

Schocher's Ideas and Wötzel's Words: Notes Along a Sidetrack

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Christian Gotthold Schocher (1736-1810) is an obscure figure, but still of some historical interest as the almost legendary founder of a rather peculiar and little known school of German declamation around 1800. Declamation as a performance art, the oral interpretation of literary texts, was a fashion which arose in Germany in the 1770's and had its high point around 1810, though it was cultivated throughout the nineteenth century and after. Alongside this practice appeared a plethora of textbooks, essays and poetic anthologies. In many respects these publications continue the tradition of rhetoric, of which declamation had always been a part.¹

Declamation is a primarily a vocal art (although, possibly, with gestural elements), and as such it has features in common with singing – the sound parameters of speech, pitch and time, in a broad sense: melody and rhythm. To put it strongly (too strongly), one might say that declamation is ‘a kind of singing’, a ‘reduced’ or ‘restricted’ kind of singing, as song is intensified or heightened declamation, *erhöhte Deklamation*. Cicero had called it *cantus obscurior*,² an expression that has been interpreted in various ways, but probably is best translated as *a vague kind of song* — “In speech too there is a vague kind of song” — a song which has no precise pitches; the thing we sometimes call ‘speech melody’. Christian Friedrich Michaelis, a popular essayist, echoes this rhetorical commonplace when he characterizes declamation as, “as it were, an obscure, restricted, stunted kind of singing”.³ It may closely approximate singing by the application of more melodious intonation (*musikalische Modulation*). At this point in his argument the editor has inserted a dissenting footnote: “Song is actually something quite different from declamation, not by degree, but by essence”. It shows that the issue was a controversial one.

The term ‘dark song’, *dunkler Gesang*, had been used also by Schocher, who asked:

*Must Speech Forever Remain an Obscure Song, or Could Its Manners, Courses and Inflections Be Depicted in a Way Similar to Musical Notation?*⁴

— which is a long title for a tract of just twenty pages (1791). It is not quite fair maybe to ridicule the author for that; in those days small tracts or reports on weighty issues might have titles such as:

Kann man nicht in zwey oder drey Monaten die Orgel gut, und regelmäßig schlagen lernen?: Mit Ja beantwortet und dargethan vermittelst einer Einleitung zum Generalbasse: Verfaßt für die Pflanzschule des fürstlichen Reichsstiftes S. Emmeran

by Sebastian Prixner (1795), or

1 See Muns, *Concert Song and Concert Speech* (submitted).

2 “est autem etiam in dicendo quidam cantus obscurior [...]”. Orator 57.

3 “ein dunkler, eingeschränkter, verkürzter Gesang”. Michaelis (1805): 113.

4 Schocher (1791).

Ist die sächsische Wollmanufaktur ihrem Verderben nahe?: beantwortet in Hinsicht auf die seit dem Jahre 1583 erschienenen Landesgesetze und die im Sörgel'schen Memorial an Sr. Churfürstl. Durchl. zu Sachsen enthaltenen Behauptungen

by the Saxonian state official Gustav Anton von Seckendorff (1803), who a few years later would transform himself into a wandering declaimer and declamation theorist.⁵

A much more serious complaint is that the little book with its unquotable title (I will call it Schocher's '91) is itself highly obscure, as contemporaries have noted.⁶ Schocher predictably answers the first question with *no*, the second with *yes*: the 'darkness' of speech (which he thinks is a matter of incomprehension) will be lifted once speech prosody is rendered in a kind of musical notation. Of this he only gives a rudimentary, and as he admits, "obscure" illustration.⁷

Capturing the Sound of Speech

Basic to Schocher's theory is the assumption that both language and music could develop fully only through the art of writing:

For what would language be without letters, and music without notes? [...] only through writing it was possible to give rules, perfection and continuity to language, as it was for music through notes.⁸

This view is not peculiar to Schocher. The most respected (and criticized) eighteenth-century authority on the German language, Johann Christoph Gottsched, had said something very similar:

Though all languages in the world were spoken before they were written, they were very crude and irregular until the invention of letters. It is to writing that they owe their first orderly shape; this enables one to pay much closer attention to all the words.⁹

This is as wrong for language as it is for music (obviously, to modern readers), but it is true that notation did have an immense impact upon music history. The practice of 'composition' depends upon it. That language as a communication system is much less an object of historical development than music, and ancient literature had oral sources, could have been known to these eighteenth-century authors; but the fact may have been somewhat obscured by the superficial complexities of Baroque literary language.

