker – not of your treasures
But of the lives of your men. Not of gold but of corpses.
Give your men to the war of God and you get ashes.
Aeschylus, *Oresteia* (1999, p. 24)

War has haunted dramatic texts for more than two thousand years. Harbouring the roots of theatre, ancient tragedies, mostly informed by the heroic idealism and sacrifices that war imposed on men, not only celebrated war but also lamented it and delineated its gruesome realities drawing their inspiration mainly from Homer and his war-glorifying epics. From comic poets to tragic ones, Greek dramatists portrayed the aftermath of wars and particularly their destructive effects on those who fought them, as the chorus lamentably suggests in the above quote from Aeschylus' *Oresteia*. Among others, Aeschylus' *The Persians* and *Seven against Thebes*, Sophocles' *Philoctetes* and *Ajax*, and Euripides' *Children of Heracles* also bring up war and the dire experiences of soldiers.

Vindicating Greek masters, the legacy of wars and soldiers has dominated Western dramatic history through either patriotic furores idealising war or agitprop plays criticising its gruesome nature. Becoming a quintessential site for the discussion of social and political conflicts, Western stages were exceptionally seething with representations of soldier experiences following the two World Wars. During the time of the First World War, one of the most common themes on British and German stages was soldiers deployed to the war zones and their heroism as the trope of the soldier as a warrior hero was the dominant paradigm. Lechmere Worrall and J. E. Harold Terry's *The Man Who Stayed at Home* (1914) and Bertrand Davis' *A Call to Arms* (1914) were highly patriotic propaganda plays encouraging enlistment, praising gallantry and celebrating sacrifice in England. "Conventional dramas expressing opposition to the war, however, generally did not get past the censor or the theatre producers" (Luckhurst, 2006, p. 304). However, despite the lack of anti-war dramas, the adverse effects of war were everywhere. There was a considerable number of homecoming soldiers on both sides who suffered from long-lasting psychological effects due to their experiences in the trenches. As a result of the unprecedented extent of these cases and rising public discontent regarding this issue, after the First World War, the imperial discourse of heroism and manliness were subverted and the depiction of war in art changed dramatically. Later, some anti-war propaganda plays appeared on both the English and German stages. As a good example of an anti-war play in England, R. C. Sheriff's *Journey's End* (1928) dramatised the folly of honour and the real cost of war in the trenches through the exploration of a mentally disintegrating soldier. Suffering dire consequences from the Great War, the Weimar Republic witnessed the staging of plays calling the purpose of the war into question. A former militarist whose experiences in the army triggered a mental breakdown, Ernst Toller's *Die Wandlung* (Transfiguration, 1919) along with a stage adaptation of Jaroslaw Hašek's *Osudy Dobrého Vojáka Švejka za Světové Války* (The Good Soldier Švejk, 1928) by Erwin Piscator, laid bare the absurdity of war and its destructive effects on soldiers. Even though German theatre was tremendously Nazified as of 1933 and post-war dramatists were expected to follow this trend (Bentley, 1944, p. 328), opposing voices incited a radical transformation. Bertolt Brecht, for example, penned *Mutter Courage und ihre Kinder* (Mother Courage and Her Children, 1939) and *Schweyk im Zweiten Weltkrieg* (Schweik in the Second World War, 1943) as a sequel to Hašek's work when Brecht was in exile from Nazi Germany (first in Scandinavia and then in the United States).

PTSD

Soldiers who suffered from mental breakdowns after the Great War were long accused of being cowardly, malingering, or possessing hereditary taints (Showalter, 1987, p. 170) even though mental breakdowns were some of the most common psychological cases at the time and were responsible for 40% of British war casualties during the Great War (Herman, 1997, p. 20). Considered "moral invalids" (Showalter, 1987, p. 170), "some military authorities maintained that these men did not deserve to be patients at all, that they should be court-martialled or dishonourably discharged rather than given medical treatment" (Herman, 1997, p. 21). Due to that public and official opinion, these cases remained hidden and were either omitted or condemned in both public and literary works. Nonetheless, physical and psychological problems among British soldiers had become prevalent as early as the winter of 1914. In response to this, British medical officer Charles Myers identified certain psychological cues and attributed the symptoms to the effects of exploding shells and intensive bombardments, naming the disorder "shell shock" (Myers, 1940, p. 26) which was variably named 'soldier's heart', 'war neurosis' and 'battle fatigue'. However, it was gradually realised that even soldiers who were not exposed to any kind of physical trauma also succumbed to the symptoms; therefore, shell shock was eventually acknowledged to be

