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**"How Skinny I Got and How Fucking Weird I Was": Michael
Shannon, Sarah Kane, and *Woyzek***

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Poster Presentation P29

"HOW SKINNY I GOT AND HOW FUCKING WEIRD I WAS": MICHAEL SHANNON, SARAH KANE, AND *WOYZECK*

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School of Theatre, Illinois Wesleyan University

September 27th, 2007 I conducted an interview with Michael Shannon concerning his role as the title character in *Woyzeck* directed by Sarah Kane at the Gate Theatre in 1997. As the bulk of academic focus has been on Kane as a playwright, I am offering a new perspective on her artistry by presenting her work as a director through the examination of this interview. This examination is a worthy one, because the production was highly reviewed. Michael Billington, British theatre's most renowned critic, calls Kane's *Woyzeck* "a flawless production." Mark Ravenhill, notorious playwright who authored *Shopping and Fucking*, comments on *Woyzeck* stating, "I told her it was just about the bleakest thing I'd ever seen." The reviews of the production marvel both at the excellence and the dismalness of the performance. The title quote, taken from my interview with Shannon, captures the essence of the artistic process that Shannon and Kane shared, and the product, which the reviewers witnessed. Shannon explains that, considering Kane's writing, the process was surprisingly traditional. Kane primarily used method-acting techniques, but, less surprisingly, the techniques were extreme. In the interview Shannon explains that he lived with Kane at the time of performance, starved himself, and fell in love with Kate Ashfield, the actress who played Marie. In addition to my interview with Shannon, my primary sources are the reviews of *Woyzeck*, Kane's obituary in *The Independent* (the source of the Ravenhill's quote), and Graham Saunders' 2000 interview with Kate Ashfield. It is through these sources I intend to begin to illuminate Kane's directorial process.