The writing system of language, the alphabet, renders primarily its grammatical aspect – words and sentences. The letters may roughly correspond to sounds, as is the case in the Latin and Greek alphabets. Punctuation signs do not only separate one syntactic unit from another, but also have a function as prosodic markers, indicating where

⁵ See Muns (2016).

⁶ Goethe to Schiller, 24 July 1794: "Sie erhalten hiermit die Schochersche Abhandlung mit Danke zurück; das, was ich davon verstehe, gefällt mir recht wohl, das Uebrige wird er mit der Zeit ja wohl aufklären!"; Weithase (1930): 103. Friedrich Schlegel, 1793: "Aus Schochers Declamation besonders im Unterricht wird grosses Wesen gemacht. Er hat ein schlechtes Organ. [...] Seine Schrift soll ohne mündlichen Unterricht sehr unverständlich seyn"; Krause (2012): 34.

⁷ "Sollten die Ziffern das Beyspiel noch ertwas dunkel lassen: so wird es die Melodiezeichnung in künftiger Übersicht desto deutlicher darstellen." Schocher (1791): 16.

⁸ Schocher (1791): 13.

⁹ Gottsched (1798): 58 (or. *Vollständigere und neuerläuterte Deutsche Sprachkunst*, 1762).

one pauses, where a new idea is to be expected. Alphabet and punctuation however do not explicitly and precisely fix intonation and timing, as musical notation does. The idea that these ‘musical’ features of language might be studied with the help of a special notation system, similar to that of music, is not so new as Schocher pretends. The abbé Dubos had in 1719 addressed the issue with much more knowledge of and respect for antiquity, and proposed (on the advice of others) that it could be done in regular staff notation, with the distances on the staff interpreted as quarter tones.¹⁰ A lively debate ensued that fanned out over France, England and Germany. Many have pointed out that regular musical notation, recitative-like, may often render speech fairly faithfully. André Grétry, in a famous passage of his *Mémoires* (1789), transcribes a pompously uttered *Bonjour monsieur* as c’ g g c.¹¹ Johann Friedrich Rochlitz, who may have known that passage, in 1796 transcribes the exclamation *Wie ich mich freue—!* in $\frac{3}{4}$ time as d’ b g e’ c’.¹² The Hildesheim pastor Hermann Heimart Cludius, in a 1792 handbook on *körperliche Beredsamkeit* or rhetorical delivery, reproduces fragments of literary texts with regular musical notation, as a kind of recitative without tonal structure.¹³ An exceptionally thorough attempt to record prosody with modified musical notation is the *Prosodia rationalis* (1779) by Joshua Steele. Others have used various symbols to indicate declamatory accents, emphasis and pauses, a well-known example being the *Lectures on the Art of Reading* (1775) by the declaimer or ‘elocutionist’ Thomas Sheridan. They were translated into German and amplified by Renatus Gotthelf Löbel, a Leipzig scholar and lexicographer, to whom Schocher has respectfully dedicated his ‘91.¹⁴

The British ‘elocutionary movement’, a collective designation for a number of preachers and actors (including Sheridan), cultivated eloquence as an art of oral delivery more or less divorced from its traditional rhetorical context. It had its counterpart in the German fashion for professional stage declamation as a performance art. Many actors developed a repertoire of poetry and dramatic fragments for appearances in concerts between musical items, or in their own ‘declamatory concerts’ or ‘declamatoria’.