a result of psychological trauma. During and after the Second World War, shell shock once again came to the limelight as the symptoms were observed in both soldiers and Holocaust survivors alike. After this, however, it was not until the soldiers returning from the Vietnam War showed the same severe symptoms that developed into chronic problems that shellshock was pushed into the public consciousness again. Upon returning home, a great number of veterans started to abuse drugs and alcohol and behave aggressively: in stark contrast to the outward illusion of heroism, it became clear that the soldiers were collapsing psychologically[1].

In the political climate of the 1970s, anti-war veterans raised their voices about the severe emotional consequences of their catastrophic experiences and started to create 'rap groups' to share and discuss their war experiences. Their main aim was to draw public attention to the serious psychological injuries caused by war. These tactics and discussionss yielded results and for the first time, PTSD appeared as a diagnosis in the third edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM III)* in 1980. Noting its "essential feature" to be "the development of characteristic symptoms following a psychologically traumatic event that is generally outside the range of usual human experience" (APA, 1980, p. 236), the definition stated the following

> PTSD can arise as a result of a trauma which may be experienced alone (rape or assault) or in the company of groups of people (military combat). Stressors producing this disorder include natural disasters (floods, earthquakes), accidental man-made disasters (car accidents with serious physical injury, airplane crashes, large fires), or deliberate man-made disasters (bombing, torture, death camps). [. . .] The disorder is apparently more severe and longer lasting when the stressor is of human design. (APA, 1980, p. 236)

Even though the definition underlined the direct experience of an event that involves a threat to a person's physical and psychological integrity, in the revised edition of *DSM III* (1987), the diagnostic criteria were significantly expanded to focus on the traumatic stressors rather than a direct personal experience. According to the revised definition, "in some cases, the trauma may be learning about a serious threat or harm to a close friend or relative, e.g., that one's child has been kidnapped, tortured, or killed." (APA, 1987, p. 248). This way, PTSD was not limited to one's direct experience of an extreme event anymore but included witnessing or learning other people's traumatic experiences.

In the most recent yet controversial edition of *DSM, DSM V*, PTSD has been removed from the "Anxiety Disorders" and moved to "Trauma- and Stressor-Related Disorders". Even though the definition has varied across the editions of *DSM*, in the fifth edition it has not changed substantially and has been defined once again as exposure to actual or threatened death, serious injury, or sexual violence in one (or more) of the following ways:

1. Directly experiencing the traumatic event(s).
2. Witnessing, in person, the event(s) as it occurred to others.
3. Learning that the traumatic event(s) occurred to a close family member or close friend. In cases of actual or threatened death of a family member or friend, the event(s) must have been violent or accidental.
4. Experiencing repeated or extreme exposure to aversive details of the traumatic event(s) (e.g., first responders collecting human remains: police officers repeatedly exposed to details of child abuse. (2013, p. 271)

In addition to the above diagnostic criteria, existent three core symptom clusters namely intrusive memories, avoidance, and hyperarousal remained the same, and a fourth one "negative alterations in cognitions and mood" (2013, p. 271) was added.

Even though PTSD has long been associated with victims of war, physical accidents, violence, and bodily abuse, it has been revealed that people subjected to emotional abuse can also develop symptoms of PTSD. A recent study suggests that "The exposure to disturbing experiences, unpredictable work routine and lack of professional emotional support, often leads to increased emotional stress" (Agius & Grech, 2022, p. 2) which, in time, evolves into PTSD. Not limited to war-induced traumas, a military environment based strongly on a hegemonic masculine hierarchy accommodates different forms of legitimised emotional violence and precipitates cases of PTSD. Setting such an example, Georg Büchner in his masterpiece *Woyzeck* portrays a simple soldier who does not have any war experience yet turns into an epitome of PTSD due to the treatments he gets from his superiors. Anthony Neilson's *Penetrator* (1993), creates a soldier figure who, likewise, shows oft-discussed symptoms of PTSD. Even though Neilson's soldier has first-hand war experience, he stands out as a victim of the military environment rather than war. Embodying the trauma of military oppression, these two soldiers themselves inflict violence on others later. From these points forth, the present study intends to examine these characters as victims of PTSD arising from emotional and physical abuse whilst commenting on the never-changing nature of army life as well as the cycle of violence turning victims of trauma into perpetrators.

