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Woyzeck (1837) by Georg Buchner, 1813–37

lain McClure

Woyzeck inspired many of the key innovators in Western theatre, since its 1913 Munich premiere, including Brecht and Beckett. Although short in length, it is endlessly innovative and exciting, on many levels. The simple plot includes a theme of medical negligence. A doctor, deluded by his social status, enrolls our humble protagonist into a study of the physiological and psychiatric effects of an exclusive diet of peas. The doctor's disinterest in his subject's well-being is dramatic and tragic. Woyzeck becomes psychotic and murders Marie, his beloved. The play's contagious power lives in its interweaving of scabrous satire and precocious compassion.

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