The Schocher Legend

Schocher was therefore by no means unique in his pursuits, though his self-presentation may suggest the contrary. Schocher, who held the title of *Magister* and spent most of his life as a declamation teacher in Leipzig, had been a student and admirer of the poet and Leipzig professor Christian Fürchtegott Gellert.¹⁵ Of his own practical activities as a declaimer there are few traces, and he may not often have performed in public. Dörfel’s history of the Leipzig Gewandhaus concerts mentions declamations by Schocher as a kind of sideshow to Dittersdorf’s three symphonies after Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* in 1790.¹⁶ One unfavourable review was reason for Schocher to shun all future public per-

10 Dubos (1740): 145, 163-4; a German translation was published in 1761.

11 Grétry (1789: 280-1).

12 Rochlitz (1796): 58 *Anmerkung*.

13 Cf. Winkler (1931): 61-105.

14 Sheridan and Löbel (1793).

15 Schindler (1810): 745.

16 Dörfel (1884): 187. Cf. Schocher (1790).

formances, “in order to avoid such rebuke forever”, as he states in the foreword of his ’91. Even the reviewer’s use of the term ‘declamatory concert’ rather than ‘declamatorium’ reaped the declaimer’s inexplicable scorn.

Schocher’s death in 1810 elicited a few admiring obituaries. The Leipzig historian Christian August Semler describes his impression of Schocher as of “a man intensely captivated and moved by his subject; and his speech touched the heart, as all will testify who have heard him without prejudice in his earlier years [...]”.¹⁷ Another Leipzig scholar and friend of Schocher’s, Johann Gottfried Grohmann, admits that his voice was somewhat hoarse or muffled and not suited for a large hall.¹⁸ Carl Schindler (probably a teacher at the Leipzig *Bürgerschule*) speaks of his “somewhat dull *Moll-Ton*”, and of a slowing down of his speech due to the loss of his front teeth. “And yet at 74 years of age, with a hoarse voice and toothless mouth, he spoke so vigorously and pleasantly, that one wanted to listen to him ever more”.¹⁹

Schocher’s reputation as a theorist is not so much based on his ’91 as on elements of his teaching that were orally received and passed on by others, colleagues and students. One of these students was, for a short while, the philosopher Johann Gottlieb Fichte. Fichte characterizes him as “a scholar who after persistently studying declamation for 20 years has cast it into the form of a system, given it a near unshakeable foundation in its own nature, invented easily comprehensible rules for it, and also provides a specially devised notation for the text. A perfect practitioner of the art himself, he has trained the most excellent actors”. He adds that “for lack of initiative and desultoriness he has never made himself the use of his art that I will make of it, otherwise he would not be lingering in darkness and obscurity in Leipzig”.²⁰

In this description we find most of the elements that have contributed to the creation of a legend around the figure of Schocher: the portrayal of the scholar as a kind of alchemist, who through obstinate, singleminded pursuit discovers the philosopher’s stone of speech; an unworldly figure, unable to reap the fruit of his own inventions. Much of this may be due to Schocher’s self-portrayal. In the preface of his ’91 he states that the toil of developing his notation of speech melody (*Melodiezeichnung*) has robbed him of “nearly everything, health and even life itself”. The one ingredient of legend that is lacking in Fichte’s sketch, persecution or lack of recognition, is compensated for by Schocher himself, who for much of the preface is rebutting the critic, his “enemy”. “Just as well, that I know how to get rid of such enemies with good manners! — I hold my peace, and am able do so, because I can still love them.” A slightly sarcastic reviewer for the *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung* finds this “funny”, and thinks the author’s style and argumentation makes one doubt his taste and judgement.²¹

17 Semler (1810): 1075.

18 Grohmann (1810): 571.

19 Schindler (1810): 755. Such irreverent details were maybe the reason that the organizers of a subscription for Schocher’s posthumous work announced a “rectification” of this article. ZEW *Intelligenzblatt* 1810 (22), *Pränumerationen-Anzeige*.

20 Letter to his fiancée (8 June 1790), Fichte (1830), 96-97. Three months later he concluded that on the practical side he learned nothing from Schocher. *ib.*: 112; Weithase (1961): 398-399.

21 ALZ 1792 (206): 440. — *Bey dieser Gelegenheit erfahren wir zugleich, daß Hr. S. sich beynah seine ganze Lebenszeit mit der Grammatik beschäftigt, und dieses Studiums wegen Ruf und Amt ausgeschlagen. Ferner, daß er “manchen Leipziger Gelehrten diesen und jenen entwischten Sprachfehler insgeheim entdeckt, welche Offenheit man so gut gefunden, daß man ihm die Manuscripte*

The Vowel Scala

The main points of Schocher's theory or system do not emerge clearly from his '91, and it is not my intention here to attempt a reconstruction of his ideas. What we may call the 'Schocher doctrine' appears much more clearly from publications by his followers and other witnesses, and may be very briefly summarised in two points. First, the five vowels (*u, o, a, e, i*, from low to high) are associated with as many speech 'tones', which together form a "Tonleiter". Second, any speech can be realized in one of these "tones" which then functions as a 'Tonart'. Accordingly, one may speak 'in a' or 'in i'. The various 'tones' defined by the vowels each have their particular character, which should match the nature of the text: they carry characterizations such as *Götterton* (i), *Conversationsston* (a), *Monologton* (e), *Gebetton* (o), and *Geisterton* (u).