[1] For a detailed genealogy of war neuroses and PTSD, please see Aygan, 2018, pp. 13-20.

Woyzecks of a Vicious Circle: Traumatised Soldiers in Büchner's *Woyzeck* and Anthony Neilson's *Penetrator*

Inspired by a notorious murder case,[2] Georg Büchner wrote *Woyzeck* between 1836 and 1837, in the very last months of his life. Even though he died before completing it, the play has posthumously become the most acclaimed work of the playwright following its first production in 1913. Ahead of its time, *Woyzeck* is pretty innovative and avant-gardist as it foreshadows many literary and artistic traditions. Considered the precursor of modernism, the play has a splintered structure, each scene, presenting intense stark portrayals from the antihero's life, is a world in itself. Throughout these scenes, Büchner sketches the title character's gradual descent into a feral frenzy culminating in murder due to his unpleasant experiences in the army and being the victim of his low life.

Anthony Neilson's earliest in-yer-face attempt *Penetrator* takes on similar themes to Büchner's work. "Loosely based on a real-life event" (Neilson, 1998, p. 118), Neilson's Woyzeck is an AWOL, named Tadge, who was formerly serving as a squaddie in the 1991 Gulf War[3]. Even though there is no clear or reliable information about Tadge's military service in the course of the play, from his erratic behaviours and inconsistent statements, it can be deduced that he had rather unpleasant experiences and has probably been discharged from the army. Either discharged or escaped from the service, Tadge disquiets his old friends Alan and Max's steady life with his unexpected visit and following psychotic acts.

Even though Neilson and Büchner's works are separated by one and a half centuries, both plays employ army life and associated male violence as central themes and both revolve around an erratic soldier from a lower class. No matter how abnormal and dangerous they seem, and they become perpetrators in the play, in actuality the characters themselves are the victims suffering from serious PTSD. Their victimisations can be read hidden between the lines of social criticisms incorporated in the texts. As a matter of fact, Büchner and Neilson are not political playrights per se, yet socio-political resonances reflecting on their eras stand out in their works. It is these socio-political undercurrents that help the audience recognise the characters' victimisation. A "good for nothing" (Büchner, 2003, p. 10) lower class anti-hero Woyzeck, to start with, is a military barber. In order to support his common-law wife Marie and their illegitimate child, he fulfills extra tasks given by his commander, the Captain, and offers his body as a subject for the callous Doctor's experiments which include studying peas-only diet on Woyzeck's physical and psychological health. *Penetrator*'s Tadge, however, "is the only 'real' victim, or hostage, of war" (Newberry, 2020, p. 61),"*totally brainwashed*!" and "learning to kill people" (Neilson, 1998, p. 81, emphases in original) as he imbued himself body and soul to the army. Hence, used and abused to their bones, what is left of these figures is two precarious bodies embodying symptoms of trauma.

In *Woyzeck*, while intense work pressure meshed with an unhealthy diet deteriorates the titular character's body, on the one hand, Captain's psychological abuses break his mind and soul, on the other. At the very opening scene of the play[4], Woyzeck's social stratum and correspondingly the treatment he gets start to be unveiled through a dialogue between him and the Captain:

> CAPTAIN. [. . .] Woyzeck, you're a good chap but, [*solemnly*] Woyzeck, you've got no sense of decency. Decency is when a chap acts decently, do you follow? [. . .]
> WOYZECK. When you're poor like us, sir . . . It's the money, the money! If you haven't got the money . . . I mean you can't bring the likes of us into the world of decency. We're flesh and blood too. Our kind doesn't get a chance in this world or the next. If we go to heaven they'll put us to work on the thunder. (Büchner, 1998, p. 108)