The basis for this strange theory is a speculative physiology and acoustics, which lacks a distinction between pitch and timbre (in fact, there seems to have been no word for timbre or tone colour in German at the time).²² The vowels are thought to be produced in the larynx. Curiously, a scientific and basically correct explanation of vowel production was available in 1791, when Wolfgang von Kempelen, famous as an automaton builder, published his description of a mechanical replica of the human vocal apparatus. On the basis of his experimental physics Von Kempelen attributes vowel production to the shape created by the tongue and the mouth opening. But vowels on one pitch still sound higher and lower, Von Kempelen observes, and may produce a kind of "melody".²³ It is possible, of course, to "colour" one's speech by shaping all vowels more towards one or another end of the spectrum, without affecting the actual pitch range. With an overwrought analogy, this choice of "tone" or "key" is sometimes called "tuning".²⁴

Several authors have pointed out the difference between musical scales and declamatory "scales". Löbel for instance thinks that the fine pitch distinctions of speech should not be measured in a scale, because "the purpose of such a scale, harmony, lies so far outside the sphere of declamation".²⁵ Despite such sensible reservations, the concept of an *oratorische Scala* seems to have become a kind of orthodoxy with its inclusion in the *Conversations-Lexikon* of 1809.²⁶

vor dem Druck zum Durchsehen zugeschiedt habe." Nun weiß man also, wem man es zu danken hat, wenn die Schriften mancher Leipziger Autoren von grammatischen Fehlern frey sind.

22 The word *Klangfarbe* was not in use before 1822. See Muzzulini (2006): 263-365.

23 Kempelen (1791): 196. The concept of a vowel scale dates back at least to a dissertation by the physiologist Christian Friedrich Hellwag (1781); see Weithase (1940): 17.

24 Schröder (1832): 18: "Beim Deklamieren muß man also gleich einem Instrumente sich stimmen, d. i. den richtigen Grundton des Deklamationsstücks in seiner Kehle suchen."

25 Löbel, in Sheridan and Löbel (1793): 271.

26 *Conversations-Lexikon* (1809): 262-265 at 263. The Macklot *Conversations-Lexikon* (1816), pirated from Brockhaus's third edition of 1814, contains an added reference to Schocher. Schocher (1791) is cited in Koch (1802): 413. Traces of his teaching, attributed or attributable, are found for instance in Grohmann (1794): 250, 299-300; *Neue deutsche Dramaturgie* (1798): 30-34; Rambach (1800): 27-35 (relying on Schocher's oral instruction); Bernhardt (1801): 271; Bielfeld (1801): 21-22; Kerndörffer (1813): 19-26 (copying material found in Grohmann without reference to Schocher); Schott (1815): 221-222; Solbrig (1816): ix; Schröder (1832): 18-22; Ersch and Gruber (1837): 137-145 (*Declamation*, by [Christian Gottlieb] Flemming). Dupree (2014: 75) wrongly seems to imply that Seckendorff followed Schocher in his theory of the vowel scale. Seckendorff did share the confusion about the

The Lost System

Schocher's brief and barely comprehensible first essay should have been superseded by his opus magnum, announced under the title *System der enharmonischen Beredsamkeit*. This never happened. Instead we have 62 pages dedicated to a *Justification of the Spelling 'deutsch'* (rather than 'deutsch'), published in 1793, which may seem to have only the slightest connection with declamation, but surprisingly contains a lengthy introduction explaining that the purpose of this work is to prepare his audience for his System, and it accordingly includes a general exposition of his ideas on declamation. The need for such a system, Schocher claims, had been felt by Gellert and Lessing, who thought it intolerable that there should be no strict rules to guide the declaimer. Even though all the rules are ultimately derived from nature, a declaimer ignorant of the rules is just groping around in the dark, forever uncertain whether he does the right thing. But his visualization of the structure of speech will cause "the bright light of Reason" to shine upon this dark area. The proof of this may at any time be demanded from one of his pupils:

One need only ask him to declaim a previously rehearsed fable or poem, and, provided one has a fine and prepared ear, one will easily discern the tuning, modulation and their causes, no less the correct accentuation or emphasis. One may stop him at any point, at which he will answer which is the key (*in welchem Tone er stehe*), and by which causes he had arrived there from the previous one.²⁷

Shortly before his death, Schocher, then living in Naumburg, some 50 km south-west from Leipzig, has dedicated a manuscript to the university of Leipzig which contains a fragment of the projected System: *Nebeneinander aufgestellte deutsche und griechische Vocalenleiter, um über die wahre Aussprache der chromatischen Töne v, oi, ε v, εi, η, und ai evident zu entscheiden*.²⁸

According to a reminiscence of the declamation teacher Johann Friedrich Schröder, it was the costs of producing the necessary engravings that retarded its publication. "The author has shown me the manuscript often, but always with with a sort of jealous distrust, and did not let me read it, because he feared that he might loose the fame due to his work if his ideas would become fully known to another person."²⁹ Others have attributed the failure to the author himself. By the time of his death more than three quarters are said to have been completed, but, as Carl Schindler remarks, "anyone who knew the good Schocher's character well, had reason to fear that it would have remained incomplete even if fate had granted him a few more years [...]. Untiringly striving to complete, he forgot to end".³⁰

A subscription for posthumous publication was organized shortly after Schocher's death by friends, who claim to have been charged with its publication by the author, un-

location of production of vowels (in the larynx).

27 Schocher (1793): xii-xiii. The reviewer for the ALZ 1796 (229): 214 is again mildly sarcastic: "Hr. Sch. ist ein guter Declamator, der jedoch für sein Fach etwas zu viel Begeisterung zu zeigen scheint."

28 *Intelligenzblatt JALZ* 1810 (20): 157. An obituary in the same journal (34: 269) claims the work was "noch kurz vor seinem Tode vollendet".

29 Schröder (1832): 7.

30 Schindler (1810): 748.

der the strict condition that it should be printed exactly as he had left it. Response apparently fell short of expectations, for the System has not been heard of again.

The Wötzel Puzzle

There is a shadowy and slightly paranoid tinge to the world of Schocher's theory. This becomes more pronounced with the appearance of a new character upon the scene, Johann Carl Wötzel (1765-1836). If Wötzel is to be trusted, he had been Schocher's "student and friend for many years", and upon his teacher's insistence, had promised that he would complete his work, obtaining however *carte blanche* to adapt it freely to his own insights.³¹

Unfortunately, Wötzel is not to be trusted. The deceit starts with his name and title. Graduated as *Magister* in Leipzig in 1794, he called himself *Doctor* in all his publications since 1802. Between 1800 and 1805 he wrote his name as *Wezel* – in an attempt, it seems, to profit from the risen fame of his near-namesake, the satirical novelist and philosopher Johann Carl Wezel (1747-1819). The malversations of Wötzel's early career have been brought to light in a 1987 article by the Wezel specialist Phillip McKnight, who has even suggested the possibility that a lost part of Wezel's philosophical masterpiece, *Versuch über die Kenntniß des Menschen*, has ended up in Wötzel's *System der empirischen Anthropologie oder der ganzen Erfahrungsmenschenlehre* (1804).³² If it was Wötzel's ambition to create a longlasting bibliographic nightmare, he has fully succeeded. Not only do many of his lengthy and confusing titles still appear in library catalogues under Wezel's name, he also in 1802 managed to publish with one publisher (Breitkopf & Härtel) two apparently contradictory books with largely identical titles: *Versuch der einzig zweckmäßigen Propädeutik zum richtigen, gründlichen und fruchtbaren Studio der Vernunftlehre oder der Logik* (427 pages) and *Grundriß der einzig zweckmäßigen Propädeutik zum gründlichen, richtigen und fruchtbaren Studio der Metaphysik oder der Transcendentalphilosophie als der Grundlage des Kerns und Geistes aller wahren Philosophie* (380 pages).³³