These very first remarks of Woyzeck inform the audience about his class and motives and manifest Captain's superiority over him. This superiority is determined in relation to how 'the inferior' is defined (Şentürk & Şentürk, 2021, p. 104). He is fully aware of his inferiority and the fact that he is stifled by his own life. As he puts himself, even after he dies and goes to heaven he will be working because life does not offer him self-esteem, appreciation, escape, or any other choice. This awareness of his fate and the injustice everywhere render Woyzeck's situation pretty pathetic. This is aggravated by the Captain's abusive treatment which permeates the whole text as he finds the liberty of humiliating Woyzeck thanks to the hierarchical structure in the society and the army.

The rest of the play, likewise, discloses Woyzeck's low life, struggles, and dehumanising experiences he is coerced

[2] In 1821, a 31 year-old ex-soldier, and allegedly simple-minded barber, Johann Christian Woyzeck stabbed his former mistress, 46 year-old Johanna Woost, to death in seven places for consorting with other soldiers. Despite numerous hallucinations and his unstable behaviours, Dr. Hofrat Claus declared that Woyzeck is fully capable of reasoning and mentally competent to stand trial. Having been found guilty of his crime, Woyzeck was executed publicly by decapitation. After becoming a medical researcher and lecturer, Büchner developed a special interest in the case and wrote *Woyzeck* with inspiration from Johann Christian Woyzeck.

[3] Reinforcing the ubiquity and anonymity of war, Neilson, in the "Notes" of the play, states: "This play was written not long after the Gulf War. This element is not as important as it might appear, mainly lending some topicality. You could choose to keep it as it is and treat the play as period, or you could substitute another item of topical news, preferably a similar conflict" (Neilson, p. 118).

[4] As there is no putative fair copy of the play by Büchner himself and no evidence bearing on the order of twenty-seven scenes, it is not possible to know the precise order in the play. For this paper, I have used the version that appeared in Oxford World Classics, *Danton's Death, Leonce and Lena, Woyzeck* (1998). For a detailed study of attempts to determine the sequence of the scenes, see Knight, 1974.

to endure. Through an encounter with the Doctor, his social status and accordingly the treatment he gets fall into place, once again.

> DOCTOR. I saw you, Woyzeck. Pissing in the street. Pissing up against the wall, like a dog. And me giving you threepence a day, plus board! That's bad of you, Woyzeck.
> [. . .]
> DOCTOR. Have you eaten your peas, Woyzeck? Nothing but peas, *cruciferae*, remember. There's going to be a revolution in science, I'll blow the whole thing sky-high. Uric acid 0.10, ammonium hydro-chlorate, hyperoxide.—Woyzeck, can't you have another piss? Go inside and try. (p. 115, emphasis in original)

The doctor does not hesitate to rebuke and liken Woyzeck to a dog for breaking his word to him. Besides, he treats him like a guinea pig and as if he owns Woyzeck just because he pays him for the experiments. Even though Woyzeck tries to defend himself as best he can, this causes the Doctor to despise Woyzeck further. This interaction proves the range of gaps and injustice between people and how people of status use their authority over their inferiors in an inhuman and cruel way. Likewise, these poignant encounters elucidate, as Schechner succinctly remarks, that "Woyzeck is denied full humanity by the captain and the doctor. The struggle in Woyzeck is not simply between classes, but between species. It is an absolute struggle, signaled by the absolute gap between Woyzeck and those above him" (Schechner, 1969, p. 16). It is this sheer gap and unremitting struggle that determine Woyzeck's existence and actions. Thus, these eerie and humiliating dialogues instantiate injustices and their reflections in society, in the person of Woyzeck, epitomising a "biting social satire" (Martin, 2022).

Two contrasting worlds and realities represented by Captain/Doctor and Woyzeck are mirrored in Neilson's *Penetrator* with stark contrasts between Tadge and his old friends, as well as Tadge and his superiors in the army. While Tadge joins the army and experiences war first-hand, Alan and Max continue their lives talking about shopping, laundry, and TV shows. For the latter two, the ongoing reality of war is only comprised of images that are mediated through TV.