This may have disturbed only the small number of readers who were able to struggle beyond the title, but Wötzel-Wezel managed to create quite a stir when he ventured into spiritism. *The True Appearance of My Wife After Death (Meiner Gattin wirkliche Erscheinung nach ihrem Tode)*, published in 1804, claims to report an "experiment" in after-death contact. In the press debate that ensued Wötzel attempted to pull things straight and affirm his authorship. Replying to a favourable review (most likely written by himself) that had called upon him ("in the name of humanity")³⁴ to reveal himself and vouch for the truth of his account, he announced his intention to take an oath "with an honourable council of the University of Leipzig".³⁵ The review and his reply are reproduced in a *Further Explanation and Elucidations* of 319 pages, published in 1805.

This may look like an entertaining mixture of ghost stories and fraud, but in fact any reader is likely soon to be discouraged by the sheer amount of empty verbiage that

31 Wötzel (1814): xxxxi.

32 McKnight (1987): 249, 253

33 *ibid.* 250.

34 Wötzel (1805): 5.

35 *ibid.* 13.

Wötzel pours over any subject he can lay hands on, in interminable sentences that defy the worst of contemporary German Idealist writing. More disconcerting is the fact that within this web of apparently unscrupulous deceit there is a sad element of truth, the fact that indeed his wife had died. In the preface of the second volume (787 pages) of his *System der empirischen Anthropologie oder der ganzen Erfahrungsmenschenlehre*, published in 1803, he mentions her deadly illness in a list of excuses aimed at future petty-minded critics. The preface is dated 1 June 1803; his wife died six and a half weeks later.³⁶

The wide resonance of the *True Appearance* eventually turned against him, because the book was much ridiculed and parodied by titles such as *The True Appearance of My Cat After Death* and *Kilian, I Will Come Back! or: True Appearance of My Wives After Death*.³⁷ Moreover, Wötzel was exposed as a plagiarist by one of the victims of his large scale thieving.³⁸ This reviewer (a Jena professor) very aptly describes Wötzel's method, which in later years would be exactly the same:

The author's own contribution – where any is to be found in this book – consists merely in *words*, which do not just inundate the few ideas (taken from elsewhere), but drown them so completely, that all characteristics of their living intellectual origin must vanish.³⁹

After this exposure Wötzel seems to have taken to his heels, and a gap of nearly ten years appears in the list of his publications. By 1814 he has settled in Vienna, working as composing room supervisor (*Faktor*) in the Stöckholzer von Hirschfeld printing offices — a job he must have been good at, considering the numbers of pages that have come from under his hands.⁴⁰ He now attacks the book market with a new specialisation, the theory of declamation, and poses as Schocher's leading apostle in a *Grundriß eines allgemeinen und faßlichen Lehrgebäudes oder Systems der Declamation nach Schocher's Ideen* (1814, 840 pages). It is followed by some seven other works on declamation and acting during the next four years. His employment with the Hirschfeld firm may explain how he was able to print some of these volumes at his own expense, but it is hard to imagine that this could have been a lucrative enterprise.

Wötzel did not change his method, and copied freely from unacknowledged sources. The titles of his 1814 *Grundriß* and the 1815 *Grundriß einer pragmatischen Geschichte der Declamation und der Musik* however acknowledge a debt to Schocher (*nach Schocher's Ideen*). Wötzel repeats the conjecture that “the good Schocher” might never have finished his work, “because of his natural shyness and modesty”; but against Schocher's executors denies that Schocher had left “a true system”.⁴¹ This leaves him at liberty to create his own version of the Schocher legend. In his 1815 *Geschichte der Declamation*, Schocher, the “great creative reformer and restorer”, becomes the initiator of a third epoch in the art's history, his name placed next to Luther's in one of the chapter

36 McKnight (1987): 249; Wötzel (1803): ix.

37 Rather solemnly reviewed in the JALZ 1806 (97): 162, where Wötzel is characterized as “berüchtigter Bücherfabrikant”.

38 McKnight (1987): 251.

39 JALZ 1805 (30): 234; McKnight (1987): 250.

40 Meusel 1827: 658.

41 Wötzel (1814): xxxxi, xxxiv. Wötzel refers to a confrontation with Schocher's heirs in the *Dresdner Anzeigen* of February 1812; cf. Wittsack (1932): 216.