> **Alan** What about Baghdad? Any more raids?
> **Max** (*off*) Nah. Bunch of poofs.
> **Max** [. . .] If they'd just start bombing again, we could have some *decent* telly.
> **Alan** You sick bastard.
> **Max** You'd prefer another (*Mock French*) 'Alain Delon' movie?
> **Alan** True enough. (Neilson, 1998, pp. 66-67, emphasis in original)

As the dialogue substantiates, such a gruesome phenomenon as war does not mean much for those who are not exposed to it. Max and Alan treat warfare as a petty and ordinary case and boil its results down to shooting new movies because, new wars, and sufferings attributable to them, only spell the production of high-budget, quality movies for the two who essentially represent the best part of society. People, either soldiers fighting the war or civilians suffering from it, mean nothing but statistics and materials for the movies to be shot. Even though Alan and Max do not abuse or humiliate Tadge openly as Captain and Doctor do in *Woyzeck*, their callousness, and lack of support manifest the loneliness and destitution of Tadge that aggravate his current plight. Hence, Tadge and Woyzeck "spen[d] their entire lives coping in a brutalizing society that treats the human being as so much 'dust, sand, and dirt'" (Rugen, pp. 75-76), and it is the same society and the same indifference that lead to their predicaments.

Alongside a social commentary, these two sets of groups and the oppressive and abusive relationships between them become the very reason for the main characters' traumatic cases. In *Woyzeck*, as the play progresses, whilst the main character's portrayal and nature are unfolded, his eccentricity comes into sight. In a scene with his fellow soldier, Andres, Woyzeck rambles about Freemasons, who stir up mysterious phenomena and haunt his entire life perpetually.

> WOYZECK. It's true, Andres. There is a curse on this place. Do you see that light patch on the grass over there? Where the toadstools are. That's where this head comes rolling down every night. Somebody picked it up once, thought it was a hedgehog. Three days and three nights later he was in his coffin. [*Whispering*] It was the Freemasons, Andres. Straight it was. (p. 108)

Woyzeck claims seeing a bodiless head rolling down which even caused someone's death for unknowingly touching it. Later, in the following scene, he repeats the same paranoid gibberish to his mistress Marie, saying "[*mysteriously*] It happened again Marie. Lots of things. [. . .] It followed me right to the edge of the town. Something we can't understand, something that drives us mad. What will come of it?" (p. 111). This time, he further claims that Freemasons are after him and walks away leaving Marie to concur "The man's seeing things. Didn't even look at his own child. Thinking's driving him crazy" (p. 111). As a matter of fact, thinking really drives Woyzeck to the brink of madness and more,

though Marie cannot foresee and imagine the real extent of it. It is because the massive workload, maltreatment, and malnourishment he has to abide cause him to overthink which subsequently brings about unusual behaviours.

The scene with the Doctor when Woyzeck tries to talk about his delusions also serves as another manifestation of his pathetic situation and it actually is a plea for help. He appeals to the Doctor saying "Doctor, have you ever seen nature double? When the sun is at noon and it's like the whole world was going up in flames? That's when a terrible voice spoke to me" (p. 116). These signs along with his erratic behaviours denote Woyzeck's upcoming psychological destruction, yet he cannot find anyone to hear or offer a lifeline and once again his call for help goes unheard. Doctor only finds him a more "interesting case" (p. 116) now due to the symptoms he shows and announces that Woyzeck will get a raise for that.

Woyzeck suffers from a trauma that causes him to feel constantly chased and to be taken down attesting to a symptom of negative changes in thinking and mood in PTSD. It can be argued that this fear is a result of the constant abuse he is exposed to and the Freemasons are shadows of his real-life abusers as the play provides enough validation. Just like the Captain and the Doctor, who persistently pick on and harass him, Freemasons, allegedly, chase to capture him. Beyond any doubt, haunted by the idea of imminent attack all the time, Woyzeck's deranged psyche makes up the Freemasons and he is doomed to live with this delusion.

A very similar fabricated surreal story appears in *Penetrator* after Tadge, uninvitedly, appears at Max and Alan's door and asks to stay over for a few nights. After a short conversation, out of the blue, he starts talking about a dark group and their ill-treatment against him in the army.

Max Are you feeling all right?
A long pause
Tadge I'm in trouble, man. They've been following me.
Max (*pause*) Who has?
Tadge (*pause*) The Penetrators. (p. 84)

A striking resemblance between Woyzeck and Tadge's stories is distinctly visible. While Woyzeck mentions a group called the Freemasons, Tadge talks about a clandestine military group named the Penetrators. Both groups, mysterious and dangerous, chase and harass two men, according to their claim. Unlike Woyzeck, Tadge claims to be captured and molested by the Penetrators. These fantastic stories of the two are delusions closely attesting to psychosis developed in the victims of PTSD (Hamner, 2011). As trauma theory claims, trauma that resists articulation manifests itself in psychotic symptoms attesting to the expression of the inexpressible. The psychosis involves losing connection with reality, leading to symptoms such as delusions, hallucinations, and incoherent behaviour (Tull, 2023). Having lost their connection with reality, both Tadge and Woyzeck manifest these symptoms, which affect the very reality of their lives, all through the plays. Trauma, enveloped by the abuses they have been exposed to, is compulsively repeated in the form of hallucinations about some secret groups. Fear and anxiety arising from these hallucinations worsen their condition and deepen their trauma.

Meeting on common ground as members of the army, their erratic behaviours and delusions are directly connected to army life. *Penetrator* does not include any ostensible interaction or instance of abuse throughout the time of the play. Nonetheless, it discloses the existence of a similar persistent harassment during his service that engenders alike delusions. Corroborating that, after realising Tadge's strange behaviours, Alan reflects on the prevailing propensities in the army as a cause for Tadge's plight.

Max [. . .] He's acting really strange.
Alan (*whispers loudly*) What do you expect? He is a fucking *squaddie*!
Max He's Tadge before that.
Alan That's where you're wrong. You didn't see him the last time he was through! He's been totally *brainwashed*! He's been out there learning to kill people! [. . .] As far as *I*'m concerned, when you *join* the *Army* you *forfeit* your right to be treated as a human being! (p. 81, emphases in original)

In addition to the inhumane treatments Tadge is supposed to have had, he was subjected to physical abuse and sexual molestation since he makes frequent violent references to anal rape.

Max What the fuck they *do*, these . . . terminators or whatever? [. . .]
Tadge They penetrate. [. . .] They stick up things up you. (*Pause*). Up your arse.
Max Up your arse?
Tadge They stick up things up you. All sort of things. I found about them and they kept me in this . . . black room, it was a. . . just a black room. (p. 85, emphasis in original)

No matter how much his story seems to be beyond the realms of possibility, research suggests that the number of males who are sexually abused during military service is greater than the number of female service members (Morral et

al., 2015). As he manifests symptoms of PTSD, besides his accounts of what he has experienced during his service, it is highly likely that Tadge was subjected to such abuses which, in time, destroy him mentally. Fabrication of Penetrators and their unspeakable acts against him are, then, manifestations of the trauma he develops from these abuses.

It is conspicuous that Woyzeck and Tadge are victims of legitimised violence of differing kinds within the military environment. This evidence suggests that both developing varied disorientations result from authority figures' abusive treatments as both of them suffer from pretty similar disorders reverberating these abusive experiences. Whilst Woyzeck's troubles arising from these figures are ostensible as witnessed throughout the play via mutual contacts, the toxic oppression of Tadge is disclosed through evocations as he recalls and shares his memories.

As a large body of research documents, sleep disturbances are one of the most prevalent symptoms of PTSD (Koffel et al., 2016; Spoormaker & Montgomery, 2008; Harvey et al., 2003). As another distinct symptom of PTSD, the characters' sleep problem is a prevailing situation in both plays. Even though Tadge's eerie talk does not make any sense, it is clear that he is pretty disturbed by what he has experienced during his service. As a result, he suffers from insomnia.