titles. Along with this aggrandization of Schocher, Wötzel does not shy away from grotesque self-promotion. The title pages of three of his publications *nach Schocher's Ideen* claim the endorsement of Schiller and Franz Volkmar Reinhard, the latter being a well-known preacher and Dresden court chaplain. Since both were dead, they could not protest. Schiller, in particular, becomes the object of Wötzel's fanciful projections: not only had he "invited" Wötzel to publish his work, but he had actually "elaborated his last works according to my principles, and revised some of his earlier ones accordingly".⁴²

Considering its obstinacy, size and scope, Wötzel's fraudulent practice can only be called pathological. At the same time it is almost funny; the more so because modern scholarship has mostly failed to see through the bogus nature of his work.⁴³ It is true that critics of his own time have often treated Wötzel's works on declamation rather respectfully, though his theft did not always go unnoticed. A reviewer of his *Versuch einer völlig zweckmäßigen Theater-Schule* (1817) complains that "if we should mark all the plagiarisms in this work of Dr. Wötzel, this chronicle would look exactly like an accounts book".⁴⁴ A brief excerpt from Wötzel's *Schöne Vorlesekunst* (1816) will show his method of adding words to other people's text.

Es ist ein so süß schmeichelndes Vergnügen, sich und andere in jene Begeisterung zu versetzen, in der jeder sich dem andern anbetet und die großen Thaten und Tugenden eines großen Mannes in Gedanken nachthut und in süßen Träumen den nach Thaten dürstenden Geist befriediget, der nun den Fesseln des Standes und der kleinlichen Beschäftigung und allen einengenden Verhältnissen entfliehet. — Da ist man mit lauter Helden umgeben, in jedem Auge glänzt Tapferkeit und die Tugend wandelt in sichtbarer Schönheit. Alle lieben sich, alle schlingt die Sympathie in einander. Franke (1789) vol. 1: 27

Denn er bewirkt hiedurch das süß schmeichelnde Vergnügen, sich und andere Mitglieder in eine solche Begeisterung zu versetzen, in welcher jedes Mitglied sich in dem andern verehrt, große Ideen und Tugenden nachahmt, zuletzt aber — auch den (in süßen Träumen nach großen Thaten dürstenden) Geist befriedigt, welcher nun leicht den Fesseln des Standes, der Beschäftigungen und der einengenden äußern Verhältnisse entfliehet. Denn, mit lauter Helden, oder tugendhaften und gebildeten Menschen umgeben, glänzt auch in dem Auge jedes Zuhörers Tapferkeit und die Tugend wandelt in sichtbarer Gestalt; alle lieben sich, von der Sympathie (Theilnahme, Mitleidenschaft) in einander verschlungen [...]. Wötzel (1816): 15-16.

In an 1848 collection of Viennese anecdotes Wötzel is described as a pathetic figure, slender, stooped, demure and polite, who tried to sell his books house-to-house. "Everybody will now remember the many books on declamation and theatre, still stocked in antiquarian bookshops [...]" He left Vienna in 1835 and died the next year in Jena "in the most miserable deprivation".⁴⁵

⁴² Wötzel (1814): xxxxiv.

⁴³ Dupree (2014): 69 includes Wötzel among the authors who "were themselves professional actors or *Deklamatoren*". I have found no evidence of this, and considering Wötzel's writing style it is hard to imagine he could have been. Wittsack (1932: 45) has noticed a literal repeat of several pages in Wötzel 1815 (66-69 = 89-91), but did not see that this had in fact been copied from Sheridan and Löbel (1793 vol. 1 185-188). Of course, such correspondences are easily discovered nowadays thanks to digitization.

⁴⁴ *Erneuerte Vaterländische Blätter* 1817 (76): 303.

⁴⁵ Gräffer (1848): 27-28. — *Daß Wötzel maliciös war, kann man ihm unmöglich nachrühmen. Er hat durch allerhand verhetzende Einsendungen manchen Autor und Journalisten viel Verdruß bereitet, aus purer Böswilligkeit und Animosität.*

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