> **Tadge** Alan?
> **Alan** *looks at him*
> **Tadge** I couldn't sleep in there.
> **Alan** (*pause*) you couldn't sleep?
> **Tadge** I could hear things.
>
> [. . .]
> **Tadge** They kept me in . . . a black room. They hid me away. I never saw . . . their faces. (*Pause*.) They wore . . . gloves . . . ? (*Pause*.) They can make you disappear. Like a black hole. (pp. 97-98).

The experiences he claims to have gone through in the army and the paranoia caused by their trauma render falling asleep impossible for Tadge. With this confession, his fear and helplessness due to the symptoms he is trying to cope with, are further unfolded. Similarly, Woyzeck cannot fall asleep for he keeps hearing voices as the boundaries between reality and his imagination increasingly blur.

> ANDRES. What's the matter?
> WOYZECK. I can't sleep. When I shut my eyes everything spins round and I hear the fiddles. On and on. And then a voice comes out of the Wall. Don't you hear anything? (p. 123)

As a symptom and result of their disturbed psychologies both Woyzeck and Tadge cannot sleep, this, in turn, precipitates their tragedy. Woyzeck continues hearing voices that later take over his control. Tadge's delirium is also aggravated which causes him to believe in things like his father is not his real father, but "Norman Schwarzkopf" (p. 89) is his father and Alan is one of the Penetrators. While they continue to suffer severely from such symptoms, their traumas lead the way for further suffering.

Woyzeck's story has kept its notorious fame for hundreds of years due to the unexpected murder it culminates in. Echoing Othello's cardinal sin, Woyzeck slaughters Marie from self-induced jealousy. After Captain implies Marie's infidelity, and he sees her dancing with the Drum Major in the tavern, Woyzeck succumbs to despair and frenzy. In a very short yet one of the most dramatic scenes, while he wanders in grief, he hears voices again, saying "Stab the she-wolf dead. Stab. The. She-Wolf" (p. 122) followed by a vision of a knife evocating Macbeth's floating dagger. Shortly after, he buys a real one from a Jew, takes Mary to the edge of the woods by the pond, and stabs her to death. Unlike Woyzeck's brutal finale, Neilson's character does not kill or hurt anyone, at least not in the play. However, he terrorises people around him with his disturbingly psychotic acts and extreme verbal violence. First, he simulates teddy bears that Max is so fond of having sex with and rips them to shreds with a knife with which he intimidates Alan.

Even though *Penetrator* does not incorporate an overt murder scene like Woyzeck, it provides enough implications relating to a probable former murder. Serving as another striking resemblance with Woyzeck's penultimate scene, Tadge arrives at Max and Alan's house with blood splattered on his military gear. In a similar vein, Woyzeck comes back with blood on his hand and says it belongs to him and he famously tries to clean it (p. 132), this time reminding the reader of the famous lines of Lady Macbeth in the bloody hand scene. Beyond any dispute, the blood on Woyzeck belongs to Marie, yet it remains a mystery from whom the one on Tadge is as he only says "It's not mine" (p. 77). As a matter of fact, as he narrates his escape from the penetrators, he claims to have killed one of them (p. 87), yet as many others, this account also remains suspicious and does not offer enough clarification for the blood stain.

Prevailing commonalities in both plays precipitate that the ongoing social order is the same: the strong abuse and terrorise the weak, who, in turn, terrorise each other, suggesting a continuation of the victimisation of the weak. Their position on the fringe or borderline and their alienation from the world and the subsequent trauma they experience push

Woyzeck and Tadge to breaking point. This is because none of them can find a way to work through their trauma, and "Unattended and compelling memory of trauma, thereby, leads to a perpetuating cycle of abuse and violence" (Aygan, 2018, p. 101). Michael Cotsell, on the consequences of soldiers' trauma, notes, "In the worst outcomes, the traumatised themselves adopt traumatising behaviour towards others, typically those closest to them" (2005, p. 3). The after-effects of Woyzeck and Tadge's trauma, too, surface in the form of violence towards those they feel closer to. Their trauma is manifested in the form of aggressive behaviour inflicted on them. Thus, as former victims of the social order and trauma, they become victimisers.

Last, but not least, the common thread Woyzeck and Tadge meet on is the fact that they both desperately vie for recognition and affection. As a response to trauma survivors, listening to them, hence, bearing witness to their trauma is a critical means to give voice to trauma victims and to provide them with acknowledgment, the literature indicates. Finding a listener who "they have been waiting for a long time" (Laub, 1992, p. 72) affects trauma victims positively. Established trauma theorist Ann Kaplan, underlining the utmost importance of this listening process, calls the exchange between a listener and trauma victim "emphatic sharing" (Kaplan, 2005, p. 37). While Marie stands out as the only warmth and haven in Woyzeck's life, Max means the same to Tadge. Tadge's violent abusive behaviours towards Alan are a manifestation of his jealousy due to Alan's friendship with Max (Sierz, 2001, p. 76). "He is jealous of him because he has taken his place in Max's life" (Karadağ, 2018, p. 93). Woyzeck calls Marie "my wife" (p. 116) and sacrifices his whole life for her and their son. Tadge and Max share the last rolo as a symbol of their bond (Newberry, 2020). Yet, the lack of craved understanding and support from the characters Tadge and Woyzeck are emotionally attached to renders emphatic sharing impossible and becomes another explicit trauma variable in both plays. Marie's lack of understanding and Max's indifference to the gruesome realities Tadge went through preclude real communication. This lack of the process of bearing witness, subsequently, augments their silence about their real plights and traumatic state of liminality ultimately causing both characters' destructions.

Conclusion

"A text raped many times by the theatre" (1987, p. 74) in Heiner Müller's words for being reworked, rewritten, and adapted many times, and labelled the "first working-class tragedy" (Price, 1998, xviii) for employing a lowly soldier character as its protagonist when tragedy was acclimatised to the middle classes back then, Büchner's unprecedented *Woyzeck* still remains relevant today due to its innovative techniques and ever-timely subjects. Transcending location and epoch, the piece has been adapted to many languages and cultures and performed on stages many a time. Contemporary British playwright Anthony Neilson's part of 'the core repertoire of in-yer-face theatre' (Scullion, 2010, p. 81) piece *Penetrator* bears significant resemblances with Büchner's Woyzeck both with the portrayal of a troubled soldier and a plot, incorporating many conundrums. While *Woyzeck* culminates with many unresolved questions, due to having a fragmented nature and no ending, it is equally hard to pinpoint an ending in *Penetrator* and find answers to questions such as whether Tadge is raped by the Penetrators or any of what he says is true.

Woyzeck and *Penetrator* are unarguably ambiguous and elusive, hence, far from providing easy answers, yet they consequently submit to some plausible readings. Their protagonists, for example, stand out as victims of PTSD resulting from inhumane treatments they are exposed to by their superiors in the army. While verbal, psychological and physical abuses are explicit and manifest in Büchner's piece, they are rather implied in Neilson's. What is clearly visible in both texts is that the abuses the characters put up with result in serious mental breakdowns manifesting in various symptoms attesting to PTSD. Manifesting prominent features of PTSD both Woyzeck and Tadge suffer from sleep problems, delusional confusion of hallucinations with real events, permanent anxiety, and a propensity for violence.

Both characters' resorting to violence that they have to yield during their service is another point that requires further attention. Woyzeck, whom Brustein names "the archetypal victim" (Brustein, 1972, p. 5), within the army and Tadge, a counterpart of him, suffer from violence throughout their military service with various forms of horror and oppression permeating their lives. Unfortunately, they cannot find a person who can listen to and understand them, hence, help them work through their trauma. The lack of this safe haven and the impossibility of eluding what is destroying their body and mind, aggravate their despair and push both to further depression. Unable to handle the stress and delusions, this time they resort to violence. Portraying these characters as more than raving lunatics, Büchner and Neilson invite their audiences to a more emphatic judgement by giving these perpetrator-victims a voice. Thus, *Woyzeck* with its short, unusually intense scenes and an unexpected murder, and *Penetrator* with its ever-amplifying fierce atmosphere leave a mark on their audience. They also propagate disastrous effects of mental and physical abuse both on the soldiers and those around them. Furthermore, pointing out issues such as the oppression of lower-class groups, plights of soldiers, psychological exploitation, mental breakdown and their aftermath, both plays become timeless and critically notable works in German and British dramatic histories.

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